

Signage Foundation Celebrates the Announcement of the Terence M. Fruth/Gemini Chair of Signage Design and Community Planning

Representatives of the Signage Foundation, Inc. joined with the leadership of the University of Cincinnati, including administration and faculty from the Colleges of Business and Design, Art, Architecture and Planning (DAAP) to announce the establishment of the Terence M. Fruth/Gemini Chair of Signage Design and Community Planning. The chair was made possible by the generous donation from Jim and Sharon Weinel of Gemini, Inc. This gift clearly demonstrated the deep commitment to providing research and education to grow and enhance the sign industry. In 2007, the Weinel established the James S. Womack/Gemini Chair of Signage and Visual Communications.



SFI Board Chairman, Joe Rickman, congratulates Jim Weinel of Gemini on his generous giving to the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning.

James (Jim) Weinel was born in Minnesota and spent his early days in Randolph, graduating from Randolph High School in 1951. From there he attended and graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in Civil Engineering in 1956.

Sharon Weinel was born in eastern South Dakota, grew up on a farm and graduated from Howard High School. She attended South Dakota State College in Brookings for three years and later graduated from Metropolitan State University in Minneapolis in 1985.

Jim and Sharon met in Minneapolis and were married in 1956—a very successful partnership of 52 years. They have three children - two daughters and one son; they have 11 grandchildren.



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After a brief active duty tour in the Army, Jim and Sharon settled in Minnesota. Jim worked in aerospace engineering for five years then had an opportunity to purchase a small company in Minneapolis, Gemini, in 1964. This vacuum forming company made various articles for industry in and around the Twin Cities and soon began making letters for the sign industry. They grew and expanded this venture into a major industry making letters in plastic, aluminum, stainless steel, cast metal, and bronze. Gemini now has plants throughout the United States.

Jim and Sharon have been very active and lifelong members of the Lutheran Church of Minneapolis. Philanthropy has been a very intentional part of both their personal and professional lives.

In 2006 Jim and Sharon established the Don Osell Chair of Sales and Marketing for Engineers at University of Minnesota. Additionally they established a 501(c)3 corporation to reach out to high school students in locations where Gemini has plant operations. The Ross Wagner Scholarship Program for Engineers awards educational grants to high school students who have selected engineering as a career choice.

During the celebration, Dr. Nancy Zimpher, President of the University of Cincinnati, affirmed the University's commitment to be the "center for signage research and education through a multi-disciplinary approach". Dr. Robert Probst, Dean of the College of DAAP shared with those assembled the work currently underway within the College of DAAP to build a specialty in signage into the Planning curriculum. Dr. David Edelman, Director of the School of Planning discussed the timeline and plans for the University of Cincinnati to become the world's first center dedicated to signage. He outlined collaborative efforts currently underway with the Signage Foundation, Inc. and the American Sign Museum:

- (1) A Planning graduate student with a first degree in graphic design will graphically visualize using computer simulation how the world's first comprehensive model signage code might be applied to a short urban street segment;
- (2) A fourth year planning studio will begin to explore the new signage code in relation to a business district.
- (3) During the spring, Menelaos Triantafillou, Dr. David Edelman and representatives from the Signage Foundation, Inc. will announce at the national APA Convention in Minneapolis the collaboration and scope of work the Fruth/Gemini Chair will undertake to assist planners.
- (4) This summer a studio of advanced planning students will engage in a real world laboratory for a client community (Anderson Township) and the Signage Foundation to further test, report on and ultimately advance this revolutionary signage code.
- (5) By the fall, the Terence Fruth/Gemini Chair of Signage Design and Community Planning will be fully established and the occupant will conduct real world research related to signage.
- (6) In October the Colleges of Business and DAAP will assist the Signage Foundation in hosting the National Signage Research and Education Conference which will be held for the first time in Cincinnati. This event will bring together representatives from the signage industry, planners, designers, architects, marketers, students and politicians as well as business, planning, architecture and urban design researchers from the University of Cincinnati.
- (7) Joan Christodoulou will work with the Signage Foundation in planning the October conference and prepare the first comprehensive review of signage literature. From that research, a white paper will be

(8) In the fall, the new Signage Chair will begin detailed planning for a new sequence of courses that will be offered for the first time in the fall of 2010. This sequence of four courses will constitute the world's first certificate in signage.

About SFI

The Signage Foundation, Inc. (SFI) works to promote signage in the societal sense, educating the public about its social, economic and aesthetic value to the at-large society, emphasizing to users how to maximize their communication effectiveness. The Foundation focuses on bringing education to sign users and to those who interact with sign users, including advertising agencies, lenders, appraisers, attorneys, regulators, business form franchisers and small businesses.

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