

Korean to English Translation:

[Interview: Dr. Larry R. Thompson, President of Ringling College of Art and Design in the United States](#)

Herald Economy, South Korea

“Starving Artists? They create the best business and career opportunities.”

“Anyone can imagine things in their mind. However, true creativity lies in bringing those imagined things out and turning them into tangible results through numerous failures and trials.”

Dr. Larry Thompson, the president of Ringling College of Art and Design in the United States, who visited Korea last week, particularly emphasized shattering the myth of the “starving artist” during his 24-year tenure as president. He stated, “The era of creative power combining art, design, and computers has created completely new markets and opportunities unlike the past.”

Ringling College of Art and Design, located in Sarasota, Florida, USA, is regarded as the most prestigious art and design college. It has been praised for integrating cutting-edge technology and facilities into traditional art fields, leading the way in the field of art education. For example, it is ranked as the top in the world in Computer Animation. Graduates from the College have made remarkable achievements at prominent global companies such as Netflix, Pixar, Fox, Google, Microsoft, and Marvel.

President Thompson visited Korea this month and had a busy schedule, including delivering a special lecture on the “Future Art and Design” at Seoul Institute of the Arts.

Here are some Q&A excerpts:

1. What was the purpose of your visit to Korea?

Among approximately 1,700 students at Ringling College of Art and Design, there are around 100 Korean and Korean-American students. Due to the COVID-19 situation, we haven't had much time to meet, but I came here to have a conversation with Korean students and their parents. We will also hold a welcome event and share valuable information for students who have already been admitted to, or are interested in our College. Our College allocates the majority of its resources to academic programs for student education and does not particularly focus on advertising or marketing. As a result, although our College possesses a prestigious position and outstanding academic programs in the arts and technology fields within the United States, it is relatively unknown among Korean individuals. One of the purposes is to promote the excellence and capabilities of our College to Korean students and their parents.

2. Can you introduce Ringling College of Art and Design?

We take pride in being a leading, global, educational institution that combines cutting-edge technology with existing art and design in the field of new art education. Departments such as Computer Animation, Motion Design, Graphic Design, Illustration, and Game Design consistently rank among the top one to three in US college rankings. Anticipating that computers would become new tools for creative art and design since the mid-1990s, we made significant investments in this field. Not only did we establish the world's first Computer Animation department and successfully develop it, but we also pioneered the integration of Motion Design as a major. Moreover, we created a Business of Art and Design department by combining business and art, and most recently, we became the first in the world to launch a department dedicated to Virtual Reality (VR). In this way, all our College's departments have been at the forefront of educating future generations in art and design, leading the direction of education.

3. What was the motivation behind integrating cutting-edge technology into traditional art?

It felt almost instinctual. I had an intuition that the digital art era would open up and transform the overall direction of art and education with the advancement of computers and cutting-edge technology. However, it was also true that there were burdens and concerns. At the time, investing a tremendous amount of money in state-of-the-art computer facilities was a huge risk and challenge, as the failure could potentially ruin the school. However, instinctively, we realized that by introducing the state-of-the-art IT infrastructure like Pixar or DreamWorks possessed, the vision of the school and students would follow as much as the investment we made for the future.

In particular, during my 24-year tenure as the president, I placed the utmost emphasis on breaking the stereotype of the "starving artist." I was confident that digital art and computers would contribute to shattering such misconceptions. The results were successful. We provided our students with new opportunities and markets, and a majority of our graduates are now engaged in highly specialized and high-income professions.

4. What is the most important trait that you value in a person?

Anyone can imagine things in their mind. However, true creativity can be described as turning those imaginations into tangible results through numerous failures and trial-and-error processes. The foundation of creativity lies in taking risks and daring to challenge. That is the most desirable quality we seek. If someone can create their own unique and original stories without relying on computers, and demonstrate their abilities as individuals to the fullest extent possible, then that is precisely creativity.

In addition, regardless of one's major or where they work, the ability to communicate and collaborate with others and possess leadership skills are also qualities that I highly value.

5. As the president with a term of 24 years, what is the secret to your long-lasting tenure?

As a leader, it is important to establish common goals and direction and then empathize sufficiently with people. Once a sense of empathy is formed, we should not just tell the professors to do well, but also provide enough support to create an environment where they can excel. We need to instill a sense of pride in all members of the school community and enable them to teach students with the highest educational capacity.

Not only professors but anyone in general administration or support departments has access to the president's office. Moreover, I personally approach these individuals and listen to their ideas and suggestions for the development of the school. I believe that as a leader, it is more important to listen to others rather than talk a lot. If that is the secret, then it can be considered the secret (laughs).

6. Is there a message you would like to convey to students majoring in art and design, as well as their teachers and parents?

In the past, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) was emphasized, which focused on science and technology. Now, we are in the era of STEAM, where Art has been added to STEM. We have officially entered the era of new creativity, and those who study art and design have become the main actors of this era. While being an artist may have been a less popular profession in the past, now it has become a promising career path leading industries around the world are actively recruiting those students for.

[By studying art and design] I believe that you have made the most appropriate choice for the upcoming future.