



## New landscape, new phase

Polymer Engineering Academic Center is first building of the University's \$200 million campus enhancement initiative

By Ken Torisky

**I**t was the perfect gift to celebrate The University of Akron's New Landscape for Learning – wrapped up in a giant polymer ribbon and bow.

On June 8, about 250 faculty, staff, students and friends of the University helped open up this new gift – the Polymer Engineering Academic Center.

The \$5.9 million, 35,000-square-foot facility is the first building to be dedicated in the University's \$200 million campus enhancement effort. The four-story structure features the 134-seat Sundar and Eleanor Aggarwal Lecture Hall; a 24-seat distance learning classroom; a student calculation room; a general purpose classroom; faculty, staff and student offices; and conference and seminar rooms. The facility also houses the Rubber Division of The American Chemical Society, which has cultivated a seven-decade-long relationship with The University of Akron.

A glass walkway connects the Polymer Engineering Academic Center to the neighboring Olson Research Center, which houses laboratories, instrumentation and equipment used for polymer engineering research.

University President Luis M. Proenza presided at the dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony, which also featured distinguished guest speakers such as: U.S. Rep. Tom Sawyer '68, '70; State Senator Kevin Coughlin; Ted Curtis, UA vice president, Capital Planning and Facilities Management; Dr. Frank N. Kelley '58, '59, '61, dean of the College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering; Rudy School '73, chair, Rubber Division, American Chemical Society; Dr. Lloyd A. Goettler, chair, Polymer Engineering Department; Taner Sen, president, Polymer Engineering Student Organization; and Dr. Emmanuel Giannellis, Department of Materials, Cornell University. Other special guests at the ceremony included UA Board of Trustees

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Visitors enjoy the spacious atrium of the new Polymer Engineering Academic Center.

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vice chairman Dr. Mark N. Apte and member Diane C. Fisher, and former UA President Dr. Norman P. Auburn.

The opening of the facility continues the academic leadership of the University's world-renowned College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering, Proenza emphasized.

"Today we dedicate the Polymer Engineering Academic Center – the first of what will be a series of new University facilities – as we continue to change our landscape and grow this University," he said. "This elegant and yet very functional building stands as a tribute to our world-class polymer program, and serves as an example of what The University of Akron has already accomplished, what it is pursuing and what it is destined to become.

"In this increasingly global knowledge economy, it is our people who are our most important materials – our most important product, if you will – and through them we are able to construct things like the many fine polymer products that do define the new materials for the new economy," Proenza added.

Rep. Sawyer told the crowd that the new polymer engineering center will be a key contributor to the growth of the University's polymer programs, and also to the growth of regional and global economies.

"As I travel around the country I am frequently asked, 'What do you do in Akron these days?' I tell them what we make in Akron – we make decisions, and we make progress. And at the heart of that progress is the work that has been centered on this University for 100 years now, and is more important today than it has ever been in our entire modern life.

"We're reflecting the first stages in a vision for a future that is enormously important. But what we're really doing is choosing that future. That future isn't going to happen by accident. It is going to happen because people of vision came together, and leadership made it possible," Sawyer said. "Today we are on the threshold of becoming the predominant institution – not in Northeast Ohio, not just in the United States, but literally in the world – in opening a whole new field of materials developed for specific

applications and designed from the molecular level up. We can change our world and our lives and the way we live them. That's extraordinary."

The addition of facilities such as the Polymer Engineering Academic Center is gaining the attention of Ohio's legislators, according to State Sen. Coughlin.

"The University of Akron has become regarded by members of the legislature – in both parties in both chambers – as a leader in technology, as a leader in research and as a leader in education," he said. "This building today is proof of your success – it is here because of the demand. More and more people want to get into this program. More and more people want to be part of the exciting changes that are happening here at the University. It is proof that you are succeeding and growing.

"And I fully expect, under your leadership, that we will be back here in a year or two doing this again for yet another polymer facility of some kind – whether for classroom space or research space," Coughlin added.

