



**CHICAGO FASHION INCUBATOR**

at macy's on state street

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**CHICAGO FASHION INCUBATOR UNVEILS DRIEHAUS ENTREPRENEURIAL CENTER**

*New resource center will foster local design talent, led by new CFI executive director Tonya Gross.*

CHICAGO (January 11, 2017) – The Chicago Fashion Incubator at Macy's on State Street (CFI), a non-profit organization committed to helping emerging local fashion designers as they develop their design talents into successful businesses, is pleased to announce the opening of the Richard H. Driehaus Entrepreneurial Center inside its offices at 111 N. State Street in Chicago. The Driehaus Entrepreneurial Center (The DEC) is a resource center that provides Chicago-based apparel and accessories designers with educational tools, research assets, and programming that will help to further their fashion business growth and development.

The DEC is a sleek, modern space that is accessible to the CFI's current Designers in Residence, as well as to CFI alumni, providing them with essential tools to aid them in their development as both creative artists and successful business owners. Additionally, the DEC plans to support an internship program in partnership with leading fashion schools in Chicago and also to host professional business and merchandising seminars and workshops for emerging fashion entrepreneurs, in addition to other public programming. The DEC was made possible by a grant from the Driehaus Design Initiative, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established to promote and encourage design education and foster public appreciation and understanding of all aspects of fashion, design, and history.

"We are tremendously grateful for the generous partnership of the Driehaus Design Initiative in bringing the vision of this resource center, lovingly nicknamed 'The DEC,' to life," said Andrea Schwartz, CFI Board President. "The DEC will not only provide important tools to help CFI designers, it will also help us reach beyond these walls and carry on our mission of keeping fashion talent in Chicago. Today, design talent can choose to live anywhere, and we want to make it easy for them to choose Chicago."

The DEC opened in tandem with the appointment of Tonya Gross as the CFI's Executive Director. As Executive Director, Gross is responsible for the operational management of the not-for-profit organization, in partnership with the Board of Directors, including managing ongoing development of the incubator program as well as overseeing curriculum development in coordination with the CFI Creative Director and CFI Business Mentors. She will develop short and long-term strategic plans supporting the mission of CFI: to continue to make a meaningful economic impact in Chicago by giving fashion designers technical product development, business tools, and training to create innovative products and launch globally competitive businesses based in Chicago.

Gross is the former Director for Fashion and Culinary Programs with the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, responsible for producing programs that support entrepreneurial development in the creative industries through city initiatives such as Lake FX Summit + Expo, Chicago Farmers Markets, and Chicago Fashion Week. In 2012, Gross was selected for the 2013 Zappos.com Emerging Designer Program, which featured and sold her spring/summer collection, [tonya gross millinery](#), on the Zappos.com website. Her headwear has been featured at New York Fashion Week with designers Pamela Rolland and Plutocracy, on Season 4 of the “Real Housewives of New Jersey,” and in many millinery exhibitions throughout the United States. Before launching her business, Gross was an information technology professional with Citadel Investment Group, the Northern Trust and Grosvenor Capital Management. She has a degree in International Business Management and Japanese Studies from Ferris State University and studied Fiber Arts and Millinery at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

“Tonya comes to CFI with a wealth of knowledge and background in fashion. She has built her own company from her previous experiences taking part in an emerging designer program and provides invaluable support on succeeding in this industry. She is engrained in the Chicago community and we look forward to working with Tonya to create more opportunities for aspiring designers and entrepreneurs in Chicago,” said Andrea Schwartz.

#### **About the Chicago Fashion Incubator at Macy’s on State Street**

The Chicago Fashion Incubator (CFI) provides six emerging Chicago-based designers with the resources including work space and mentoring needed to strengthen and grow their careers in fashion. The Designers in Residence (DIR) are required to complete a core curriculum of business and creative workshops and seminars. Workshops range in topics from media training, creating business plans, cost analysis, and building a brand strategy to more artistic sessions like preparing patterns for production to color and proportion theory. Throughout the two-year program, the designers have the chance to establish relationships with a network of industry professionals including fashion buyers, merchandisers and branding, marketing and communications experts, lawyers and accountants For more information on the CFI, visit [www.chicagofashionincubator.org](http://www.chicagofashionincubator.org).

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