

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

NEWS BUREAU | PUBLIC AFFAIRS

507 East Green Street, Room 345
Champaign, IL 61820



NEWS

Released 10/4/16

[\\$25M gift from tech entrepreneur and UI alumnus Thomas Siebel will fund construction of Siebel Center for Design](#)

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CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — The 60,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art facility will cultivate interdisciplinary design thinking and will foster innovation in undergraduate and graduate curricula in multiple colleges.

The Thomas and Stacey Siebel Foundation and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign today announced a \$25 million lead gift to establish the Siebel Center for Design. The new two-story building will be a campuswide hub for student-focused design thinking and learning.

The center will facilitate and support innovative approaches to product, process and user interface design, with an emphasis on advanced technology, creativity, purpose and multidisciplinary collaboration. The remainder of the funding for the \$48 million project will come from institutional funds.

The Siebel Center for Design will maximize opportunities for interaction throughout its flexible collaboration studios and open gathering and meeting areas, designed to facilitate problem-solving, immersion, making and doing. Whether it is the design of physical things like a new mobile phone or medication, intangibles like software or social services, or processes such as the best way to deliver clean water in the developing world, the Siebel Center for Design will support all fields by fostering design-thinking academic ideals.

“Tom Siebel has established himself as one of the world’s leading innovators by refusing to be limited by disciplinary boundaries – whether in software, in energy systems or through his campaign against methamphetamine abuse,” said Chancellor Robert Jones. “It is clear to me that he focuses on big problems and brings the right expertise and resources together to solve them. And he’s spent his career developing companies and products that help others do the same thing. Now, the Siebel Center for Design is going to offer our students an unmatched facility to develop those same box-shattering approaches in their own lives and careers.”

Andreas Cangellaris, dean of the College of Engineering, said the Siebel Center for Design will offer the entire campus opportunities to rethink the student experience at Illinois.

“Many of our students arrive at Illinois with an innovative, entrepreneurial spirit. Many more develop that spirit during their time here,” Cangellaris said. “Tom Siebel understands that as well as anyone. He’s giving us the opportunity to offer a design-thinking education that will be unique in its breadth and depth. The Siebel Center for Design will help reimagine the land-grant university for the 21st century. It will drive students to make the most of their wide-ranging creativity and deliver new ideas to the world in unexpected, thrilling ways.”

Illinois students have a long history of putting their academic experiences into entrepreneurial practice. From affordable prosthetic limbs for mass deployment in war-ravaged regions to cheap solar-powered lanterns to step-climbing wheelchairs, Illinois students have been practicing the concepts of design thinking for years.

“The combination of top-tier academics and entrepreneurial drive at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is powerful. By infusing all areas of study with the multidisciplinary approaches of design thinking, this facility will create unlimited opportunities for the students to fuel and nurture that drive,” said Thomas Siebel, chairman of the Thomas and Stacey Siebel Foundation.

Cangellaris said Siebel’s own degrees from Illinois – history to business to computer science – followed an unusual progression at the time. “Today, we know that cross-disciplinary educational experiences like Tom pursued are critical in preparing our students to leave here ready to make significant impacts in the world.”

Symbolic Location

The center will feature five team-based collaboration studios for up to 400 students, including one studio for large-scale construction and graded access for big prototypes. It will also include a large workshop for 3-D printing, metal fabrication, laser cutting, water-jet cutting and computer-controlled machining. Two digital media studios will support video and audio recording, as well as immersive technologies for virtual reality applications. There will also be public gathering spaces, meeting rooms and galleries to encourage more informal interaction.

Groundbreaking for the Siebel Center for Design is planned for summer 2017, with construction expected to take about 18 months.

The 60,000 square-foot building, designed by the architectural practice Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, will be prominently sited on one of the major campus axes, between Huff Hall and the Art and Design Building. The location is a symbolic link connecting the north and south areas of the campus.

Interim Provost Edward Feser said the site was carefully chosen. “The Siebel Center for Design was conceived by Tom as a facility and resource that would bring students, faculty and external stakeholders from many fields together to solve real-world challenges, drawing on knowledge developed in home disciplines and guided by a rigorous integrative framework.”

Feser said the center, which will focus primarily upon supporting instruction and secondarily upon supporting research, will help to innovate undergraduate and graduate curricula in multiple colleges. Rather than offer independent degree programs, the center will help colleges incorporate design principles, concepts and practices into their own offerings.

“Illinois has been very successful at building world-leading interdisciplinary research centers that bring together scholars from widely different areas of expertise,” Feser said. “The Siebel Center for Design will offer a similar environment for interdisciplinary collaboration among our students.”

Rethinking the Student Experience

Feser said design-thinking concepts are already embedded in many programs and curricula. “In fact, the size and strength of design-related teaching and research at Illinois is a key reason why the Siebel Center for Design will be unmatched in its transformative impact. A state-of-the-art facility that connects disciplines and helps embed theories and practices of design in the educational experience will position Illinois as the place to go for students who want to prepare themselves to solve grand challenges and make significant change.”

“Innovative thinking is key to solving big problems. The resources at the Siebel Center for Design will equip University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign students with the skills to address the most difficult challenges,” Siebel said.

Cangellaris said the gift marks one more in a growing list of campus investments from the three-time university alumnus.

“Tom Siebel is a transformative force for this university. From endowed scholarships and faculty chairs to the Thomas M. Siebel Center for Computer Science, his investments in the people and facilities here generate impact that will be felt for generations to come,” Cangellaris said. “The Siebel Center for Design is an exciting new addition to that legacy and one that will benefit all the students who come to Illinois looking for an experience they can’t find at any other university.”

About Thomas M. Siebel

Mr. Siebel is the chairman and chief executive officer of C3 IoT, an enterprise PaaS and SaaS software company that enables companies to design, develop, deploy, provision and operate large-scale IoT applications. C3 IoT applies the power of big data, advanced analytics, social networking, machine learning and cloud computing to enable the rapid development of IoT SaaS systems.

Mr. Siebel was the founder, chairman and chief executive officer of Siebel Systems, one of the world’s leading software companies, which merged with Oracle Corporation in January 2006. Founded in 1993, Siebel Systems rapidly became a leader in application software with more than 8,000 employees in 32 countries, over 4,500 corporate customers and annual revenue in excess of \$2 billion.

Mr. Siebel earned three degrees from the U. of I.: a bachelor's in history (1975), a master's in business administration (1983) and a master's in computer science (1985). He also holds an honorary doctorate from Illinois.

About the Thomas and Stacey Siebel Foundation

The Thomas and Stacey Siebel Foundation, established in 1996, funds projects to support energy solutions, educational and research programs, public health, and the homeless and underprivileged. Thomas Siebel is the founder and chair.