

A Refuge for Scholars:
CCNY's New Student Center Proposal



Fig. 1: AI generated rendering of proposed student center

March 23, 2026

Morphosis:

**Tarik Kandic
Saraf Ohi
Roshni Ramprashad
Myesha Tasnim**

Introduction:

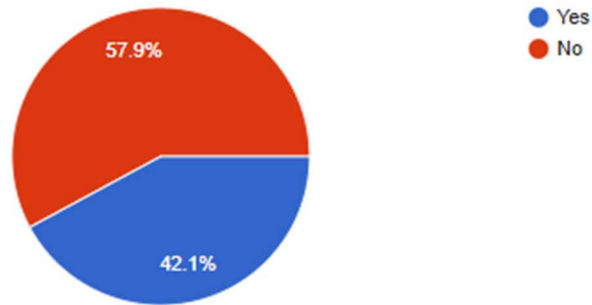
"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." These are the words of the late Helen Keller, one of the most inspirational figures in modern history. However, this sense of togetherness can be difficult to achieve at The City College of New York. Considering that the overwhelming majority of CCNY students are commuters, they often have little reason or motivation to stay on campus and engage with each other outside of class. Thousands of students attend CCNY every day, yet they have few opportunities for interaction aside from study rooms and libraries. In addition, there is a severe lack of space for club meetings and student-organized events. There is also no designated lounging area for students to rest, socialize, or simply spend time between classes. These issues make it difficult for students to properly participate in campus life. For these reasons, The City College of New York should establish a modern student center that may serve the campus community as a hub for collaboration and social interaction.

Evidence gathered from student feedback and existing research further emphasizes the demand for a student center. A survey conducted among CCNY students reveals that nearly 60% of students are not even aware of the current student center's existence, and 73% don't know where it is. In addition, more than 88% of students report visiting the existing student center fewer than five times in total (See fig. 2). The survey also shows strong interest in potential services within a proposed student center, particularly dining areas and additional study spaces.

Have you ever heard of the Student Center on campus?



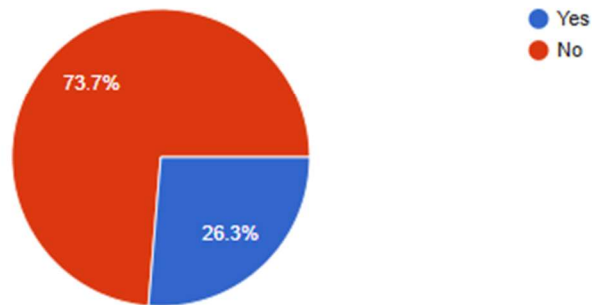
38 responses



Do you know where CCNY's Student Center is?



38 responses



If you've been to CCNY's student center, how often do you go?



27 responses

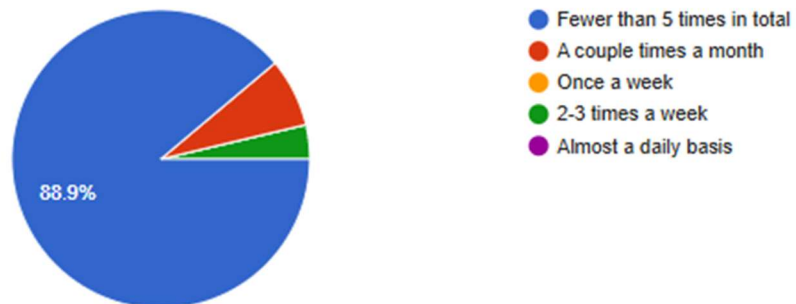


Fig. 2: Graphs of primary survey results

The need for a student center is also supported by existing research on campus infrastructure and student engagement. According to an article by John Dubber, “well supported and appropriately funded students’ unions can play a vital role in improving the experience of students. Their work can be crucial in ensuring students have influence on university decision making, it can help improve mental and physical wellbeing, support enhanced employability, and contribute to a stronger sense of belonging and community.” (Dubber, 2024) Furthermore, research suggests that rates of mental health issues among students have been steadily increasing in recent years (Refer to fig. 3) (Brown, 2019).

