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Chou Hall earns third in trifecta of green building credentials



Chou Hall is the country's greenest academic building. Photo: Dan Williams

Connie & Kevin Chou Hall has earned the third in a trifecta of green building credentials: a WELL Certification recognizing its “strong commitment to supporting human health, well-being, and comfort.”

The certification comes on the heels of two others the building has received over the past year from Green Business Certification Inc. (GBSI). It achieved [TRUE Zero Waste Certification](#) at the highest possible level and [LEED Platinum Certification](#) for its architectural design, construction, and energy efficiency.

“From the start of the Chou Hall construction project, we focused on building a student-centric academic space that reflected our school’s unique culture and how we value sustainable impact,” said Courtney Chandler, senior assistant dean and chief operating & strategy officer of the Haas School. “Being the first academic building to be [WELL Certified](#), and the greenest academic building in the country, exemplifies our [Defining Leadership Principles](#) in action.”

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Cafe Think's seating connects the indoor cafe to the outdoors seamlessly through the use of windows.
Photo: Jim Block

"It's particularly rewarding to cap off the building certification journey with the last of these three certifications," said Walter Hallanan, BS 72, who has managed the Chou Hall project as well as the school's Master Plan Project. "We're breaking new ground with Chou Hall. It's a significant achievement that sets an example for the Berkeley campus, particularly with regard to the LEED and WELL certification."

Attention to many details

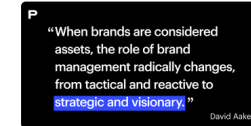
WELL Certified spaces are designed to improve the overall health of the people who use the building, by addressing areas such as nutrition, fitness, mood, sleep patterns, and performance of the building occupants. Design details include everything from the solar panels that provide energy to the building to the fact that as much outside air as possible is funneled into the building's interior.

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Students descending stairs in Chou Hall get exercise and a view of the trees. Photo: Jim Block

The WELL Certified credential is the culmination of literally years of detailed planning and design. “There are hundreds of requirements you have to comply with,” Hallanan said.

Certification officials toured Chou Hall for performance verification site visits in December 2018 and June 2019 to get a sense of the building’s environment.

“The level of detail and thought that went into the design and construction of the space and flow throughout Chou Hall contribute to the overall feeling,” Chandler said. “It’s not an accident that when people come to Spieker Forum—our top floor event space with huge windows and amazing views—they often say it feels like they’re in a tree house.”

An innovative funding model

Another novel aspect of the building was its funding model that enabled greater efficiency and cost savings. A private nonprofit fund, the Partnership for Haas Preeminence, chaired by Ned Spieker, BS 66; Walter Hallanan, BS 72; and former Dean Rich Lyons, BS 82, raised the donations and managed design and construction in tandem before donating the completed building back to the university last year.



The new Chou Hall classrooms and meeting spaces were part of the Haas Master Plan Project, led by Walter Hallanan, BS 72. Photo: Blake Marvin

Chou Hall is the core of the Haas Master Plan Project, which also included the new courtyard and the addition of cooling to Cheit Hall. The student-centered building includes classroom and meeting spaces, the state-of-the-art Spieker Forum event space, and a cafe at the courtyard level.

Chou Hall provided much-needed space at Haas, where enrollment has nearly doubled over the past 20 years.

It is named for Kevin Chou, BS 02, and his wife, Dr. Connie Chen, in recognition of their donation: the largest personal gift by an alum under the age of 40 in UC Berkeley's history.

"I am proud of what we've accomplished," Chandler said. "What I love hearing most is how the building makes people feel. That's what people are going to remember."



"What I love hearing most is how the building makes people feel. That's what people are going to remember." – Haas COO Courtney Chandler. Photo: Blake Marvin

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