

LENA PINKSTON, MR

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Curriculum Vitae

Experiential Learning Leader • Industry Engagement Architect • Entrepreneurial Educator

“For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.” — Aristotle

Strategic higher education leader specializing in experiential learning program development and industry engagement. Known for building partnerships with national brands, corporate leaders, and local business owners to expand student access to internships, mentorship, and professional development opportunities.

Curriculum specialist and early adopter of online and hybrid learning models with experience developing industry-relevant course design and digital learning environments. Recognized for integrating open educational resources, emerging technologies, and experiential learning strategies into curriculum development to enhance student engagement and accessibility in higher education.

Licensed cosmetology educator and beauty industry entrepreneur, founder of Lavish Hair Studios and Pink Herb Beauty, bringing more than **two decades of industry leadership and entrepreneurial experience** into higher education through applied learning, mentorship, and industry-connected instruction.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

University of South Carolina | Columbia, SC | 2023 - present

Internship Director

As Internship Director for the Department of Retailing, leads the development and management of internship pathways and experiential learning initiatives serving more than **600 students**. Builds strategic partnerships with corporate executives, entrepreneurs, and regional business leaders to expand student access to internships, mentorship, and career development opportunities.

Program Leadership

- Design and lead experiential learning initiatives connecting students with industry professionals through panels, workshops, conferences, and career engagement programming.
- Develop structured internship pathways that integrate academic coursework with professional industry experience.
- Coordinate employer participation in internship recruitment and student mentoring initiatives.

Industry Engagement

- Cultivate partnerships with national brands, corporate leaders, and regional business owners to expand internship opportunities.

- Facilitate executive speaker sessions, industry panels, and professional development workshops exposing students to business leadership and retail operations.

Program Assessment and Operations

- Develop and manage registration systems, participation tracking, and post-event evaluation processes to support program assessment.
- Analyze and present engagement data to departmental leadership to inform experiential learning strategy and student career readiness initiatives.
- Maintain strong program engagement, with registration-based events consistently reaching full capacity and achieving 97% student satisfaction ratings.

University of South Carolina | Columbia, SC | 2023 - present

Clinical Instructor: Professional Track

Develop and teach undergraduate courses emphasizing experiential learning, professional development, and customer experience within retail environments. Guide students in applying classroom knowledge to real-world retail settings through internship preparation, applied learning activities, and career-focused instruction while supporting departmental teaching needs.

Committees

- HRSM Curriculum Committee, Secretary (2024–Present)
- HRSM Distance Learning Management Committee, Member (2024, 2025)
- HRSM Engaged Learning and Outreach Working Group, Member (2024, 2025)
- Graduate Curriculum Committee, The Graduate School, Member (2024–2025)
- Associate Dean of Academic Programs and Student Affairs Search Committee, Member
- Department of Retailing Instructor Search Committee, Member

Courses taught:

- RETL 295 Practicum
- RETL 495 Internship
- RETL 362 Introduction to Customer Service
- RETL 201 Exploration in Retail Management and Fashion Merchandising

Voorhees University | Denmark, SC | 12/2019 – present

Marketing Instructor

Develop curriculum and designed distance-learning courses within the School of Business and Entrepreneurship, emphasizing learner-centered instruction and real-world application. Support student learning through structured course facilitation, practical assignments, and applied business projects that connect classroom concepts with industry practices.

- Utilize interactive teaching approaches that support student engagement and course satisfaction
- Integrate industry examples and practitioner insights to enhance course discussions and applied learning
- Guide students through applied marketing research assignments that strengthen analytical and presentation skills

Courses taught:

- MKT 331 Principles of Marketing
- MKT 332 Principles of Advertising
- MKT 335 Retailing
- MKT 430 Product Management
- BUS 302 Organizational Behavior

South Carolina State University | Orangeburg, SC |12/2016 – 05/2023

Academic Program Coordinator

Managed the Fashion Merchandising program, supporting curriculum quality, program assessment, and accreditation compliance within the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences. Taught undergraduate courses in fashion merchandising, retailing, and entrepreneurship while guiding program development to align with industry standards and student career preparation.

