Local man gives USC $35 million

LOS ANGELES - A Pasadena businessman has donated $35 million to the University of Southern California's engineering department, saying he's become wealthier than he ever imagined possible and wants to help others at his alma mater.

Ming Hsieh, 50, earned bachelor's and master's degrees in electrical engineering from USC after spending his youth on a rice farm in China during the Cultural Revolution.

He became a billionaire when the fingerprint identification technology company he formed, Cogent Inc., went public in 2004.

The donation is part of a $300 million fundraising campaign by USC's engineering school.