



June 2023

**Dear Retail Industry Friend:**

Retail Connect is an annual conference organized by the University's College of Design, known for its significance in the retailing field. Since its inception in 2010, Retail Connect has featured prominent industry experts and influential thinkers who address the current challenges and advancements shaping the retail landscape. Over the past 13 years, the conference has actively facilitated connections between industry professionals and Retail Merchandising students, allowing them to engage in discussions regarding the presented ideas, enhance their networking skills, and establish connections for potential internships and future career opportunities. Moreover, Retail Connect serves as an excellent platform for retail professionals to connect with their peers in the industry.

Event sponsorships have played a crucial role in providing scholarships and opportunities for professional development for exceptional students as well as supporting the College of Design's Center for Retail Design & Innovation (CRDI). This year's event will feature a significant highlight, the presentation of student scholarships and awards recognizing student leadership. These scholarships have been made possible by our esteemed event sponsors, ranging from Signature to Gold level contributors.

**Visibility**

Visibility at Retail Connect is impressive, with a diverse range of retail professionals in attendance including representatives from Fortune 500 companies to entrepreneurial ventures. This creates an exceptional opportunity for Retail Merchandising students to gain exposure to a wide spectrum of industry expertise. Historically, the conference has attracted over 300 attendees, with an equal split between retail professionals and students.

We are excited for this year's event, which will be held in person at the McNamara Alumni Center on campus. The event format allows us to connect retail thought-leaders, professionals, and students from Minnesota and across the country, enriching both content and discussion through onsite networking and engagement. This year's event is titled: ***The Power of Sustainable Retail: How We Make a Difference*** and it will be held on **Tuesday, October 24th, 2023, from 5:45 pm – 8:00 pm** at the McNamara Alumni Center. The keynote speakers and moderators will be:

- **Amanda Nusz, SVP Corporate Responsibility and President, Target Foundation, Target | Speaker and Panelist**
- **Scot Case, VP Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability, National Retail Federation (NRF) | Speaker and Panelist**
- **Samina Virk, CEO Vestiaire Collective | Speaker and Panelist**
- **Dr. Barry Kudrowitz, Department Head, College of Design | Moderator**

### **Event Description**

Join us for an engaging panel discussion on sustainability in retail, where industry experts share innovative approaches to reducing negative environmental impact and promoting ethical practices. Discover how leading retailers are integrating eco-friendly initiatives into their businesses, implementing circular economy models, adopting sustainable packaging practices and more, in an effort to meet the growing demand for socially responsible products. Gain valuable insights and practical strategies to enhance your retail business sustainability efforts while aligning with the values of conscious consumers.

### **Sponsorship and Support**

This event is made possible with the support of dedicated volunteers and industry partners. Gifts of sponsorship allow the University to host this high-quality event that showcases new ideas and builds industry connections. The program fosters growth, networking, and diffusion of innovation amongst retail professionals and students - all while building awareness of the University's Retail Merchandising Program and Center for Retail Design & Innovation. Most importantly, our Signature, Diamond, Platinum, and Gold level event sponsorships allow us to present student scholarships and awards. As a new initiative, this year, 50% of the funds raised after expenses will go to the College of Design's [Design Justice](#) fund to help advance anti-racist design approaches and design justice initiatives including courses, programs, scholarships, events, and diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in design education.

### **Retail Connect Sponsorship Levels and Benefits:**

#### **Signature Level - \$15,000+ - Scholarship Sponsor**

- Contact us for a customized sponsor experience before making your gift.

