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CUNY film school will be housed in Brooklyn studio lot

By ERIKA PRAFDER

A SPIRING TV and filmmakers should brush up on their self-promotion skills. A new graduate film school — and the only public one of its kind to be housed on a working film studio lot nationwide — is preparing to open its doors to its first classes in the fall of 2014.

The expansion of Steiner Studios, which rests on 20 acres of the Brooklyn Navy Yard and is home to hit productions like “Sex and The City: The Movie” and HBO’s “Boardwalk Empire,” is now in its core shell stage of development. Upon completion, it will lease two floors of space to Brooklyn College (brooklyn.cuny.edu) for the Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema.

In the newly renovated and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified space, the “green” building will contain soundstages, photo studios, post production and support spaces, in addition to the new grad school.

The school’s price tag is also attractive. Compared to film and new media degrees at private institutions, which can run upwards of \$150,000, degrees at the new grad school are projected to cost \$35,000.

Barry R. Feirstein, a former hedge-fund manager and Brooklyn College alumni for whom the school is officially named, says he was motivated to donate \$5 million to the project for several reasons.

“To be able to help develop an industry and take it to a new level is good for this city and those involved,” he says. “The grad school will plug right in to the ecosystem of the film industry here, which has obvious networking advantages. The cost to attend this major educational institution will

THE REEL DEAL



Barry R. Feirstein (left) and Douglas C. Steiner at the site of the new Graduate School of Cinema at the new production lot at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

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— Douglas C. Steiner, chairman of Steiner Studios.

be significantly less than other cinema programs, which opens it up to a lot more people. There are tremendous strengths to this project — it could have a lot of real world impact.”

Feirstein is also chairman of the Brooklyn College Foundation’s board of directors. He felt that

rather than just “investing in Apple” the film school would be “a great enterprise.” The impact on the film industry here will be significant, too. Currently, it generates \$75 billion annually and employs \$100,000 people.

“That may increase by another \$10 billion as a result of this

project,” according to Douglas C. Steiner, chairman of Steiner Studios.

“Right now, the industry is at full capacity manpower-wise. This project will bring in the next labor force to meet the growing demand here at a fraction of the price of what private

universities charge. Having it on the studio lot, through casual and other interactions, students will get their feet in the door for internships, jobs and in freelance business,” says Steiner.

Steiner’s advice to prospective students?

“The building they’re going into will be filled with people who work in the business every day. Strike up conversations, talk to people. It’s a friendly group. Forge relationships in an unstructured manner. That’s the way people will filter in to full time employment. Students will have an unvarnished, realized view of what this highly desirable field is really like every day,” he says.

With approximately 100 students slated to fill the competitive class spots for the school’s first year, Karen L. Gould, the president of Brooklyn College, projects there will be 200 students by the second year and double that by year five, if not sooner.

As for staffing up, “Five finalists for the school director’s position have been identified. The search committee will begin their formal interview process at the end of this month,” says Gould. “A number of full-time faculty and adjunct professors in the industry will also be hired.”

The three-year degree programs offered will span quite the gamut. Master of Fine Art degrees will be offered including cinematography, directing, post-production, producing, production management and screenwriting, and media scoring and sonic arts as well as animation and visual effects, according to the school’s president. Students will also be able to pursue a Master of Science in Entertainment Industry Management or Master of Arts in Cinema Studies, she says.

A \$6.7 million dollar donation from the City of New York’s Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment, the funds will assist with construction of the school and its development.

“It will help us move faster into areas of new media and animation that are expensive and require special space, equipment and faculty,” says Gould.

Given the new school’s inherently ideal location, “It’s also a chance for industry folks to be aware of the tremendous and diverse talent that will be coming out of our programs,” says Gould. “The industry tells us it’s very interested in that and we see it as a real advantage.”

NY Post: Brian Zick