something bigger than all of us.

Art starts with an impulse—that instinctive urge to create, renew, explore, contribute, to think in what-ifs. Artists can’t ignore it. They have to turn that urge into something meaningful and tangible, something they can share, something bigger than any one person.

The Boston University College of Fine Arts has armed generations of artists with the skills they need to give life to those impulses—on stage, in the studio, in the concert hall. Yet another creative urge helps make this possible: the impulse of art-lovers to support the development of artists who enrich the human experience.
Established in 1873 as the Boston University College of Music, CFA was the first institution in the United States to offer a Bachelor of Music degree. Today, CFA spans three campuses and three artistic disciplines.

The School of Music, School of Theatre, and School of Visual Arts now educate more than 1,500 undergraduate and graduate fine arts majors each year. CFA has blazed a trail by moving beyond the traditional perpetual-audition-and-elimination conservatory model of arts education, in which faculty members sit on pedestals as judge and jury. By instead imposing stringent admissions standards, the College frees professors to nurture students’ talents, honoring the sacred trust between artist and apprentice.

On our Commonwealth Avenue, Huntington Avenue, and Tanglewood campuses, the CFA faculty focuses students on diligent practice and technique, as well as theory. Through collaborations with resident professional ensembles—like Grammy-nominated Boston Baroque and the esteemed Huntington Theatre Company—and our groundbreaking forty-two-year partnership with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, students are held to exacting standards. By graduation, they are prepared to enter the arts world as both teachers and performers.

Nothing exemplifies CFA’s success better than the College’s 11,000 alumni. As painters, producers, actors, stagehands, musicians, teachers, collectors, enthusiasts, and more, our alumni are not only ambassadors of CFA’s tradition of pioneering excellence, they are living, breathing examples of what it means to turn a creative impulse into a lifelong commitment to the arts.
Facilities Campaign

The College of Fine Arts has a vision. We call it “Art at the Heart.”

CFA sits at the center of a large and diverse University, drawing on its intellectual variety and profusion of perspectives—but not as much as it could. Boston University in turn benefits from having a thriving, rhythmic, hands-on artistic community at the heart of its campus—but not as much as it should. The same is true of CFA’s ties to the city of Boston. We can push these relationships further.

Art at the Heart means joining the east and west sides of BU’s elongated, divided campus at a lively, accessible, and relevant cultural hub—a center of gravity for student life, and a community arts centerpiece rare among Level 1 research universities. Art at the Heart means inspiring all BU students to express themselves creatively through University-wide arts requirements and functional practice spaces spread across campus. It means a robust scholarship program to support a vibrant student body and the resources to host professional-caliber productions and exhibitions for all BU students and Boston art-lovers. It means consistently supporting our top-tier faculty while bringing in illustrious visiting artists for master classes and residencies, making these talented people accessible to our students, our University, and our city.

This vision—our plan for something bigger—is not just a pipe dream. We can make BU a place where the arts connect the entire community, with CFA at the heart of it all. And we know how to get started.
With the right community, curriculum, and vision in place, it’s time to give our emerging artists a space that works better for them.

As a 1919 Buick dealership, CFA’s home at 855 Commonwealth Avenue reflected the industrial glamour of that era with sprawling showrooms, expansive windows, and Beaux-Arts architecture. Since CFA acquired it in 1954, however, the building has been walled up and cordoned off into a maze of classrooms, offices, and studios.

After decades of hard use by student-artists—and decades of patchwork maintenance—CFA’s buildings challenge the College’s ability to cultivate students’ potential.

Today, dancers leap across damaged studio floors. Musicians blare scales through the walls of each other’s practice rooms. Sculptors create as an archaic HVAC system struggles to remove clay dust from the air. Visitors flounder to find the front door. These conditions undermine learning and teaching at the College, turn off prospective students, and turn away the guests who provide audiences and support. Furthermore, being asked to make the best of under-functioning facilities can lead students to believe that their University and College communities don’t care to foster their drive to create.