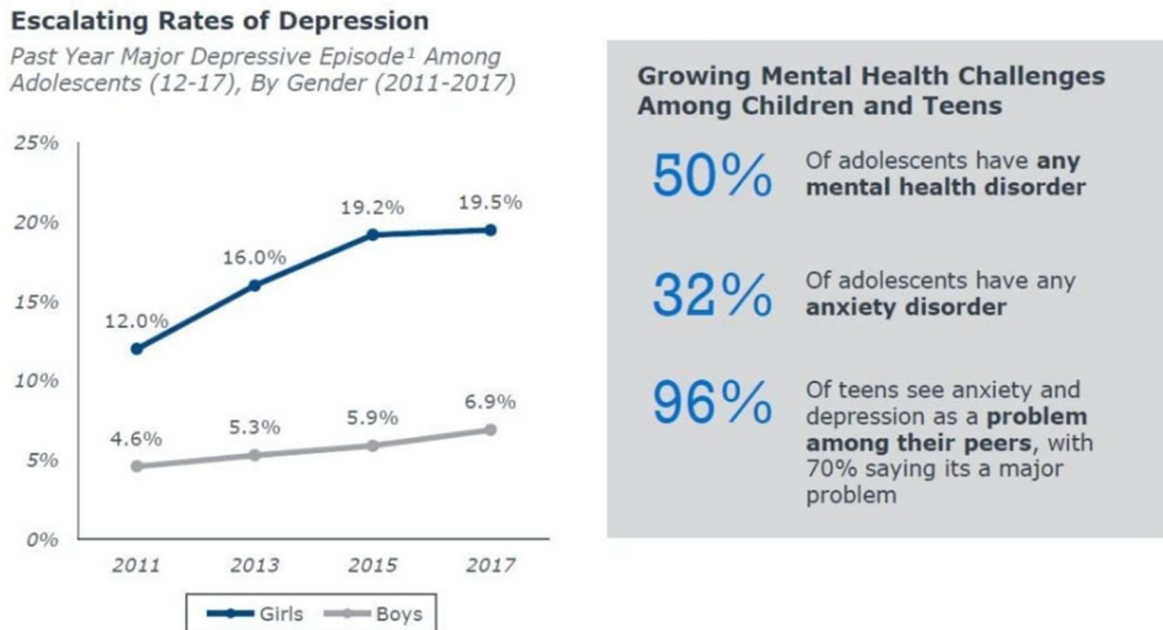


Fig. 3: Escalating Rates of Depression

Moreover, a paper published in the National Library of Medicine states that “Social support is widely acknowledged as a vital determinant of happiness and life satisfaction across various domains of life. It encompasses emotional encouragement, practical assistance, and

valuable advice, all of which make individuals feel appreciated and better equipped to navigate life's challenges.” (Ruihua et al., 2025) Together, this research suggests that a modern student center could significantly improve the quality of life for CCNY’s roughly 15,000 students, many of whom endure long daily commutes.

Given the clear demand from students and the benefits highlighted in existing research, establishing a modern student center would be a valuable investment in student wellbeing and campus engagement. This proposal outlines a plan for developing such a space and demonstrates how it could better serve the needs of the CCNY community.

Action Plan:

