J’S BACKGROUND

J Banks grew up in the Bay Area and later moved to Los Angeles with his family. He was always into fashion. "It’s funny. When I was a kid, my mom actually told me I was going to be a stylist." After high school, J found work assisting in the make-up and wardrobe departments on movie sets, but soon the long hours and lack of creative autonomy got to him. He wanted to get out of the film industry, but without a degree, his options were limited.

WHAT BROUGHT J TO CCSF

J tried retail for a while, working in sales and visual merchandising for Mango and Abercrombie & Fitch. "I was good at it. My commission was always more than my hourly pay. So, I thought, why am I making someone else all this money?" He knew it was time to go back to school. "I went to a community college in L.A. and took all kinds of classes. The one that stood out to me was the sewing class. It didn’t feel like work." From there, J knew he wanted to study fashion and decided to move back home to the Bay Area and enroll at CCSF.

J’S CCSF EXPERIENCE

J has taken a fluid approach to studying at CCSF. He attends part time and signs up for classes that appeal to him. One of the things he likes most about the program is that it is constantly changing. “The last week of each semester, the instructors have a town hall-style meeting to figure out what changes should be made, what should be cut, and what new classes they should offer. They’re really good at incorporating industry trends into the curriculum.” Through instruction and experimentation, J ultimately found his passion in patternmaking and working with metals. “It’s the most rewarding feeling in the world when you learn a skill, have an idea, and then create something.”

WHY CCSF WAS A GOOD CHOICE FOR J

“I had the freedom to try new things and find my style.” J also had the opportunity to build on those skills as an intern at Wear Something Rare, a retail store and studio for emerging Bay Area designers. J is now a CCSF fashion department peer mentor. He was also one of six students selected to showcase their work in the Senior Collection. “I’m really excited! My collection is kind of African tribal, and I’m opening the show.” Outside of college, J is already making a living with the skills he has mastered. “I rented a space, and I’m working every day. I made a list of everything I’m good at and enjoy. Each semester I add on to it.” J’s instructors helped him with pricing and offered business advice. “I have about ten clients for pattern work and two for sample work. I work with fur and faux fur. I do a lot of leather work and some tailoring.” J plans to continue studying while he grows his business.