



PennState



Chuck and Karen Thomas stand outside the electronics lab in Penn State Great Valley's Innovation Center. Now called the Chuck and Karen Thomas Electronics Lab, the area provides classroom and workspace for students in the regional engineering – multidisciplinary engineering design option and serves as a resource for the REV-UP Center for Entrepreneurship.

Image: Elizabeth Palmer

Great Valley Electronics Lab named for Chuck and Karen Thomas commitment

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MALVERN, Pa. — Advisory Board member and former part-time faculty Chuck Thomas and his wife Karen have made a commitment of \$200,000 to name the Electronics Lab in Penn State Great Valley's Innovation Center.

The Chuck and Karen Thomas Electronics Lab provides classroom and laboratory space for undergraduate students enrolled in the regional engineering – multidisciplinary engineering design option. Through this option, students at Penn State Abington and Penn State Brandywine complete two years of foundational engineering coursework at their respective campuses and finish their degree at Penn State Great Valley, where they have access to state-of-the-art engineering facilities.

“This gift from Chuck and Karen Thomas will have a profound impact on the Great Valley campus, in particular on the students in the multidisciplinary engineering design program,” said James Nemes, chancellor and chief academic officer of Penn State Great Valley. “Our campus is fortunate to have supporters as generous as Chuck and Karen.”

Located in the campus' Innovation Center, the Chuck and Karen Thomas Electronics Lab can accommodate 10 two-student teams for courses in electronic circuit design. It also serves as a resource for the REV-UP Center for Entrepreneurship, the Great Valley campus' Invent Penn State Innovation Hub. The space includes oscilloscopes, function generators, and spectrum analyzers for lab courses and for the fabrication and testing of circuitry related to projects of the start-up companies working with REV-UP.

A former vice president at Comcast and QVC, Chuck Thomas served as a part-time faculty member at Great Valley for 11 years, teaching courses in new ventures and entrepreneurship for the campus' MBA program. After retiring from teaching, he became a member of the campus' Advisory Board in 2015.

After beginning his career as a systems programmer, Chuck founded several software and services companies, including the largest retail industry enterprise software company in the United States at the time. He holds a bachelor of science in information systems management and an MBA, both from the University of Maryland. Prior to attending the University of Maryland, he took electrical engineering courses at Penn State.

Karen Thomas retired from her position as senior vice president and chief information officer at Main Line Health in 2016. During her time there, she implemented a variety of electronic health record products from vendors like Siemens and NextGen Healthcare. She received a bachelor of science in biology and psychology from Bucknell University and a master of health administration from Duke University.

"Teaching at Penn State Great Valley was a wonderful experience for me," said Chuck. "I learned so much from the students who brought all of their experiences with them to class. This is an intimate campus full of those committed to achievement — that makes it a great place to be. Karen and I are delighted to help in Penn State Great Valley's continued development and growth."

The Thomas' commitment was recently celebrated with a ribbon cutting ceremony at an annual design expo for students enrolled in the regional bachelor's degree in engineering.

This gift will advance "A Greater Penn State for 21st Century Excellence," a focused campaign that seeks to elevate Penn State's position as a leading public university in a world defined by rapid change and global connections. With the support of alumni and friends, "A Greater Penn State" seeks to fulfill the three key imperatives of a 21st-century public university: keeping the doors to higher education open to hardworking students regardless of financial well-being; creating transformative experiences that go beyond the classroom; and impacting the world by fueling discovery, innovation and entrepreneurship. To learn more about "A Greater Penn State for 21st Century Excellence," visit greaterpennstate.psu.edu.

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