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## Accounting building celebrated

FACILITY IS THE NATION'S FIRST FREESTANDING ACCOUNTING BUILDING.

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More than 50 people gathered Saturday morning for the Gary R. Gerson Hall dedication — complete with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, guest speakers and a champagne toast.

The \$9.3 million facility, which houses the UF Fisher School of Accounting, is the first freestanding accounting building in the nation.

The hall — which has been operational since January — honors Gary Gerson, a 1954 UF accounting graduate, MBA recipient and major donor to the project.

"This building is possible because of Gary's generosity and because of his efforts in rallying others," UF President Bernie Machen said.

Gerson, who was named the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce's Citizen of the Year in 1996, also helped fund UF's Center for Jewish Studies and several scholarships.



**Machen**

"We have to remember we have roots," said Joelen Merkel, accepting the building on behalf of the UF Board of Trustees. "We come back here, we give back to our university, and Gary knows how to do it: first-class."

Gerson said he was humbled and honored by the dedication. On the way to the ceremony, he said his wife asked him if it was the "peak day of his life."

"The first thing I learned at the University of Florida: Be wary of trick questions," he quipped. "Having the foresight of knowing that I have to go home tonight and be with my dear wife, I said 'No darling, the peak day was the one I married you.'"

But the dedication was a close second, he added.

The design and layout of the facility promotes student interaction and faculty collegiality, accounting professor Doug Snowball said.

"We've noticed a rapid drop in the number of faculty fistfights per week," he joked.

The hall boasts technologically advanced rooms, with terrazzo flooring and cherry veneer paneling in select areas.

The Cannon Design-created building received the Award of Excellence in the "Unbuilt" category by the Jacksonville Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

"They say the most important characteristic for success is feeling lucky," Gerson said in closing. "I couldn't feel any luckier today."