

WOHLERS HALL



Dedication Ceremonies
September 21, 2000



College of Commerce and Business Administration
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

“We are grateful to the University of Illinois for many things, but particularly for the far-ranging education we received there and for the affordability it offered. The advantage of a state-supported university education is that everyone has a chance. It levels the playing field.”

Albert and Jane Wohlers



“The University of Illinois allowed me to fulfill my dreams. I am pleased to put the fruit of that success to work for current and future generations of students. I am humbled to be a part of this great institution.”

Albert H. Wohlers

*I*n today's world, in which technology has changed how we do almost everything, no college of business can hope to remain competitive unless it is responsive to real world technological advances. The renovations that have transformed Commerce West into Wohlers Hall have done more than create a gracious learning environment. They have allowed for the upgrade of various communications systems in the building so that the college will be able to take advantage of new technologies as they become available. We are grateful to our benefactors for the important steps forward their gifts have made possible. These changes will help the College of Commerce and Business Administration continue its rich tradition of business instruction and research. Generations of students and faculty will reap the benefits of their generosity.

Program

WELCOME

William R. Bryan

Interim Dean, College of Commerce and
Business Administration

SPEAKERS

William D. Engelbrecht

President, University of Illinois Board of Trustees

James J. Stukel

President, University of Illinois

Michael Aiken

Chancellor, University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign

Sidney S. Micek

President, University of Illinois Foundation

Albert H. Wohlers

Founder and Retired Chairperson,
Albert H. Wohlers & Co.

RECEPTION AND TOURS

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Please join us in the tent on the Commerce Quad (between Wohlers Hall and David Kinley Hall) for a reception. Guided tours are available immediately following the dedication ceremony. Anyone preferring to walk through the building on his/her own is invited to do so.

Albert H. and Jane L. Wohlers

A lot of hard work, persistence, and creative thinking have brought solid financial success to Al and Jane Wohlers who have generously shared their good fortune with the university they love.

From the time he was in high school, Al had a goal — “to make something of myself.” And he had the good judgment to recognize, even in 1935, during the depths of

the Depression, that a college education would provide the path to financial independence. An only child, Al was the first person in his family and the only one among his high school friends in Chicago to attend college. With the help of a state scholarship and money he had saved while working for a printing company, Al came to the University of Illinois — “because it was good and because it was affordable.” He majored in economics and graduated in 1939.



Jane, another Chicago native, always knew she was headed for

college. Her father hoped she would follow his example and go to Northwestern, but Jane wanted to go farther afield — to Wisconsin in fact. The summer before she was due to enroll there was a sudden change in plans and Jane, too, headed for the University of Illinois, where she majored in journalism. Jane graduated in 1941.

Al and Jane met on campus in 1937, and in 1941, after a year of work and a year in the service, Al returned to campus

to “do the best job of selling I ever did.” He persuaded a reluctant Miss Jane Lindemann to marry him. The ceremony took place four days before her U of I graduation. After the brief honeymoon, Jane returned to campus for the graduation ceremony and Al returned to active duty.

With the coming of World War II, Al’s one year in the service stretched into six and a half, and he returned to civilian life as a lieutenant colonel in the Army Air Corps. He returned to Continental Casualty, where he had worked before the service, but soon left to join Youngberg-Carlson Co., where he became a corporate officer. But in 1961, Al struck out on his own and founded Albert H. Wohlers & Co., which eventually became one of the largest providers of insurance to professional associations. He sold the company in 1997 and retired from the business.

The company succeeded for many reasons, but certainly one key was Al’s creativity in designing coverage that met the needs of any individual group. Success also came because of a lot of hard work. In the early days of the company Al would bounce ideas off Jane and she remained active in Wohlers & Co., serving as corporate secretary until the business was sold. Both Al and Jane recalled evenings at home when the family, including daughters Susan and Nancy, sat around on the floor stuffing envelopes for an advertising campaign. Al once remarked that “The UI was the source of everything for us. I wouldn’t have met Jane without the U of I. Without Jane I don’t know what would have happened. We were a good team.” And a good team they still are after fifty-nine years of marriage. They still consult on important matters and reach mutual decisions — like the decision to make a generous gift to the College of Commerce to renovate Commerce West.

Both Al and Jane have maintained close ties with the university. Jane remains active with her sorority, Delta Delta Delta, and Al has been closely involved with the College of Commerce since 1982, when he first became a member of the Business Advisory Council. He chaired that group during the 1993–94 academic year and played a role in establishing an entrepreneurship emphasis in the college. The Wohlers have also been very active members of the University of Illinois Foundation.

