





OPEN FOR

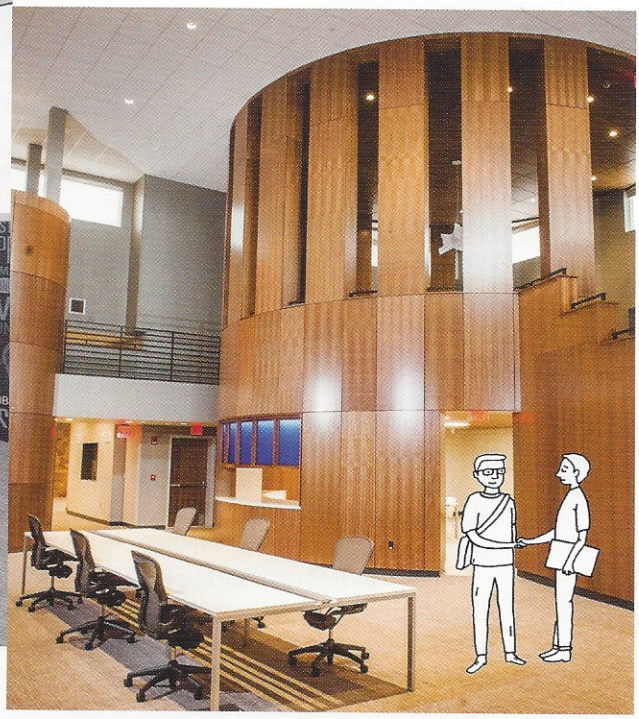
The new ICB is a place where students come together to solve problems,

BY MARY ELLEN COLLINS
ILLUSTRATIONS BY DRUE WAGNER





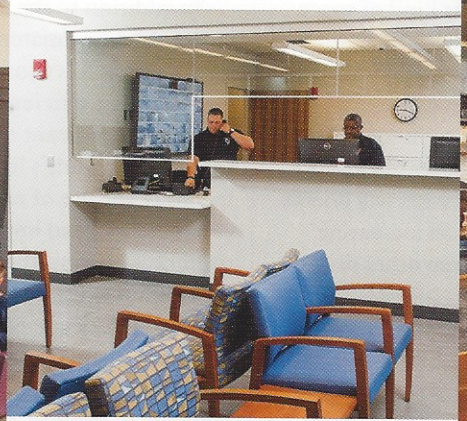


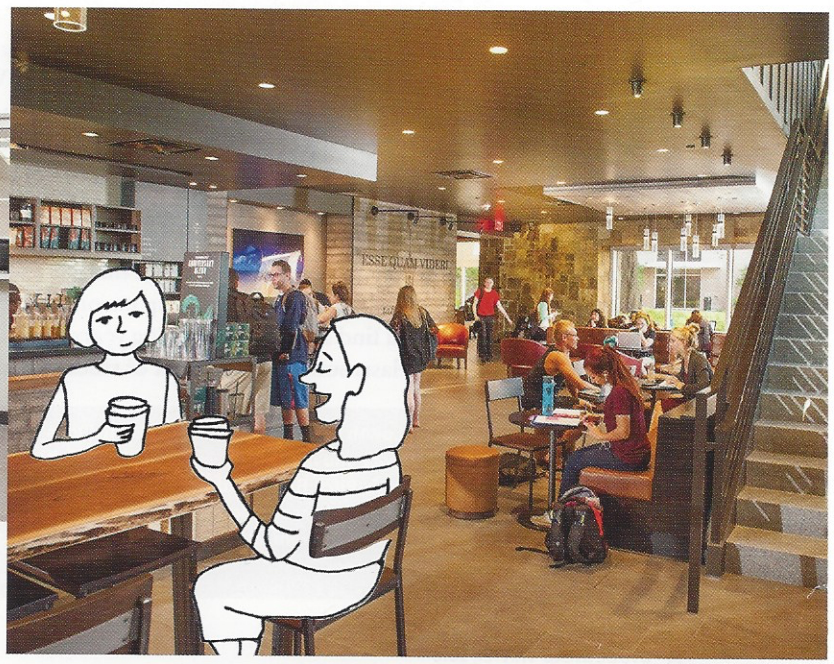


BUSINESS

learn, answer questions, relax, interact, teach and be taught.









STUDENT ENTREPRENEURS WHO ARE LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO WORK ON THEIR business plan, cybersecurity majors who need hands-on experience with security tools and programs, and faculty members who want to park and grab a latte before teaching a class all have a new destination on campus — the Innovation and Collaboration Building (ICB).

"This was one of the most complex and thoughtful building projects we have ever undertaken at UT," said UT President Ronald Vaughn about the ICB, which is located at the corner of Kennedy and North Boulevards.

