# BUSINESS STRATEGY

## THE INTERSECTION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND FASHION



Image:Excertpt from 2023 Business Strategy Scholar Megan Gole's Case Study

# CONTENTS

Image: WWD spoke with the VP of Google
Cloud regarding what retailers/brands need
to know about AI.

# BUSINESS STRATEGY

*How can fashion brands and retailers integrate AI to improve the ecommerce experience?*

Fashion exists in an environment where digital technology is changing rapidly (Pastore, 2023). The use of artificial intelligence (AI), in which machines complete traditionally human tasks, is expected to play an increasingly pivotal role in fashion and business strategy. Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be used to advance a brand/retailer's goals in a variety of manners, ranging from enabling automated checkout to asset creation and customer engagement (Clark, 2023). According to WWD, "Companies that build a strong foundation of AI by adopting and scaling it now, where the technology is mature and delivers clear value, will be better positioned to reinvent, compete and achieve new levels of performance." (Pastore, 2023). According to Paul Daughtery of Accenture Technology, "Over the next decade, AI will be a mega-trend, transforming industries, companies, and the way we live and work, as generative AI transforms 40 percent of all working hours." Yet alongside rapt interest and early exploration, the fashion industry is only at the cusp of AI integration.

## EXAMPLES BUSINESS STRATEGIES FOR AI AND ECOMMERCE

Early adopters of AI are exploring applications to apply throughout business practices, for instance:

- Martha Stewart is connecting her lifestyle products and services to AI through Martha AI, a tool to help consumers answer their home and living queries in real-time, almost as if Martha was standing next to them (Belgum, 2023).

- H&M is using AI within Snapchat to explore the audience's preferred filters and assess the desirability of digital fashion (Lee, 2022).

- Bloomingdales recently partnered with Lily AI to easily apply a variety of attributes to broad product ranges, making it easier to search and filter one's entire inventory by any attribute (Lily AI, 2023).
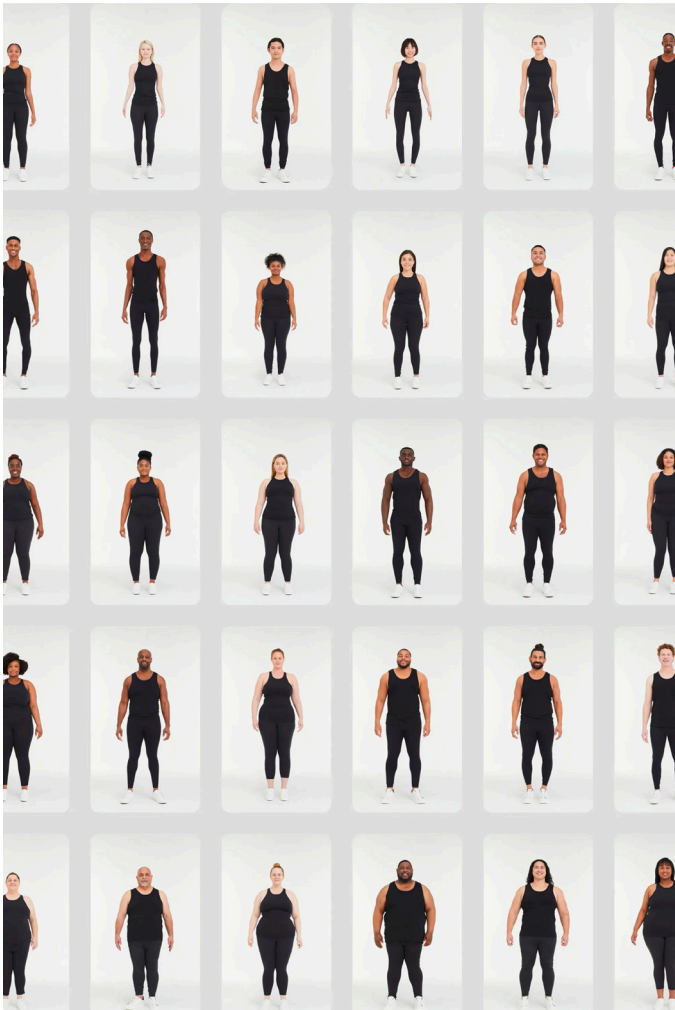
## YOUR ROLE

You are the Vice President of Ecommerce at a brand/retailer of your choice. You are responsible for developing your brand/retailer's ecommerce strategy across ecommerce, mobile commerce, and social commerce. You must drive performance and align your actions with the brand mission. As VP of Ecommerce, you must institute solution-oriented strategies that will advance the functionality and consumer experience online. Currently, your goal is to make systemic improvements to your brand's ecommerce activities through integrating AI technology.