The right environment for CFA is not a glitzy, over-the-top design—no marble hall or pseudo-hotel. The right environment is a place with natural light, tough bones, and just the right amount of grit, where artists know they can still get their hands dirty. It is a place that encourages students to explore—and to discover the artists they might become.

The University administration is now acting on its own impulse: to make improving CFA facilities a top priority of President Robert A. Brown’s University-wide strategic plan. BU has promised to match campaign contributions dollar for dollar. The right environment is within reach—

with your help.

Broken auditorium seats, cramped practice rooms, dingy dance floors, fluorescent-lit art studios, the closed-off and deteriorating grand staircase, and sinks caked with years of paint and clay are some of the many physical challenges our CFA community faces every day in 855 Commonwealth Avenue.

It needs the right environment.
CFA presents a drab and dreary face to Commonwealth Avenue—gray, windowless (practically doorless), and shrouded with ivy. Who would notice it, much less come inside? But 855 Commonwealth Avenue can become a glowing beacon for art students and art-lovers, a glass-fronted showcase for the artists, classes, exhibits, productions, and performances within.

This is the right environment.
We worked with Wilson Butler Architects to develop a detailed, multi-year plan to make the College’s home elegant in its public spaces and open, durable, and functional behind the scenes. Phase 1 of this plan addresses our most critical needs at 855 Commonwealth Avenue, detailed as Phases 1.1 through 1.4 in the following pages.

With $7 million in funding from the University, work has already started, including installation of a new HVAC system and expansion of visual arts spaces. But to launch Phase 1 in earnest, we must raise $15 million from our alumni and friends. We ask supporters of all three Schools to put their enthusiasm and their funds behind this vital first step. After all, the next phase cannot begin—not can CFA’s larger vision of Art at the Heart be realized—until Phase 1 has successfully been completed.

CFA has a plan for creating the right physical environment for the arts at Boston University. Phase 1 is the foundation of that plan.

Beyond Phase 1:

Phase 1 is vital to realizing CFA’s vision of Art at the Heart—but it’s just the beginning. In subsequent phases, we will pursue further infrastructural improvements, including realizing a new home for the School of Visual Arts at 808 Commonwealth Avenue; reuniting our theatre performance and design facilities on the Charles River Campus; consolidating our Schools of Music and Theatre on the upper floors of 855 Commonwealth Avenue; and addressing critical needs and enhancing the assets of both the BU Theatre on Huntington Avenue and the BU Tanglewood Institute campus in Lenox, Massachusetts. We must also raise funds to increase scholarships, create endowed professorships, foster and support our professional residencies, and garner the resources to enhance the production values of our art exhibitions and theatrical and musical productions. Supported first by our physical transformation and then by the growth of CFA’s endowment fund, we strive to create an arts centerpiece for the Boston University campus of the 21st century and beyond.
The Plan for Phase 1
**Phase 1.1**

120 Spacious Studios and a Comfortable Community Lounge
The Judith R. Harris Center for Music Teaching and Learning will also include renovated classrooms.

**Picture this:**
Hallway after wide, brightly lit hallway lined with glass-doored, high-ceilinged music studios, in which music students practice instruments in comfort and acoustic isolation. Steps away, their classmates and professors gather, teach, and learn in a bustling lounge, spacious classrooms, and labs equipped with the latest recording technology.

**The reality:**
CFA’s 500 undergraduate and graduate student-musicians spend twenty-five to forty hours each week on the ground level of 855 Commonwealth Avenue, in a maze of practice rooms that are without adequate air-conditioning and only minimally sound-proofed. The cramped spaces become hot and humid during spring and summer months, hindering rather than encouraging students’ efforts. Sound bleeds through the walls, challenging the focus of students and faculty members working in adjoining studios, classrooms, and offices.

