Naval Academy to honor computer scientist Grace Hopper

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The U.S. Naval Academy will name its future cyber building after Grace Hopper, a pioneering computer scientist and U.S. Navy rear admiral, the academy's superintendent announced Thursday.

Vice Adm. Ted Carter made the announcement at the academy's "Athena Conference: Heroines of the past, present and future," which is marking the 40th anniversary of women's admission to the academy.

The cyber facility, which will be called Hopper Hall, will be the first building named after a woman at the three main service academies.

Often referred to as "Amazing Grace" and the mother of computing, Hopper joined the U.S. Navy Reserve during World War II. She later worked on a team to develop the UNIVAC computer and convert mathematic code into language. That led to developing the first compiler in 1952, which led to the creation of COBOL. Carter said Hopper also wanted to be known for training men and women in the Navy.

"So today, her vision, her legacy, will follow through in this field of dreams of cyber for the admiral of the cyber seas—Adm. Grace Hopper," Carter said.

A group of women who were the first females to graduate from the academy in 1980 were on hand to applaud the announcement. It meant a lot to Midshipman Frances Kratz, who said she "teared up a little bit" when she heard the building would be named for a Navy woman who

inspired her. The sophomore computer science major said Hopper was a big influence on her decision to study computers at the academy.

"I just really think that she was so influential, for not only the women in the Navy, but for computer science," Kratz, of Tampa, Florida, said. "Obviously, she was such a leader in that field, and I'm just so excited that it's going to be named after her."

Carter noted Hopper Hall will likely be the last major academic building constructed on school grounds, which is tight for space along the Severn River. Groundbreaking is set for Oct. 21 on the 206,000-square-foot building. The academy hopes to have the $106 million facility operational by 2019. It will be built between the Nimitz Library and Rickover Hall.

The academy requires all students to take two cyber security classes in a field of increasing importance to national security and civilian computer networks. The school graduated its first cyber security majors this year. Next year, it hopes to become the nation's first college to have a cyber major accredited by ABET, a leading nonprofit accrediting agency for the disciplines of applied science, computing and engineering.

"It will be a first for a cyber program nationwide, but we expect to do pretty well. We've been planning this for three years," said Andrew Phillips, the academy's academic dean and provost.

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