Dean Kelley said the building dedication signaled a glorious day for the University's polymer scientists, who identify and build giant molecules, and polymer engineers, who mix and shape these molecules into materials and products for commerce.

"This new building will allow them to recruit the best faculty and students, and that is critically important to the growth and success of any program. Today we celebrate and welcome friends to our new home," Kelley said.

While the Polymer Engineering Academic Center brings well-deserved recognition to the department, it also brings a challenge, Goettler said.

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A variety of high-tech classroom demonstrations and facility tours took place at the event.



# Dedication ceremony plants new program phase

By Ken Torisky

Change is sprouting at The University of Akron – literally.

The June 8 dedication of the Polymer Engineering Academic Center also served as the backdrop for the planting of the first of 30,000 trees as part the University's New Landscape for Learning campus enhancement effort.

President Luis M. Proenza invited a distinguished group – including U.S. Rep. Tom Sawyer; UA Board of Trustees members Dr. Mark N. Apte and Diane C. Fisher; Dr. Frank N. Kelley, dean of the College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering; and Dr. Lloyd A. Goettler, chair, Polymer Engineering Department – to plant the symbolic first Linden tree.

The tree planting marked “a monumental occasion in the history of The University of Akron,” Proenza said.

“In this, the first year of the new millennium, The University of Akron has embarked upon a new path, a New Landscape for Learning, as we dramatically reshape and redefine the University and its campus.

“We are excited about the progress that is being made here at The University of Akron as we have set in motion a plan to capture our destiny,” the president continued. “One of the University's five fundamental strategies deals with the enhancement of the campus, which includes adding 30 acres of new green space and planting trees to provide the campus with an open, green, park-like atmosphere, he added.

“Very much like the trees that we plant today, we too will continue to grow and branch out as a University, as we differentiate and distinguish ourselves from others in strengthening our position and reputation as the public research university for northern Ohio.”

Proenza pointed out other changes to the campus landscape, such as the construction of the new Arts and Sciences Building and the new Student Union. And on the far east portion of the campus, a new four-level, 1,100-space parking deck was opened in time for classes this fall.

In addition, the closing of portions of Carroll and Union streets will unify the campus, creating a core area unparalleled in other metropolitan university sites, he said.

“We will be adding more open space – creating courtyards and walkways and terraces and plazas – nearly doubling what currently exists on our campus,” Proenza said. “Impressive, you might say? Yes, but this \$200 million project is only the beginning. Because this year we will be commencing the planning efforts for the second phase of our master plan that will move our University even further.”

Ted Curtis, UA's vice president of Capital Planning and Facilities Management, said the ongoing effort will create a suburban feeling in the University's urban setting.

“In 1951 this campus had 13 acres and 10 buildings,” he explained. “Today, we have 79 buildings and 180 acres with a value of \$800 million. We don't have a consistent architectural style, nor do we have a pastoral setting. Therefore, we are going to create it with trees, landscaping and 30 new acres of green space. Our master plan calls for 30,000 new trees, and with that you add bushes, flowers and shrubs. This equates to 50,000 new plants on this campus, creating our New Landscape for Learning. This presentation will be the common thread that will visually lift this campus into a suburban feeling.

“Winston Churchill stated, ‘We shape our buildings, and afterward our buildings shape us,’” Curtis concluded. “Judging by what we have today, we are in good shape.” ■

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“Along with recognition always goes a challenge that never ends,” he said. “The challenge is for us to not only continue what we've been doing in the past, but to do it even better. We must not become complacent with these fine new facilities. We need to go forward. We will accept that challenge and start working on developing programs, curricula and research activities that will take us to the next step and justify further gifts.”

After the dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony, Giannelis conducted a symposium, “Frontiers in Polymer Nanotechnology,” that offered guests a demonstration of the distance learning capabilities of the Aggarwal Lecture Hall. Visitors also attended tours and viewed artwork by UA art students, who used polymer crystals and other media to symbolize polymer research. ■