- Evaluated curriculum and student learning outcomes to support continuous program improvement
- Designed online course materials and supported distance-learning delivery
- Provided guidance to faculty on effective online teaching strategies and course development

Courses taught:

- FM 103 Introduction to Fashion Merchandising
- FM 204 Essentials of Textiles
- FM 205 Design Elements and Principles
- FM 302 Apparel Merchandising & Quantitative Analysis
- FM 312 Contemporary Aspects of Clothing
- FM 364 Apparel Construction & Analysis
- FM 410 Principles and Practices of Fashion Merchandising
- FM 420 Merchandising Management
- FM 427 Internship in Fashion Merchandising
- FM 450 Fashion Industry Overview
- FM 412 Restaurant and Apparel Store Entrepreneurship

The Art Institute of Pittsburgh | Online Division |12/2008 – 12/2018

Online Instructor

Taught undergraduate courses in the Fashion Marketing and Management program through online instruction, facilitating structured course delivery and active student engagement. Moderated discussions that promoted collaboration, peer learning, and meaningful faculty interaction in virtual learning environments.

- Achieved a 95% student satisfaction rate through innovative teaching methods
- Designed course content aligned with industry standards and real-world retail and fashion business

applications

- Fostered collaborative online learning environments that supported student participation and engagement

Courses taught:

- Entrepreneurship
- Introduction to Retailing
- Sales and Event Promotion
- 3-D Visual Merchandising I
- 3-D Visual Merchandising II

Johnson and Wales University | North Miami, FL | 12/2015 – 12/2016

Adjunct Faculty

Served as an adjunct professor in the School of Business, delivering undergraduate course content using engaging instructional strategies and a variety of teaching tools to support student learning.

- Prepared and delivered course materials designed to support multiple learning styles
- Fostered a supportive classroom environment through active listening, emotional intelligence, and relationship-centered teaching

Courses taught:

- Merchandising Mathematics
- Global Textile and Apparel Sourcing

The Art Institute of Pittsburgh | Online Division | 12/2014 – 12/2015

Curriculum Designer

Contributed to an institution-wide curriculum development initiative to update and standardize online course design. Collaborated with academic teams to revise and enhance master course shells for the Fashion Marketing and Management department, ensuring alignment with institutional instructional standards and effective online learning practices.

- Supported the redesign of master course shells to improve consistency across departmental online courses
- Integrated instructional strategies and digital learning tools to strengthen student engagement in virtual learning environments
- Developed interactive learning materials that supported student comprehension and course participation

INVITED SPEAKING & PRESENTATIONS

Pinkston, L. & Edwards, K. (2026). *Accessible by Design: Practical Strategies for Faculty Success*. Transforming the Teaching & Learning Environment Conference, Virtual.

Pinkston, L., & Edwards, K. (2025). *Ready or Not, the Deadline is Coming: Getting Faculty Onboard with Accessible Course Content*. Distance Learning Administration Conference, Jekyll Island, GA.

Pinkston, L. (2024). *Advancing Global Higher Education Pathways: Preparing Students for International Academic Success*. Global Women's Economic Forum, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Pinkston, L. (2024). *Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education*. Faculty Training and Development Session, Voorhees University, Denmark, SC.

Pinkston, L. (2024). *Innovation in Artificial Intelligence*. Industry Development Session, 100 Black Women Inc. of South Carolina.

Pinkston, L. (2020). *Open Educational Resources and Academic Libraries*. HBCU Academic Librarians Open Educational Resources Conference, South Carolina State University, Charleston, SC.

Pinkston, L. (2018). *Integrating Students with Interactive Content*. South Carolina State University Faculty Development Session, Orangeburg, SC.

Pinkston, L. (2018). *Transitioning to Open Educational Resources*. South Carolina State University Faculty Development Session, Orangeburg, SC.

