

IMPACT

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Featured article:
SRIDHAR MITTA

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Hall of Fame Inducts Mitta, Kridler, Mitchell in 2009

The College of Engineering, Architecture, and Technology's 2009 Hall of Fame inductees are three distinguished graduates, Charles Kridler, A. Joe Mitchell Jr. and Sridhar Mitta. In addition to excelling in their fields, these individuals share qualities that help inspire others and generate a remarkable foundation for the future. Their induction in 2009 brings the total CEAT Hall of Fame giants to 84 since the college began its Hall of Fame in 1954.



A. Joe Mitchell Jr.,

A. Joe Mitchell Jr., 1974 architectural engineering graduate, has had a long, successful career in the high-tech industry where he blazed a unique trail using the problem-solving and engineering background he acquired at OSU.

His first professional position was design engineer with Conoco in Ponca City, Okla. In time, Conoco named him general manager of its building division. In 1980, Mitchell and his family moved to Midland, Texas, where he was responsible for building the ClayDesta Plaza, a \$200 million mixed-use real estate project. There he served as president of ClayDesta Corporation.

In 1982, veering to the communications industry, he founded ClayDesta Communications and served as its president the next four years. In 1986, Telecom USA in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, secured his talents and expertise as a vice president of the company that subsequently grew to a \$200 million business before going public and being purchased by MCI.

Mitchell's entrepreneurial career strengthened in 1989 when he used \$20,000 in personal finance to found VarTec Telecom. His intuition for a new venture paid off. Within four months, the company was profitable and grew steadily to a \$2 billion company with 8,500 employees in 14 countries.

Recognizing his accomplishments and business acumen in technology and communications, *The Wall Street Journal*, CNN, and Ernst & Young named Mitchell Entrepreneur of the Year in 1998.

Between 2004 and 2008, Mitchell founded and served as chair of four companies in the oil and gas, oil services, real estate, and cattle industries with revenues over \$50 million. He has also designed and built 13 lakes on his 10,000-acre ranch in Texas.

In 2004, which marked 30 years of significant accomplishments, Mitchell decided to share his leadership skills with young entrepreneurs. As a mentor, he has been invaluable in helping with the start-up of five-energy related companies.

He and his wife, Connie, have helped some 100 students obtain higher education degrees through their philanthropic support. In addition, the Mitchells have offered generous support to OSU through the establishment of the Joe and Connie Mitchell Academic Enhancement Center — a special gift that touches both academics and athletics.

Mitchell says being a small-town boy from Carrier, Okla., one of only 14 in his high school class, and receiving an education at OSU prepared him for entrepreneurship by giving him the tools to analyze problems and opportunities.

His philosophy for success is to be passionate about what he is doing and to continue learning. Mitchell's passion and strong work ethic to make the most of each opportunity has enabled him to make his mark in the technology and communications industries as well as leave a legacy to OSU.

Sridhar Mitta

Sridhar Mitta's stellar career as an engineer, an executive, an entrepreneur and a humanitarian has brought global recognition to this OSU alumnus, who when a student demonstrated the insight and foresight that helped guide his future accomplishments.

After completing his doctorate in electrical engineering in 1973, he returned to India where his professional contributions to his native country have made a major impact on the development and evolution of the information technology industry.

Currently, his leadership and vision in addressing societal needs through commercial entrepreneurship is bringing remarkable results that will benefit thousands of people countrywide.

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In India, Mitta joined Electronics Corporation of India, where as technical manager, he developed real-time computer applications for the army and air force. In 1980, Sridhar became the first employee of Wipro Limited, and as chief technology officer, he played a key role in achieving its technology leadership.

His ability to look at problems holistically and combine technology with business is one of the valuable assets he brings to a company. In 1990, Sridhar put forth strategies to transition Wipro's captive R&D to a Global R&D. Thus, the company pioneered outsourcing and off shoring of IT product development that has made Wipro a \$4 billion industry today and propelled India into an IT leadership position.

That effort is his most satisfying as well as most challenging managerial achievement. Under his leadership, Wipro received the "Award of Excellence in Electronics" from the Government of India for five consecutive years and earned the coveted CMM Level V software quality certification.

As an entrepreneur, Mitta founded EnThink Inc., an intellectual property design and licensing start-up company in California's Silicon Valley in 1998; e4e Inc. (entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs), an organization outsourcing business services to companies worldwide to facilitate deployment and management of business processes, in Santa Clara, Calif. in 2000.

He played key roles with IndUS Entrepreneurs, which fosters entrepreneurship globally and mentors many young technology start-ups.

Today, he is passionate about building social ventures through his founding of NextWealth Entrepreneurs Private Limited. His vision for NextWealth is to address societal needs through commercial entrepreneurship by using technology and business models to help solve society's problems.

Currently, NextWealth is establishing multiple rural centers to create 10,000 jobs for rural graduates, reversing the trend of their migration to cities for employment. NextWealth is working with the Masonic Blood Bank of Vellore in Tamil Nadu, India, to help it grow and become financially self-sustaining through the effective use of information technology.

This project alone will affect untold numbers of individuals residing in rural and poor sections of India — a testimony to Mitta's humanitarian efforts.

Coming to OSU, Mitta's first U.S. experience, introduced him to American life and led to his continual association with technology and business in the U.S.

Charlie Kridler

Charlie Kridler, 1963 architecture graduate, is one of the founding members and a principal of Gensler, a global design and architecture firm named the AIA 2007 Firm of the Year. Kridler has devoted 40 years to growing the firm from a single account to the number two retail architecture firm in the United States.

Under his leadership, Gensler plans, designs and implements the full range of retail — from store design and rollout to retail architecture — and has spearheaded the growth and rollout strategies that have become standard practice in retail architecture today. As a member of Gensler's management committee, Kridler is responsible for the firm's strategy, financial success and operational performance.

Over the years, he has mentored all of the firm's retail leaders. He is personally responsible for the prominence of this practice as well as the hundreds of awards Gensler has received for retail design. The most important award, he says, came in 1998 with the *Business Week/Architectural Record* Award for the Gap Office Building in San Bruno, Calif.

Kridler did not start in architecture. His geologist father influenced him to pursue a degree in geology, but after two years of study at Colorado School of Mines, he admitted that was not for him.



What followed was a trip to visit a cousin in Stillwater who was head of the ROTC program at OSU. Col. McPherson gave Kridler a tour of the campus where he met Architecture Professor Bill Lacy. Kridler liked what he heard and saw, realizing that architecture was a mix of art and science, two areas of interest to him.

The decision to attend OSU proved to be right for him. Throughout his study of architecture, Professors Lacy (who became Kridler's mentor), Bill Fash and Alex Notaras had a lasting influence on Kridler in stressing the importance of learning how to analyze problems. Thus, learning to solve problems was paramount in his studies at OSU.

Mentored by firm founder Art Gensler, Kridler gained recognition early in his Gensler career. The firm's unprecedented growth and success is a testament to the talents of principals like Kridler, who have defined, grown and perfected its retail practice area. He is the first generation for a number for Gensler Practice Areas that now are in their second and third generations: retail, mixed-use, broadcasting, hospitality, renovation and historic renovation.

Gensler's retail practice area received numerous project awards in 2009: the Art Deco Society of California Award for Historic Preservation; the California Preservation Foundation Restoration Award; the Association for Retail Environments Restaurant/Fine Dining Award; and finalist in the Hotel World Global Hospitality and Design Awards Program.

For those in the field of design and architecture, Kridler serves as a role model for his own definition of hero, "the uncommon common man, the ordinary people who do extraordinary things." **CEAT**