ACES Building Renamed for Long-Anonymous Donors

The principals behind the O'Donnell Foundation, one of The University of Texas at Austin’s biggest donors, have long eschewed recognition. But after years of encouragement from the university, Peter and Edith O'Donnell agreed that the tenth anniversary of the Institute for Computational Engineering and Sciences (ICES) is the appropriate time to shed their anonymity.

On March 26, the Applied Computational Engineering and Sciences Building at UT will be renamed the O'Donnell Building for Applied Computational Engineering and Sciences to honor the donors who built it.

The $32 million state-of-the-art ACES building, which was funded by the O'Donnell Foundation, was built in 2000 to house graduate students and researchers, more than 70 faculty members, and 60 annual visiting researchers.

“No one in history has had a greater impact on science and engineering in Texas than Peter O'Donnell,” says J. Tinsley Oden, director of ICES. “His extremely generous and strategically planned support of computational science and engineering has made possible the creation of one of the top academic and research programs in the world, and has led to advances of great benefit to not only all Texans, but to all Americans.”

More Than $418 Million in Donations

The O’Donnell Foundation, along with Peter and his wife Edith, has given more than $135 million to the university since 1983. This includes 156 endowments for student fellowships, faculty support, and graduate education programs.

The total market value of the endowments made by the O’Donnells and the O’Donnell Foundation, and accompanying challenge grants, currently exceeds $418 million.

“By any measure, Peter and Edith O’Donnell are among the greatest supporters of The University of Texas in its 130-year history,” says President Bill Powers. “Their transformative generosity is based on the belief in our power to change society for the better. It brings honor to UT to have their names connected with the campus in perpetuity.”

Hands-On Supervision Helps Stay Within Budget

The building was constructed under an unusual arrangement in which the O'Donnell Foundation leased the land from the university, built the building, and deeded it to the university on completion.

With Austin Commercial as the general contractor, the new building was constructed in record time and within budget with hands-on supervision by Peter O'Donnell.

Gifts from the O'Donnells and their foundation were made on the conditions that matching funds were provided, and that the gifts bore the names of those providing the matching funds. The single exception is the Peter O'Donnell, Jr. Centennial Chair in Computing Systems, which is assigned to the director of ICES.