**How we’ll fix it:**
- 120 spacious, acoustically sealed, fully ventilated individual and ensemble practice rooms, prefabricated offsite to minimize construction-related downtime at CFA
- Improved lockers and instrument storage
- A community lounge—made inviting with couches, tables, and chairs and brightened by restored windows—where students and faculty members can work and socialize
- Renovated, well-ventilated music classrooms with ample adjacent storage areas
- A studio fully equipped for the composition of electronic music
- A group piano lab with networked electronic keyboards
- An ethnomusicology lab with special humidity controls to preserve world instruments
- A piano-repair shop for the College’s tuning and maintenance needs
- Reconfigured and expanded restrooms
- Improved security and access control systems

**Who will benefit:**
The Judith R. Harris Center for Music Teaching and Learning will provide an environment tailored for developing the musical talents of all BU community members who use it. Even the simple improvements—a locker in which to store a tuba during a class across campus, temperature control in a practice space—will mean a big boost in quality of life and work (and CFA’s student-recruitment success). The addition of common space will build a sense of community through its dual uses as a place where students and faculty can relax and collaborate, and a preparation space for the concert and recital hall above.
Phase 1.2

State-of-the-Art Concert Hall
Renovations to the Concert Hall and ensemble rooms will provide dramatically improved acoustics, air quality, and aesthetics where musicians practice and perform—and where BU gathers to enjoy live music.

Picture this:
A rapt audience of nearly 500 filling a concert hall, where natural, softly gleaming walls and flooring foster intimacy while the acoustics of a 24-foot ceiling afford musicians a clear and powerful presence. Clean, comfortable rehearsal space in which music ensembles can lose themselves in getting the notes and feel just right. Secure and inviting corridor connections between practice, performance, and community spaces.

The reality:
CFA’s Concert Hall and rehearsal spaces lack adequate heating and air conditioning. Ensemble practice spaces are undersized, poorly ventilated, and oppressive. With grossly inadequate soundproofing, they exchange sound with the adjacent Concert Hall, distracting rehearsing musicians and placing limitations on appropriate practice times. In the Concert Hall, excessive noise from antiquated ventilation fans competes with performances.

How we’ll fix it:
• Raising of the Concert Hall roof to increase cubic volume and improve acoustics
• New floors, wall, and ceiling finishes devoted to beauty and acoustic excellence in the large-ensemble rehearsal room
• A new heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning system in the Concert Hall and all three ensemble rehearsal rooms
• Renovation of corridors linking the spaces mentioned above, including new finishes and light fixtures
• Connection between ground-level practice rooms and grand staircase (to be renovated in Phase 1.4), including a revolving access-control security door
• A new staircase linking all practice spaces with the Concert Hall and street-level performance spaces

Who will benefit:
A Concert Hall brought up to standards and beyond will bring joy to Boston music-makers and music-lovers alike as they are transported by arpeggios, beats, and vocals enhanced by crisp, soaring acoustics. Since the hall is often used as a lecture space, it will also improve the educational experience of many other BU students (and their teachers). Attractive and functional rehearsal spaces, where musicians will spend the bulk of their time, will ensure that the music continues.
Elegant Entry Arcade and Premier Performance Venue
A new and elegant entrance and a renovated Jacob Sleeper Auditorium will turn CFA's best face forward and forge a partnership with the College of General Studies.

Picture this:
A bustling arcade featuring sparkling glass, dramatic lines, natural light, and original artwork. This arcade will truly welcome the BU and Boston communities into 855 Commonwealth Avenue to learn, train, and share in practice and exhibit spaces and classrooms—and to both perform in and enjoy performances on the stage of a renovated, fully accessible Jacob Sleeper Auditorium.

The reality:
CFA's current main entrance is little more than a small and nondescript street-level stair landing. Students, faculty members, and visitors must struggle to find their bearings, rather than diving right into the vivid, vibrant world of the College. Jacob Sleeper Auditorium, in the neighboring CGS building, is currently used primarily for lectures; it is a useful space in many ways, but it falls short in terms of accessibility, sight lines, and appropriateness for full performances.

