

A new day for the mathematical and statistical sciences



Last May, NC State formally dedicated SAS Hall as the university's new home for mathematics and statistics. Construction of the \$32 million building was made possible by the Higher Education Bond Referendum passed by North Carolinians in 2000, as well as by gifts from private donors, including a substantial contribution from Cary-based software company, SAS.

The 119,000 square-foot building houses state-of-the-art classrooms, computer labs, tutorial centers and meeting and study space for students and faculty from NC State's mathematics and statistics departments. Quickly approaching the end of its first full academic year of use, SAS Hall has already had a profound impact on the faculty and staff of its two departments and students across the university.



PHOTOS BY MARC HALL



Mathematics and Statistics Department Heads Loek Helminck (left) and Sastry Pantula (right) flank (from left to right) Ginger and John Sall and Jim and Ann Goodnight of SAS.

A great facility worthy of a great tradition

NC State boasts a longstanding tradition of excellence in teaching and research in mathematics and statistics. The university ranks fifth nationally in both total research and development expenditures and in competitive federal research and development expenditures in the mathematical and statistical sciences. The

Department of Mathematics is one of the largest producers of doctoral degrees in mathematics in the nation. The Department of Statistics is among the nation's oldest and most prestigious, having been founded by renowned statistician Gertrude Cox in 1941.

"NC State's mathematical and statistical science programs rank among the best in the nation," says PAMS Dean Dan Solomon. "We now have a state-of-the-art facility that is worthy of the stature of our students and faculty."

Loek Helminck, head of the Department of Mathematics, agrees, adding that the new building not only reflects the two departments' current quality, but will help perpetuate it.

"We are both already recognized as top departments, but our new home helps project that image of quality to everyone who walks through our doors, including prospective students and faculty" Helminck says. Recalling the cramped, noisy corridors and offices of his department's former home, he adds with a smile, "Let's just say Harrelson Hall could be a tough sell to prospective faculty."

In contrast to Harrelson Hall and some of the other previous homes of the two departments, SAS Hall features spacious, flexible spaces for classrooms and student labs, faculty and graduate student offices, study areas and more.

A partnership with Cisco has helped ensure that all these great spaces also have great tech-

nology. The company provided state-of-the-art telephones, routers and other infrastructure that immediately made SAS Hall one of the most technologically advanced teaching facilities on campus.

Mathematics graduate student Catherine Buell appreciates both the technology and the overall quality of the environment the new building provides.

"The classrooms are well-equipped with great teaching tools that add to the learning experience," Buell says. "Honestly, I walk into SAS Hall and I immediately feel like I am at a university that has high expectations and is proud of its mathematics program. My mind still says, 'Wow!' whenever I enter the building."

While the high-tech classrooms and offices have received high praise, the spaces that members of both departments seem to have found the most beneficial are the common areas directly off the four-story main atrium.

"I've been amazed by how much I can find out about what's going on in the department simply by going over there with my brown bag lunch or to get a cup of coffee," says Sastry Pantula, head of the Department of Statistics.

Both departments' common areas—mathematics' on the fourth floor and statistics' on the fifth—seem to be brimming with activity all day long. That activity can take the shape of lunchtime seminars, student study groups,

potlucks, even a weekly game of Bridge.

Faculty and students are finding that the proximity of the various offices, meeting rooms and common areas in the new building are leading to greater communication and collaboration across the two departments as well as within. The departments are investigating ways to further foster and benefit from this newfound synergy.

Providing for all future mathematicians and statisticians... even the really young ones

One room in the new SAS Hall that may not get a lot of attention, but that is greatly appreciated by those who use it, is the Baby Care Room on the fifth floor. While still a relatively new concept, lactation and baby care rooms have been found to benefit new parents on college campuses and other workplaces across the country.

Statistics graduate student Breanne Cameron has found that having a comfortable, private baby care space nearby has made life a lot easier for her and her baby, Geoffrey.

“Prior to the move to SAS Hall, there were several instances where I had to change Geoff’s diaper in the hallway with an audience or try to find an empty room for privacy to feed him,” Cameron recalls. “The new Baby Care Room is the first room I have encountered on this campus with a changing table, sink and comfortable chair to give Geoff everything he needs while on campus.”

Cameron says she hopes to see more facil-

PHOTOS BY ROGER WINSTEAD



Students, faculty and staff alike benefit from a wide variety of spacious, “connected” classrooms, labs and meeting spaces in SAS Hall.



PHOTO BY PAUL HUBBARD

paintings to hanging textured pieces to free-standing sculptures, were donated by SAS. The company is widely known for the high quality and diversity of the artwork on its corporate campuses, which it periodically makes available for public viewing.

Why SAS Hall?

SAS was born out of a research project that began in the NC State Department of Statistics in the early 1970s. Since then, the company has grown into one of the largest software providers in the world and was recently voted the nation's best company to work for by *Forbes*. Two of the company's founders, CEO Jim Goodnight and Executive Vice President John Sall, as well as their spouses, remain close partners and staunch supporters of the departments and the university.

"At SAS, we believe that it is vital for stu-

dents in the mathematical and statistical sciences to learn in an environment that provides state-of-the-art facilities and instructional technologies," Sall said at last year's dedication ceremony. "It's also critical that they participate in the kind of collaborative initiatives they'll experience in the work place. That type of environment produces the type of employee and person we want at SAS, and it's the type we want to produce at NC State. That's why we decided to make a significant contribution toward ensuring that this building would become a reality."

Having the name of one of the most respected companies in America certainly doesn't hurt, either.

"Having 'SAS' on the outside of this building immediately positions us as a computational and analytical hub," says Sastry Pantula. "This is a magnet, a destination, for anyone who wants to work and study in our fields." □

ities at NC State use SAS Hall as a model and to see the campus, as a whole, continue to become more infant and toddler—and parent—friendly.

Where mathematics meets design

Two of the dominant decorative elements of the new SAS Hall—a mobile that hangs in the main atrium and a spiral in the stone plaza outside its main entrance—were inspired by the Golden Ratio and visual constructions based upon it.

The lobby mobile, titled *Essentia*, was inspired by a gift from SAS to the College of Physical and Mathematical Sciences and is the work of Colorado-based artist Barbara Baer. In a unique partnership between colleges, the piece was designed and created over the course of the Spring 2009 semester by the following students in NC State's College of Design: Samuel Lewis Davis III, Marie Hermansson, Margaret Jamison, Michelle Ko, Elena "E" Page and Claudia Povenski.

The students worked with guidance from Barbara Baer and under the direction and support of Jan-Ru Wan, David Knight and other faculty and staff from the College of Design.

Other artwork in the building, ranging from

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SAS Hall receives architectural honor

SAS Hall isn't just receiving accolades from its new residents. The building received an honor award at the 2009 American Institute of Architecture (AIA) South Atlantic Region conference held last fall in Greenville, SC.

Twenty projects were selected from more than 200 entries submitted by AIA South Atlantic Region members. The South Atlantic Region includes North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. The Park Shops renovation project—located across Stinson Drive from SAS Hall—also received an honor award. □