# OBJECTIVE

*Advance the integration of artificial intelligence in fashion ecommerce.*

Your objective is to develop an ecommerce AI strategy for an existing brand or retailer of your choice. The brand/retailer that you select should be generally well-known. The brand that you chose must be a fashion apparel, accessories, footwear, home, beauty, or health & wellness brand. It is suggested that you choose a company that is publicly traded so that information regarding the company is easily accessible.

Within your hypothetical role as the VP of Ecommerce, you are seeking to improve efficiency and create a stronger customer connection utilizing artificial intelligence. Specifically, you would like to advance site merchandising, consumer interactions, and management of omni-channel inventory. You are tasked with identifying an AI solution for one of these areas of opportunity.

Faced with new opportunities for the application of AI in fashion, you will develop an AI initiative that addresses one of the areas of ecommerce opportunity for your chosen brand. Your initiative should be innovative yet obtainable. It may build upon existing technologies used by the company or present an entirely new technological initiative. Your initiative may introduce a new process, technology, or tool that enables the business to interact, manage, or sell efficiently.

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# CASE STUDY REQUIREMENTS
## & *CHECK LIST*

## SUBMISSION FORMAT

Case studies should be submitted as a 17-21 page slide deck including title, appendices, and references. The slide deck should be in landscape orientation, with slides sized for on-screen show 4:3 or 16:9 display (approx. 10" x 7.5").

Submission files can be created in any software of the applicant's choosing, such as PowerPoint, Keynote, Adobe InDesign, Illustrator etc. However, **all cases must be submitted in a flat PDF format** without video or sound.



## REQUIRED SECTIONS

### Section 1: General Introduction *(2-3 Slides)*

☐ **Title Slide.** *Must be the first page/slide of the deck.* Include: title, case study discipline (Business Strategy), and one sentence summary of your business pitch. Do NOT include any identifying information (name, school, etc.).

☐ **Executive Summary.** Cover all components of your case study to provide the essence of your case study without the fine details in paragraph format, no longer than 350 words.

☐ **Table of Contents.** *Optional.* Outline sections of your case study.
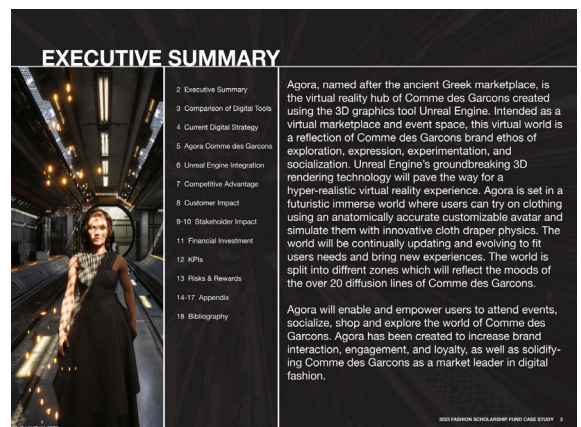


Above: Example of Section 1: General Introduction; 2023 FSF Chairman's Award finalist Julian Tong

## Section 2: Establish Your Brand *(2-3 Slides)*

☐ **Brand/Retailer Introduction.** Introduce your chosen brand/retailer. Provide relevant information so readers understand relevant product, channel, distribution, and/or communication strategies.

☐ **Current Strategies.** Assess the company's current strategies related to digital technological and ecommerce. Include recent activities relating to AI. Specifically, address the problem/challenge you seek to address with your AI initiative.

   ☐ **Competitive Analysis.** Research similar or advanced technology strategies pursued by competitors and aspirational brands. Evaluate the successes and opportunities presented by these existing business cases.

   ☐ **SWOT Analysis.** Identify relevant strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of your brand/retailer. Focus on areas that may relate to your initiative. For instance, if focusing on a supply chain initiative to support ecommerce, identify strengths and weaknesses of the brand's current supply chain strategy.