Pinkston, L. (2011). *Health and Beauty Forum*. University of South Carolina.

Pinkston, L. (2010). *Health and Beauty Forum*. University of South Carolina.

Pinkston, L. (2006). *How Generation Z Consumer Behavior Patterns Affect Customer Loyalty*. Florida State University Research Conference, Tallahassee, FL.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Lavish Hair Studios, LLC | Columbia, SC & Atlanta, GA | 2007 – Present

Owner and Managing Director

Founded and manage a boutique salon and retail operation providing professional hair services and curated haircare products. Directed business operations for dual locations in Columbia, SC and Atlanta, GA during the company's expansion phase.

- Managed business operations including client services, retail product sales, and vendor relationships
- Led brand marketing and local business development initiatives during the company's growth period
- Oversaw financial management, compliance, and operational planning
- Maintain ongoing studio operations serving a consistent client base

The Adoara Group | Miami, FL | 2015 – 2020

Product Marketing Associate

Supported marketing initiatives for consumer brands across the beauty, retail, and beverage industries through brand activation, sponsorship activation, and digital marketing efforts.

- Conducted market and competitor analysis to support product positioning strategies
- Contributed to product launches and promotional campaigns across multiple consumer brands
- Supported marketing initiatives for beauty industry brands, retail stores, and alcohol brands
- Assisted with digital marketing and social media campaigns that expanded brand visibility

Hervé Léger Paris | Miami, FL | 2015 – 2017

Senior Wardrobe Consultant

Provided luxury wardrobe consultation and client styling within a luxury fashion retail environment, supporting brand presentation and client engagement.

- Delivered individualized wardrobe consultations that strengthened client relationships and brand loyalty
- Maintained visual merchandising standards aligned with luxury brand guidelines
- Supported sales performance through product expertise and personalized service

Stein Mart | Columbia, SC | 2007 – 2009

Regional Visual Merchandiser

Supported regional store merchandising initiatives across South Carolina and Georgia, executing visual merchandising strategies that strengthened brand presentation and customer engagement.

- Assisted with merchandising setup and visual display execution for new and existing store locations
- Designed merchandising floor plans aligned with company retail standards
- Collaborated with store leadership teams to implement regional merchandising strategies
- Analyzed product placement and promotions to enhance store presentation

Florida State University | Tallahassee, FL | 2005 – 2006

Research Intern

Selected by the Family and Consumer Sciences department to participate in faculty-led marketing research. Conducted research on marketing and consumer behavior under the mentorship of distinguished faculty.

- Assisted in the development and execution of a research study focused on marketing and consumer behavior
- Collaborated with faculty researchers on academic inquiry and project development
- Presented research findings at an institution-wide academic conference in Tallahassee, Florida

EDUCATION

Doctoral Studies, Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)

Florida International University | Miami, FL | 2019 – 2020

Completed one year of doctoral coursework focused on business research and marketing. Participation in the program concluded following the unexpected conclusion of grant funding supporting the doctoral study.

Master's-Level Coursework in Marketing

South Carolina State University | Orangeburg, SC | 2018 – 2019

Completed graduate-level coursework in marketing and business strategy while serving on faculty.

Master of Retailing

University of South Carolina | Columbia, SC | 2006 – 2007

Course concentration: retail strategy, merchandising management, and consumer behavior within the retail industry.

Bachelor of Science, Family and Consumer Sciences Business - Fashion Merchandising
South Carolina State University | Orangeburg, SC | 2002 – 2006

HONORS & AWARDS

- Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award, The President's Council on Service and Civic Participation, United States Government (2024)
- Provost's Award for Teaching Excellence, South Carolina State University (2019)

CERTIFICATIONS

- INSIDE LVMH Certification | 2025 | Creation & Branding, Operations & Supply Chain
- Certified Digital Marketing Professional | Digital Marketing Institute | 2023
- Professional Certified Marketer | American Marketing Association | 2023
- Certified Accreditation Evaluator | Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) | 2022
- Methods of Teaching Certification | South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation | 2018