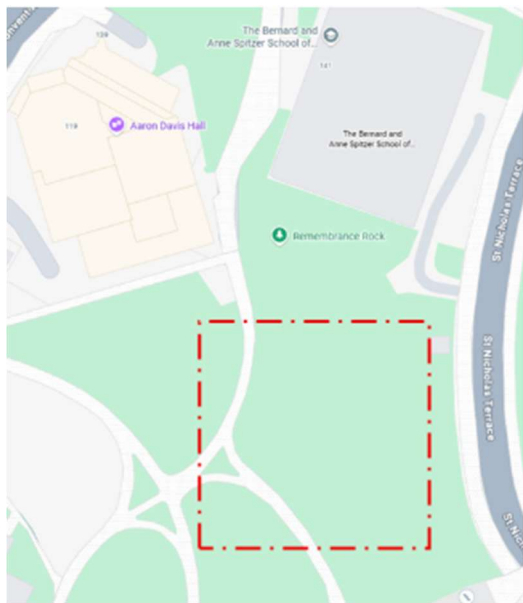


Fig. 4: Proposed location of student center

A university campus is more than classrooms and lecture halls. To fulfill the need for spaces where students can meet, collaborate, and relax, creating a student center would help bring these elements together in one place. The building's design is inspired by the architectural

style of Norman Foster and a project by Foster + Partners. The unbuilt ICÔNE complex in Belval is the right fit for a student center Because This design focuses on open spaces, natural light, and flexible layouts that encourage people to gather. Use of broad daylight will help relieve the academic stress of the students.

The proposed student center will be a three-story building of about 95,000 square feet. The building is planned to be located near the Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture, The dotted area in Fig 4. This location provides a quiet corner of the campus that is still accessible to students. Placing the student center away from the busiest academic areas will allow the building to serve as a comfortable environment for studying, relaxing, and socializing without interfering with classroom activities. Moreover, the student center locations serve as a quick getaway from academic stress, which is psychologically peaceful for students. The building will bring together several important facilities in one place, such as spaces for studying, dining, recreation, and wellness. Large glass walls and open interior spaces will allow natural light into the building. The gathering spaces and broad daylight will create a welcoming environment where students will want to spend time.

The facilities of the building will be organized into three floors. Each floor serves the different needs of students. Some areas will focus on academic work. Others will provide spaces for relaxation and recreation. These functions will make the student center a central place where students can connect with each other.

First Floor

The first floor will function as the main public gathering space of the student center. After entering the building, students will be welcomed by an open atrium.

One of the main features of this floor will be the dining area, which will include a cafeteria and several food vendor stations, including a microwave for commuter students and vending machines. This dining space will provide students with a comfortable space to eat and socialize. Large seating areas will be arranged for group gatherings.

Near the dining areas, a resting zone will provide comfortable seating and quiet corners. Students can relax or take short breaks during the day. Some storage facilities, like locker rooms and restrooms, will be on the floor as well. All floors will be equipped with shared, gender-separated bathrooms and gender-neutral bathrooms.



Fig. 5: AI generated visual representation of planned atrium

Overall, these features will make the first floor an active and accessible space that welcomes both social interaction and student needs.