## Section 3: Research *(2-3 Slides)*

☐ **Technology and Ecommerce Drivers.** Address evolving technology and ecommerce trends in the fashion industry or related industries. Consider trends that may influence your initiative.

☐ **Industry Research.** Summarize key findings from your research regarding the evolving fashion industry. This may include insights on competitors, consumers, and industry-wide trends.

☐ **Impact.** Demonstrate how this research highlights a gap in the market and/or an AI/ecommerce opportunity for your chosen brand/retailer. Tie together the research about the brand/retailer's market, consumer, and/or digital strategies.
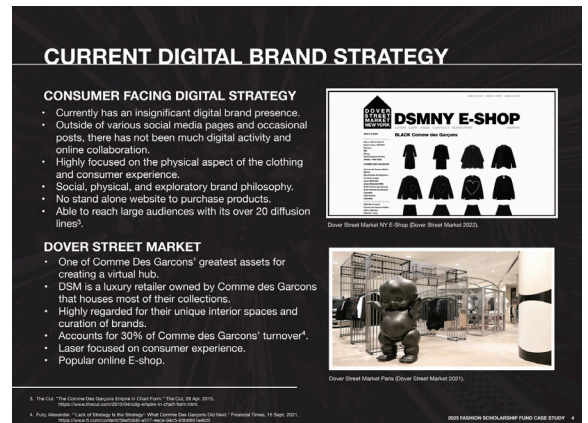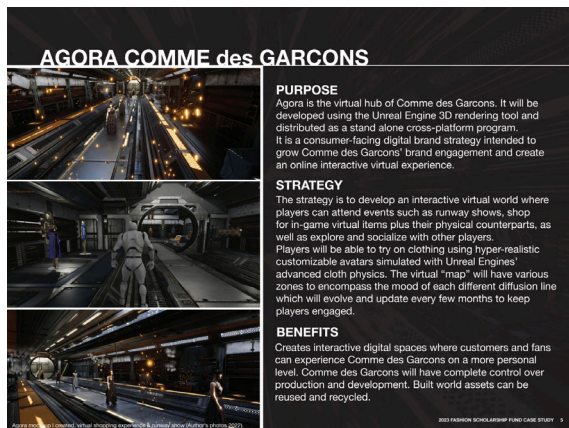


*Above: Example of Section 2: Establish Your Brand; 22023 FSF Chairman's Award finalist Julian Tong*



*Above: Example of Section 3: Research; 2023 FSF Chairman's Award finalist Julian Tong*
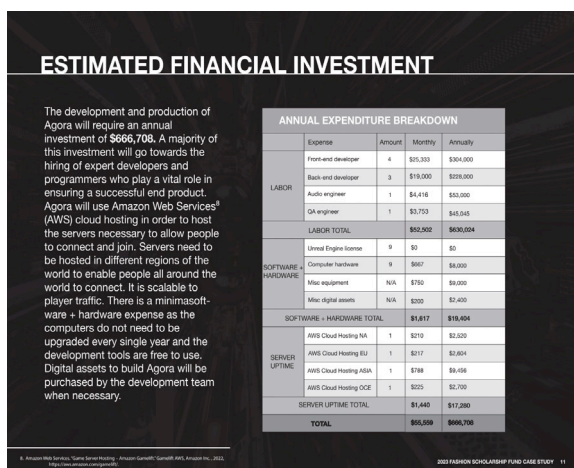
# REQUIRED SECTIONS *(continued)*



Above: Example of Section 4: Proposed AI Initiative; 2023 FSF Chairman's Award finalist Julian Tong



Above: Example of ection 5: Integration Roadmap, 2023 FSF Chairman's Award finalist Julian Tong

**Section 4: Strategic AI Initiative** *(4-5 Slides)*

☐ **Strategic Objective.** Introduce the specific objective of your AI Strategy. This may include friction points you want to solve for or specific goals that you seek to achieve. It will also include intended outcomes.

  ☐ Your strategy may seek to attract new clients, improve the user experience, or advance other components of the site. Consider questions such as:

   ☐ (1) How do I get people to the site? How will I engage new clients?

   ☐ (2) How do I create the strongest user experience (e.g., the cart, payment, visual merchandising, search bar, etc.)?

