Students learn to dress for success

By Valentina Toro
Managing Editor

Students explored how professional attire, first impressions and personal branding can influence career opportunities during the "Business Fashion Forum" on Oct. 13.

Hosted by the National Association of Black Accountants and Fashion, Attitude, Creativity, Elegance, the event featured Eileen Adao, founder of Elephant Advisory, and Richard Dorval, senior national business outreach manager at Men's Wearhouse.

"Practice every single detail when you're making that first impression, because you don't get to make it back," Dorval said.

Dorval engaged the audience by asking students to describe their first impressions of him. Students called him professional, sophisticated, successful and intimidating.

He used their responses to explain how appearance can influence perceptions before a conversation begins.

He encouraged students to practice handshakes, maintain eye contact and prepare for interviews, emphasizing the importance of presenting themselves confidently.

He demonstrated how looking toward someone's forehead can help maintain the appearance of eye contact when speaking to an audience.

"Think of yourself as your own personal brand moving forward," Dorval said.

Adao shared an experience from her early career at Ernst & Young, when she attended an overnight inventory assignment wearing jeans and a T-shirt after being told to dress casually. During the assignment, a store manager questioned her age and whether she belonged there.

The experience changed how she approached professional attire, particularly as a young woman working in accounting.

"I'd rather be overdressed than underdressed, and throughout my whole career, I've always had to prove myself," Adao said.

The discussion shifted to building professional wardrobes on a college budget.

Adao recommended purchasing versatile clothing that could be combined into different outfits and shopping at thrift stores for affordable options.

"It's about how polished you looked. Did you iron your shirt? Did you put something good together?" Adao said.

Dorval encouraged students to invest in essential pieces, including dress shirts, pants, blazers and shoes. He emphasized that properly fitted clothing can make affordable outfits appear professional without relying on expensive brands.

The event also featured a demonstration by F.A.C.E., showcasing different types of professional attire and providing students with examples of how to dress for workplace settings.

The presentation connected the clothing advice discussed during the panel with examples students could consider when preparing for internships or job interviews.

Dorval invited several students to stand and display their outfits, highlighting details such as ties, layered clothing, accessories and coordinated colors.

He explained how small additions can express personality while maintaining professionalism.

"Get the job first," Dorval said.

The panelists also discussed common mistakes young professionals make, particularly confusing business casual with everyday casual clothing.

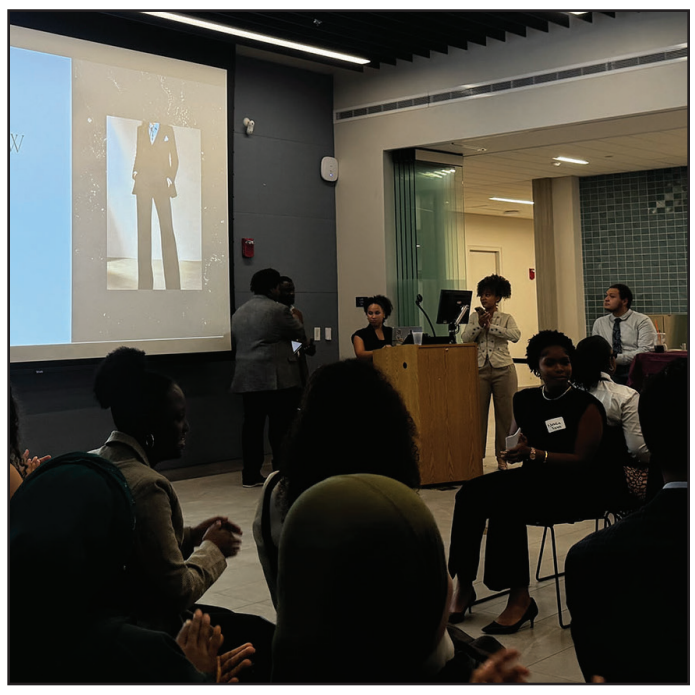
Dorval encouraged students to research company expectations before attending interviews and gradually incorporating their personal style.

Beyond clothing, both speakers emphasized the importance of maintaining a professional social media presence and developing relationships with mentors throughout their careers.

Adao described how seeing a colleague's online posts changed her opinion of that person, underscoring the lasting impact of personal digital impressions on social media platforms today.

As the discussion concluded, Dorval encouraged students to learn from their mistakes, while Adao emphasized the importance of finding mentors who can offer guidance throughout their careers.

"Finding mentors along the way as you continue to grow, I think is important," Adao said.



PHOTOS | VALENTINA TORO

National Association of Black Accountants executive board members leading the "Business Fashion Forum," event.



Fashion, Attitude, Creativity, Elegance executive board members strutting the walkway in front of attendees in the School of Business on Oct. 13.

Employee stipends under investigation

By Noah Nunez
General Reporter

Throughout September into early October, student workers in multiple positions were unpaid due to a Connecticut State Colleges and Universities investigation regarding whether stipend-paid positions complied with labor laws.

