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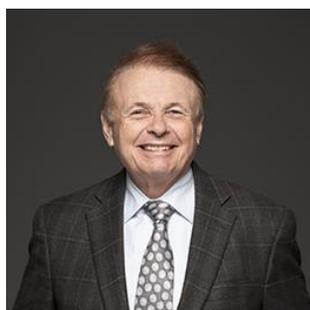
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Meet the president of Ringling College of Art & Design on WEDU PBS

Suncoast Business Forum with Geoff Simon Airls on WEDU PBS at 8:30 p.m. Thursday, June 29



Tampa, FL– **SUNCOAST BUSINESS FORUM** goes to Sarasota for **Episode 240** which airs at **8:30 p.m. Thursday, June 29**. Host Geoff Simon interviews **Dr. Larry R. Thompson, President of Ringling College of Art and Design** to find out what it takes to run a world class Arts College.

Dr. Thompson's vision has led Ringling to be one of premiere Arts, Animation, and Design Colleges in the World. Ringling is currently listed in the Variety top 25 Film Schools and has been named "One of the Top Film Schools in America" by The Hollywood Reporter.

Ringling College of Art and Design's Studio Lab provides students with professional level experience by combining academic excellence and film industry connections.

The Ringling Film School has successfully integrated the college into the entertainment industry and with the economic development goals of the region. Through forging partnerships, Ringling's goal is to provide students with an education that will allow them to have successful careers.

"The students who are at Ringling are incredibly creative but their also disciplined so they do the work within their class that is almost like being in a design studio or at a studio itself that for film or for animation," said Dr. Thompson.

Simon will be interviewing Dr. Thompson in the school's new soundstage. Stretching a length of a city block, the new facility compromises over 30,000 square feet. With 25,000 feet of soundstage space and over 5,000 feet of post-production spaces, the college continues to expand.

The Post Production Studio was made possible by the county of Sarasota and various community donors and the Soundstages were a collaboration with Semkhor Productions, a private company interested in Ringling College.

"The environment for Ringling graduates is very robust," said Dr. Thompson. "The students who are at Ringling are incredibly creative but their also disciplined. So they do the work within their class that is almost like being in a design studio or at a studio itself that for film or for animation."

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Dr. Thompson who has been president of the college for the past 12 years is pleased with the school's development but continues to strive to be the best.

"Our major competition today are the top tier art design colleges... and we are among that top tier but we're not satisfied with that and that's why we are on this trajectory to become the prominent art and design college because of so many of the things that we are doing that embraces technology and art," said Dr. Thompson.

Dr. Thompson takes pride in the fact that the school not only prepares students for future success but provides the access to opportunities to gain employment in their specific field shortly after graduating.

"We have 90 something recruiters who come here each year to recruit our students and they're from all over the country and some of them are over the world. So its places like Pixar, DreamWorks and all the major design firms Hallmark Cards, American Greetings, Apple, LinkedIn and Google. Their all after our students," said Dr. Thompson.

Although Thompson doesn't have a creative arts background, he does know what is required to operate a successful arts college. "My ability is near zero, I can barely draw a stick figure. So it's really ironic being ahead of an art college and not being able to really do what our students do. But sometimes you don't need that in order to run an art college but you do need to understand and appreciate what the people do," said Dr. Thompson.

ABOUT WEDU PBS

WEDU is West Central Florida's leading PBS station reaching 16 counties through media platforms including on-air programming and online experiences that broaden horizons, transport and transform and open gateways to new ideas and new worlds. Financially supported by the community, the organization offers a wealth of award-winning inspirational, educational and enlightening content over a variety of multi-media platforms including: television programming, station website, www.wedu.org and various social media platforms, monthly member magazine *Premiere*, educational outreach activities and a myriad of special events. WEDU's focus on the local community has resulted in the station being regarded as a beacon of trust for men, women and children of every walk of life no matter their age, ethnicity or socio-economic status. WEDU is a treasured community resource; a window to the world for the homebound and a vital educational source for the youngest members of society. WEDU prides itself on its position in the Tampa Bay community as a leader, partner, informed citizen and a member of PBS, the most trusted institution in America (Marketing & Research Resources, Inc. M&RR, January 2017). For more information, program schedules or to support WEDU visit www.wedu.org; WEDU Public Media on Facebook and Twitter (@wedupbs) or call (813) 254-9338.

ABOUT SEMKHOR NETWORKS

SEMKHOR is a media and technology company focused on digital content production and distribution. It provides consulting services centered on integrating the entertainment industry into a wide range of projects. It also is co-investing, with Ringling College, in the new 40,000 square foot sound stage and post production facility as well as executive producing a slate of original, celebrity based web series.

ABOUT RINGLING COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

For nearly 85 years, Ringling College of Art and Design has cultivated the creative spirit in students from around the globe. The private, not-for-profit fully accredited college offers the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in eleven disciplines and the Bachelor of Arts in two. The College's rigorous curriculum employs the studio model of teaching and immediately engages students through a comprehensive, first-year program that is both specific to the major of study and focused on the liberal arts. The Ringling College teaching model ultimately shapes students into highly employable and globally aware artists and designers. For more information please visit the Ringling College website at www.ringling.edu, follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter or call 941.351.5100.

-WEDU PBS-