



Chief External Architect Of Edwardsville Campus, Gyo Obata, Remembered For Visionary Designs

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EDWARDSVILLE - The chief external architect of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's campus core, Gyo Obata, passed away on Tuesday, March 8 at the age of 99.

Obata, of St. Louis, was a world-renowned architect. He co-founded the global architecture-engineering firm Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum (HOK) in 1955, and designed the University's Edwardsville campus in the early 1960's.

In an HOK release posted Thursday, March 10, Bill Valentine, FAIA, HOK's chairman emeritus said, "Gyo embodied everything that's honorable about the architectural profession. Instead of designing for the fashions of the times or to make a personal statement, Gyo designed to improve lives. He was a kind, thoughtful man who developed warm, personal relationships with his colleagues and clients. People believed in him, which is an essential part of turning drawings into buildings."

In highlighting many of Obata's significant accomplishments as principal of design, HOK noted the planning and design of the Edwardsville campus as the firm's "first major university commission."

According to HOK, "Gyo's innovative campus master plan, which veered away from the large, monumental and institutional style of architecture that at the time was prevalent in new campuses, shaped what then SIU President Delyte W. Morris called a 'bold and experimental institution.'"

[Read the full HOK release.](#)

In 2017, Obata was recognized with SIUE's Distinguished Service Award for his visionary contributions to campus development. [This video](#), created in acknowledgment of his award receipt, was shown at the University's spring 2017 commencement ceremony.

At the ceremony, then Chancellor Randy Pembroke said, "The beauty of the 2,660-acre site demanded something special of the architecture that would occupy the core of our campus, and Mr. Obata delivered in sensational fashion. His designs here underscore a sense of strength and stature befitting a higher education institution. We are forever in his debt."