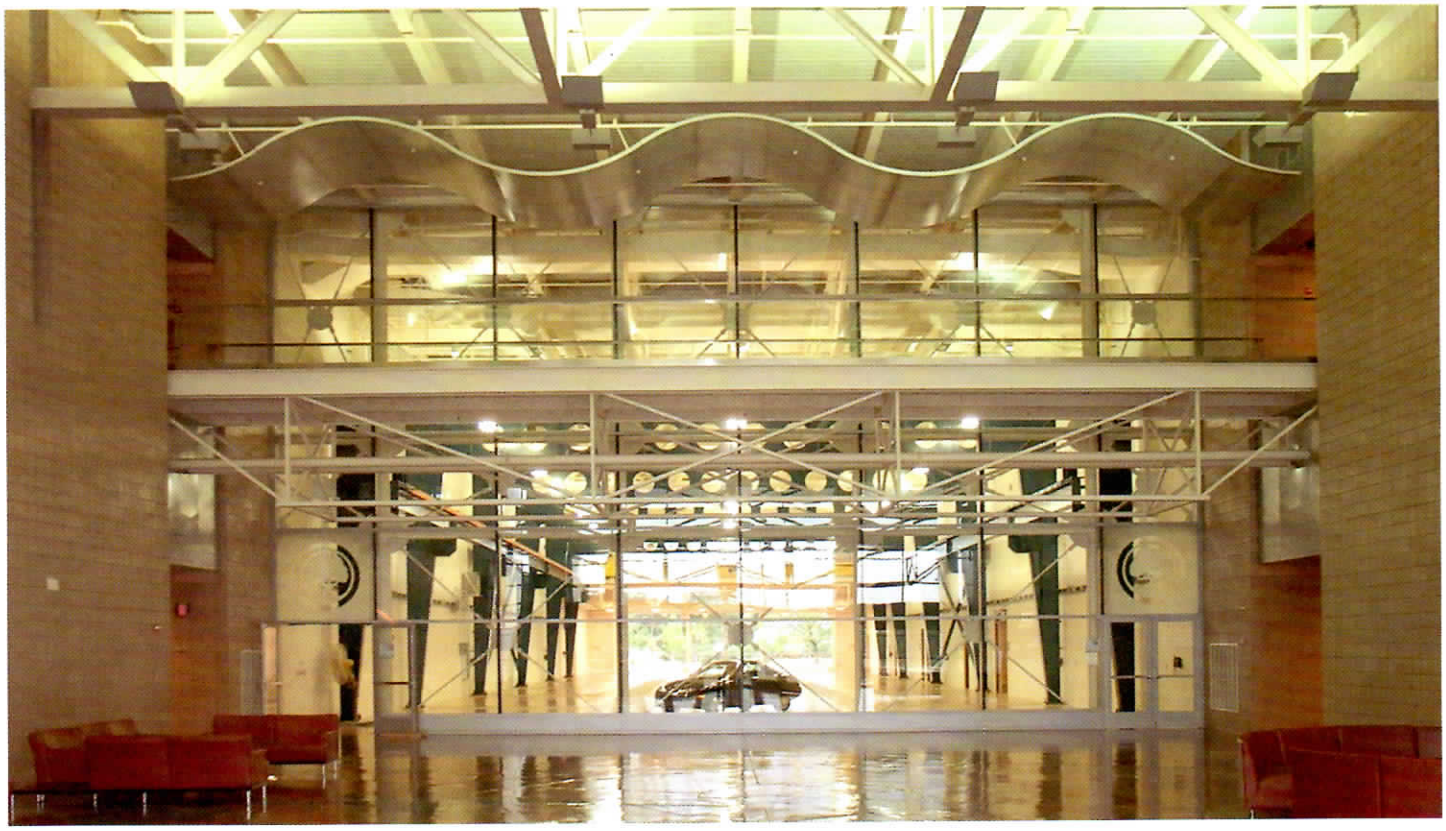


# Creativity + Flexibility = A Building for the Future

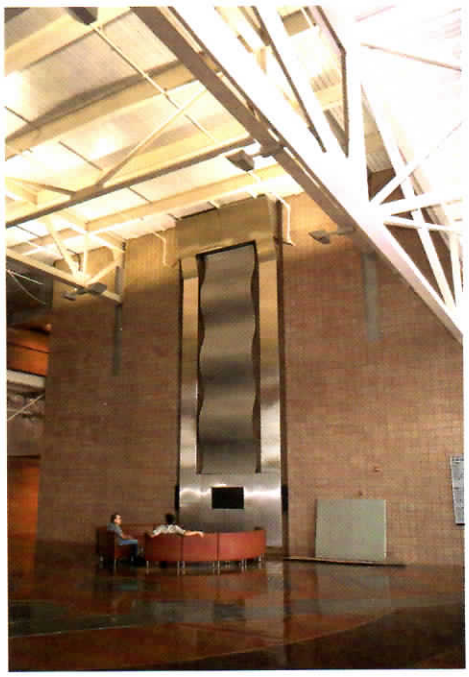
Technology is changing so rapidly that during the time it takes to plan a major new educational building, most traditional buildings are already out of date. Mott Community College (MCC) in Flint, Michigan required a facility that would help it meet the Flint region's need for a highly-skilled workforce. MCC's new 180,000 sq.ft. Regional Technology Center (RTC) is a pioneer in the development of technical educational facilities. Designed by SSOE, the RTC is a well-thought-out execution of design and flexible high-tech function that allows MCC to adapt to new training techniques for emerging technologies.

While melding with existing campus architecture, the RTC manifests an aura of technical innovation. Described as "art deco-meets-the-Jetsons" the design was achieved by using glass facades, scored ground face block, a 3-story atrium with handcrafted cement floor, aluminum panels, flowing waves of perforated metal, futuristic sculptural furnishings and art, and splashes of bold color.

SSOE worked closely with MCC users and the community to define training priorities. In fact, a board of directors made up of business and labor leaders cooperatively advised SSOE and MCC on the construction of the RTC and its curriculum. The resulting building reflects the spirit and culture of the RTC's mission.

All RTC programs are modularized and custom-designed based on the needed outcome. To support these modular programs, SSOE designed a resourceful building that houses numerous training areas:

- Manufacturing Technologies, including an 11,000 sq.ft. high bay laboratory and several specialized manufacturing process laboratories.
- Automotive Technologies, including 20 automotive service bays and automotive specialty laboratories.