When planning the ICB, Vaughn said the challenge was to address academic, administrative and student needs in a single building, and build within it unique spaces that would support students in their academic and co-curricular endeavors.

"Each area had their own space and functionality requirements, which required a lot of strategic thought and design," said Vaughn. "We spent a good deal of time studying model examples of design and function in higher education and industry, and tried to improve on those. There are designs, spaces and amenities for learning in this building that simply do not exist anywhere else in the world."

FLOORS ONE TO SEVEN

The first floor of the ICB is home to the Sykes College of Business' new cybersecurity program. In a classroom, lab and technical support area, students learn how to protect organizations' information and information systems by using industry standard tools. A dedicated server network with sophisticated software provides hands-on practice in a real cyber network.

The Campus Safety Center, which is also housed on the first floor, includes meeting and interview rooms, video monitoring and training rooms, evidence processing space, a walk-up window and a 24-hour dispatch center.

Perhaps the most popular occupant of the first floor is a Starbucks, which offers Starbucks Reserve®, a collection of unique coffees from farms all over the world. The Starbucks, with its comfortable indoor and patio seating and adjacent meeting and study areas, has already become a regular gathering spot for UT community members.

One floor up, visitors will find 22 faculty offices and several classrooms.

Though not glamorous, a much-needed expansion of the Rick Thomas Parking Garage occupies floors three through seven and adds 386 parking spaces to the garage's original 725 spaces.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON EIGHT

The John P. Lowth Entrepreneurship Center occupies the entire eighth floor, providing aspiring entrepreneurs with a unique space that encourages introspection, creativity and innovation.

"I was blessed to be involved (in the design process) from the beginning, and I visited many different entrepreneurship centers in the U.S., Europe and the Middle East," said Rebecca White, director of the Lowth Entrepreneurship Center. "We decided we wanted a very different kind of space, and it was designed with a focus on learning and the development of an entrepreneurial mindset."

The new space was built with the expectation that the number of entrepreneurship majors and minors will double in coming years, while an increasing number of students from other disciplines will also be inspired to explore their own entrepreneurial ideas.

Unique features of the center include a Collaboration Kitchen to facilitate informal interaction, Think Pods for private thought or conversations, and a Contemplation Loft for reflection and creative play.

EFFICIENCY AND FIT

Achieving a physical design that blended with the rest of the campus was a challenge, mainly due to the fact that four floors of the ICB are parking decks, according to Vaughn. "Despite that, we were still able to maintain our campus' architectural style of glass and red brick, while adding nice touches, including the chiseled arch over North A Street."

Vaughn also said one of the most visually attractive elements of the project is Agliano Park, with its fountains and unique landscaping. "This undoubtedly will become one of our students' most favorite outdoor hangouts, for both studying and socializing," said Vaughn.

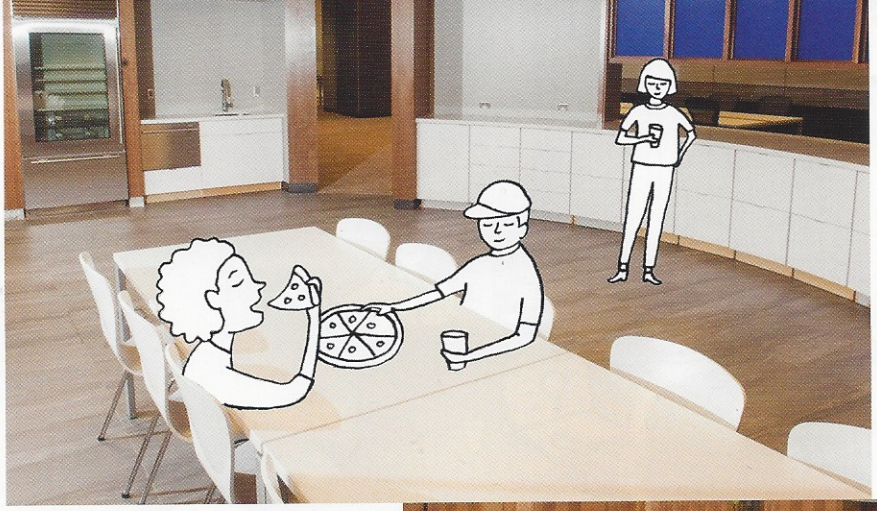
It was also important the building demonstrate the University's ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship. The ICB has been designed to be a candidate for the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).

