

LOS ANGELES — Students at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising are voicing their concerns over a recent partnership between the college and global retailer, SHEIN.

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## What You Need To Know

- FIDM announces partnership with SHEIN in May to launch a scholarship program
  - Students have concern over partnership because of accusations of unsustainable business practices against SHEIN
  - SHEIN says the program was created to give scholarship recipients a hands-on learning opportunity
  - A student created a petition asking for the partnership to dissolve. It garnered over 4,000 signatures
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The partnership, which was announced in May, offers 12 students each a \$40,000 scholarship toward their tuition. Additionally, the chosen students will take part in a 20-week curriculum centered on market research and design development, as they create a collection to possibly be sold on the SHEIN website.

However, not all FIDM students are embracing the partnership, with many raising concerns over SHEIN's alleged unsustainable business practices and legal issues.

Leading this effort is 20-year-old Lexy Silverstein, a digital marketing student at FIDM with a passion for sustainability.

She said she was shocked and confused when she learned about the partnership. She decided to create an online petition outlining her concerns and calling for FIDM to end the partnership, proposing that another brand take over the scholarship program.

The petition has garnered over 4,000 signatures to date.

Silverstein said her concerns include the accusations of forced labor and a Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act, more commonly known as RICO, lawsuit alleging copyright infringement. In response, a SHEIN spokesperson stated that the company has zero tolerance for forced labor and has implemented an independent audit system.

Regarding the RICO lawsuit, SHEIN said it takes infringement claims seriously and takes swift action when complaints are raised by valid IP rights holders. Adding they will vigorously defend themselves against the lawsuit and any claims that are without merit.

Moving toward a more sustainable approach, the company also said they launched a resell website where people can buy and sell SHEIN products.

Silverstein remains unconvinced and hopes that FIDM will uphold its sustainability values that placed them in the Top 10 sustainable fashion schools by College Magazine.

In the meantime, she encourages everyone to be more mindful of their shopping choices and stressed the importance of sustainability when getting rid of clothes.

SHEIN said they don't know yet if the partnership will continue next year.