The issue that derived from this investigation, as Tracy Tyree, vice president of student affairs, describes was more tech-based, preventing payroll from being able to input stipends during the progression of this issue.

"We learned this summer that there was going to be a review of that, and as we got to the beginning of the semester, that had not gotten resolved that some of the positions no longer had ways to pay the students," Tyree said.

The main roles affected by this investigation were Student Government leadership, Programs Council leadership and Peer Mentors.

However, student affairs sent up a request for stipends to be kept for other positions.

"We put together a document requisition exceptions for student media, the ones I just named and orientation leaders," Tyree said.

At this point, the issue has been resolved, with stipend-paid positions being returned to their original format, but the investigation is still ongoing, with the university being ready to change its process if the CSCU requests it.

However, the actual payment of the student workers was only part of the problem. A major aspect of this issue was the lack of communication regarding what was happening, namely, to Interim President Sandra Bulmer.

President Bulmer was informed about the issue via students on Oct. 1 during a visit by Interim Chancellor Natalie Braswell; she was shocked that the news had not reached her sooner.

"How unfortunate this is an issue that you have to deal with right at the beginning of the semester. I'm really sorry," Bulmer said. "This could have come to our office sooner, and I wish it had."

Tyree's reasoning for letting the issue go undiscussed for all of September was that it was a more institutional issue that did notrequire higher management involvement.

"It's something that people that are in the department needed to fix. When it came to light, it was a big problem in how it affected students, but it wasn't a big problem in terms of level of authority that was involved in fixing it," Tyree said.

Following the president's discovery of the issue, meetings were scheduled with the three major groups affected on the second and fifth of October to discuss what had occurred and why students had not been paid.

However, before these meetings, students, like speech, language and hearing sciences major, Jolie Jasmin, a junior and Programs Council member and Peer Mentor, were left in the dark about the payment issues and what a potential hourly payment looked like.

"Our jobs cannot be facilitated hourly; we facilitate the student experience. You can't put on the clock me hanging out in the classroom with the freshmen; you can't time me planning a trip," Jasmin said.

Given the time in which this problem was known from the end of August to its solution in the middle of October, students and even higher-ranking faculty were left out of an explanation regarding why students have not been paid.

New banners raise concerns



PHOTO | LILY RAND

Former banner promoting Social Justice on Buley Library on April 6.



PHOTO | WILLIAM GAGNÉ

New banner promoting academic excellence on Buley Library on Sept. 14.

By Brianna Wallen
Editor-in-Chief

New banners installed outside of Buley Library over the summer have sparked mixed reactions among students, with some welcoming the university's updated branding while others question the absence of its previous social justice messaging.

The signage refresh replaced displays that highlighted social justice with banners promoting the university's academic achievements, research designation and student success.

"This fall, Integrated Communications & Marketing began a planned cyclical refresh of campus signage to enhance visual consistency across university spaces," Allison O'Leary wrote in a message to the campus community on June 16.

O'Leary said the first phase of the project occurred in March, when new signage was installed at the Wintergreen Building and Wintergreen Parking Garage before Accepted Students Day.

"That work continued with the installation of a new banner system on the front of Buley Library, which provides a more sustainable and flexible way to update institutional messaging over time," O'Leary said.

This is not the only new change, as pole banners along the Academic Quad walkways and updated signage in and around Buley Library and the Student Center have also been posted throughout campus.

"As these updates continue, our campus visuals will reflect the university's mission and longstanding commitment to social justice while also celebrating academic excellence, our R2 research designation, student success and Southern pride," O'Leary said.

However, some students said this new look raises questions about how the university presents its values.

Many students who were not on campus during the summer became aware of new banners through an Instagram post from the university's official account.

"I saw the change while scrolling on Instagram, and I was disappointed," healthcare studies major Chrystophe Obiang Ze, a senior, said.

To Obiang Ze, the previous banners proudly displayed the university's identity as a social justice institution.

"It used to serve as a reminder that the school is still upholding their identity as a social justice school, despite the policies with DEI," Obiang Ze said.

Obiang Ze said the university's new messaging places greater emphasis on its accomplishments while leaving out the social justice messaging that many students value and resonate with.

"We're an R2 school now, but we're no longer promoting that we support DEI or that we're a social justice school," Obiang Ze said.

Obiang Ze said the university's commitment to social justice was one of the reasons he chose to attend the university.

"Southern stood out to me as one of the state schools that has social justice, inclusivity and diversity as their top priority," Obiang Ze said.

Now, as a senior, he recognizes that a different message is shared.

"I'm seeing a shift in what they're promoting to prospective students and values that the institution is upholding," Obiang Ze said.

While the university described the project as a planned refresh, the reaction highlights how campus signage can serve as more than decoration.

For some students, the banners represent a visible statement of the values they associate with their university.