Al Wohlers is recognized across the industry as a pioneer in group insurance. “Al and Jane are legends in the Association Group business and Albert H. Wohlers & Co. is recognized as the top in quality and performance among all broker/administrators in the business,” wrote the president of one of the insurance companies with whom Al worked, on the occasion of Al’s retirement. The creed by which he ran his business says a lot about the kind of man Al is. “A client is the most important person in our office. . . . They are flesh and blood human beings. . . . It is our job to handle them profitably in light of their best interests and in ours.” As one friend said, “He’s easy to meet and hard to forget.” Present and future generations of Commerce Illini will not forget Jane and Al Wohlers. Wohlers Hall will stand as a testimony to their generosity and spirit.

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Commerce Buildings — A History

The task of Commercial Science and Art, one of the original nine departments at the University of Illinois in 1868, was to prepare men “for the arduous and riskful responsibilities of the merchant and businessman.” In 1902 the department had become Courses of Training for Business and by 1915 it had evolved into the College of Commerce and Business Administration. Four years prior to receiving college status, money was appropriated for a Commerce Building, which is now the east side of the Henry Administration Building on the main campus quadrangle. Records indicate that over a two-year period, \$250,000 was appropriated for the building, which was dedicated in 1913. This art deco building remained the home of the business school until 1925 when a new, and larger building, called the new Commerce Building was built on Gregory Drive, across from the main library. When David Kinley, president of the university from 1920–1930, died,

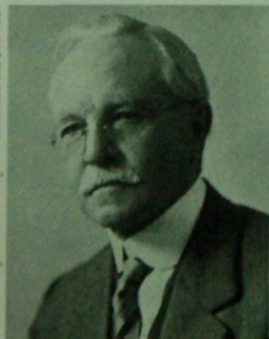
there was strong sentiment to rename a building in his honor. Originally the Board of Trustees proposed the library as the memorial. But, the Executive Committee of the college made a counter proposal — that the new Commerce Building be renamed David Kinley Hall. Their proposal



The original Commerce Building, circa 1913

Courtesy University of Illinois Archives

Courtesy University of Illinois Archives



David Kinley



David Kinley Hall, circa 1925

carried the day for these persuasive reasons: David Kinley initiated the “Courses” in 1902 and served as director until 1905, a period of great expansion; he founded the college in 1915; he was a professor of economics throughout his career at Illinois; and the building was constructed during his tenure as president.

By the early 1960s, space had become a rare commodity. The Board of Trustees approved funding for a new building, Commerce West, to ease the overcrowding. The building contained 98,206 square feet and was built, furnished, and

landscaped for a cost of \$3,361,710. The original use of the building was to house graduate study and provide offices for 100 faculty.

Although the exterior of the building reflected the Georgian style of architecture of David Kinley Hall, the interior was state-of-the-art when it was dedicated in



Commerce West, circa 1964

1964. Among its many attributes was an IBM computer lab, a rarity in buildings designed for the social sciences. There were seven amphitheatre classrooms similar to those found at Harvard Business School, a large auditorium, a well-appointed graduate student and faculty lounge, graduate student carrels, twenty-seven classrooms, and faculty offices. The building housed the departments of economics, marketing, industrial administration, and accounting, as well as the Graduate School of Business Administration, the Executive Development Center, and the Center for International Education. Before Commerce West was built, only three full professors had private offices. All others shared an office, with one space in DKH housing eight faculty. Although the new building did not totally relieve the college's shortage of space, it made a tremendous difference. As one contemporary newspaper article put it, "After being shunted to eleven locations, it will be a place to call home."



Computer lab, circa 1964

Courtesy University of Illinois Archives

Now, after thirty-six years, Commerce West has undergone a major renovation, thanks to the generosity of Al and Jane Wohlers, who made a lead gift of \$6 million, and Judd Malkin and Neil Bluhm, both 1959 accountancy graduates, who each gave \$1 million toward the renovation. On September 21, 2000, in recognition of their lead gift, Commerce West is being renamed Wohlers Hall. Room 260 will be called the Judd D. Malkin Dean's Suite and Room 141 will be known as the Neil G. Bluhm Lecture Hall.