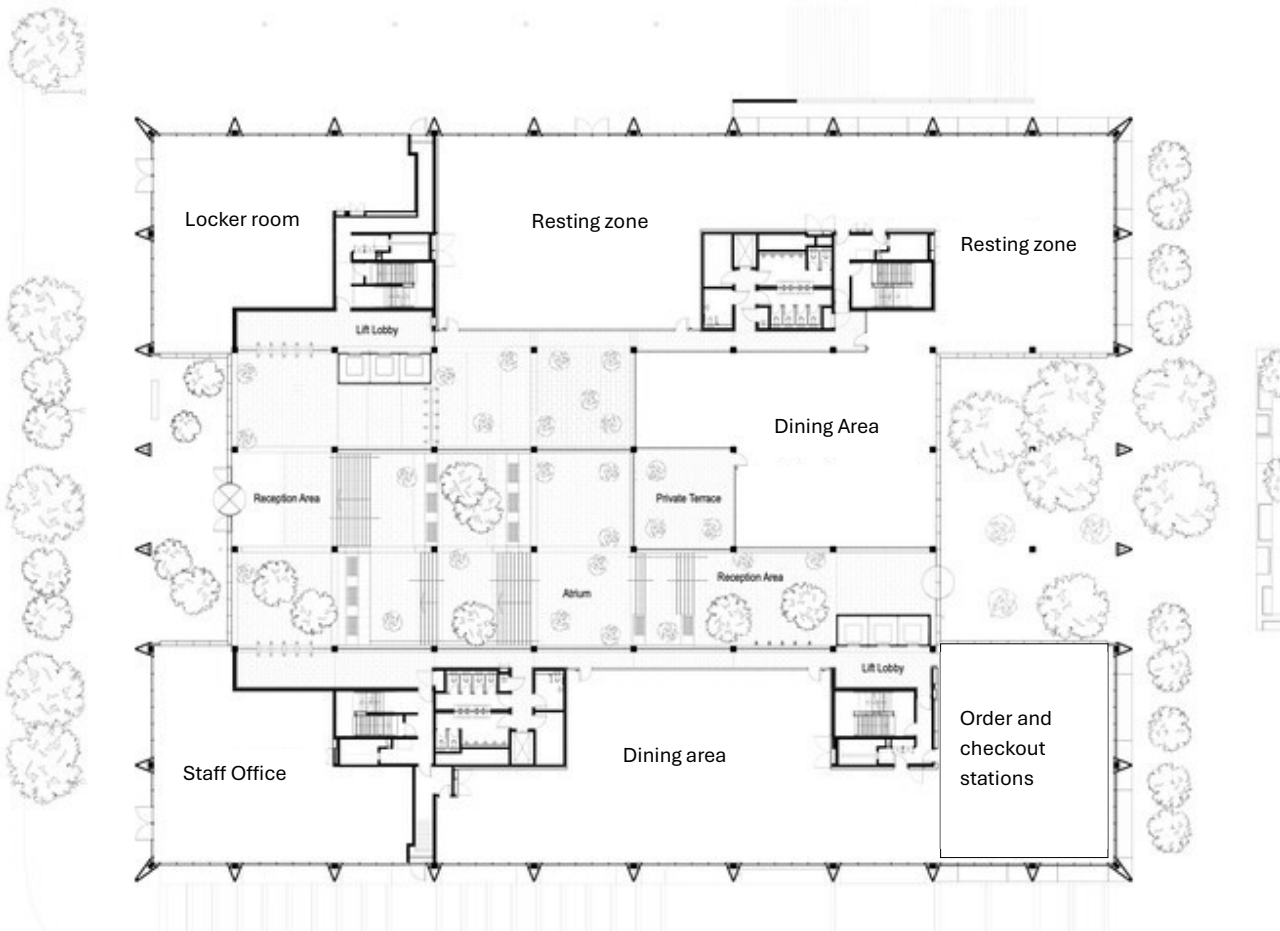


Fig. 6: First floor plan (modification of Norman Foster's original design plan)

Second Floor plan:

The second floor will contain academic support, digital media, and collaborative learning spaces. This level will include several study rooms and small study spaces where students can study in groups or individually. These rooms will be equipped with whiteboards, digital screens, and comfortable seating to support collaborative academic work.

A key feature of the second floor will be the digital studio and gaming space. The digital studio will give students access to modern media tools for video editing, podcast recording, and digital design projects. The gaming area will offer a recreational environment where students can take a break from academic pressure and enjoy multiplayer gaming and esports activities.