- Building Trades Technologies, including material testing laboratories, and training facilities for carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and mechanical trades.

- Informational Technologies, including drafting, vehicle design and simulation, and numerous computer labs.

- Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Technologies, including electronics and hydraulics laboratories.

Using Stewart Brand's 1994 book, "How Buildings Learn," as a guiding philosophy, SSOE integrated all aspects of the design and construction process into a building that embodies an aesthetic, yet functional and adaptable vision. Programmed and organized to adjust for evolving training requirements, the RTC lends itself to flexible layouts. Labs and classrooms are positioned to maximize space so they can be shared when possible or claimed by others in the future as instructional programs expand, contract, and/or change. This strategy is geared to the future and ensures that as the building's use changes with time, the RTC will be able to adapt with an easy redefinition of space.

SSOE's design also provided for an open technology infrastructure to accommodate next-generation training needs. The building is equipped with the latest technology from a state-of-the-art two-way teleconference auditorium, to "smart" interactive classrooms, to individual workstations that integrate with the MCC campus and building network to form a seamless information exchange.

The intrinsic and economic value of the RTC's design emphasizes the importance of flexibility and creates a powerful link between education and employers. With the RTC's remarkable ability to innovate, adapt and evolve, SSOE has changed the way we design educational buildings to train students now and in the future.●

## project highlights

- 180,000 sq. ft.
- Technical Educational Facility
- Flexible Design
- "Smart" Interactive Classrooms
- State-of-the-art Technology