

## Mike Gustason represents Imagineers at the THS Career Day

By: Emily Blankenship, The Voice Reporter

Description: Students get animated about possible Disney careers

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Imagineer Mike Gustason has worked at Disney for 12 years, and his primary focus as Director of the Engineering Laboratory is to invent new Disney rides.

"Walt Disney said the parks will never stay the same, and we have changed- characters, animation, and more," Gustason said.

Mike Gustason gets to walk through the secret passageways at Disneyland and stay at the park through the night, but being an Imagineer requires a lot of hard work, education, and dedication.

Gustason says he "lucked into" his job. He was working on the *Stealth Bomber* when Disney made a contract with Northrop. With a Masters Degree in Engineering from Cal State Northridge, he was sent to Disney to develop new technology. After the contract was up, Disney asked Gustason to continue work as an Imagineer.

Aspiring Imagineers may not have as much luck, and the field is very competitive. A four-year degree from a reputable school, participation in an internship and incredible talent are necessary to be hired. College studies applicable to Imagineering are architecture, creative writing, animation, engineering, project management, media production, and much more.

"Not only do you need a degree, but you have to be good at what you do," said Gustason.

College students have the chance to enter a design competition, and typically the winner is hired as an Imagineer. Internships opportunities can be found at [DisneyInterns.com](http://DisneyInterns.com). Although the qualifications may seem overwhelming, the starting salary for an Imagineer is \$50-100,000.

The most rewarding part of Gustason's job is, "early in the morning or late at night when the park is closed to the public, it is a special place that you get all for yourself."

The most challenging part of being an Imagineer is that Imagineers challenge themselves.

"We're kind of perfectionists, it's hard to get things just right," he said. "Imagineering is a broad field of work."

Imagineers are responsible for ensuring that standards are met in Disney parks around the world, like Tokyo or Paris. Some of their other responsibilities include identifying ways to use new technology, or designing hotels and cruise ships.

Imagineers work with Pixar to guarantee that the rides tell the stories the right way. Gustason accounted that an Imagineer developing the Indiana Jones ride, went on the ride 1,500 times before finishing the project. *Imagination* requires a great deal of dedication and vision.

"Disney strongly supports Synergy," explained Gustason.

Imagineers can work with Disney Channel, Pixar, or for the studio. Experiences with the different branches of Disney give Imagineers a better understanding of what is needed.

Currently, Gustason is working at Disneyland to install a monorail, but Imagineers don't always work at the park. They can be stationed places for months at a time, or they can work from home on a project. The Imagineering office is in Glendale, but many Imagineers make their way across the country or even around the world.

Mike Gustason and the other Imagineers will keep Disney's legacy alive, and "continue Walt's vision."