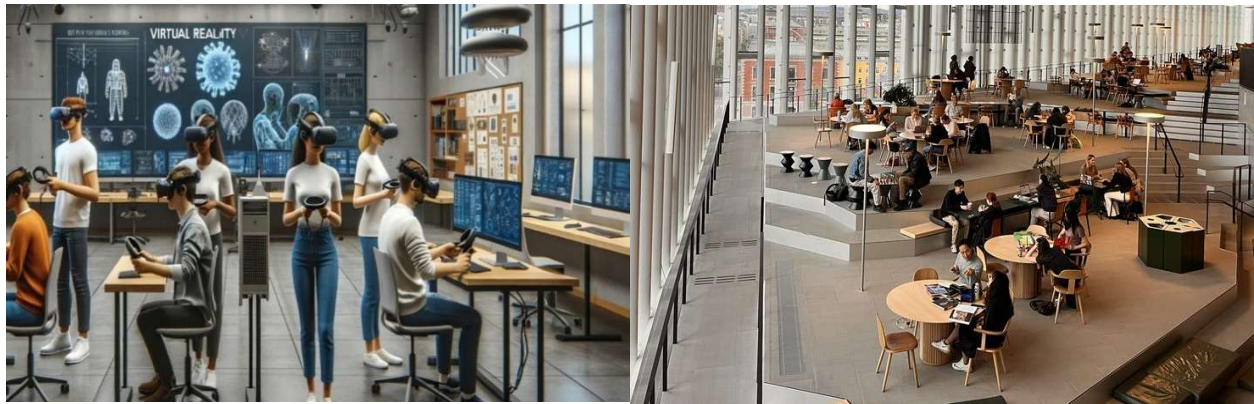
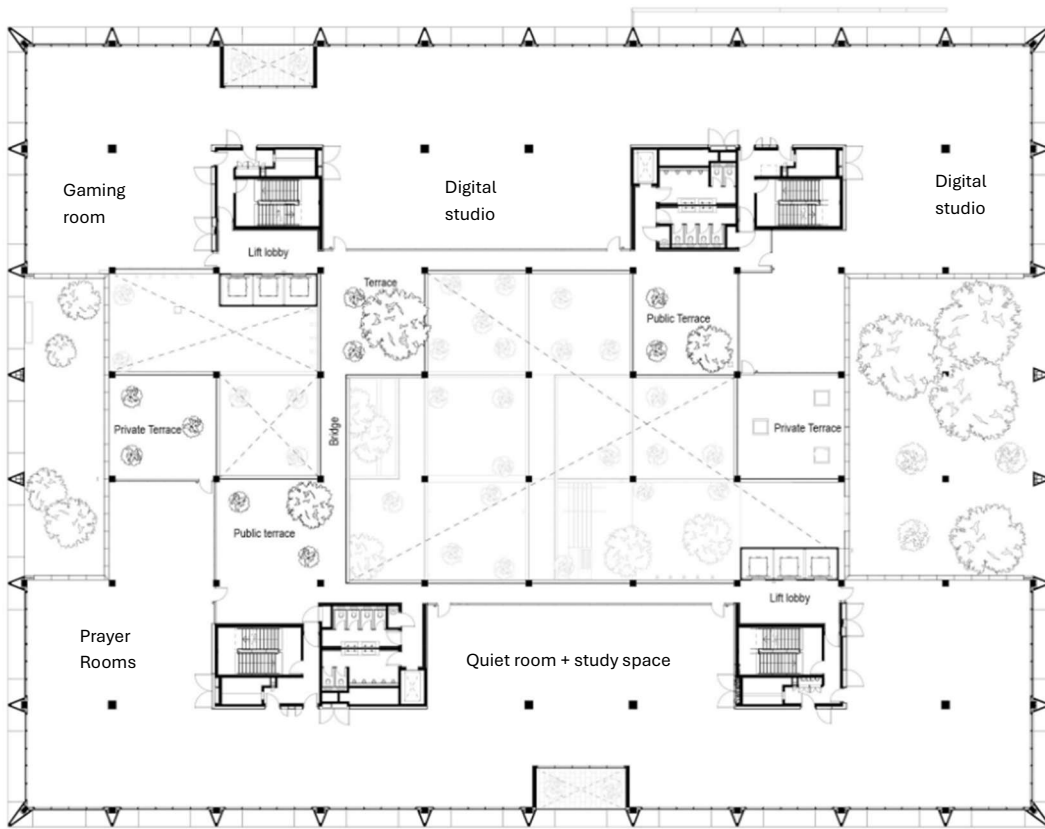


Fig. 7: AI-Generated Visual Representation Of The Planned Digital Studio And Collaborative Learning Spaces

The second floor will also contain quiet rooms for prayer and reflection. These rooms will make sure that students from diverse religious backgrounds have the chance to practice religious activities. These features will have a calm and respectful atmosphere. Some private terraces presented in the plan will have small spaces for collaborative work.



