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Belmont Abbey College Announces New Visual and Performing Arts Center Site and Conceptual Design Plans

Belmont, N.C. (September 15, 2025) – Belmont Abbey College, in collaboration with Little Diversified Architectural Consulting (Little), announces significant progress in the development of its new Visual and Performing Arts Center. Key milestones include the selection of a strategic site, the release of conceptual renderings and architectural designs, and an updated project cost estimate of \$60 million for the state-of-the-art facility designed to serve both the college and community needs.

The new center will offer a vibrant venue for theater, dance, visual and performing arts, exhibitions, and a wide variety of educational and cultural events. Designed to be both beautiful and functional, the facility will feature versatile performance spaces carefully designed to enhance audience experience and support a wide range of artistic disciplines.

The site for the new center has been strategically selected along Abbey Lane—Belmont Abbey College's main campus thoroughfare—between the Science Building and Stowe Hall. The site was chosen based on several criteria, including accessibility, parking, traffic flow, utility access, and environmental considerations. This location also reinforces the college's commitment to integrating the arts into campus life and enabling strong community engagement.

Conceptual renderings released by Little showcase a design that honors Belmont Abbey College's Catholic heritage and Benedictine values, blending traditional Gothic architectural elements with a modern aesthetic. The result is a welcoming, inspiring space designed to elevate artistic expression and community connection.

"The Visual and Performing Arts Center will be a vibrant embodiment of the Benedictine values of hospitality, community, and tradition, providing a dynamic space that nurtures creativity and growth," said Adam Caruthers, Studio Principal at Little. "Designed to inspire both students and the greater public, it will serve as a lasting resource that strengthens bonds and reflects Belmont Abbey's commitment to tradition and fostering a vibrant community."

The \$60 million project cost reflects the full scope of the ideal center, which includes a 1,000-seat theater, a full stage with backstage areas, control and mixing rooms, coverable rehearsal space, storage, a loading dock, and a workshop. Additional features include a dance studio, secondary rehearsal space, and an art gallery.

"This performing arts center is not only a transformative addition to the college, but also a vital cultural resource for the greater Gaston County community," said Phil Brach, Vice President of College Relations at Belmont Abbey College and a representative of the Community Leaders' Advisory Committee. "Our vision is a shared one—by dedicating over 50% of the facility's use to community groups, we're creating a space that will truly serve and enrich the entire community."



The Gaston County Arts Advisory Committee—comprising more than 40 local leaders and college representatives—has played a vital role in the planning process. Their extensive research, including surveys and site visits to other performing arts centers, has ensured the new facility reflects the needs and aspirations of the broader community.

A wide range of community organizations are eager to utilize the new Visual and Performing Arts Center (VPAC), including Gaston Dance, which plans to host its three annual performances at the venue, while the Charlotte Symphony hopes to bring its first-ever concerts to the county. With over 75 members, the Gaston Symphonic Band aims to present its annual concert series at the VPAC, and the Gaston County Art Guild plans exhibitions in the gallery. Holy Angels anticipates hosting art shows and its annual resident talent show. Many other community groups plan to use the VPAC's auditorium and event spaces—highlighting strong local demand for this new cultural resource.

Belmont Abbey College's commitment includes hosting the facility on its main campus, operational costs, fundraising, and a pledge to make the facility accessible to local organizations and residents. The project is being funded through North Carolina state grants, private donations, and community partnerships.

Belmont Abbey College, in partnership with Little, presented plans for its new facility to community leaders and local supporters on Friday, September 15. The presentation featured remarks from Adam Caruthers of Little, along with several distinguished guests, including:

- Representative John Torbett, North Carolina General Assembly
- Chuck Stowe, retired theatre educator in Gaston County and professional actor
- Donny Hovis, Director, Gaston County Economic Development
- Reeves McGlohon, representative, Gaston County Arts Advisory Committee
- Vincent Ginski, Director of Workforce Development, NC Chamber Foundation
- Phil Brach, Vice President of College Relations, Belmont Abbey College

As plans move forward, Belmont Abbey and Little will continue working closely with community leaders to finalize designs and begin construction. The new Visual and Performing Arts Center is poised to become a cornerstone of artistic excellence, enriching the cultural life of the region and beyond.

If you would like more information or are interested in supporting this project, please contact Debra Windley at debrawindley@bac.edu or 704-461-6691.

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 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.