



Ringling College of Art and Design Announces Plans for New Post-Production Facility and Soundstage in Newtown, Sarasota, Florida

September 19, 2014 (Sarasota, FL) – Ringling College of Art and Design today announced plans to build an approximately 30,000 square foot professional Soundstage and commercial post-production complex in the Newtown neighborhood of Sarasota, Florida.

The new Soundstage and post-production complex will be located on land comprising almost a complete city block extending south from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way to 25th street and running east to west between Central and Cocoanut avenues. “This is an exciting day for Newtown and Sarasota,” said Sarasota Mayor Willie Shaw. “We have long sought having a greater economic and strategic community partnership with Ringling College and we are thrilled that a project of such potential economic benefit will be located in the neighborhood. We see this as a catalyst to inspire others to develop along the MLK corridor.”

This entire public-private initiative will be a major impetus to advance the College’s academic mission and provide economic development to the City of Sarasota, the County of Sarasota and the entire region. Consulting on the project is director Roman Coppola, who was the College’s 2014 commencement speaker and is working with Ringling College students on several projects.

The innovative project was the brainchild of Ringling President Dr. Larry R. Thompson and Semkhor’s David Shapiro, who with Ringling College co-founded the College’s Digital Filmmaking Studio Lab. Mr. Shapiro and his business partners, BHS Properties, are investing in this project and working with the College to build the complex.

Semkhor and BHS Properties, a group comprised of business professionals with long-standing and significant ties to the region – including Brad Baldwin, Eric Howell, Higgins Gayheart and JB Baldwin – are building the complex in conjunction with Ringling. The first phase of the project will be done by Ringling College, beginning with the demolition of the existing structures on the property by locally owned Ducon construction.

Construction is slated to commence in 2015.

The approximately 30,000 square foot state-of-the-art professional Soundstage and film and television post-production complex is tied to the College’s academic needs and is expected to attract a broad range of commercial production. When complete, the College will conduct filmmaking classes and the College’s students will work on any commercial productions that use the complex. David Shapiro will work with the College to operate and manage the commercial aspect of the facility, helping boost regional economic development and providing professional-level experience and connections for Ringling students who will learn by being part of those commercial productions.

The reputation of Ringling’s filmmaking program continues to grow as evidenced by the college being named to *The Hollywood Reporter’s* Top 25 Film Schools list three times in the past four years. “This new facility significantly expands the depth and breadth of our film program while also attracting professional production opportunities that provide the real-world experience and industry engagement that has enhanced employment prospects for so many of our Ringling graduates,” said Bradley Battersby, department head for the Ringling College Digital Filmmaking Program.



Ringling College's efforts to accelerate Sarasota's economic development as an entertainment production hub received initial support from the County with the provision of a \$1.75-million Financial Incentive Grant originally approved in October 2010. This grant was to assist the College with the building of a professional post-production facility on the College's campus. The Grant was reapproved by the County last spring and allowed for payment of "expenses related to the construction of a stand-alone Soundstage and post-production facility and the purchase of necessary post-production equipment."

"We are excited to support Ringling College in bringing a professional film and television production facility to the heart of Sarasota," said Sarasota County Commissioner Carolyn Mason. "This symbiotic collaboration of public and private interests brings together Ringling's proven ability to develop and generate top-tier talent with ongoing entertainment industry engagement at the highest levels."

The new complex will include an approximately 25,000 square foot Soundstage and 5,000 square feet of space for post-production facilities such as dubbing bays, professional editing suites, and a Foley (sound effects) stage, offices, classrooms, a private screening room and data-centric storage capabilities allowing multiple personnel to work on the same production at the same time from various locations.

Mr. Shapiro first became involved with the College in 2010 with partner, Sarasota entrepreneur and Producer Sam Logan, as co-creators of the Ringling College Digital Filmmaking Studio Lab. The Studio Lab created a new model for film education expanding upon the College's excellent academic focus by incorporating industry expertise through its series of filmmaker lectures, classroom experiences, and real world experience working alongside experienced filmmakers, along with providing much needed economic development to Newtown, the City, and the County.

