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Shawmut Design and Construction completes Grousbeck Center for Students & Technology at Perkins School for the Blind; designed by Gund Partnership

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Perkins School for the Blind propelled its local campus into the future with the dedication of the Grousbeck Center for Students & Technology.

Built by Shawmut Design and Construction from architectural plans created by the Gund Partnership, each aspect of the 17,000 s/f Grousbeck Center is designed to enable innovation, interaction, and independence. Singular features like the world's first interactive tactile audio campus map and a 3D topographical map that was sculpted by a robotic arm add to the futuristic feel.

Inspired by a parent's observation that her teen-aged son was missing out on the kinds of natural social interactions that help youngsters become young adults, the new building contains space for playing high-tech games, making music, learning about new technology, practicing vocational skills and just plain hanging out.

The Student Center has flexible space for games and performance, plus an internet radio station and a music studio equipped with electronic drums and keyboard, and microphones for recording. The Tech Center gives students a chance to tinker with the newest adaptive technology. Even the CafÃ© is more than a place to get a snack; students are trained in food service skills while enjoying each others' company.

Perkins parents Wyc and Corinne Grousbeck led the movement to create a space where present and future Perkins students can expand their experience, just as children and teens do in any community. Corinne Grousbeck, chair of the Perkins Trust Board, sees huge potential in the open platform for learning that the building provides. "The Grousbeck Center fully integrates technology into the unrivaled education students already get at Perkins. More vital than that, having a space of their own empowers students to expand their world concept and to find unique ways to become productive and independent. That's what all parents want for their children."

The Grousbeck Center is a truly unique facility because it is not only a Student Center, but also a world-class teacher training facility. Controlled by iPads, which are readily accessible to people with visual impairments, meeting and training rooms at the Grousbeck Center are wired for international access to connect educators in all corners of the globe through video conferencing.

"I'm not being facetious when I say that this building is like Helen Keller meeting George Jetson," said Perkins president Steven Rothstein, referring to the school's most famous pupil. "The technology built into the Grousbeck Center was only imagined a few decades ago. We've gone from chalkboards to SMART Boards and from talking books on tape to iPad audio readers in one fantastic leap. This is truly a place where our students prepare for their future, whether enhancing their grasp of technology, creating their own music, socializing independently, or practicing job

skills."

The Grousbeck Center was built with a lead gift of \$10 million from the Grousbeck Family Foundation. That leadership gift has been a key element in Perkins ongoing Touch Our World Comprehensive Campaign to raise \$130 million. The funds will advance capital projects such as the Grousbeck Center, technology upgrades, educational programs, the Braille and Talking Book Library and international partnerships. As of this summer, the campaign has raised \$104 million, with 20 months to go.

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