#### **Diamond Level - \$10,000 - Scholarship Sponsor**

- Company logo in program, on website, invitation, and presentation slides, and name mentioned during event welcome
- VIP Meet & Greet prior to the event, to network with speakers, advisory board members, scholarship recipients, student leadership, and faculty
- This level supports a \$5,000 Student Leadership Scholarship in your company's name for selected student(s)
- Up to 10 seats for employees and guests close to the stage with reserved parking available.
- Tables marked with signs including company name and logo
- Seated with speaker(s), student scholarship recipient, Student Leadership Board, and/or faculty members
- Tax-deductible gift of \$9,800 to the University of Minnesota's Retail Merchandising Program

### **Platinum Level - \$5,000 –Scholarship Sponsor**

- Company logo in program, on website, invitation, and presentation slides, and name mentioned during event welcome
- VIP Meet & Greet prior to the event, to network with speakers, advisory board members, scholarship recipients, student leadership, and faculty
- This level supports a \$2500 Student Leadership Scholarship in your company's name for selected student(s)
- Up to eight seats with reserved parking available for employees and guests
- Tables marked with signs including company name and logo
- Seated with speaker(s), scholarship recipient, Student Leadership Board, and/or faculty members
- Tax-deductible gift of \$4,840 to the University of Minnesota's Retail Merchandising Program

### **Gold Level - \$3,000—Scholarship Sponsor**

- Logo in program, on website, invitation, program, and presentation slides, and name mentioned during event welcome as event sponsor
- This level supports a \$1500 Student Leadership Scholarship in your company's name for selected student(s)
- Up to six seats with reserved parking
- Tables marked with signs including company name and logo
- Seated with scholarship recipient, Advisory Board members, and/or Student Leadership Board members
- Tax-deductible gift of \$2,910 to the University of Minnesota's Retail Merchandising Program

### **Silver Level - \$2,000**

- Logo in program, on website, and mentioned during event welcome
- This level supports our National Retail Federation Student Association (NRFSA) with up to \$2,000 in funding and event sponsorship for the 2023-2024 academic year. Sponsors at this level will be recognized as sponsors on Retail Connect and student NRFSA event materials
- Four seats with reserved parking
- Table marked with signs including company name
- Tax-deductible gift of \$1,940 to the University of Minnesota's Retail Merchandising Program

### **Bronze Level - \$1,000**

- Logo in program, on website, and mentioned during welcome
- Two seats with reserved parking
- Table marked with signs including company name
- Tax-deductible gift of \$970 to the University of Minnesota's Retail Merchandising Program

### **How to Become a Retail Connect Sponsor**

**Email Peggy Lord** ([lordp@umn.edu](mailto:lordp@umn.edu)) expressing your intention to sponsor the program.

**Make your sponsorship payment** as follows:

- **Online:** Go to: [give.umn.edu/giveto/retailmerch](https://give.umn.edu/giveto/retailmerch) and make your payment at the level desired.
- **Mail:** Mail completed gift form ([z.umn.edu/umfgiftform](https://z.umn.edu/umfgiftform)) with credit card information or a check payable to the University of Minnesota Foundation. Note Retail Merchandising Fund UMF0021948 on check.

- **Unable to sponsor the event but would like to donate to the Retail Merchandising Scholarship fund?** Go to: [give.umn.edu/giveto/retailmerch](https://give.umn.edu/giveto/retailmerch) and make your payment at the level desired.

*Your tax-deductible gift will be received by the University of Minnesota Foundation.*

**Sponsor signage, tables, and recognition:** In order to maintain gift-eligibility through the University of Minnesota Foundation, signs, banners, tables, brochures, and other display items that are not managed and controlled by the University are not allowed at this event.

**Event information, registration, and archives** from past events can be found at [Retail Connect Website](#). A video recording of this year's program will be available after the event.

***We depend on hearing from you and want to secure your partnership. Response needed by August 31, 2023. The last day to be included in marketing materials is September 29, 2023.***

**If you have any questions about sponsorship, please contact:**

*Peggy Lord, Assistant Director Center for Retail Design & Innovation  
College of Design, Retail Merchandising  
[lordp@umn.edu](mailto:lordp@umn.edu)*

Thank you! We look forward to talking with you!

*University of Minnesota, College of Design  
Retail Merchandising Program & Advisory Board*