Fig. 8: Visual Representation of The Quiet Rooms and Atrium View Taken from Google And Foster's Original Collection



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Fig. 9: Second floor plan (modification of Norman Foster's original design plan)

Third Floor Plan

The third floor will serve as the innovation level of the student center. This floor will have larger spaces designed for activities, student governance, and club events.

One of the main features of this level will be a large multipurpose auditorium with a convertible layout. The layout will change according to the hosted events, such as seminars, performances, or workshops. The auditorium will be equipped with modern audio-visual systems and flexible seating arrangements. Across the multipurpose hall will be a student leadership and Club office suite that provides office space for major student groups, the student government, and campus organizations. Most of the clubs in CCNY need office spaces to allow student leaders to coordinate events and initiatives more effectively. The suite will have an office layout where different clubs and organizations will have different offices.

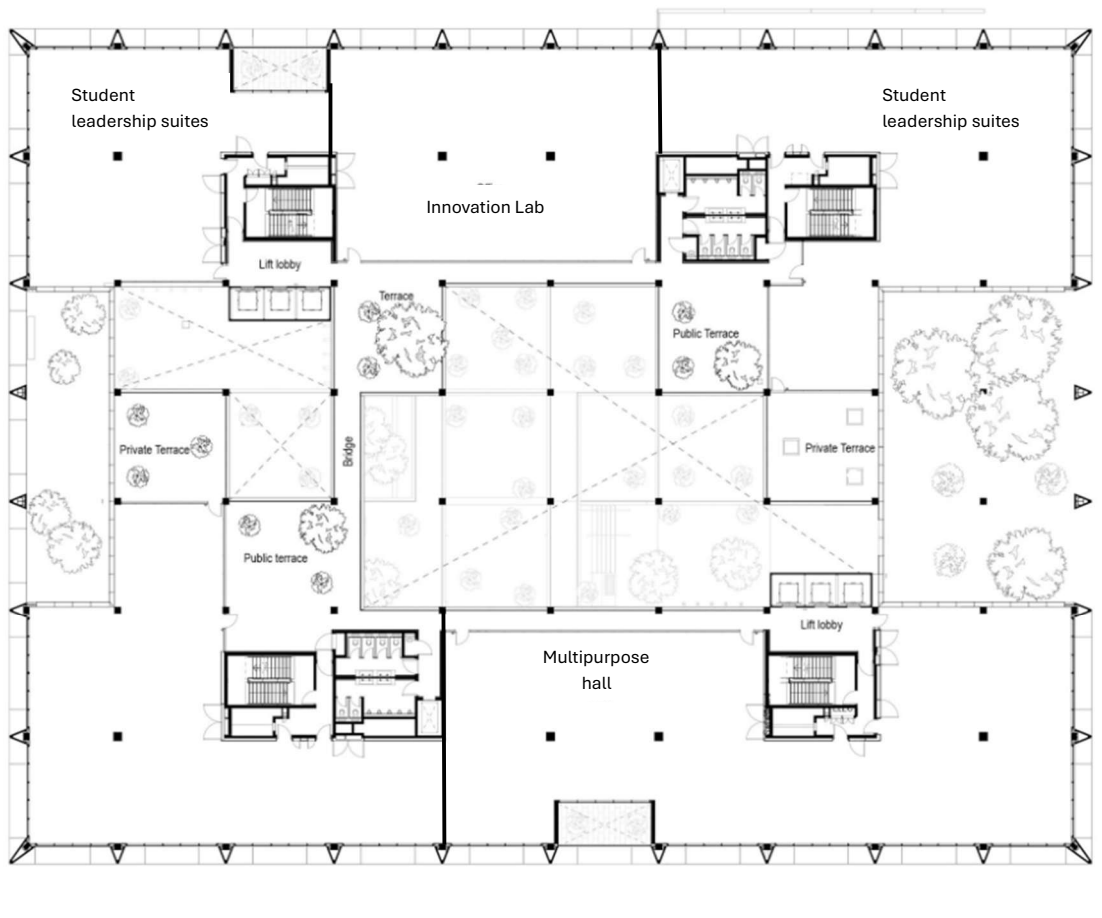


Fig. 10: Third Floor Plan (Modification of the original plan of Norman Foster's design.)



