

SF State students give fresh look to unwanted clothing through repair and redesign

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By **Kent Bravo** Thursday, October 13, 2022



SF State Apparel Design and Merchandising students working on their garment designs for the Goodwill pilot project.

Apparel Design and Merchandising students repurpose unsellable garments through University partnership

The city sends about 4,500 pounds of textiles to landfills every hour, according to the [San Francisco Department of the Environment](#) (SFE). That adds up to more than 39 million pounds of textile waste a year from San Francisco alone. The good news is that San Francisco State University students are lending their hands (and designs) to help reduce these daunting numbers. How? Through garment repair and redesign.

San Francisco State has formed partnerships with local organizations to give Apparel Design and Merchandising students a unique opportunity: using textiles from damaged and unwanted clothes donated to Goodwill to create new sellable pieces. This opportunity was

made possible through a pilot project funded by [SFE](#) in partnership with the California Product Stewardship Council and Goodwill of the San Francisco Bay.

The project aims to strengthen California's sustainability efforts by diverting textile waste from landfill. In turn, it also focuses on opportunities for textile reuse and renovation while bringing awareness to the need for upcycled clothing.

“The strong partnerships developed through this project highlight how a successful textile recovery and repair system supports local jobs and diverts textiles from the landfill,” said SF State Professor Emerita of Apparel Design and Merchandising [Connie Ulasewicz](#), who helped facilitate the University's part in this project. “It also provides the knowledge and understanding of how to keep our textiles in long-term use.”

During the Spring semester of 2022, under the guidance of Lecturer of Apparel Design and Merchandising Nancy Martin, several students initiated the pilot project. This Fall, students enrolled in “Apparel Design II: Draping” continue to create these upcycled clothes under the guidance of Martin and Lecturer of Apparel Design and Merchandising Kamal Ragbotra.

Along the way, students will fully immerse themselves in the design process — from sketching to construction — while also learning the history and perspectives in the development of innovative apparel designs. Upon completion, garments will be returned to Goodwill to be sold online.

“Through this course, students will do much more than recycle old clothes by giving them a new redefined look,” Ragbotra said. “They'll get a completely hands-on experience that also teaches students the importance of sustainable fashion and increasing the shelf life of garments.”

SF State senior London Deutsch says what she loves about the class focuses on freedom of expression, igniting her creativity. “It's fun to be able have a more free, open-ended project,” said Deutsch, who is expected to graduate Spring 2023 with a bachelor's degree in Apparel Design and Merchandising. “It was fun to sketch something out and envision how to make it from something that was falling apart to something that has our own personal flair.”

Deutsch also appreciates how Ragbotra personalizes her teaching based on skill level. “We are in an upper-level class at this point. A lot of us are juniors or seniors,” she said. “We're pretty capable; we know how to do most of the tasks. I appreciate how she can recognize that.”

The students are expected to finish their garments later this semester. To learn more about the Apparel Design and Merchandising major, visit its [web page](#).