☐ **Key Performance Indicators.** Clearly present the intended benefits to the business. Address what key performance indicators (KPIs) you seek to impact. Include at least 3 KPIs.

  ☐ Explain your rationale for identifying these as your key indicators of success.

  ☐ Explain how the KPIs will be used to measure the initiative's success. Include numeric goals, such as a total financial target or percent change.

  ☐ Examples of KPIs include financial measures (e.g., cost, sales, profit) and customer adoption (e.g., traffic, conversion).

☐ **AI Ecommerce Initiative.** Introduce your AI initiative intended to achieve your overarching objective. Address how you may advance site merchandising, on-site consumer interactions, or management of omni-channel inventory for your chosen brand/retailer.

  ☐ Present the details of how your initiative would be integrated for the brand. This may align with existing strategies and processes or be an entirely new integration.

□ **Technology Introduction.** Provide an introduction of the specific AI technology that will be utilized within your initiative. Explain how the technology can be utilized to support brand/retail strategies, with focus on ecommerce.

    □ If utilizing a specific software or tool to support your AI initiative, introduce the capabilities of the software/tool.

    □ If relevant and available, provide an use-case example of a current brand/retailer using a technology that is the same or similar.

## Section 5: Integration Roadmap *(1-2 Slides)*

□ **Development and Launch.** Develop an integration roadmap to address the various stages of development and launch for your new AI initiative. Include a specific timeline and milestones.

    □ You may use the Identify, Design/Define, Develop/Test implement framework. Alternatively, you may address specific tasks and stages such as research and development, manufacturing, transit, and launch.

□ **Targeting.** Address the specific product categories, consumers, or processes that will be affected by your AI ecommerce strategy.

□ **Financial Investment.** Summarize the estimated investment required to launch your proposed initiative.

    □ Explain the breakdown of financial investments aligned with integration. For instance, is there a major investment in tools, technology, and/or resources for the company? Or does it utilize resources the company (most likely) already has?

    □ Consider if costs are recurring or one-time only investments.

# REQUIRED SECTIONS *(continued)*
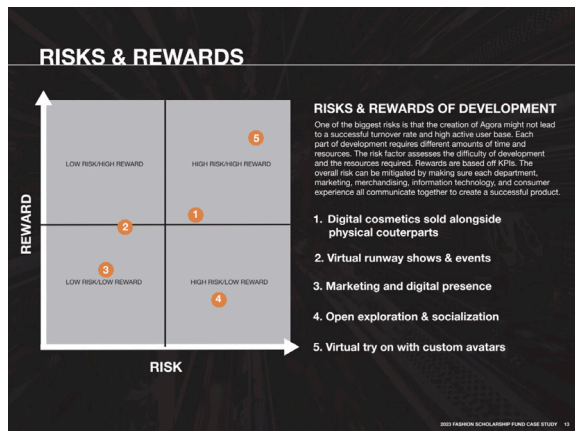


Above: Example of Section 6: Potential
Risks, 2023 FSF Chairman's Award finalist
Julian Tong

## Section 6: Potential Risks *(1 Slide)*

☐ **Risk Assessment.** Address the potential risks involved in the execution of your strategic initiative. Emphasis may be placed on non-financial risks such as integration and execution challenges, learning curve for use, customer use scenarios, and impact to brand reputation.

    ☐ You may choose to balance your risk assessment with comparable consideration of rewards. This may include the reverberating reward for the total business.

## Section 7: Plans to Scale *(1-2 Slides)*

☐ **Future Growth.** As the integration of AI in fashion continues to advance, consider how you will scale your initiative over time. Specifically, outline your plans for growth if your initiative is successful. This may relate to growing this initiative or may address your overarching objective with another process or tool.

## Section 8: Conclusion & References *(2-4 Slides)*

Use the final slides for your conclusion, bibliography, and any footnotes.

☐ **Conclusion.** Your conclusion should be your final statement expressing the importance and relevance of your idea for the brand you have selected and the industry. This may utilize a traditional recap approach, touching on key points, or you may utilize creative storytelling to instill understanding and importance.

    ☐ Your conclusion should address the objectives of your AI ecommerce strategy, the specific technology to be used, and the intended business impact.