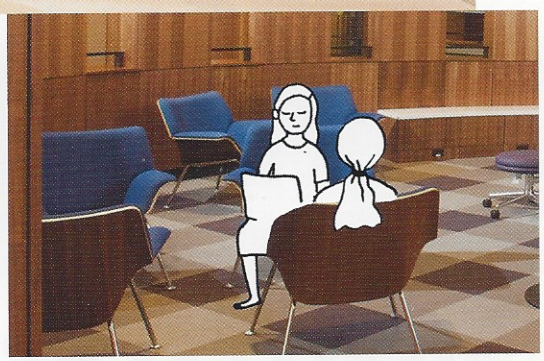
In addition to the fact that 30 percent of building materials were sourced locally, the ICB's connection to the campus' high-efficiency chiller plant results in significant energy cost savings. The building's lighting controls facilitate the use of natural light whenever possible, and low voltage lighting promotes energy efficiency.

From its creative design to its cutting-edge academic programs, the Innovation and Collaboration Building provides a stimulating environment for students to explore, discover and work together while carving out their own paths to success. **UT**

Previous spread; top row: The Lowth Entrepreneurship Center includes spaces that encourage introspection, creativity and innovation, including (from left) the Inspiration Center, a covered reception deck, a Pitch Room and the Contemplation Loft (viewed from below). Bottom row: The first and second floors are home to (from left) dedicated computer labs for the cybersecurity program, study and meeting areas, a Campus Safety center and a Starbucks Reserve®.







The Collaboration Kitchen (above) is a space for discussing business ideas around the kitchen table. The Contemplation Loft (right) gives students a place to reflect on what they're learning.

One Spartan Accelerator participant is senior Andrew Visnick, who started Cool College Cleaners in Fall 2014 and currently has 100 customers who take advantage of his weekly cleaning service. He particularly appreciates the chance to be surrounded by people who are knowledgeable about every aspect of starting and running a business.

"It's a nice community where you can reach out to anyone. There are always a few entrepreneurship professors hanging out, or entrepreneurs who come in and donate their time. Or you can always turn to people in the incubator," he said.

Visnick said having instant access to people who can help is far more attractive than having to make an appointment with someone. "A lot of times you have an idea, and you can take that to the next level pretty quickly by talking to people who've been there, done that," he said.

CURRENT COMMUNITY INCUBATOR PARTICIPANTS

- Andrew Favicchio '13, Sauce Digital
- Brian Galan '15, Midnight Waxers
- Ricardo Garcia Stenftenagel '14, ClassSuite
- Phil Michaels '10, MBA '15, M.S. '15, Tembo
- Matt Rutkovitz '13, SurgeCurve
- David Wistocki '13, DJ Dayve & Associates

CONTEMPLATION PART OF THE PROCESS

While the Community Incubator and Spartan Accelerator foster the coaching and mentoring, and apprenticeship learning modalities, the Entrepreneurship Center includes a number of areas that incorporate the collaboration, reflection and practice aspects.

"For the Collaboration Kitchen, the idea was that a lot of business ideas are hatched around the kitchen table," said White. "Just like the kitchen is the heart of the home, it's the heart of our space." The welcoming room includes a refrigerator, microwave and large table, along with displays of businesses that were started by alumni.

Entrepreneurs need to perfect their ability to explain their business in a way that will attract the interest of potential investors. "They have to practice their pitch over and over again, so we created a unique room designed especially for pitching," said White. The space includes an audiovisual booth for recording and reviewing pitches.

Those who appreciate the lively and collaborative environment of the center also make good use of the spaces designed for quiet time.

"People here are learning a lot, and you need the opportunity to reflect on what you're learning," said White. For that, individuals can head to the Contemplation Loft on the mezzanine level or one of two egg-shaped Think Pods. These unique, freestanding magenta and purple pods have bench seating inside along curved walls and offer the perfect place to brainstorm, problem-solve, or, as Michaels does, center oneself.

"I meditate in there every day," he said. "It's great for getting yourself out of the day-to-day (activity)."

IT'S A WINNING FORMULA

Although the center just opened in September, it is already garnering rave reviews, especially from the Community Incubator participants, like Matt Rutkovitz '13.

"We get unbelievable mentorship from faculty, and we have state-of-the-art everything at our fingertips," he said. "Not only is the incubator going to have a major impact on the community, it's also a great place for students to learn, and to live and breathe what it's like to start a company. It's 50,000 times more beneficial than what you can learn in a classroom."

Rutkovitz launched Outeraction, a digital marketing firm in 2014 and is in the incubator with his current venture, SurgeCurve, a company that will enable people to save money, make money and learn how to start their own business in less than two days.

The thoughtful design of the center, the breadth of available resources and the valuable input and support from faculty and fellow entrepreneurs has resulted in a one-of-a-kind creative haven for anyone at any stage of turning a business dream into reality. **UT**