

Introduction

My name is Md Imranul (Imran) Islam, Associate Professor in Department of Textile Development and Marketing at Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), State University of New York (SUNY). Supported by the IFFTI Exchange Initiative, I undertook a research and pedagogical exchange visit to the Swedish School of Textiles at the University of Borås in early June 2026.

Purpose of the Visit

The primary purpose of this visit was to explore opportunities for collaboration in knitting education, textile technology, and innovative pedagogy between FIT and the Swedish School of Textiles. I also aimed to present my current research on integrating emerging technologies into knitting education and to benchmark curricula, laboratory facilities, and student outcomes. This visit forms part of a broader strategy to expand international partnerships and foster joint initiatives in sustainable and technologically advanced textile education.

Although we teach comparable knitting content, our courses diverge significantly in deliverables, modalities, and pedagogical frameworks. These differences present a timely and valuable opportunity for comparative study that stands to benefit both institutions. The Swedish School of Textiles' strong research culture, combined with my own experience incorporating 3D modeling, extended reality (virtual and augmented), and 3D-printed knit structures into classroom instruction, creates an ideal foundation for a meaningful academic exchange. As a recipient of the 2022–23 State University of New York (SUNY) Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, I have long prioritized pedagogical innovation and collaborative knowledge-building in my professional practice. This exchange offers a powerful platform to extend that work.

Host Institution Overview

The Swedish School of Textiles at the University of Borås is structured into four divisions: Textile Technology, Textile and Fashion Design, Textile Management, and Textile Innovation. This integrated structure creates a uniquely interdisciplinary environment, bridging engineering, design, management, and innovation within one institution. My host was Dr. Joel Peterson, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Textile Technology, with whom I share a common teaching and research focus on knit design and development courses.

Timing and Context of the Visit

I was fortunate to visit during the final weeks of the semester in June 2026, which coincided with graduating students' exhibitions, portfolio presentations, and fashion shows. This timing allowed me to see the full spectrum of student works, from concept development and research through to final collections and prototypes. Experiencing these activities in person provided rich insights

into how the Swedish School of Textiles scaffolds student learning toward professional readiness.

Academic Presentation and Knowledge Exchange

During the visit, I delivered a research and teaching presentation titled “Reimagining Knitting Education through 3D, VR, and AI,” sharing my ongoing pedagogical innovations in knitting education at FIT. The presentation sparked engaging discussions on how immersive technologies can support visualization of complex knit structures, deepen student engagement, and bridge the gap between analogue craft and digital tools. I also presented an overview of FIT’s textile and knitting curriculum, including course modules, lab structures, and examples of student work, which served as a basis for comparative pedagogical dialogue.

As a visiting participant, I aimed to co-developing and refining pedagogical approaches to knitting education by integrating creative technologies and comparing the diverse teaching strategies employed at FIT and Borås. Through structured reflection and classroom observation, I examined how experiential, technology-enhanced, and diagram-based instructional methods influence students’ conceptual understanding of knit structures and their ability to apply this knowledge in both creative and technical contexts. Particular attentions were given to how these approaches function across in-person and online modalities, with the goal of identifying adaptable and scalable models for contemporary textile education.

Strategic Meetings with Academic Leadership

I held substantive, strategic conversations with representatives from all four divisions: Textile Technology, Textile and Fashion Design, Textile Management, and Textile Innovation. These meetings focused on identifying overlapping strengths and complementary capacities between FIT and the University of Borås, particularly in areas of knit technology, sustainability, and innovation. Together, we explored frameworks for student exchange, dual-diploma pathways, and joint research initiatives that could support the next generation of textile leaders.

Facilities and Laboratory Observations

The laboratories at the Swedish School of Textiles are exceptionally well equipped, featuring state-of-the-art machinery and instrumentation that support both education and advanced research in textile technology. I spent considerable time in the weaving and knitting laboratories, closely observing the organization of facilities, the integration of industry-standard machines, and the way lab-based learning is embedded in the curriculum. These observations will inform ongoing enhancements to FIT’s laboratory pedagogy and potential future investments in equipment and teaching infrastructure.

