

Richey-Mixon Building Will Think Outside the Box

\$5 million commitment supports “think box” approach to innovation

The recipe for starting a successful new business is simple, according to Joseph B. “J.B.” Richey II (CIT ‘62) and A. Malachi Mixon III: Take one part technology, mix it with one part business plan and add a few generous helpings of chicken wings.

“We used to go to a place that had free chicken wings and plot how some day we’d have a business together,” Mixon recalls.

It was during one of those wistful conversations that he and Richey—whose adaptation of X-ray tube and electronics technology created the first full-body CAT scan—began to discuss a struggling wheelchair manufacturing company. The two co-led the leveraged buyout of the company in 1979. Mixon turned to Richey to capitalize on the engineer’s talent for seeing the product potential in new technologies.

Today, Elyria, Ohio-based Invacare Corporation is the world’s top manufacturer of home medical products.

To celebrate their successful partnership as a model for the region’s next wave of entrepreneurs, the duo has made a \$5 million commitment to name a Richey-Mixon Building at the Case School of Engineering. The space will house the school’s “think box” programs—a collection of initiatives that seek to leverage and enhance the university’s culture of innovation.

In addition to creating a critical space for students, the building will provide state-of-the-art workspace in the heart of University Circle for startup and established companies to do collaborative work with the university and others—from prototyping to business plan development.

Richey and Mixon plan to have offices in the building after they retire to support the startup of new businesses.

“We want to be a part of helping the next generation of young people with vision take some risks and generate some companies and a new birth for Cleveland, and we hope others will join us,” Mixon says.

For more information about supporting “think box” programs, please call Daniel Ducoff at 216.368.0835.



J.B. Richey and Mal Mixon

Engineering the Future

Business strategist makes a \$2 million investment

When 1949 Case Institute of Technology alumnus Charles Phipps imparts advice to current engineering students, he focuses on an ever-changing future: “Commit to continuous learning. Take courses. Be adaptable. Learn to sell your ideas to those around you.”

Above all else, he says, “Think ahead several years about what you want to accomplish and what it will take to get there.”

As a leadership donor, Phipps already has thought ahead about the tools the Case School of Engineering will need to take electrical engineering and computer science to the next level. Through a \$2 million commitment, Phipps will create an endowment that will help support the department’s needs as they emerge.

Adaptability has been critical for his career, which has spanned six decades, taking him from the test engineering program at GE, through the classrooms of the Harvard Business School and eventually to Texas Instruments, where he made a name as a business strategist. Today, he is general partner at venture capital firm Sevin Rosen Funds, where he still believes that a strategic outlook is critical to growth.

Applying an entrepreneurial style to his own philanthropy is not new to Phipps. In 2005, he and his brother, the late John B. “Jack” Phipps (CIT ‘49)—who attended the Case Institute of Technology with him after World War II—created the Myron Phipps Dean’s Discretionary Fund in memory of their father. The endowment already has provided essential funding by helping to research, plan and launch the university’s Great Lakes Energy Institute, founded in 2007. “Our gift was based on a venture capital model of giving,” says Phipps of the early success of the endowment. “We supplied the seed money to make things happen. As a donor in that model, you’ve got to have faith in the institution. You can’t micromanage it.”

His philanthropy also captures the spirit of his late wife, Mary Claire, who hailed from a philanthropic family whose endowments live on at a number of institutions.



“Through targeted investments you can be a critical part of helping a department or school really grow. That’s very gratifying.”

—Charles Phipps