

## Industry Insight: extended

Erin Habes, Lecturer at Buffalo State University, USA, extended interview.

*Erin's interview appears in abridged form in Chapter 4, page 130.*

### Biography

Erin Habes is a lecturer in the Buffalo State [Fashion and Textile Technology Department](#), producer and co-creator of the successful Buffalo State “[Runway](#)” series, style editor for Buffalo Spree magazine and a fashion consultant for Visit Buffalo Niagara. She also has a growing creative consulting business in Buffalo, New York.

Her clients include [Visit Buffalo Niagara](#), [Buffalo Spree](#) magazine, [Fawn & Fox Salon](#) and [Annarlette](#). Habes has 15 years of experience in various positions in the fashion industry, from retail to wholesale and buying, as well as development, branding, strategy, fashion show production, and event planning. She's also known for bringing her keen sense of style and unbridled enthusiasm to the Buffalo scene.

Her mission is to spark the conversation about fashion in her region and to create collaborations between artists, local designers, businesses, students, and entrepreneurs.

Living in Buffalo has allowed Habes' creative energy and abilities to flourish: the city's uniquely supportive community shares, builds, creates, and enriches. Buffalo has empowered her to think big and “connect the dots” creatively.

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### How did you get into fashion show production?

I used to produce shows in college as a student. I am a big collaborator: I like to bring people together. Then when I went to New York, I worked there for 3 years for a footwear designer. I went to shows, I saw what went into Fashion Week. I came back to Buffalo and opened my own store. I wanted to bring ideas I had seen in New York to Buffalo. I started to teach, I had the opportunity to teach the fashion show production class. I love theatre, I love the production side of fashion shows. I see beyond the fashion and I see environment; that is my passion.

### Do you have sponsorship for the shows?

Money from ticket sales goes into the production, which gives us motivation to get people on seats. Sponsorship is from local companies and goes directly into scholarships. A Buffalo company that does equipment for fashion sponsors \$15,000. At the end of the show we present the scholarships and the runway winners. The local connections are important.

The sponsors sit front row in VIP seats. We had sponsors who came to the show and donated £10,000 in my honour, then another \$5000. They were overwhelmed by student dedication and effort. I use \$1,000 each year to help students to buy accessories, it has upped the consistency of the collections.

### **How did you develop the shows?**

I wanted to take the show off campus. There are two incredible museums across the street: Albright-Knox Museum and the Burchfield Penney Art Center. I collaborated with the Albright-Knox to do their first runway. We worked with our senior designers, local boutiques and designers. We had a red-carpet VIP area; 2,500 people showed up and it could only hold 500 people. Buffalo State was thirsty for a fashion show! Later we moved to the Pierce-Arrow building: a big warehouse space and we had the show there for several years before we brought it back on campus. It was wonderful having the show out in the community.

### **How do you teach the students show prod?**

I have job descriptions for the different groups. I send this to students in advance. I have a waiting list for the class. I sit down with everyone and I treat it like an interview. I decide who should do what. They all want to be show producers but I am flexible, I relate their roles to what they want to do as a career.

### **What do you do about models and hair and make-up?**

We have model castings on campus. We use students and local modelling agencies. We get the word out, using social media (we have a big following). That's been a wonderful tool to get more models, hair and make-up ... local freelance stylists work with us. Fashion shows are about fantasy and everyone wants to be involved in the fantasy.

P.S. I tell the students you have to stay fluid and you have to prepare every detail!