

William Miller, Provost Emeritus, Stanford University



Dr. William F. Miller has spent about half of his professional life in business and about half in academia. This combination has permitted him to play a unique role in the development of Silicon Valley.

He received a PhD in physics from Purdue University in 1956 and became the director of the Applied Mathematics Division at the Argonne National Laboratory in 1958. In addition to leading the computerization of Argonne, he and his colleagues did significant early work on computational science. Miller was the last faculty member recruited to Stanford University by the legendary Frederick Terman, who was then vice president and provost of Stanford. Miller carried out research in computer science and directed the research of many graduate students.

As Stanford's vice president for research and later as vice president and provost, Miller championed the establishment of the Office of Technology Licensing (OTL), which has become the model for such activities at other universities. He actively facilitated the establishment of a number of interdisciplinary programs.

In 1968, Miller also played a role in the founding of the first Mayfield Fund (venture capital) as a special limited partner and advisor to the general partners.

As president and CEO of SRI International (1979-90), Miller opened SRI to the Pacific Region. He established the spin-out and commercialization program at SRI and established the David Sarnoff Research Center (now the Sarnoff Corporation) as a subsidiary of SRI. He became the chairman and CEO.

In 1982, Miller was appointed to the National Science Board. He has served on the board of directors of several major companies such as Signetics, Firemans Fund Insurance, First Interstate Bank (and later) Wells Fargo Bank, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, and Varian Associates.

Since 1990, Miller has worked with start-ups and nonprofits in Silicon Valley. He helped organize Joint Venture Silicon Valley Network, co-founded SmartValley, Inc., Center for Excellence in Nonprofits, and aided the formation of CommerceNet, where he also serves on the board of directors.