How we’ll fix it:
New Entry Arcade
• Construction of a new primary entrance to BU performance venues, designed for aesthetic distinction and ease of navigation
• ADA-approved wheelchair accessibility
• Display spaces for sculpture, hanging artwork, and arts-event publicity materials

Jacob Sleeper Auditorium Renovations
Performed in collaboration with the College of General Studies
• Direct access to Jacob Sleeper Auditorium and the College of General Studies
• An addition of 430 square feet to the stage
• A raised stage and leveled orchestra-rake front to improve sight lines
• Meet ADA-accessibility requirements
• A connection to the Judith R. Harris Center for Music Teaching and Learning (Phase 1.1), which will allow performers to warm up in practice rooms before performances
• Reconfigured seating that captures prime center-stage locations (including accommodations for wheelchair access)

Who will benefit:
A welcoming, graceful entrance and improved performance venue will ensure comfortable, memorable theatre and concert experiences for the BU community, strengthening CFA’s position as the campus’s arts centerpiece.

No longer solely a lecture hall, Sleeper Auditorium will become a prime performance space on campus—one that will welcome all, enhance the learning space for CGS, showcase the extraordinary talents within the Schools of Music and Theatre, and create an organic unity of practice and performance, allowing performers to fully inhabit and thrive in their creative spaces.
Phase 1.4

Turning CFA Inside Out
Public lobby improvements will restore the grand staircase, creating a student lobby and lounge and uncovering CFA’s original showroom windows.

Picture this:
Groups of students studying, socializing, and creating in a wide-open, high-ceilinged lounge flanked by banks of display cases. An entire wall of windows giving the building a fully accessible and welcoming public face—and allowing an abundance of natural light to stream in. Opposite that wall, an ornate, fully restored grand staircase leading to the second-floor library, classrooms, and offices, all redesigned to best suit the teaching, learning, and practice needs of students and faculty.

The reality:
The College’s facade is covered in concrete and vines, creating a barrier rather than an open invitation, and deterring the rest of the BU and Boston communities from engaging with the high-quality art housed inside. The once-grand showroom staircase is boarded up on both sides—prohibiting access to the second floor—and the space is used sparingly as a makeshift rehearsal area. Because of the building’s choppy layout, traffic circulation through the first and second floor hallways is stilted, underserving the students who spend so much time there.

How we’ll fix it:
Street Level
• Restored showroom windows
• Restored grand staircase serving as principal access point to second floor
• New student lounge and lobby area, including student lobby gallery
• New east entrance opening into student lobby
• ADA-compliant wheelchair accessibility on east side of building
• Reconfigured hallways providing improved access to classrooms, offices, and the Music Resource Library
• Renovated state-of-the-art computer lab
• Acoustically separated music classrooms
• New restrooms

Who will benefit:
The newly improved Faye G., Jo, and James Stone Gallery will display School of Visual Arts students’ work in the professional manner these pieces deserve. Full access and enhanced wayfinding will allow visitors to navigate the renovated public spaces with ease. In this phase, School of Music students will perform in a high-quality recital room, and all students will benefit from a beautiful, comfortable student lounge and lobby area—a space that will meet their needs outside of the classroom and strengthen the sense of community and collaboration at the College.
It starts with you.

The blueprints have been drawn. The University is committed. The groundwork is under way. Now we need you.

Picture a research university where every student takes courses in the arts before graduation. An arts college that is the geographical and cultural hub of urban university life—a place of expression and entertainment for BU students, faculty, staff, and alumni and a major performance and exhibition center for Boston. An arts curriculum taught by illustrious professors and important visiting artists that is accessible to all students with talent and drive, regardless of socioeconomic status.

Putting art at the heart of the Boston University experience means creating community and collaboration across disciplines, schools, and colleges. A setting that is inviting, stimulating, and functional—that supports the talent and rigorous training of the artists who shape CFA—is the necessary underpinning of that vision.

The College’s administration has joined with University President Robert A. Brown and his team to turn this soaring vision into a concrete plan. Your contribution to Phase 1 is vital proof to BU and other donors that the CFA community can do what it takes to make our plan a reality. Your impulse to give to the CFA Facilities Campaign will first turn into something tangible—an inspired painting, a professional performer, the home CFA and its students deserve—and then into something transcendent. Inspiration. Education. A thousand futures. Art.

Together, we’ll create something bigger than all of us.

To learn more about ways of giving and naming opportunities, or to make your gift, please contact the CFA campaign staff at 617.358.5211 or impulse@bu.edu.