Smart Textiles Showroom and Innovation Ecosystem

One of the most inspiring aspects of the visit was the Smart Textiles Showroom, which showcases a diverse range of experimental and applied textile innovations. The showroom highlighted how research, design, engineering, and industry collaboration intersect at Borås, particularly in areas such as smart materials, functional textiles, and sustainability-driven concepts. The experience offered a strong reference point for how we might further curate and communicate innovation outputs within FIT's own ecosystem.

Student Work, Exhibitions, and Fashion Show

I had the opportunity to review graduating students' portfolios, examine their research-driven projects, and attend a major fashion show featuring final collections from the front row. The work demonstrated a high level of creativity, technical depth, and conceptual rigor across knitwear, woven, and hybrid textile applications. Seeing how students situated their practice within broader themes of sustainability, technology, and social responsibility provided valuable benchmarks for our own program learning outcomes.

One-to-One Scholarly Meetings

A key strength of the visit was the number of in-depth one-to-one meetings with faculty and researchers across the university. I had an extended discussion with Dr. Vincent Nierstrasz, Professor of Textile Materials Technology and current President of AUTEX (Association of Universities of Textiles), focusing on advanced textile materials, research directions in textile engineering, and possible alignment with international research networks. I also met with Dr. Nawar Kadi, Professor of Textile Technology, to explore potential collaborative grant applications and future joint projects in textile technologies and innovations.

Additional Academic and Research Dialogues

Further important meetings included discussions with Dr. Andres Persson (Senior Lecturer, Department of Textile Technology), Professor Mikael Skrifvars (Swedish Centre for Resource Recovery), and Margareta Zetterblom (Senior Lecturer, Department of Design). These conversations covered topics such as bio-based materials, resource recovery, circularity, and design-led innovation in textiles. I also met with Daniel Hjelmgren, Director and Associate Professor in the Department of Business Administration and Textile Management, and Monik Nyrén, Lecturer in the Faculty of Textile Engineering and Business, to consider intersections between technical textiles, management education, and industry collaboration.

Knitting Pedagogy and Curriculum Exchange with Dr. Joel Peterson

I spent the most time with my host, Dr. Joel Peterson, engaging in detailed discussions on the pedagogy of knitting technology education. We reviewed course syllabi, lab assignments, student samples, and fabric swatches, comparing our week-by-week approaches to teaching knit design and development. This exchange helped us identify shared challenges and opportunities, including strategies for integrating research into teaching, fostering student-led inquiry, and incorporating digital tools and data-driven analysis into traditional knitting education.

International Affairs and Program Development Discussions

I also met with Dr. Jenny Balkow, Senior Lecturer and Strategic Advisor for International Affairs, and Mr. Gustav Kibe, International Coordinator for Exchange and Dual-Degree Programs. Our conversation focused on the practical frameworks, timelines, and administrative considerations involved in establishing student exchange and potential dual-diploma programs with FIT. These discussions will be continued in coordination with FIT's Office of International Programs (OIP) to explore formal agreements and pilot initiatives in the coming years.

Reflections on Pedagogy and Program Alignment

The visit was deeply thought provoking and prompted me to re-examine my own pedagogical approaches in knitting and textile education. Observing how the Swedish School of Textiles aligns cohorts, scaffolds project-based learning, and integrates research and industry collaboration has given me fresh ideas for revising course structures and learning activities at FIT. I am particularly interested in incorporating more cross-disciplinary projects, strengthening links between technology and design, and deepening students' exposure to innovation and sustainability challenges.

Anticipated Outcomes and Tangible Deliverables

This initiative generated tangible benefits for students, faculty, and the broader IFFTI community as it helped me to delve into comparative reflection outlining best practices, pedagogical challenges, and recommendations for incorporating creative technologies into knitting and textile education. In addition to contributing course materials and teaching strategies, this visit brought insights from ongoing research on how creative technologies can make knit education more intuitive, inclusive, and impactful for diverse learners.

I returned from the visit with a rich set of ideas for collaborative research, curriculum development, and student mobility between FIT and the University of Borås. In the short term, I plan to share my observations with colleagues, explore joint class projects or virtual exchanges, and identify specific modules where shared teaching or co-developed materials might be feasible. Longer-term goals include pursuing joint grant applications, formalizing exchange or

dual-diploma pathways, and contributing to IFFTI through joint presentations and publications stemming from this collaboration.

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I have included a few photos from the trip in the next section.























