to them has helped him grow as the president and in his work as an engineer for a satellite development center.

Hanson says Rose Float experience educates student volunteers in all facets of their professional careers. “This work helps so much with management, budgeting, processes, practical experiences,” she says. And then there is the important social component. “You can’t work on something of that scope and scale without having relationships. There’s a bond you get that you just don’t get from going to class.”

That may be why saying goodbye to the old shed will be tough for many of the veterans. Simons says he spent both his 18th and 70th birthdays at the lab, but he’s not sorry to see it replaced. “We’ve been talking about a new lab for 30 years, and now the students are getting one,” Simons says. “They will be able to better spend their time coming up with new ideas and initiatives because they won’t be dealing with weather or equipment problems.”

McDowell served as director of Rose Float operations for four years and recently turned over her duties to Hanson, a former president of the Rose Float alumni chapter, and has become the university’s director of first-year and transition experiences. Even with the new job, she will remain involved. “I love it,” McDowell says. “It’s a family.”

Support the Rose Float Lab and Design Complex

KRISTA SPANGLER
909-869-4450
kspangler@cpp.edu
www.cpp.edu/rosefloatlab

By Shelley Levitt

When Mitch Hill attended Cal Poly Pomona in the late 1970s, like a lot of students then and now, he needed to work to support himself. He hoisted tires during the graveyard shift at a Pep Boys auto shop, bagged groceries at a local supermarket, and found jobs in computer programming as he gained knowledge as a computer information systems minor.

In 2000, Hill launched Avanade, a Seattle-based technology services company. Under Hill’s leadership, Avanade grew to a billion-dollar company with nearly 10,000 employees worldwide. Today, it’s the leading digital innovator on the Microsoft ecosystem. Avanade named Cal Poly Pomona one of nine universities around the world to participate in their STEM scholarship program. Designed to encourage more women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math, the program names five CPP STEM Scholars each year who receive annual grants of $15,000 for up to five years. With a new grant of $270,000 from Avanade, the scholarship program at Cal Poly Pomona will be extended for an additional three years through 2023.
The Hill family — Cherie and the couple’s sons Matthew and Mitchell — have always been involved with the endowment. This year they’re deepening their engagement.

“We’ve seen generosity in action,” Cherie says. “It’s been inspiring to watch how well Aవanade’s support has worked out in creating the data center and all these student programs, which also include student competitions like CyberPatriot and other events. Aవanade has kept upping their commitment, and all this is being done to honor Mitch. I felt it was time for my family to have a role.”

The Hills’ generous support includes a blended gift with an estate designation of $500,000 to the endowment in addition to the funding of three Hill Family Fellowships. Two of the fellowships will support paid student staff positions for the data center. The third will be a Family Fellow for Technical Project Management (TPM) and will work alongside faculty to design and develop a new certificate program in technical project management.

Beginning this year as a volunteer, Matthew will serve as an executive-in-residence to the new program in the College of Business Administration. As a consultant for Aవanade for eight years and now a technical program manager with Amazon Web Services, he’s seen firsthand the pressing need for people who have both technical prowess and the essential skills of management, such as communication, teamwork and organization.

“In our industry we still don’t really have a way to train people to be technical project managers, which is ironic because it’s such a critical role. But it’s a challenging one,” Matthew says, “You have to understand technology very well so you can communicate with a variety of developers who all have different technology focuses and you also need to communicate with business headquarters.”

Matthew says he’ll work with Pike on enhancing the curriculum and adding additional activities that will prepare graduates to become technical program managers.

“When I had the opportunity to walk around the campus and start meeting faculty members, including Ron Pike, I was blown away by their passion and the connection to their students,” he says. “They’re always so excited about their work, and it’s been thrilling to let myself get swept up in that.”

As Cherie listens to her son speak, she thinks about her late husband. “Mitch would have been immensely proud of his son. Matt has had an admirable career in technology and has been instrumental in sharing his knowledge and expertise with the faculty and students to aid in furthering the success of the program. Matt’s respect for his father and that he has chosen to support his father’s legacy at his alma mater would have deeply affected Mitch.”

Though Matthew hadn’t known much about Cal Poly Pomona before his father’s death, he’s now certain it’s the right place to create an innovative program in training technical program managers.

“The soul of being a good technical project manager is being able to deal with all the changes that are being thrown at you and come out successful at the end. Ron and I have a lot of fun ideas on how we can immerse students in that kind of controlled chaos,” Matthew says.

Support the Mitchell C. Hill Center for Digital Innovation

JEFF COX
909-869-2755
jecox@cpp.edu

The student-run data center allows students to apply their technical, leadership and communication skills.

The family gift will enable Cal Poly Pomona students to carry on that legacy.

“We are immensely thankful for the tremendous generosity of the Hill Family. The gift to the endowment and the paid student positions are helping us create and maintain leading-edge facilities in which our students work and learn,” Dean Erik Rolland says. “In addition, the gift allows our students to focus on developing their career on campus and therefore gain valuable experience within their field of expertise, further setting them apart from graduates at other institutions.”

The hands-on experience that the student data center instills is so sought after, he adds, that students are being recruited for positions — often with six-figure salaries — from companies such as Google, Amazon and Protiviti.

“Education was so valued by Mitch and by his family,” she says. “We’ve seen generosity in action, and this is a real opportunity to give back.”

The student-run data center allows students to apply their technical, leadership and communication skills.