In the early days of ERA, most of the engineers the company hired were graduates of the University of Minnesota. Over the years, UNIVAC and other Minnesota tech companies continued to stay connected with the University in what remained a mutually beneficial relationship.

Keeping up with the times, the University purchased their first digital computer in 1957. Having first contemplated purchasing an IBM computer, they bought a UNIVAC 1103 for a bargain $250,000. This state-of-the-art machine helped spur on the field of computer science at the University which they later established as a formal department in 1970.

Some of the company’s early hires from the University went on to become leaders in Minnesota’s computing industry, and for a few, industry giants. Seymour Cray, an alumnus, is widely regarded as a pioneer in the industry. Known for his genius in designing computers, he later founded Cray Research and built supercomputers. The U acquired a Cray-1 computer in 1981.

Today the legacy still remains. Several endowed chairs, one named for William Norris (who later founded Control Data), bear the names of important individuals and companies in Minnesota’s tech industry. The University also houses the Charles Babbage Institute, dedicated to preserving the world-wide history of the IT field.