

Public Relations

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Case Study: Gates and Hillman Centers Dedication at Carnegie Mellon

The Challenge

Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) in Pittsburgh is home to one of the top computer science schools in the world. In its 40-year history, the School of Computer Science (SCS) outgrew its campus home in Newell-Simon Hall and planned to move to the Gates Center for Computer Science and the Hillman Center for Future-Generation Technologies, collectively referred to as the Gates and Hillman Centers.

Made possible by a lead gift of \$20 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Gates Center would include new classrooms, graduate and faculty offices, conference rooms, labs and open project space. The Gates Center was architecturally coupled with the Hillman Center for Future-Generation Technologies, made possible by a \$10 million gift from the Henry L. Hillman Foundation.

Complication: The dedication of the Gates and Hillman Centers was scheduled for a week in September that was later announced to be the same week as the G-20, also in Pittsburgh, a global economic summit known for drawing world leaders... and violent protesters.

CMU called on its longtime collaborators at Jack Horner Communications Inc. (JHC) to integrate a series of related campus events and initiatives over a 48-hour period for optimum support of the overall strategy.

PRSA!

Pepperpot Winner

• Special Events



The Solution

JHC served as the strategic counsel and overall program coordinator for the event.

In the months leading up to the building dedication, the agency worked closely with CMU's University Advancement team to coordinate all aspects of the program into a strategic plan with multiple audience tracks and a comprehensive timeline to ensure that all goals and deadlines were met.

During a hard-hat tour of the Gates and Hillman Centers, the JHC team found inspiration for the color palette of the invitation and other materials in the architecturally significant elements of the buildings' design. JHC created a wordmark and theme for the program—"Connecting on a Whole New Level"—and the marketing collateral included intricate folds and die-cuts representative of the buildings' stunning architecture.

Event-day kicked off with a lecture from Rick Rashid, Vice President of Research at Microsoft Corporation, and a presentation by the architect. Later, Bill Gates delivered a keynote address to more than 1,200 students, faculty, staff and alumni. Following the speech, Mr. Gates and Mr. Hillman led a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially dedicate the two buildings. The festivities ended with a private reception where Mr. Gates and the Hillmans were presented with one-of-a-kind commemorative picture frames. JHC worked with a fabricator to create the custom frames, which were designed to mimic the windows in their buildings. Each frame contained a photo of the donors with student groups that had been taken earlier in the day.

The Results

More than 250 VIPs and donors from all over the United States attended the event. When the e-blast invitation was sent to students, faculty, staff and alumni, the 900 allotted seats in the gymnasium were reserved within the hour. Due to the successful marketing effort to the on-campus community, additional viewing spaces were opened to accommodate the overflow of interested students.

Media coverage totaled more than 1,197,241 impressions and \$161,123 in advertising equivalency. Highlights include:

- The Chronicle of Higher Education
- Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
- Pittsburgh Tribune-Review
- Pittsburgh Business Times
- KDKA-TV
- WPXI-TV
- WTAE-TV



CONNECTING ON A WHOLE NEW LEVEL THE GATES & HILLMAN CENTERS



"The team at JHC remained true to the overall business strategy and positioning for this event. Their attention to detail and creativity could be found in every aspect of the program. With their support, we were able to meet and exceed our goals for the Gates and Hillman Centers dedication."

Kathy Lachenauer
Assistant Vice President
Corporate & Foundation Relations
Carnegie Mellon University

