Family and Consumer Sciences
Dr. Cynthia M. Smith, Chair
The Department of
Family and Consumer Sciences
The Department of Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) offers numerous programs for students that affect families and consumers internationally. The FCS department operates within the total mission of the University’s land-grant function of research, instruction, and service. Program areas include: Apparel, Merchandising and Design; Human Development and Family Studies; Family and Consumer Sciences Education (in cooperation with the School of Education); and Nutrition and Hospitality Management.

**Mission**

The mission of Family and Consumer Sciences is to prepare professionals to enhance the general well-being of individuals, families, and communities, within the context of their environments through teaching, research, demonstration and economic development activities.

**Degrees:**

The department offers a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Family and Consumer Sciences with Majors/Concentrations in:
- Apparel, Merchandising & Design
- Fashion Design
- Human Development & Family Studies
- Nutrition & Hospitality Management
- General Dietetics
- Hospitality Management

Master of Science (M.S.) in Family and Consumer Sciences (Thesis and Non-Thesis Options) with Concentrations in:
- Apparel, Merchandising & Design
- Human Development & Family Studies
- Nutrition & Hospitality Management

In cooperation with the School of Education the department offers two degree programs:
- Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Family & Consumer Sciences Education
- Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Family & Consumer Sciences

(Alternative 5th Year Program available for students desiring to become certified in Education)

**Accreditations**

All of the undergraduate programs in the department of FCS are accredited by the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (AAFCS). The General Dietetics program is also accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education (CADE) of the American Dietetic Association. Although not an accreditation, the 18-hour online program in Family Financial Planning is registered with the CFP Board of Standards.

**Career Opportunities**

- Apparel, Merchandising & Design Majors
- Merchandising and Retail Managers
- Apparel Designers
- Fashion Stylists/Personal Shoppers

Further education at a design school could develop additional connections and internships in the fashion industry that could lead to apprenticeships and/or ownership of design businesses.

- Family & Consumer Sciences Education Majors - Educators in academic institutions and community settings.
- Human Development & Family Studies Majors - Professionals in the following sectors: Child and Adolescent Development
- Family Life - Government Social Service Agencies - Private Businesses that specialize in goods and services for the family, children, and the home environment
- Nutrition & Hospitality Management Majors - Nutritionists - Managers in hospitals, restaurants, amusement parks and resorts such as Disney

Graduates in many of the FCS majors may also work in the Cooperative Extension System, which offers opportunities for competitive salaries and professional growth. The Extension System provides both county and state staff the opportunity to interact with the public to design programs that fit the needs of their constituents. Extension agents are usually required to have a master’s degree. Terminal degrees are preferred for state specialist positions. Salaries for agent positions begin at about $32,000. State specialists can achieve pay grades comparable to individuals with doctoral degrees, depending on professional experience and length of service.

**Student Activities and Involvements**

All FCS students are required to complete hands-on pre-professional activities, and internships, experiences associated with classes, and involvements in pre-professional organizations.

The Department sponsors an Awards Day each Spring where students are recognized for their accomplishments, (i.e., President’s Cup, Dean’s List, honor roll, choir, band, dance team, etc.). Awards Day is also the department’s way of showing appreciation to the FCS students for representing the Department at various functions internal and external to the University. The Department also sponsors a special activity (reception, brunch or luncheon) for its graduating students, both undergraduate and graduate levels, preceding each commencement exercise at the University. Students are provided words of encouragement, presented with gifts by the department for their achievements, and asked to replace themselves through recruitment of future students. Family members are encouraged to attend the ceremony.

**Competitions and Events**

The Department of FCS participates in various competitions and events throughout the year where students gain valuable experience and exposure. Some of the competitions are state level design competitions mainly for undergraduate students. In 2009, Alabama A&M University students won two of the three awards in the design competitions at the state meeting of the Alabama Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (ALAFCS). In that same year, the Department of FCS had winners in the graduate scholarship competition from ALAFCS and the Alabama Dietetic Association. Another FCS undergraduate student also won the election of state president of the ALAFCS student unit. Events such as these encourage the objective of the department concerning the preparation of students to be strong leaders.

The annual Spring Fashion Show is another exciting event for the department. Open to the public, this event is the culmination of activities for seniors in Apparel, Merchandising & Design. This activity allows students to showcase original designs and to utilize knowledge and skills learned to plan and organize a fashion show for public presentation.

The Fashion Study Tour, where students travel to major fashion markets, is an additional opportunity for learning and growth. With this in mind, in the future, the department optimistically plans to travel to the fashion capital of the world - Paris, France!

**Community Service**

The Department of FCS values giving back to the community by being involved in service to mankind and providing a positive and motivating presence. Some of its efforts have included service to the community by providing seminars to children’s homes, local elementary schools and other community organizations.

**General Department Information**

The Department of FSC also offers:
- A Hospitality Management Program in conjunction with J.F. Drake State Technical College
- An expanding e-learning program and practical learning experience through the Family Center, Child Development Center, Bed and Breakfast, Catering Services, Historic Costume Collection, Fashion Study Tour, and Fashion Extravaganza.
- Research and Development opportunities
- Financial assistance and Scholarship Awards for qualified students
- Distinctive internship opportunities for all students with organizations such as the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) and Walt Disney World, Inc.
- Great job prospects!

**FCS Faculty and Staff**

The Department of FCS has creative and competent faculty and staff, capable of meeting the needs of all its students. Dr. Smith and her faculty are published professionals that hold various offices and board memberships in professional organizations. The department also has an excellent advisory council consisting of practitioners from various facets of Family and Consumer Sciences. Care is taken to ensure that all program areas are represented on the council.