☐ **References.** All text references should be properly formatted using a format such as APA, Harvard, or Chicago style. Images may be cited with the source name listed under the image on each page, such as "Vogue" or "WWD". Alternatively, image citations may be provided in a separate list with web addresses only.

## Section 9: Appendix *(3-5 slides)*

*Optional.* Use the appendix to present additional, supplemental ideas that support your project concept.
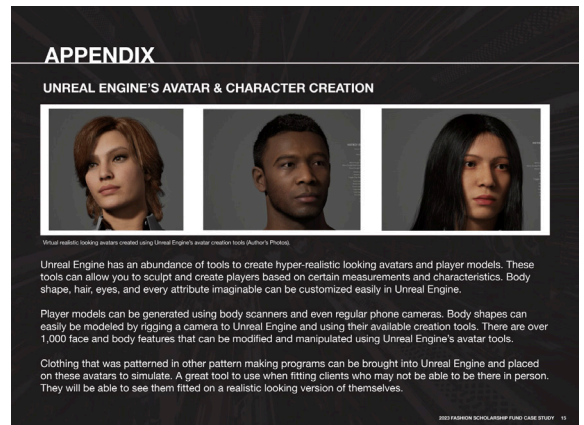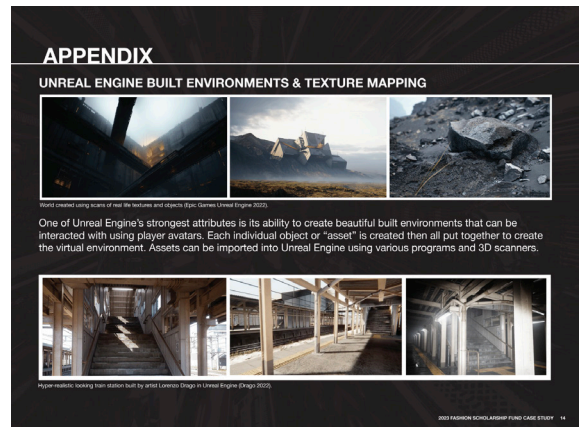




Above: Example of Section 9: Appendix; 2023
FSF Chairman's Award finalist Julian Tong

# COMPETITION GENERAL GUIDELINES

## FORMATTING

**Do not include your name or college/ university affiliation** on the title page or anywhere in the case study as the review process is anonymous.

**No specific font or format will be enforced.** You are encouraged to utilize visuals throughout your presentation. It is advisable to not overload each slide with information, and to keep your presentation concise and to the point: each slide should take no more than 1-2 minutes to absorb by the reader.

**Do not exceed the page limit.** Ensure your content connects from section to section to tell the story you are trying to convey. This is the first time judges will be exposed to your case study and they should be able to fully interpret your intended plans.

**All references should be included** within a references/bibliography page at the end of your slide deck or annotated in footnotes visible within the slide. Do not use hyperlinks in a footnote as the content cannot be accessed once the case study is uploaded.

**Be sure to proofread your case study.** Points will be deducted for not following format directions, as well as for grammar and spelling errors.

## ELIGIBILITY

- **You must be a full-time sophomore, junior, or senior.**
- **You must be graduating no earlier than Spring 2025.**
- **You must demonstrate a desire to pursue a career in fashion.**
- **To receive on-campus support, you must be enrolled in an FSF member school.**

## AI DISCLOSURE

You may use AI programs (e.g. ChatGPT) for brainstorming and help in generating ideas. However, note that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be properly cited like any other reference material.

## VIRGIL ABLOH'S™ "POST-MODERN" SCHOLARSHIP

The mission of the Virgil Abloh™ "Post-Modern" Scholarship Fund is to foster equity and inclusion within the fashion industry by providing scholarships to students of academic promise of Black, African American, or African descent. Mr. Abloh named the fund "Post-Modern" to represent that recipients will not only receive funds, but will also be given access to vital career support services and mentoring.

# REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

1. Completed FSF Case Study

2. Current Resume

3. Current Unofficial Transcription

4. **\*New for 2025\*** Prepare an (approximately) 90 second video containing your responses to the following prompts:

   - Explain why you have decided to select your case study discipline.

   - Tell us about your interest in the fashion industry and career aspirations.

   - Tell us about your background and any experiences that make your situation unique.