"Because of the launch of our Digital Filmmaking Studio Lab in 2010, we have seen a significant increase in applications to the academic programs and we are attracting increased attention from the professional film industry, which offers a dynamic benefit to our student body and our community," stated Ringling College President Larry R. Thompson. "As a result of the Studio Lab students have worked on productions with Werner Herzog, Forrest Whitaker, Anna Paquin, Matt Dillon, Paul Schiff and others. The new facility will expand our ability to bring in content production opportunities from initial preproduction to final post and give our students a look and experience at real world entertainment production."

The Soundstage and post-production facilities will provide a vital academic link to the Studio Lab with the availability of students working alongside professionals. The economic benefit will come from helping to catapult Sarasota into a viable option for film and television programming producers. Ringling's Soundstage and post complex will be a tremendous complement to the available student and professional talent pool in our area and be a major impetus for growth and redevelopment in the Newtown community. The facility will be available for rental at costs far lower than exist in major film studio hubs such as New York or Los Angeles, providing a cost-effective alternative for film production.

According to David Shapiro: "The Sound Stage is the natural next step in the growth of the Ringling College's Studio Lab and will allow the region to work more closely with top-tier filmmakers, entertainment talent and local artists. This will only enhance Sarasota's thriving artistic community and help achieve long-term economic development goals."



Shapiro went on to say: “These facilities continue the experimentation of the Studio Lab’s effort to integrate real word productions with a top-tier academic setting. Central to the effort is a focus on providing a way for Ringling College students, and other residents, to have access to cutting edge technology and processes so that a large local talent pool develops - the key to creating a sustainable industry here. Working with Ringling, Dr. Thompson, and the community, has been inspiring and the reason why we are throwing ourselves into this effort. Sarasota is unique and will become a valuable part of the media and entertainment industry. We are very fortunate and thankful to be a part of this.”

Previous projects on the Ringling campus has included a post-production master class by Director Werner Herzog of “Into the Abyss,” and actor wife-husband team Anna Paquin and Stephen Moyer’s CASM Films Sarasota-filmed independent film “Free Ride.” Ringling and Semkhor expect to be announcing additional post-production projects in the near future.

Soundstage Site Location

The 30,000+ square foot complex will be sited on land that virtually includes all property extending south from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way to 25th street and running east to west between Central and Cocoanut avenues, with the exception of the two city owned lots – situated on the corner of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way to the east at Cocoanut and to the west at Central.

Summary

Ringling College first developed its academic filmmaking program in 2008. In collaboration with Semkhor since 2010 the College has provided enhanced learning across all disciplines by connecting industry professionals to the classroom and providing professional level experiences to our students and young graduates. “With the addition of the Soundstage/post production complex, student education will now provide an unbridled opportunity for enhanced economic development focused on the film and entertainment industries,” said Dr. Larry R. Thompson. “Every year, our most promising and well-prepared students are recruited by the top employers in the world and leave our area seeking work and professional accomplishment. The many coordinated elements of our growing academic program with the Studio Lab component and now this new complex are laying the groundwork with which to retain some of our best and brightest talent and to help us drive the entertainment production economic engine in our region.”

About Ringling College of Art and Design

Ringling College of Art and Design is a private, not-for-profit, fully accredited college offering the Bachelors of Fine Arts degree the following disciplines: Advertising Design, Computer Animation, Digital Filmmaking, Fine Arts, Game Art & Design, Graphic Design, Illustration, Interior Design, Motion Design, Painting, Photography & Digital Imaging, Printmaking, and Sculpture, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in the Business of Art & Design. Located on Florida’s Gulf Coast, the picturesque 48-acre campus enrolls nearly 1,300 students from 44 states and 50 countries.

Ringling College of Art and Design

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