

HEARTBREAK ON BROAD STREET: DAG STATEMENT ON UARTS CLOSURE

Art is the heart of modern Philadelphia. And our heart skipped a beat when the University of the Arts unexpectedly announced immediate closure.

Eds and Meds may be the muscle of our city, but the arts define its spirit, lining the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and literally naming the stretch of Broad Street called the Avenue of the Arts.

As we all collectively unpack this tragedy, the DAG Steering Committee believes that now is the time to focus all our collective efforts on sustaining this important cultural phenomenon that has helped define our downtown. While questions have begun and will inevitably continue to surface considering alternative uses for the University's impressive portfolio of historic Center City buildings, we urge restraint. While they are undoubtedly important, and largely protected by historic designation, continuing to serve the university's mission and supporting the students, faculty, and staff should be the sole focus at this time.

That means calling together the political, institutional, community, and cultural leaders at city, region, and state level to both determine the causes of the mysterious collapse of the University of the Arts and devise a plan for restoring it to life. There may be blame to assign, however the only immediate reason to be concerned about these failings is to determine how to reverse them.

What we need today is what the University of the Arts has been throughout its long history:

- A magnet for students and artists, both drawing talented people to Philadelphia and providing a reason for Philadelphians to stay.
- A multi-media hub, distinguished from other art schools in the city and elsewhere by its embrace and fertile collocation of almost all forms of creativity.
- A community of creative people, with housing and community spaces that energize not only a campus, but the surrounding neighborhoods—and distinguish it from the commuter education seen elsewhere.
- A defining feature of Center City, lighting the many hours when the theaters and music venues of south Broad Street are dark with performances, exhibitions, and the ordinary extraordinariness of a large, diverse cultural community living in our midst.

While we do not have a proposal to repair the damage done and salvage what has been lost, we advocate in the strongest terms that our leaders come together to develop a solution to protect and resurrect this critical cultural institution.

The DAG Steering Committee