5. Required for all applicants: Please submit a 250-word maximum written response identifying the top five Named Scholarships you're most interested in applying for, and why.

   - *IN ADDITION: If you are an **international student only:*** Submit a 250-word maximum response to address the following question:

     - As an international student, what would it mean to you to become an FSF Scholarship recipient?

   - *IN ADDITION: If you are a **Virgil Abloh™ "Post-Modern" Scholarship applicant*** (see previous page): Submit a 250-word maximum response to the following question:

     - Please explain why Virgil Abloh's™ "Post-Modern" Scholarship mission is important to you. What would like the team carrying on Virgil's mission to know about you? We encourage you to tell us about relevant personal and fashion-related experiences.
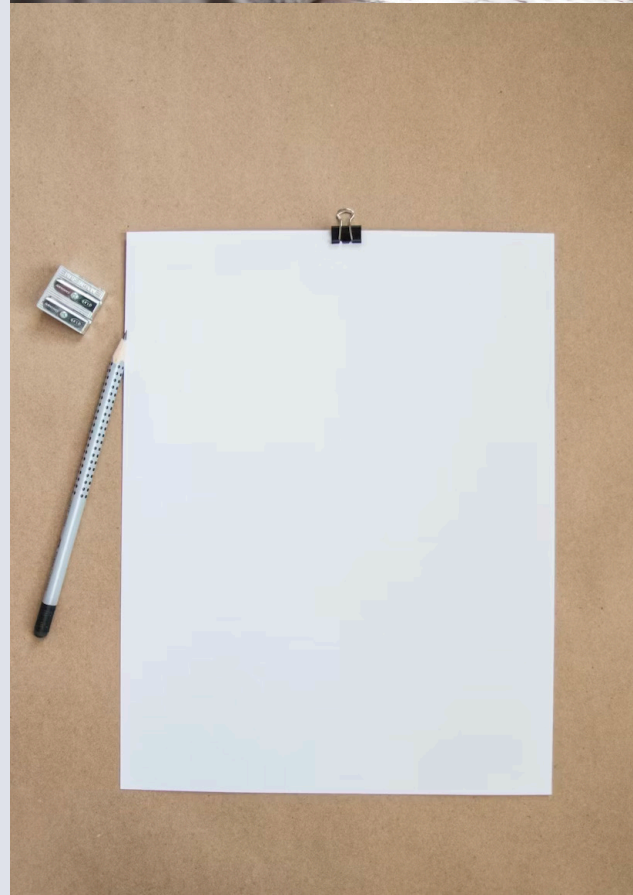
# JUDGING CRITERIA

*Your case will be reviewed by industry professionals including the FSF Board of Governors, FSF Mentors, and FSF Alumni.*

## Creativity & Feasibility (20%)

- Is the applicant's idea unique, inspiring, and innovative?
- Is the applicant's idea well-thought-out and conceivably executable?
- Is the applicant's idea clearly connected to the selected brand?

## Research & Development (20%)

- Has the applicant researched the selected brand, demonstrated depth of knowledge of the company's activities and competitive positioning as relevant to the presented concept?
- Has the applicant conducted thorough research regarding the retail landscape and the attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyle traits of the intended consumer?

## Collection Presentation (40%)

- Has the applicant presented their concept development in a manner that is clear and supports the final collection design?
- Has the applicant presented a final collection that conveys a strong presentation of design and is fitting to the intended concept?
- Has the applicant presented technical design details (through tech sheets) that are easy to understand and show how to execute the concept?

## Clarity (15%)

- Does the scholar clearly and consistently tell their story, aligning direction from executive summary, through core content, and into the conclusion?
- Does the applicant's case follow logical development and a clear structure; is it easy to follow and summarize?
- Did the applicant clearly complete each portion of their prompt?

## Format (5%)

- Did the applicant use correct grammar and spelling?
- Did the applicant include a title page with one sentence to summarize the case?
- Was the applicant's name and school kept anonymous?

# TIMELINE

*Deadline and Announcement
of Competition Results*

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**February 1, 2024**

Wizehive, the digital platform used for FSF case study submissions will open. Your FSF faculty member will provide you with the Wizehive link. Complete the Applicant Profile on Wizehive to participate in **FSF Summer Scholar Series** which will run from **June – August 2024** (see details on next page).

