



The Making of



University planners wanted to do more than merely expand venerable Adams Hall. They wanted a facility that would transform the education of OU's future business leaders.

For the record, Michael F. Price Hall totals roughly 55,000 square feet of space divided among classrooms, computer labs, student support centers, study spaces, board rooms, common areas and advising offices. Constructed by Flintco of Oklahoma City, the new facility was designed by the Westwood, Kansas, architectural firm of Peckham Guyton Albers and Viets, with oversight by OU's own Architectural and Engineering Services.

But to describe Price Hall in terms of numbers alone—or space delegation or design—is to do it an injustice. The building has to be experienced, as it was by Buddy Ellis, director of development for the Price College of Business, as he drove south down Asp Avenue on a lazy summer morning in 2005.

"I pulled up to the middle of the circle drive [leading to the north entrance of the building] and saw Price Hall—the building with the fountain in the foreground and a little of the stadium visible beyond—and I thought to myself, 'Wow, this is great!' That was really the first time it sunk in that this was all real."

Price Hall is real, all right, standing just east of Adams Hall, the ancestral home of the College of Business now serving as the anchor between a rich history and a promising future. Much of the excitement about the college's future can be credited to the man whose name is now synonymous with both the college and its new building.

Michael Price is a 1973 OU alumnus and one of the country's most successful and respected mutual fund managers. His longtime support includes an \$18 million gift in 1997 that funded endowed chairs and professorships as well as other needs. Price then laid the foundation for a successful building campaign with a \$7.2 million gift in 2002, nearly half the \$15 million in private funds that, coupled with \$3 million in public money, resulted in the construction of Price Hall.

"He's always been active and asked questions about what we need," Ellis says of Price. "We were talking about space; he became interested and subsequently provided the \$7.2 million gift. Without his help, it would not have been a possibility."

During dedication ceremonies for the building in September 2005, OU President David L. Boren underscored the importance of Price's support.

"He has changed the life of this university, the lives of the generations who walk through the gates of this university, because he cares so much about others," Boren proclaimed.

That sense of caring inspired the "wow" feeling Ellis experienced, a common

Price Hall

BY BILL MOAKLEY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT TAYLOR

reaction for those who walk Price Hall's interior or its skillfully designed grounds.

The walkway on the building's south side leads to a spacious courtyard, complete with lush landscaping and inviting benches and tables, creating a remarkable destination for study or contemplation. Inside, on the first floor, wide hallways lined with rich, smooth oak paneling set off common areas furnished with soft, plush sofas and chairs, sturdy wood tables and tasteful accessories, all framed by windows that stretch nearly from floor to ceiling and allow an abundance of filtered sunlight.

Although the building is almost always buzzing with students, it retains a quiet, dignified ambiance. Those for whom the building was constructed—the students—appreciate the beautiful and functional ground floor.

"I remember the first time I walked through here, I didn't expect to see a very nice, inviting lounge," says Tara Hagan, a senior in accounting. "But it's great, especially if you have a break between classes. Students are there all the time. It's so warm and homey, and you can tell when there is a big project coming due or it's finals week because it will be filled with students."

The second and third floors of the building house nine new classrooms to accommodate the college's expanding student body. With capacity ranging from 48 to 64 students, the tiered "case" rooms, which include the latest in classroom technology, were meticulously designed with influence from the college's building committee, composed of faculty, staff and students.

Faculty were particularly eager to participate in the vision for the classrooms.

"In my mind, it was crucial that faculty really pay attention to what was being done," explains Robert Lipe, KPMG Centennial Professor of Account-



■ David Williams, director of the ConocoPhillips Business Communication Center, offers presentation tips to Maribel Diaz, an industrial engineering senior, as Barbara Miller (left), management senior, looks on. Students can practice multimedia presentations with coaching from Williams before delivering their class assignments to their professors.

ing and a guiding force on the committee. "The last thing we needed was to have the rooms designed by someone who hadn't ever been in a classroom teaching. The logistics really needed to be worked out."

As part of that process, Lipe visited The Ohio State University for a day and photographed some of its classrooms. He and the other members of the committee examined online representations of classrooms at still other schools, including Case Western University. Ultimately, they went further than merely looking at examples; they built their own mock-classroom.

In a large events room in Oklahoma Memorial Union, Lipe and other committee members used exact measurements—and lots of masking tape—to plot the shape of potential classrooms as well as configurations and placement of desks, chairs and equipment. During another session, they used cardboard to construct a replica of the planned consoles from which professors would work.

"You can see things on paper, and then when they are implemented, they just don't work," Lipe explains. "As an

example, as soon as people walked in and starting looking at the consoles and standing by them, we knew they were too high. There would have been no way to tell that from the drawings. But all of a sudden, here is this big piece of cardboard furniture, and you can see it wouldn't work. So we modified it and made it workable."

The committee also favored installing two sets of whiteboards, which function similarly to traditional blackboards but with colored pens replacing chalk; two video projectors; and two projection screens in each room, all off set from the center. Traditional classroom makeup has included one screen and one board in the middle of the room.

"That basically grew out of experience," Lipe explains. "Currently in Adams Hall [classrooms], we have one projector, one screen and one blackboard. If the screen comes down, it usually covers the blackboard. Often times you want to project an image and then go off to the side and do some writing. If you stick the projector in the center of the room, and you have one whiteboard or blackboard in the center of the room, you can't [use] both."

