A building dedication is a celebration of completion and of anticipation for the future. When the doors open for the October 9 dedication of the Paul G. Allen Center for Computer Science & Engineering, the celebration will be rousing on both counts. After four years of design, fundraising, and construction, this state-of-the-art facility for Computer Science & Engineering has finished on time and on budget.

The department, the College of Engineering, and the University of Washington will celebrate the completion of the $72 million project and salute the many friends and alumni who laid the foundation for this success. Private donations contributed $42 million of the total funding, including leadership gifts of $14 million from Paul G. Allen, $7.2 million from Microsoft Corporation, and $6.5 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Seven additional gifts of $1 million or more were received, and more than 250 donors in total contributed to the campaign, which was led by Tom Alberg, managing director of Madrona Venture Group, Jeremy Jaech, CSE alumnus and co-founder of Aldus and Visio, and faculty member and Bill & Melinda Gates Chair Ed Lazowska.

“Our friends and alumni recognize the importance of having a top computer science program in the region,” said David Notkin, Bradley Professor and department chair. “The support we have received is incredibly gratifying. We are so proud to celebrate a public/private partnership that is unprecedented in UW history.”

Major categories of donors include department alumni, friends in the state’s technology industry, and venture capitalists who recognize CSE’s significant role as a catalyst for startup companies and as a source of superbly trained graduates for staffing. Corporations such as Microsoft, Intel, and Dell also have made significant in-kind equipment and software donations.

As one of the nation’s top 10 computer science and computer engineering programs, the combination of exceptional faculty, great students, dedicated staff, and now a building worthy of the twenty-first century, bodes well for the future. “The computer science field is exploding in importance, and student demand and intellectual opportunity are greater than ever,” Lazowska said. “This wonderful new building is the tool we need, not just to remain competitive, but to reach our full potential.”
In the beginning . . . was Roberts Hall in the southeast corner of campus, CSE’s home from 1967 to 1975.

CSE Buildings

Sieg Hall
Home from 1975 to 2003, prime central campus location and rallying ground for 1970’s era antiwar protests . . . .
The building was dispersed nationwide as prospective grad students took home “a piece of the rock.”

CSE Leaders

Jerre Noe 1968–1976
Hellmut Golde 1976–1977
Bob Ritchie 1977–1983

1967

1973

1983

1967 – Computer Science Group formed; M.S. & Ph.D. programs approved.

1974 – CSE achieves department status.

1975 – B.S. program approved; move to Sieg Hall.

1982 – National Academies rank CSE program among nation’s top 10.

The Computer Revolution

From the late 1960s to early 1970s, the UW Academic Computer Center had a Control Data Corporation (CDC) 6400 computer (similar to the model at left), programmed by punch cards and featuring 10MHz clock speed. Around the time of the move to Sieg Hall in the mid-1970s, CSE had its own Xerox Data Systems (XDS) Sigma 5 like the model shown above.
Paul G. Allen Center for Computer Science & Engineering

CSE's home for the 21st century — Dedication Ceremony October 9, 2003

Paul Young 1983–1988
Jean-Loup Baer 1988–1993
Ed Lazowska 1993–2001
David Notkin 2001–

In 1979 CSE acquired an early VAX-11/780 like the model at left. Shortly thereafter CSE acquired a DECsystem 2060 (above), a powerful system for its day.

A grad student in the early 1980s works on the Eden Node Machine, a multiprocessor with several Intel iAPX-432 processors. CSE built prototypes of personal workstations under the first National Science Foundation grant to create a “building-sized computer” from a federation of personal workstations.

The HP/Compaq is the most common tablet PC used by faculty and students today.

“In the Paul G. Allen Center is a world-class facility for an outstanding computer science and engineering program. It will further the excellence that is an essential cornerstone of our region’s growth and leadership in the information technology sector.”

Rob Short
Microsoft Corporate Vice President,
UW CSE Alumnus, and Allen Center Donor

1989 — CSE moves to College of Engineering and adds computer engineering undergraduate program.

1996 — Professional Masters Program added to degree offerings.


Karen Orders, University of Washington
Mark Murray, UW CSE
Welcome! A soaring, light-infused, six-story glass atrium invites visitors, students, faculty, and staff into the Paul G. Allen Center for Computer Science & Engineering. The 5,000 square-foot Microsoft Atrium, reaching 100 feet high, is a key architectural element and prime building amenity. A cafe will draw department members during the day, while on evenings and weekends the flexible space can be transformed for conferences, workshops, receptions, and dinners. On four levels open sky bridges connect the atrium to the adjacent Electrical Engineering building to encourage cross-disciplinary interactions.

The Allen Center’s seven stories (including basement laboratories) nearly triple the space available to CSE in overcrowded and crumbling Sieg Hall. The atrium, administrative offices and student services spaces comprise the first floor. Floors two through six intermix laboratories, offices, conference rooms, and formal and informal areas for interaction. On the sixth floor, the Bill & Melinda Gates Commons, a meeting and conference area with outdoor terrace, offer sweeping views of Lake Washington and the Cascade Mountains – a fine setting for seminars, meetings, and social events.

Dramatic and contemporary, the Allen Center also is warm, welcoming, and people-oriented with inviting gathering spaces for the sorts of spontaneous exchanges that catalyze great ideas. CSE and UW history are honored by the reproduction of the Steam Powered Turing Machine mural from Sieg Hall, and views from south-side offices onto the Sylvan Grove and the four columns from the original UW building dating to 1861. An eye to the future is evident in the Mobile Robotics and the Real Time Motion Capture laboratories.

“The Allen Center meets all our goals for a twenty-first century facility,” said Hank Levy, Microsoft Professor and spearhead of department planning for the building. “We wanted a pleasant, flexible, and efficient working environment to facilitate teaching, learning, collaboration, and experimental research. The fiber and wireless networks so critical to computer work are an integral part of building design. Just as important as these inner elements, the windows are large and they open! Working in a building filled with light and connected to the outside world will be invigorating. We are excited to get in and get to work. The true measure of this building will be what we do inside that takes our programs to the next level of excellence.”

The Allen Center design is the work of LMN Architects, the Seattle firm that designed two of the city’s most acclaimed cultural facilities, Benaroya Hall and McCaw Hall. The general contractor was M.A. Mortenson.