

Chancellor talks STEM with Norris

Segue • SIUE

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A student-centered educational community, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is dedicated to integrating knowledge in a manner that helps develop professionals, scholars and leaders to shape a changing world.

Much like how SIUE works to develop its students, the Global Leadership Forum (GLF), under Kendall Norris' leadership, works to unite and empower the untapped potential in the global community.

On this week's episode of Segue, SIUE's premier radio show that discusses the ideas and issues on campus and beyond, SIUE Chancellor Randy Pembroke, PhD, has a conversation with the GLF chief executive officer about the work the organization does and its impact on the community at large. This episode of Segue will air at 9 a.m. on Sunday, Feb. 18, on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound.

Founded in 2015, GLF is a nonprofit organization dedicated to aiding underserved communities by working with an assembly of several organizations to develop diverse leaders in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Norris became CEO in 2017.

A native of Sandusky, Ohio, Norris has more than 20 years of experience in the fields of technology and business, both nationally and internationally. He holds several board of trustees' positions at universities and organizations, and is a certified Project Management Institute Professional. He holds a bachelor's in communications from John Carroll University and a master's of business administration from Case Western Reserve University.

Prior to joining the GLF, Norris was a global managing director with Deloitte Toche Tohmatsu Limited in Nashville. One day, on a tech call, he became acquainted with World Wide Technology, Inc. chairman and founder David Steward.

"Through our conversation, we discovered we shared a passion for aiding underserved communities and trying to transform the lives within those communities," Norris said. "We worked together to create the GLF, which is essentially a collaboration of organizations that creates an ecosystem to educate and empower people."

"Leaving your traditional career, stable employment, and a salary to start something from square one must have been a dramatic change," Pembroke inquires.

"It was a huge change," Norris replies. "Nonprofits are still businesses, but they just have a different business model. I love a challenge, and I love to learn new things, so the experience I had in the corporate world was beneficial."

In the last several years, there has been a push to provide more educational opportunities and jobs within the STEM field, particularly for women and minorities. Advancement and training for individuals interested in STEM fields is one of the GLF's core values. The organization works to bring corporate and nonprofit leaders within these fields together to create programs and services to support individuals who need them most.

“With the advent of technology, the market for creating smart phone applications like Facebook or WhatsApp is booming,” Norris says. “Learning the bits and bytes of technologies, or the various programming languages required to develop an application is pure mechanical learning.

“Bringing the artistic and creative aspect to this process, like when you create the app, helps add more creativity to your product and helps decide how you will engage your users.”

“I’ve heard that many musicians have transitioned into computer science fields well,” Pembroke replies.

“Musicians are used to dealing with an instrument, practicing by oneself, and like programmers, have to learn a language, manipulate symbols and think abstractly.”

At its core, GFL is dedicated to helping people from all backgrounds fulfill their potential, including females and minorities.

“If you look at professionals in STEM careers, a very small segment of the population is in those positions,” Norris says. “We’re not truly tapping into the true talent that is out there.

“An interest in diversity is not just good for good will’s sake, but it’s good for the bottom line, and if you have diversity of thought, you have a stronger platform to build your business.”

Along the course of the interview, Pembroke and Norris discuss other aspects related to professional development and collaboration opportunities at the GLF, entrepreneurship, as well as the men’s shared passion for volunteerism.

One part of their conversation, which will air at 9 a.m. on Sunday, Feb. 18, on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound, includes a growing emphasis on cybersecurity.

“Everyone I talk to, whether they are in military, education or have private businesses, is concerned about finding talented people who specialize in cybersecurity,” Pembroke says.

“Cybersecurity, network security and anything in the information technology sector is flourishing,” Norris replies. “Unfortunately, we live at a time where there are a lot of ‘bad guys’ that we need to defend ourselves from in a digital environment. Cybersecurity is a burgeoning field that will continue to grow and will be of great need around the world.”

By Madelaine Gerard, SIUE Marketing & Communications