As soon as the Wohlers voiced an interest in making a gift to refurbish Commerce West, the college conducted an

extensive survey of faculty, staff, and students to find out what changes were most desired. The top recommendations were to:

- ◆ Add a student lounge
- ◆ Improve technology in the building
- ◆ Provide new furnishings for the classrooms
- ◆ Improve heating and air conditioning
- ◆ Upgrade classrooms
- ◆ Enhance public areas (hallways, stairwells, etc.)

After a little more than one year of construction, during which the building has been fully occupied by faculty, students, and staff, renovations have been completed, in a timely manner and well within budget. To accomplish this feat has taken great coordination — cooperation on the part of the contractors, workers, and regular occupants of the building. Much work was scheduled at night or on the weekends while school was in session to cause as little disruption to the college's academic mission as possible.



Central entrance to Woblers Hall



One of the new faculty offices on the third floor

When you visit Wohlers Hall the first thing you notice is the formal entranceway that has been created to become the focal point of the building. Much of the work that has been done throughout the building is structural and won't be obvious to the casual observer. But these changes will make the building compatible with growing technology needs for the foreseeable future. Every office and classroom has been rewired to accommodate high speed computing. All eighteen classrooms have been upgraded and thirteen have undergone major renovations. The installation of a new air conditioning system, necessitated in part by changes the university was making to its chiller system, freed up considerable space on the third floor that has been converted into fifteen faculty offices and a new conference room. On the first floor, a student lounge has been added. Divided into two parts, one section has vending machines and tables and will be used as a place for social interchange. The other part has computer outlets and comfortable chairs, and will provide a place where students can study between classes.



Reception area in the Judd D. Malkin Dean's Suite



Putting the finishing touches on the new lobby

The faculty lounge on the third floor has been upgraded and the suite that houses the reception area and the conference room of the dean's office has been totally redone. All public areas have been refurbished and the entire building has taken on a new glow. Lastly, the women's restrooms throughout the building have been refurbished and enlarged. The increase in women's restrooms provides an interesting social commentary on changing times. When Commerce West was begun in the early 1960s, there were few women undergraduates and practically no female graduate students and faculty. Hence, the fourth floor, given over to faculty and graduate students was built without a ladies room. This renovation has added a restroom for women on the fourth floor, rectifying this shortcoming and reflecting the changing population in the college and on the fourth floor.

The college is indeed grateful to its benefactors for making this splendid refurbishment possible.

*Generations of students and faculty will
reap the benefits of their generosity.*

WELCOME TO WOHLERS HALL



Points of Interest

FIRST FLOOR

Central Entrance ♦ The entrance in the center of Wohlers Hall has been enhanced to provide a focal point for the building. Changes include the addition of columns, a plaza, and new plantings, as well as a passenger pick-up and drop-off space for visitors. The new design also incorporates a handicap ramp.

Front Lobby ♦ The central entrance leads into a gracious lobby. An elevator has been installed just inside the front door to transport handicapped visitors to the main part of the lobby. Features of the new lobby include a handsome rotunda, a rotating globe, and a computer operated information kiosk that will provide visitors with information about the building and its inhabitants. Also located in the front hall is a plaque, commemorating the generous gift from the Wohlers that made this renovation possible.

Student Lounge ♦ At the north east end of the building, space has been carved out to provide a gathering place for students. The student lounge is divided into two sections: one area can be used by students to relax between classes, socialize with classmates, exchange ideas, and grab a snack; the other area provides a quiet haven where students can study between classes. This room contains comfortable chairs and has computer hook-ups. Between the two sections are six vending machines, offering a variety of drinks and snacks.

SECOND FLOOR

Dean's Suite ♦ The dean's office, Room 260, has been extensively renovated. The reception area and conference room have been rebuilt and refurnished. In recognition of his gift in support of the remodeling of Commerce West, the dean's office has been renamed the Judd D. Malkin Dean's Suite.

THIRD FLOOR

Faculty Offices and Conference Room ♦ The installation of a new university chiller system freed up about 3,000 square feet, which allowed the college to create a suite of fifteen faculty offices and a conference room.

Faculty Lounge ♦ During the course of the renovation, the faculty lounge was transformed into a suite of make-shift offices that housed dispossessed faculty, administrators, and staff. Now that everyone is in his/her own space, the faculty lounge has been remodeled and refurnished and is once again ready for use. As before, the lounge is divided into two sections — the north end is reserved for faculty and staff use during the work day; the south end can be reserved for faculty and student meetings and events.

For further information about the renovations please contact Pat Cleary or Carol Nelson.