For generations of UNC students, one shared rite of passage comes from filing nervously into the Carolina Union's Auditorium on the first day of orientation, surrounded by hundreds of new faces as the exciting prospect of those first days in Chapel Hill draws near. That auditorium will be undergoing a major renovation this semester, giving next year's crop of new students a fresh space welcoming them to Carolina.

Since its opening in the early 1980s, the Auditorium has not had major site improvements or renovation work. Carolina Union leaders see this project as an opportunity to create a state-of-the-art venue that will serve the many needs of the UNC community. "This is one of the highest volume venues on campus and it's a space that can transform someone's Carolina experience," said Jordan Bermudez, a senior from Durham and Chair of the Carolina Union Board of Directors. "So it is critical that we make it the most innovative space possible. We aren't just building it for people who are here now or next year, we are building it for people who will be here in 10 or 20 years."

An improved sound system, theatrical and stage lighting, as well as a resurfaced stage will make the space more amenable to live performances. "The AV systems and lighting are designed to be self-serve for clients using the space, so that will help them save money rather than having to hire a professional to orchestrate sound or lights," said Joe Singer, Director of Event Services for the Carolina Union. Acoustical panels will also be added to the walls and ceilings, further enhancing sound within the venue.

Another change will be a modular seating arrangements to accommodate a multitude of uses. Seats can be removed from the front of the auditorium to open up performance space, for example, or added to raise capacity. The Auditorium's new capacity will range from 293 to 397 people, depending on seating arrangement. Renovations will also meet current ADA code, with ramps added to improve access for all visitors.
The stage will also get a facelift that includes the addition of side screens with sharp laser projection to enhance presentations and lectures. Finally, LED lighting along the walls will offer programmable colors so that organizations can modify lighting to match their organization's colors.

The Auditorium will be closed during the spring semester while the work takes place. Expected completion for the project is in May, in time to re-open for summer 2019 orientation sessions.

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