UMD Breaks Ground for $23 Million Labovitz School of Business and Economics

UMD held groundbreaking ceremonies in July for the $23 million Labovitz School of Business and Economics to be constructed on campus. The school is named for Duluth natives Sharon and Joel Labovitz, who made a gift of $4.5 million to help fund the new building. Their generosity provided the impetus to Governor Pawlenty and local legislative leaders to pave the way for an award of $15.3 million in state funding. University funds will also be used for the balance of construction costs. The Labovitz School of Business and Economics will be the fifth new building to be constructed on the UMD campus since 2001.

The new 65,000 gross square-foot building will be approximately 1.5 times the size of the current business school. Located on the northwest corner of UMD, across from the new library, the structure will include state-of-the-art facilities to provide business education in a knowledge-based, global economy. Plans call for the building to contain the latest in advanced technology with modern computer labs, facilities for distance learning and conferencing, and multipurpose classrooms. Scheduled for completion in the summer of 2008, the three-story structure will link to the existing library annex on the lower level, thus continuing the inter-connected interior walkway system for nearly every building on the UMD campus.

UMD Chancellor Kathryn A. Martin said, "The wonderful generosity of Sharon and Joel Labovitz will provide benefits to students and area residents for decades to come. We are enormously grateful to these two outstanding Duluthians for their tremendous commitment to UMD and to this entire region." She added, "And we sincerely thank Governor Pawlenty and our area legislators for their strong support in making this wonderful building possible."

The Labovitz School of Business and Economics will be the first new public higher education building in the state of Minnesota to be a LEED certified "green building." LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a "green building" rating system established by the U.S. Green Building Council. The Labovitz School will be designed to meet LEED certification — a rigorous process that evaluates the environmental sustainability of building design, construction and operation. See enclosed description of Labovitz sustainability features.

The LEED checklist concerns five major areas: sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality.

The internationally recognized architectural firm Perkins+Will heads up the project, and world-renowned architect Ralph Johnson is the principal designer. Project manager is Eric Spielman of Chicago. Perkins+Will was named Firm of the Year in 1999 by the American Institute of Architects (AIA), their highest honor.

The building will be organized around a three-story, sky-lit common area surrounded by a two-level administrative block, a large 150-seat auditorium and a rotated instructional wing containing classrooms for 40 and 60 students. The design will serve to harvest daylight and reduce the building's energy consumption while providing views to the surrounding wetlands and Lake Superior.

Located between the new library and the library annex, the new facility will be oriented in an east/west direction perpendicular to the existing campus development. The result is the creation of a new gateway to the campus for those approaching from the northwest.

Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty, Sharon Labovitz, Joel Labovitz, and Chancellor Kathryn A. Martin.

"The promise of this outstanding new building cannot be overestimated," said LSBE Dean Kjell Knudsen. "Through the generosity of Sharon and Joel Labovitz, the Labovitz School of Business and Economics has a golden opportunity to further grow in stature and reputation and significantly contribute to the strength of our area and the entire state."

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JOEL AND SHARON LABOVITZ

A 1949 graduate of UMD, Joel Labovitz is chairman of Labovitz Enterprises, a Duluth-headquartered firm with interests in various businesses. He is the principal owner of the Duluth Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites Downtown Waterfront and the Holiday Inn Bozeman in Bozeman, Montana. Labovitz is also chairman of Lion Financial Corporation and Lion Hotel Group, both headquartered in Duluth.

Soon after graduation from UMD, Labovitz joined his father Maurice at Maurices, a Duluth women’s clothing store. The two men expanded the business through the 1960s and 1970s. When Joel Labovitz sold the company in 1978, Maurices had 175 stores in 18 states. He stayed on as president and chief executive, adding another 100 stores before stepping down in 1981.

A graduate registered nurse, Sharon Labovitz has been an active leader and philanthropist in numerous Duluth civic, educational and cultural organizations. She is president of the Sharon and Joel Labovitz Charitable Foundation and has recently completed 12 years as a member of the College of St. Scholastica Board of Directors. She is currently a board member and former president of the Athenaeum, a Fine Arts and Music Library in La Jolla, Calif. Sharon is also a member of the board of the San Diego Museum of Art.

Joel Labovitz has been closely involved with the UMD School of Business and Economics. He was named a “Senior Fellow” at the school and taught its very first courses in entrepreneurship. He was presented the “Business Leader of the Year” award in 1985 at the annual Student Business Banquet. In 1988 he received the UMD Distinguished Alumni Award and delivered the UMD Commencement address. He has taught UMD students and faculty about entrepreneurship, leadership, and business ethics. In 2006, UMD celebrated the 14th anniversary of the Joel Labovitz Entrepreneurial Awards which provide recognition and encouragement to creators of small and large businesses in the area. Labovitz is a member of the board of the Timken Museum of Art in San Diego. He also was runner-up in the Duluth City Marble Championship in 1940.

— Susan Beary Latto