

# Tektronix to Donate 10,000 Ft. Facility for Grad Center

*By State of Oregon, Department of Planning and Development*

This article and photograph appeared in the May 1965 issue of *Grow with Oregon*, a state publication of the Planning and Development Division. The article describes progress toward opening the Oregon Graduate Center, a private institution designed to provide the Portland area with much-needed graduate level education in science and engineering. As the article notes, Tektronix, a local high-technology firm and Silicon Forest leader, purchased property adjacent to its own facility in Beaverton and donated it to the forming educational institution.

The Silicon Forest is a name for the collective mass of high-technology businesses that developed in and around Portland during the second half of the twentieth century, profoundly impacting the economic development of the state. Unlike some of the nation's other important high-tech centers, such as Santa Clara and Boston, the Silicon Forest did not benefit from close proximity to a major research university that could attract qualified personnel and conduct cutting-edge research and development. Instead, key high-tech firms, most notably Tektronix, filled this void.

As an established industry leader, Tektronix attracted talented employees from prestigious universities. The company encouraged employees to pursue advanced degrees, sometimes providing financial backing. In the late 1950s, Tektronix started an in-house continuing education program, which, by the end of the 1960s, had grown as large as some area community colleges.

In addition to providing the Oregon Graduate Center with its first temporary facility, Howard Vollum, a Tektronix co-founder and company head, personally donated a considerable sum to open and maintain the institution. Vollum, John Gray of Omark Industries, Ira Keller of Western Kraft, and Samuel Diack of the Oregon Medical Research Foundation were the most active members on the committee formed to establish the center. The school hired its first faculty in 1967, enrolled its first students in 1969, and granted its first doctorate in 1973. In August 1969, it moved from its temporary location near Tektronix to a newly developed seventy-four-acre permanent campus site on Walker Road in Beaverton.

The Oregon Historical Society has in its collection an oral history interview with Richard Kerr. As a faculty member in 1967, and later as vice president and president, Kerr saw the Oregon Graduate Center through difficult financial times, always striving to strike a balance between providing students with a well-rounded education and working with Pacific Northwest industry leaders to help solve real-world problems.

**Further reading:** Dodds, Gordon B. and Craig E. Wollner. *The Silicon Forest: High Tech in the Portland Area 1945-1986*. Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1990. Mayer, Heike. "Planting High-Technology Seeds: Tektronix's Role in the Creation of Portland's Silicon Forest." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 106:4 (Winter 2004): 568-593. Kerr, Richard. 2002. Interview by Clark Hansen. December 27. Recorded as a part of the Ira C. Keller Oral History Project. Written by Sara Paulson, © Oregon Historical Society, 2007.

---

Oregon History Project

<https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/tektronix-to-donate-10000-ft-facility-for-grad-center/>