**October 14, 2024**

Submit all required materials on Wizehive **BEFORE 8:59 AM Pacific Time (11:59 AM Eastern Time)** to avoid any issues with submission. **The Wizehive portal will close PROMPTLY at 9:00 AM Pacific Time (12:00 PM Eastern Time).** Be sure to allow sufficient time to upload all required documents (i.e., case study, resume, unofficial transcript, video) – the Wizehive submission portal will close automatically at the scheduled time even if an upload is still in progress. If all documents are not fully uploaded, your submission will not be received by the FSF. Please contact Katie Simone, FSF Program Manager, at [Ksimone@fashionscholarshipfund.org](mailto:Ksimone@fashionscholarshipfund.org) who will help rectify any submissions that are incomplete.

You will receive a Confirmation of Submission to your Wizehive homepage that your submission process was completed.

**Mid-December 2024**

The Scholarship competition results will be announced in mid-December. Results will be sent to the FSF faculty member at your school. Your FSF faculty member will share the results with you. If you are applying from a school without an FSF Educator, you will be contacted by the FSF team to be notified of the results. Additionally, results will be posted to the FSF website. Following the announcement of results, you will receive a Welcome Letter from the FSF.
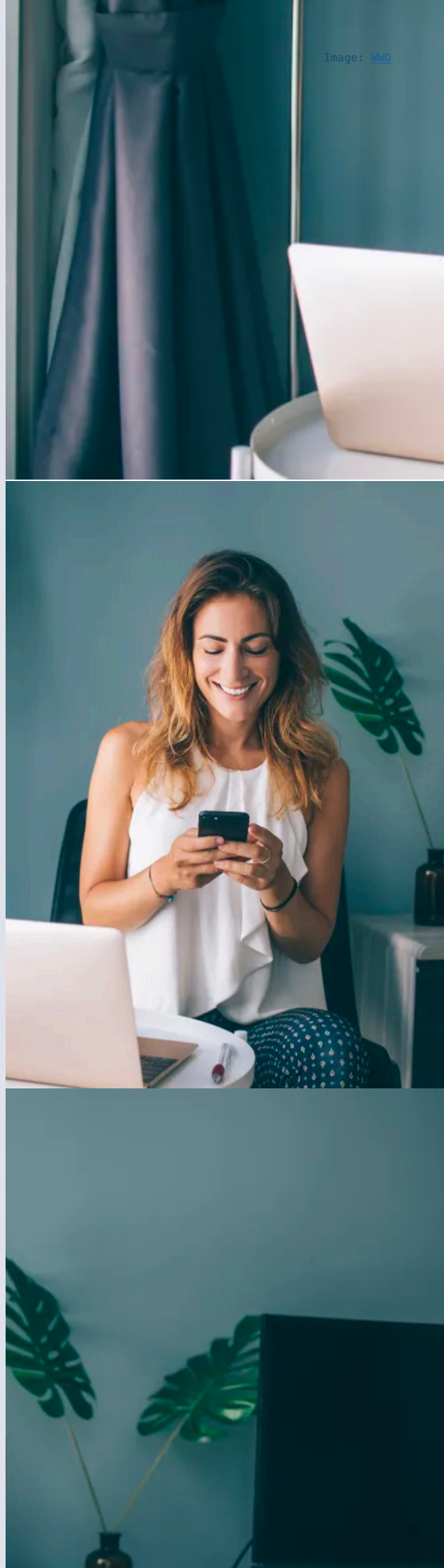
# SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Additional resources are available for all case study tracks in the **FSF Student Resources Dropbox** folder.

**Attend the Summer Scholar Series**

This program consists of workforce preparedness courses and master classes from industry experts on relevant topics and current challenges of the industry. We equip Scholars, Scholar Applicants, and Alumni for their future internships or full-time job opportunities.

**Ready to Get Started?**

To start your research, reference the following articles.

AlixPartners. (2023). 'Fail Fast and Fail Forward' When Implementing AI into Workflows. *WWD.* https://wwd.com/business-news/business-features/alixpartners-fail-fast-and-fail-forward-when-implementing-ai-workflows-1235885583/?cx_testId=1&cx_testVariant=cx_1&cx_artPos=1#cxrecs_s

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