

# 'I haven't done enough.'



Maurice Kanbar added to the \$21M he'd given Philadelphia University for his namesake college

**PETER KEY**  
 STAFF WRITER

At 4:30 p.m. on Nov. 8, Philadelphia University President Stephen Spinelli Jr. cut the ribbon to officially open the new home of the Kanbar College of Design, Engineering and Commerce.

He remembers the exact time because of what happened a half hour before when he was taking the college's namesake, Maurice Kanbar, on a tour of the building.

"At four o'clock, he grabbed me by the arm and said, 'I haven't done enough. I want to give you another \$5 million,'" Spinelli said.

That \$5 million was unrestricted, meaning Philadelphia University can use the money any way it wants to. And it brought the total that Kanbar has given the university to \$26 million; he previously gave \$15 million for the college that bears his name and \$6 million for the Kanbar Campus Center.

"I have tremendous confidence in the ability of Dr. Spinelli, who I think is really terrific, and tremendous confidence in the school," Kanbar said by phone from San Francisco, where the Brooklyn, N.Y., native has lived since 1984. "I was talking to a friend the other day and I said, 'If I had a young man going to college and he was admitted to Harvard, Princeton and Philadelphia Univer-

sity, I'd send him to Philadelphia University because I think he's got a better chance for a successful life going to Philadelphia University rather than getting a BA from Princeton."

Kanbar graduated from Philadelphia University in 1952 when it was the Philadelphia Textile Institute. One of his first successful businesses made nylon yarn, which, he said, made it a competitor of DuPont's in a small way. But it was inventing the D-Fuzz-It Sweater/Fabric Comb that sent Kanbar on his way to possessing the wealth that has enabled him to give Philadelphia University as much he has. Skyy vodka didn't hurt either. Campari LLC bought a controlling stake in the company that produced the vodka, Skyy Spirits LLC, from Kanbar in 2002 for \$207.5 million.

Of the \$26 million Kanbar has given Philadelphia University, \$20 million has come since the university launched its capital campaign in 2008. The university's goal for the campaign was \$40 million and it already has raised \$46 million, but Spinelli doesn't intend to stop it just yet.

"There's so much to do," he said. "Have we solved all the problems? Hell, no."

The Kanbar College's curriculum and building are designed to encourage students from different

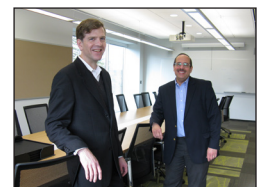


The Kanbar College of Design, Engineering and Commerce at Philadelphia University.



Left: Industrial design major Michael Leonard.

Below: Randy Swearer (left) and Ron Kander



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disciplines to collaborate to solve problems.

About 1,600 of Philadelphia University's 3,500 students are enrolled in the college, which offers 16 majors. Each of them must take a series of five interdisciplinary courses that include a capstone project.

That combination of depth of knowledge in a field provided by the courses required by a major and the breadth of knowledge of other fields provided by the interdisciplinary courses are why Ron Kander came to Philadelphia University to become the Kanbar College's dean.

"Everybody was talking about it," he said. "It was very hard to find a school that did it."

The first of the interdisciplinary courses is a perfect example of

how the college works. Called Integrative Design Process, it requires students to team up, go out into the world, observe a process, devise something that would make the process better, design and build a prototype of it, see if the prototype works and change it until it does.

"You learn how to pay attention to how people use things," said Michael Leonard, a sophomore from Lower Merion, who is majoring in industrial design. "It's putting you in the real-world situation."

That's the point.

"We're asking students to understand themselves as empowered agents who can go out into the environment and look for opportunities to make a difference," said Randy Swearer, the university's provost.