

Excitement Building Over Upcoming PAC Opening

COVID DELAY DOESN'T DAMPEN ENTHUSIASM
AROUND NEW FACILITY

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Not even a worldwide pandemic—and all of the resulting supply-chain interruptions—can diminish the excitement around the Performing Arts Center (PAC) at Garrett College in McHenry, Maryland.

Originally scheduled to open this spring, completion of the \$21 million facility has been pushed back by delays in HVAC equipment availability. Dr. Richard Midcap, Garrett College's president, said pushing back the likely opening until late summer, "is a short-term challenge in the long-term goal of bringing a performing arts center to Garrett County." Dr. Midcap also noted, "Our community has waited literally decades for this kind of facility. From that perspective, the delay is a temporary frustration. And it certainly hasn't dampened the enthusiasm for what's going to be a wonderful community resource."

Mary Callis, the PAC's executive director agreed, "I think the whole community is excited that we are collectively

Performing Arts Center facility at Garrett College under construction at the time of publication. PHOTO BY MIKE CALHOUN

turning a long-time dream into a reality." Noting Garrett County was the last remaining county in the state without a performing arts center, Mary added, "The PAC is going to dramatically expand performing arts access and opportunities."

Enthusiasm for the facility is also apparent with the success of the Garrett College Foundation's PAC endowment campaign. The Foundation set a goal of raising \$2.5 million, which would make it the largest campaign in Foundation history. Despite launching the campaign in the middle of a pandemic, the Foundation is closing in on that goal. "The outpouring of support has been phenomenal," stated Cherie Krug, the Garrett College Foundation's executive director. "There is so much excitement and goodwill surrounding this facility."



Artist rendition of completed PAC facility at Garrett College, McHenry, MD.

The project is centered on the college's old gymnasium, which is being renovated into a state-of-the-art proscenium theatre that will seat approximately 430 patrons. It also features a 2,000-square-foot conference center that can be used as a recital hall, black box theatre, and reception venue. New educational spaces are also part of the project, including a 16-seat piano lab donated by the Community Trust Foundation, as well as a sound and lighting booth.

While construction progress is readily visible to regular Bumble Bee Road travelers, Mary Callis mentioned a lot of behind-the-scenes work has also been taking place. The first, and one of the most critical steps, was the formation of a formal partnership to support the center. Five partners — Garrett Lakes Arts Festival, Garrett County Arts Council, Garrett County Public Schools, Garrett County Government and Garrett College — have signed long-term agreements to provide financial support and guidance. "In today's world, partnerships are essential for nonprofits to survive," said Mary. "We have an unbelievable set of partners in this project. The facility will bring the partners together under one roof to present more than they could accomplish individually."

Mary communicated that both business and marketing plans are being developed for the PAC, and event scheduling is taking place. The HVAC issue has required rescheduling of some of the early events that were to be held in the PAC, but Mary is looking forward to having the center up and running prior to the 2022-23 academic year that starts in September.

Mary cited, "the center could not be more ideally located. I've always dreamed of this performing arts center being

on the campus of Garrett College. I think it increases exponentially the opportunities available to the community."

The DLR Group, an international architectural firm specializing in performing arts centers, is the architect for the project. Leonard S. Fiore, Inc., based in Altoona, Pennsylvania, and serving the entire mid-Atlantic region, is the general contractor for the facility. "DLR did a wonderful job designing a center that meets the vision we developed through the design process," stated Kathy Meagher, Garrett College's director of campus facilities and security, as well as the in-house leader for the PAC project. Kathy added, "Fiore has been a great construction partner during very challenging times, thanks to the pandemic."

Dr. Midcap lauded both state and local officials for their generous support of the project, "Governor Larry Hogan, Senator George Edwards, Delegate Wendell Beitzel and our county commissioners made this project possible." Dr. Midcap also noted that the state provided approximately 75 percent of the project funding and the county contributed the rest.

"Our partners have also been incredibly supportive," noted Julie Yoder, the College's dean of continuing education and workforce development who also provides administrative leadership for the PAC. Julie added, "GLAF, the Arts Council, the public schools and the county have worked so collaboratively with Mary and PAC administrative associate Chantel Lowdermilk. We all recognize the success of the PAC will require a collaborative effort and a team approach."