The end product was a series of classrooms that work well.

"By doing the mockups and thinking through what a professor does, the committee came up with what I think were fabulous ideas," Lipe says. "It was a total committee effort, and it really worked well. Even the architects said they wished all the committees they dealt with functioned as well and came up with such good ideas."

All but one of the classrooms in Price Hall employ tiered seating in what Lipe calls a "semi-V shape," which allows for visual contact between students and the professor as well as each other, resulting in more lively discussion as a whole class and in small groups.

"I wouldn't say I'm a student of class-



■ Buddy Ellis, director of development for the Michael F. Price College of Business, pauses in Founders Hall in the newly completed Price Hall. Ellis was a steadying force during the building's construction, serving as liaison between administration, faculty and staff, design and construction companies and, perhaps most importantly, donors who helped fund the project.

room technology, but when I look at what we've done, I have great difficulty saying, 'I wish we would have done this or that differently,' " says Robert Dauffenbach, associate dean for research and graduate programs, director of the Center for Economic and Management Research and professor of management information systems. "I just don't see a thing that I wish we'd done differently."

people representing various stakeholders with various perspectives. You get them in a room and discuss what you're trying to accomplish and how that can be best accomplished. Admittedly, there are going to be people who don't get everything the way they want it, but in the end it comes out as kind of a 'wow' experience."

"Wow" also is frequently heard on Price Hall's second floor, where the ConocoPhillips Business Communication Center is located. Stocked with 23 multi-media, digital workstations across its spacious floor plan, the center allows students to learn how to use the digital media technologies commonly encountered in both the college and the workplace.

"We get students who have to design advertisements, and we get others who have to create Web pages," explains David Williams, director of the center. "We get a lot of students who have to put together a decent PowerPoint presentation. We can help with the technical end of all that and more. The content is the students' call. We help them with how to communicate it."

In addition to working on individual or group projects in the center, students also can run through class presentations in what amounts to a small version of a classroom, complete with all the technology they will use during presentations in front of professors and classmates. Williams provides coaching as well as recording services. *continued*



■ One of the favorite features of Price Hall among its students is the spacious common area on the first floor. Used as a gathering space for students studying between classes, groups discussing class projects or as a quiet spot to read the newspaper, comfortable and inviting furniture is bathed in natural light welcomed through large bay windows.



■ Michael F. Price (left), a 1973 alumnus of the College of Business, joined OU President David L. Boren in September 2005 for the Price Hall dedication. In recognition of his pacesetter support, both financially and intellectually, the college and the new building carry Price's name. During the dedication ceremony, President Boren credited Price with changing the lives of this generation of students as well as future generations.

"I can watch them run through their presentation, record it, watch it with them and help them with particular areas," Williams says. "When they show up in class, they already have a feel for their strengths and weaknesses and what they need to work on. [The run-through] gives them a chance for their classroom presentations to be much better."

The center also provides a preview of what might be expected of students once they graduate and find themselves preparing presentations as part of their jobs.

"They can get a feel for how businesses incorporate some of those digital media resources into their corporate communications," Williams says. "We're not trying to turn out media artists here. We're just trying to turn out business students who can communicate using digital resources. To be able to take dry informa-

tion and communicate it visually is a very strong skill."

Other facilities in Price Hall include undergraduate and graduate advising centers, undergraduate student support services, a graduate student support center and lounge, and nine study rooms designed for use by small groups needing a place to study or conduct group project work.

"We've moved from where business education is done on an individual basis to where it's done in groups," Lipe explains. "We keep hearing from recruiters that they want people who can work in groups. Those rooms can be checked out by students, and they can check out a laptop as well and go work effectively in groups."

In an era when design and technology often combine to create sterile, utilitarian atmospheres, Price Hall's greatest attribute may be its warmth. Think grandma's house with lots of intelligent folks and computers around.

"It looks new and prestigious, but also somewhat strangely old," is how Dauffenbach puts it. "I thought that was a real neat trick to pull off for a new building. It's inviting. It's comfortable. It has this stature and ambiance and aura of stability in a brand new building."

Perhaps the building's most striking quality also is its most subtle. It is not evident when computers whirl to life or document cameras project images beside

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professors who still have room to write on adjoining boards. It isn't to be found in the communications center.

It is found, instead, in the quiet message imparted by the walls, courtyard, fountain and engraved brick pavers. It is found in the quiet of the spacious common areas and in the hurried pace of the classrooms. It is the message that someone cares about what goes on there. It tells this generation that the next generation is their responsibility, the rightful recipient of the anticipated fruits of their labors. In a moment of reflection, Professor Kasulis sums it up best.

"Perhaps nothing can be as influential as a first-hand look at a role model," Kasulis says. "The donors of that building are role models for our students. The role and responsibility of successful people is giving back to what helped get them to where they are. The responsibility to assist others is a great lesson for our students."

A lesson well learned, as evidenced by the thoughts of Lindyn Lamb, a sophomore majoring in international business.

"I think the message is that this is a cycle," Lamb says as she reflects on the gifts from which she now benefits. "We're not being run through a mill here and leaving and never looking back. It serves as a reminder that we will be tied to the University forever. It reminds us that we have a duty to give back, not just to the University, but to our communities. It's a very important lesson."

Taught in what has already become a very important building.

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