

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF THE BUILDING ARTS

May 22, 2023

The Honorable Bruce Bannister
South Carolina 24th District, Ways and Means Committee
525 Blatt Building
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Rep. Bannister:

On behalf of the Board and students of the American College of the Building Arts, we appreciate your bringing this critical request to the S.C. House Ways and Means Committee.

ACBA was founded in the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo in Charleston, S.C., when it became abundantly clear that the last generation of traditionally trained artisans had aged out of the American job market without a new generation being trained to take their place. ACBA was created to fill this critical gap in our nation's workforce.

In 2016, the College moved into its new campus in Charleston's Old Trolley Barn, c. 1897, at 649 Meeting Street, a rehabilitation that has been recognized by both national and local preservation organizations. At that time, 52 students were enrolled in the program. Thanks to coverage by national and state news media, and as word about the quality educational experience to be found here spreads, ACBA's enrollment has exploded, more than doubling since 2019. This spring, 141 students were enrolled, pushing our instructional space to its capacity. ACBA is now wait-listing deserving and qualified students seeking to enter career fields that are facing critical shortages both in our state and nation.

Our long-term vision to addressing our space issue is focused on expanding the footprint of the Trolley Barn by adding new instructional spaces, including a new blacksmithing workshop, instructional space for stone carving and plaster, and a new library. While fundraising efforts are undergoing for this ultimate expansion plan, ACBA is leasing space to accommodate students wishing to enroll in our high-demand programs. The proposed state allocation will be used as a key component of this concerted effort.

Because the Trolley Barn is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this work must be undertaken with the utmost attention to preservation standards and best practices. The total cost of this critical expansion is estimated to be \$4 million.

ACBA is the only college in America that offers a four-year bachelor's degree in these traditional trades. On June 6, the College will receive the S.C. Governor's Award for the Arts in recognition of its success in educating the next generation of highly skilled artisans. We are poised for continued success if we can meet our space needs. We thank the S.C. Ways and Means Committee for looking favorably upon this request.

Sincerely,



Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Colby M. Broadwater III
President, American College of the Building Arts