Architects from the Boston firm designLAB are currently at work on plans to transform the fourth floor bridge of the Fine Arts Center into a makerspace for the Departments of Art, Music and Dance, and Theater.

Scheduled to open in the Fall 2021 semester, this multi-disciplinary space will include a design studio, a theater rehearsal studio (with as much space as the Rand theater stage), a costume shop, a music education classroom, music seminar room, and a recording studio, along with newly designed spaces for animation and art classes, and a computer lab. The project will maintain and enhance the integrity of the original building design.

This project, funded by the UMass Building Authority, will create a welcoming and transformative space that will enhance the visibility of the arts and encourage interaction among students and faculty in the creative disciplines.

The Bromery Fine Arts Center is perhaps the most important work of modern architecture on the UMass Amherst campus. It was conceived as a gateway to the campus at the south end of the pond, but its arcade also acts as a link between student housing on the east side of campus and the academic buildings on the west. Designed in 1968 by Kevin Roche of Roche, Dinkloo and Associates (responsible for some of the most inventive buildings of the ’60s and ’70s) the building was an innovation on American campuses.

It remains one of the most visible structures at UMass Amherst. On its lower floors, the building contains a concert hall, the Rand theater, the Bezanson recital hall, and a small black-box theater, and the University Museum of Contemporary Art. In 2020 the building was named for the late Randolph W. “Bill” Bromery, in honor of the former chancellor who was instrumental in creating today’s vibrant and diverse university and who recruited jazz legends such as Max Roach, Archie Shepp, and Fred Tillis, also the first director of the Fine Arts Center. Bromery was the first African American to lead the campus.
Theater majors at UMass Amherst develop an appreciation for design and dramaturgical interpretation along with performance. Laura Bailey ’03, member of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts Dean’s Advisory Council, says, “this multifaceted approach deepened my academic understanding and provided the groundwork for my career in film.” The practical experience she gained working behind the scenes of the theater department’s plays and performances prepared her for her current role as a script supervisor and the “beautiful organized chaos that is production.”

A generous gift in the amount of $50,000 was made by Laura and her parents, Doug and Sara Bailey, establishing an endowment in the Department of Theater. In recognition of this gift, the costume studio in the Arts Bridge will be named the Laura Bailey Costume Shop. “I fondly remember my hours working in the costume shop which was always a beehive of activity,” says Laura. “It is my hope that the new incarnation of this space will bring future generations to even greater heights.”

**NAMING OPPORTUNITIES: SUSTAINING CREATIVITY AT UMASS AMHERST**

A gift of this size is an opportunity to lead by building endowments in support of the arts. Alumni and friends can demonstrate their support in perpetuity, while honoring a loved one or a cherished professor, or linking their own names to the institution that made a lasting difference in their lives. Donors at this level not only contribute to growth and change, they catalyze it. They set an example and draw other donors to the cause, helping to bring something new into the world.

By making a gift in support of the Arts Bridge Transformation, you will leave your mark on a sustainable future for arts learning at UMass Amherst in an architecturally significant building.