Seattle University today marked a significant milestone in its 120-year history by formally dedicating the new Lemieux Library and McGoldrick Learning Commons, the largest, singular investment Seattle University has made to promote academic excellence and scholarly achievement.

The library and learning commons is an architectural jewel whose services, technology and collections stimulate student learning and support faculty research. Four student academic support services are brought together in the Learning Commons Partnership to provide personalized support to students in every academic program. Technology is deployed throughout the facility as an effective tool to support educational outcomes and stimulate academic excellence.

The new facility represents significant investments in technology and modern approaches to learning and scholarship. For example, the university’s first Media Production Center features a recording studio with “blue screen” and “green screen” technology, multiple editing bays and a comfortable screening room. Classroom Capture and videoconference technologies extend the university’s teaching and learning opportunities. The facility also nurtures quiet contemplation in distinctive reading areas, designated quiet rooms and gardens. Throughout the facility, visitors will enjoy an array of stunning artwork by artists of international reputation, including Henri Matisse.

At the formal dedication of this intellectual center, President Stephen Sundborg, S.J., praised the many donors who made the project possible, especially the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Ann Pigott Wyckoff; Dick and Betty Hedreen, who contributed much of the new artwork; Rita Daubenspeck and her late husband, Harold; and Trustee Anne Farrell, who chaired the fundraising committee.

Father Sundborg marveled at the result of their generosity and the lasting effect it will have on the mission of the university.

“The dedication of the Lemieux Library and McGoldrick Learning Commons is a historic moment for the university,” Fr. Sundborg said. “As a great independent university of the Northwest, we are extremely grateful to all our alumni, donors and supporters for making this reimagined library a reality.”

The dedication ceremonies began with a procession of university faculty, staff and students from Immaculate Conception Church, which has deep ties to the Jesuit community.

At the library plaza, the group was met by hundreds of university friends, prominent philanthropists, alumni and Archbishop Alexander J. Brunett, who blessed the building and the nearby James C. Pigott Pavilion for Leadership.

During the ceremony, senior Kevin Eggers, president of the Associated Students of Seattle University, spoke of the building as a new and exciting gathering place for students and one that would significantly enhance learning. He praised the furnishings, the technology, study spaces that will be open 24/7 and the Byte Café, an instant hit with students.
“On behalf of all the students of Seattle University today, and for generations to come, thank you,” Eggers told the crowd. “You have done something wonderful.”

The building was designed by Pfeiffer Partners Architects of Los Angeles in collaboration with Seattle-based Mithun Architects and built by Mortenson Construction. The project involved gutting the original Lemieux Library, constructed in 1966, and adding the commons structure for a total combined size of 125,000 square feet.

With its plaza, rain garden and impressive façade, the library and learning commons creates a new campus square by its proximity to the Student Center and the Pavilion. The building also is expected to achieve LEED Gold status, reflecting the university’s ongoing commitment to sustainable design. For example, rain is incorporated into a dramatic water sculpture that is part of a garden that cleans and absorbs storm water runoff.

“We have presented to the Seattle University community a building that brings each and all of us closer to what we might ideally be,” said University Librarian John Popko, who led SU’s representatives during design of the building. “It is a dynamic blend of sanctuary and community square that retains the best elements of the library as the repository of knowledge and celebrates its new role as a service center in support of inquiring and creative minds.”