Honorary Degree  
Doctor of Humane Letters

JOHN D. RANDALL (conferred June 11, 1982)

John D. Randall was born May 22, 1919, in Chicago, Illinois. Educated in the public schools of Wilmette and Winnetka, Illinois, Mr. Randall received a Bachelor of Science degree in Architecture from the Illinois Institute of Technology in 1943. Mr. Randall's work in architecture, and in particular architectural preservation and the appreciation of architectural landmarks in the United States, is the basis of this recommendation to confer upon him an honorary degree.

Mr. Randall's activities in the field of architecture have spanned five decades. From 1955 to 1961, Mr. Randall worked with various Chicago architectural firms and in private practice in Chicago. From 1961 through 1969, Mr. Randall served first as Assistant and then Associate University Architect at SIUE. During that time, he administered the planning and construction staff which oversaw development of the Edwardsville campus. After leaving the University, Mr. Randall served for several years as the manager of the Office of Facilities Planning for the State of Illinois.

In 1972, Mr. Randall left his position with the State of Illinois to undertake a year-long campaign to save the Wainwright Building in St. Louis from destruction.

Mr. Randall undertook this campaign, without compensation, because of his interest and concern with preserving the works of Louis Sullivan. It is largely through Mr. Randall's efforts that SIUE has been able to acquire much of its collection of Sullivan Architectural ornamentation. Through his efforts, the Wainwright Building was saved from destruction and restored.

Mr. Randall's interests in preserving Louis Sullivan works continued and he focused upon architectural landmarks in Buffalo, New York. The Prudential Building, located in Buffalo and considered to be one of Sullivan's greatest projects, had been slated for demolition.

Mr. Randall undertook the leadership of a public campaign to save the Prudential Building and to restore and preserve it. Because of his efforts, the restoration of the Prudential Building is in process. In addition to saving the building, Mr. Randall was able to obtain a permanent commitment of space from the owners for location of an architectural museum in the building. Since 1979, Mr. Randall has served as Director and Curator of that facility, the Architectural Museum and Resource Center.

Mr. Randall has also been instrumental in the preservation of American architectural landmarks designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, Henry Hobson Richardson, Daniel Burnham, and Richard Upjohn. Not limiting himself to buildings alone, Mr. Randall has worked to preserve public park systems designed by Frederick Law Olmstead. In recent years much of his activity has centered on the Buffalo and Erie County, New York, area.

The efforts of John Randall have contributed greatly to the American movement for architectural preservation and appreciation, and to understanding the contribution of architecture to the cultural and historical development of the United States. Mr. Randall has written extensively, lectured, and produced surveys, films, and exhibits on architectural preservation, landmarks, and the cultural, artistic, and historic significance of architecture.

Currently, Mr. Randall is in the process of chartering the first National Museum of Architecture which would chronicle and promote this aspect of our culture.

It is for John Randall’s unstinting and unparalleled efforts in the field of architectural preservation, for his furtherance of architecture as a part of our heritage and culture, and for his contributions in support of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, that this recommendation for an honorary degree is presented.
Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts Degree

GYO OBATA (conferred May 8, 1999)

Gyo Obata, co-founder of Helmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, Inc., is one the most notable names in the field of architecture in the United States and worldwide. As design principal architect, Mr. Obata was responsible for the SIUE master plan and the five core buildings. Helmuth, Obata & Kassabaum have ten offices worldwide, including London, Hong Kong and San Francisco.

Mr. Obata graduated from Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1945. After graduation, he pursued a master’s degree in architecture from Cranbrook Academy of Art, studying under master architect, Eliel Saarinen. Mr. Obata’s multi-disciplinary approach was strongly influenced by the micro-to-macro approach espoused by Mr. Saarinen. Later, after a brief stint in the Army and four years with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in Chicago, he joined Hellmuth, Yamasaki and Leinweber, the institutional ancestor of the firm he was one day to inherit.

Mr. Obata’s genius lies in being able to understand, formulate and respond to both pragmatic and aesthetic issues and to synthesize the two in a creative solution, under cost and on time. A number of outstanding projects clearly reflect that ethic. The renovation of the century-old Union Station in St. Louis has earned praise, both as an aesthetic achievement and as a key factor in the city’s rejuvenation. Of the Obata-designed National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., the most visited museum in the world, Smithsonian magazine wrote, “It can possibly be called the finest building of its kind ever erected.” Other projects include the Kellogg Company headquarters in Battle Creek, Michigan; the Levi Plaza (the headquarters of Levi Strauss & Company) and the George R. Moscone Convention Center, both in San Francisco, California; and the campus of King Saud University and the King Khaled Airport, both in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Obata has received honorary degrees from Washington University and University of Missouri St. Louis.

SIUE In The Beginning

The residents of Southwestern Illinois worked together to demand the establishment of a public university. On May 5, 1955, the board members of the Edwardsville Chamber of Commerce established a College Planning Committee (CPC) and invited representatives of the University of Illinois and Southern Illinois University to meet with them. Dr. Harold W. See, director of SIUC’s Belleville Residence Center, met with the CPC on October 19, 1955, and became their mentor. A gathering of 150 activists held in Edwardsville on September 25, 1956, established the Southwestern Illinois Council for Higher Education (SWICHE). At an October 23, 1956 Carbondale meeting, SWICHE leaders petitioned the SIU trustees for cooperation. As a result, classes began at the Alton Residence Center (formerly Shurtleff College) on July 1, 1957, under the leadership of Executive Dean Harold W. See.

On April 29, 1958, SWICHE began to solicit funds in order to purchase land for an Edwardsville campus. Mr. and Mrs. Clarence O’Brien of Lewis Road sold the initial parcel of land on January 19, 1959. By May 1959, donors had contributed more than $592,000. On December 18, 1959, Vice President Harold W. See moved his administrative offices to Edwardsville. Governor William Stratton addressed the first graduation ceremony on campus on June 14, 1960. Helmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum (HOK) of St. Louis engaged to provide architectural planning for the campus master plan on June 15, 1960. Voters in Madison, St. Clair, and Cook counties on November 8, 1960 provided the margin of victory for the state universities bond issue that paid for the infrastructure and buildings. Mr. and Mrs. Leopold Freund agreed to sell the pivotal piece of property for the campus, a 132-acre horse farm, on January 16, 1961.

The architectural design of SIUE emerged from the lengthy, sometimes difficult process of interaction between John Randall, campus architect, and Gyo Obata and his HOK team. Groundbreaking at SIUE took place on May 2, 1963, not long after Madison County officials first established zoning regulations.


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