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**Belmont Abbey College Announces Selection of Architect for New Performing Arts Center**

**Belmont, N.C. (Nov. 20, 2024)** – Following an extensive research process and significant community input, Belmont Abbey College announces Little Diversified Architectural Consulting (Little) as the architect for its highly anticipated new Visual and Performing Arts Center. In October 2023, the North Carolina General Assembly allocated \$9 million in funding for the center as part of its biennial budget. Since then, the Abbey has created a Community Leaders' Advisory Committee, with more than 40 college and community leaders, that has worked diligently to plan for the performing arts center's construction.

The college selected Little as the project architect because of the firm's expertise in designing world-class performing arts spaces, along with their commitment to creating a facility that will serve as a vibrant hub for artistic expression and cultural enrichment. Little has designed numerous notable regional projects including Gaston Day School's Pamela Kimbrell Warlick Visual & Performing Arts Center, Warlick Family YMCA, Charlotte Catholic High School's Fine Arts Center, Central Piedmont Community College's Overcash Academic & Performing Arts Center, Queens University of Charlotte's Sarah Belk Gambrell Center for Arts and Civic Engagement, and Chapman Cultural Center in Spartanburg, SC.

"We look forward to partnering with Belmont Abbey College and the surrounding region to bring their vision to reality," says Tom Balke, AIA, Community Studio Principal at Little. "Creating a performance and cultural space that provides unique experiences while reflecting this community's aspirations is an important driver of the design outcomes."

Little's experience, combined with a dedication to honoring the Abbey's Catholic heritage and Benedictine values through thoughtful architectural design, makes them ideally suited to bring the committee's vision to life. As the project moves forward, Little will work closely with the college and local community leaders to develop a comprehensive plan for a 1,000-seat theater.

The new performing arts center will allow the college and surrounding area to enjoy theater, visual and performing arts, art exhibitions, and other educational and cultural events in a beautiful, welcoming, first-rate facility. The state-of-the-art venue will feature versatile performance spaces, a theatrical scene workshop, wardrobe area, event space, and exhibition areas — each meticulously crafted to enhance the audience experience and to support a wide range of artistic disciplines.

"We are thrilled to have Little Diversified Architectural Consulting on board for this landmark project," said Phil Brach, Vice President of College Relations at Belmont Abbey and a representative of the Community Leaders' Advisory Committee. "Their innovative designs and attention to detail perfectly align with our vision for the Visual and Performing Arts Center. We are confident that they will create a space that not only meets the needs of our community but also becomes a beacon of artistic excellence, known throughout the state."

To guide the venue's development, the Community Leaders' Advisory Committee launched an extensive research phase, which included surveying members of the Advisory Committee and other potential community stakeholders. They also conducted more than 10 tours of other Performing Arts Centers, as



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well as a comprehensive study of surrounding venues, to ensure the new center would meet community needs and expectations.

Reeves McGlohon, retired superintendent of Gaston County Schools and a member of the advisory committee, remarked, "Belmont Abbey is to be commended for putting together an advisory group to provide input into planning for this project. They have supported the advisory group and have listened to what we have had to say. There is no doubt in my mind that the work of the advisory group in conjunction with the Abbey will lead to a final product that will meet the needs of the college and the community at large."

As part of the new visual and performing arts center project, the Haid Theatre at Belmont Abbey College will also undergo renovation. While the theater has served the community well, it no longer meets current needs, and feedback from community partners highlighted the importance of preserving the 200-seat theater alongside the development of the new venue.

Debbie Windley, Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations for Belmont Abbey College and a member of the advisory committee shares, "We are thankful for strong community, corporate, and legislative support for this project. Completion of the Visual and Performing Arts Center will be a great complement to the One Gaston 2040 plan that has a focus on the celebration of the cultural offerings that will continue to grow and thrive in Gaston County - making this community a hub for cultural excellence."

Donny Hicks, Director of Economic and Community Development for Gaston County, added, "The visual and performing arts center will be a huge asset to us in the recruitment of people and companies and in creating the kind of environment in which people want to live."

This collaborative approach will ensure that the new center meets the college's needs as well as the diverse needs and expectations of the surrounding community. Crucial next steps include the selection of a general contractor and site location for the Performing Arts Center. The projected schedule will be developed collaboratively to ensure all project phases are carefully planned and allow for a seamless construction process. By aligning on key milestones and timelines, the project team will remain focused on delivering a state-of-the-art facility that enriches the wider community while meeting the high standards set by the college. If you would like more information or to support this project, please contact Debra Windley at [debrawindley@bac.edu](mailto:debrawindley@bac.edu) or 704-461-6691.

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### **About Belmont Abbey College**

Founded in 1876, Belmont Abbey College is a private, Catholic baccalaureate and liberal arts institution. Our mission is to educate students in the liberal arts and sciences so that in all things God may be glorified. Guided by the Catholic intellectual tradition and the Benedictine spirit of prayer and learning, we welcome a diverse body of students and provide them with an education that will enable them to lead lives of integrity, to succeed professionally, to become responsible citizens, and to be a blessing to themselves and to others. Our beautiful and historic campus is conveniently located just 10 miles west of Charlotte, N.C., and is currently home to more than 1500 students. For more information, visit <https://belmontabbeycollege.edu/>.

### **About Little Diversified Architectural Consulting**

Little is a national design firm recognized for crafting exceptional solutions that elevate client performance in the community, retail, workplace and healthcare industries. With more than 440 professionals across the U.S., the firm combines expertise in traditional architectural services (architecture, engineering, interior architecture) with proficiency in additional architectural consulting services (planning, sustainability, site design, brand consulting, digital visualization and smart building technologies). Visit [littleonline.com](http://littleonline.com).