Building community by Carole Gieseke

The College of Business has a new place to call home

This issue of VISIONS marks the debut of a new department: College Close-up. Designed to keep readers current with Iowa State’s academic colleges, this department will profile one college in every issue. This spring, we feature the College of Business, Iowa State’s youngest and third-largest college.

There’s a lot of “wow” built into the College of Business’s $25.1 million new home.

The L-shaped, four-story Gerdin Business Building features the state-of-the-art technology you’d expect from a brand-new facility designed for business students: wireless Internet connections, the latest computers, multimedia projection systems, high-tech labs and classrooms.

But what you don’t expect is to walk into an enormous living room, bustling with students and faculty happily drinking cups of gourmet coffee, reading newspapers, working on their laptop computers, and munching on freshly baked cookies.

The 2,140-square-foot commons area, home to the Business Cafe, boasts floor-to-ceiling glass panels and a 28-foot-high ceiling. Yet the space remains cozy, with its upholstered, earth-tone couches, comfy chairs, and round-top tables. And it’s just one of the many spaces in the Gerdin Business Building for students to meet, study, and learn.

Open since Jan. 6, 2004, and with its official dedication on Feb. 20, the Gerdin Business Building is the first true home to ISU’s youngest college. Iowa State announced plans to construct the new building in the southeast corner of central campus in 1998, when Russell and Ann Gerdin of Coralville, Iowa, donated $10 million for the project. That gift launched a $35 million initiative that includes an endowment for faculty development, program enhancements, and scholarships.

The resulting facility has resonated with each of the college’s primary constituents – students, faculty, and staff – according to College of Business Dean Labh Hira.

“Anybody who walks into this building will say, ‘Gosh, this was designed for me.’ Everybody gets a sense that this building was designed with their needs and purposes and wishes in mind.”

Two design features are responsible for that feeling. First, the faculty are “intermingled” on third floor to maximize interdisciplinary interaction.

“Our faculty didn’t want accounting in one area, finance in another area,” said Hira. “That surprised the architects, but it didn’t surprise me. That’s the kind of community we have built among the faculty.”

The second design feature is simple organization: Classrooms are grouped together, student services are together, administration is together, faculty offices are together.

“From a student functionality point of view, this building is very easy to

The Gerdin Business Building was nearly finished when this aerial photo was taken last fall, looking northwest toward the center of campus.


- 111,000 square feet
- $25.1 million project, funded by a $10 million lead gift by Russell and Ann Gerdin of Coralville, Iowa. Additional funding from the state of Iowa and other private gifts.
- Location: Corner of Knoll Road and Union Drive, southeast part of campus.
- Open: Jan. 6, 2004
- Official dedication: Feb. 20, 2004
- 4 stories
- 300-seat lecture hall
- 8 classrooms
- 4 computer labs
- 2 learning labs
- 2 help rooms
- 8 team rooms for group projects
- 2 seminar rooms
- 12 interview rooms
- 4 conference rooms
- Space for graduate and undergraduate student interaction
- Space for student organizations, recruiters, and career services
- Coffee shop/cafe
- Small Business Development Center headquarters
- State-of-the-art technology, including wireless Internet access throughout the building
- Behavioral research lab with observation rooms
In its first 14 days of business, the bustling Business Café sold 880 cups of coffee ("Business Blend" is the most popular), 1,854 bottled beverages, 1,003 baked goods, 662 sandwiches, 178 salads, and 46 pieces of fruit.

About the College of Business

- Founded in 1984 as College of Business Administration
- Name changed to College of Business in 1991
- Dean: Labh S. Hira
- Number of undergrad majors: 3,635*
- Number of graduate students: 295*
- Number of faculty: 84
- Rank: ISU's third-largest college in terms of student numbers*
- Accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, which accredits only 25 percent of the 1,200 business schools in the nation
- Undergraduate programs in accounting, finance, management, management information systems, marketing, production operations management, and transportation and logistics
- MBA program and advanced degrees in accounting, information systems, information assurance, and human-computer interaction.

*Statistics from fall 2003
navigate," Hira said.
Students agree.
“This building is awesome,” said Adam Zook, a junior marketing major from Ankeny. “We couldn’t ask for more than this.”

Even in early January, students had settled in to the building’s cozy study nooks and team rooms, and they moved easily from classes to labs to lounges.
“The classrooms are great for discussion,” said McKaela Grasmick, a senior marketing major from Chaska, Minn. “You can actually talk and be heard.”

The building is expected to be the last major structure to be built on central campus, and it fills one of the university’s greatest needs: classroom space.
“Central campus needed more classroom space,” said Kim Schroeder, director of marketing and alumni relations for the College of Business.
“This building has eight classrooms, plus a large lecture hall, seminar rooms, team rooms, and learning labs.”

Hira says the new building already has become a source of pride among College of Business alumni and supporters. Private contributions covered more than 60 percent of the cost of the new facility. Donors have also provided increasing support for faculty and for student scholarships.

So everybody’s happy. The college has a new home, and everyone loves it. No, wait. There is just one small
problem with the Business Café. “People say it's too convenient,” says Janice Grove, who coordinates the food for the Business Café. “Our pastries are too tempting. Everyone says they are going to gain weight!”

Upcoming College of Business Activities

- International Business Conference, April 2, 2004
- Class Reunions, April 17 (for alumni graduating in years ending in 4 or 9)
- Robert Stafford Lecture on Banking, May 26

Points of pride

- ISU accounting students rank among the top 5 U.S. universities in all four sections of the CPA exam (2003).
- Finance faculty 2nd in the nation for publications in the top refereed journals when compared with other institutions without a Ph.D. program in finance.
- ISU’s entrepreneurial program is ranked as a top-100 program according to Entrepreneur Magazine (April 2003).
- The college administers Iowa’s 13 Small Business Development Centers, which create an economically stronger and healthier Iowa. In one year, SBDC clients generated 765 new jobs, produced $32.1 million in incremental sales, and contributed nearly $4 million in additional federal and state tax revenues.
- Nationally, the transportation and logistics program ranks 2nd among transportation programs, among the top 5 in transportation research and 9th among logistics programs.
- The college’s career services office placed more than 500 College of Business students in internships and co-ops in 2002-03.
- Brad Shander, professor of management, was awarded an $18,000 Philip G. Hubbard Award for Outstanding Education in April 2002.
- The Marketing Department is ranked 2nd for non-Ph.D. institutions in research impact and productivity and 33rd when compared to all colleges and universities.
- Russell Laznick, professor of marketing, has served as president of the American Academy of Advertising and is the editor of the Journal of Advertising.
- An interdepartmental master’s and Ph.D. degree in human-computer interaction was created to train researchers to understand how these technologies can be applied to businesses.
- Since its inception in 1997, the Pappajohn Center for Entrepreneurship has provided assistance to help launch 245 companies currently employing more than 800 people.