Fig. 11: Adjustable Multipurpose Hall



Fig. 12: Example student leadership and organization suite layout and AI generated visual



Fig. 13: AI generated visual representation of the Lab and private terraces as collaborative spaces.

Roof plan:

The rooftop of the student center will be designed as a Green roof, which gives an outdoor space for informal or formal meetings. Inspired by the open terraces and adjacent greenery used in projects by Norman Foster. The goal is to create an outdoor environment that lets students enjoy fresh air while staying connected to the academic and social life of the building.

The rooftop will include planted garden areas with trees and seasonal plants, helping reduce heat from the building surface. These green areas will also support sustainability and rainwater absorption on the roof.

Several seating and resting zones will be placed all over the area. These spaces will include benches and small tables where students can study and read. Some seating areas will have canopy structures for shading during sunny weather.

Moreover, the rooftop will include a flexible open space for small events. This space can host a club meeting or cultural events

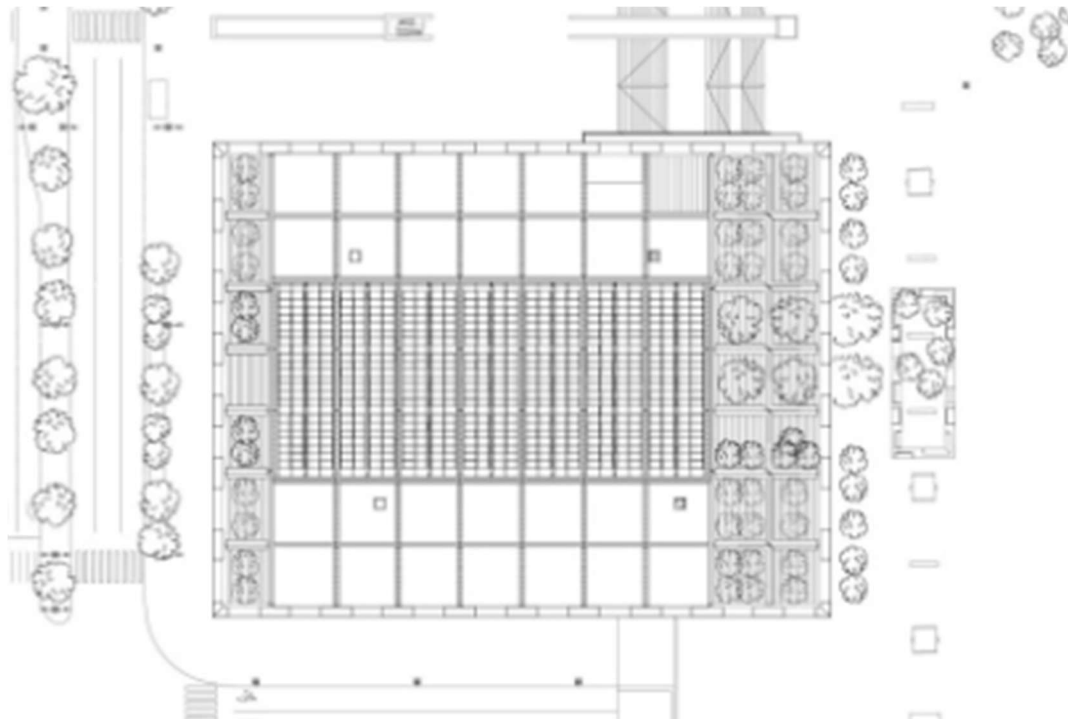
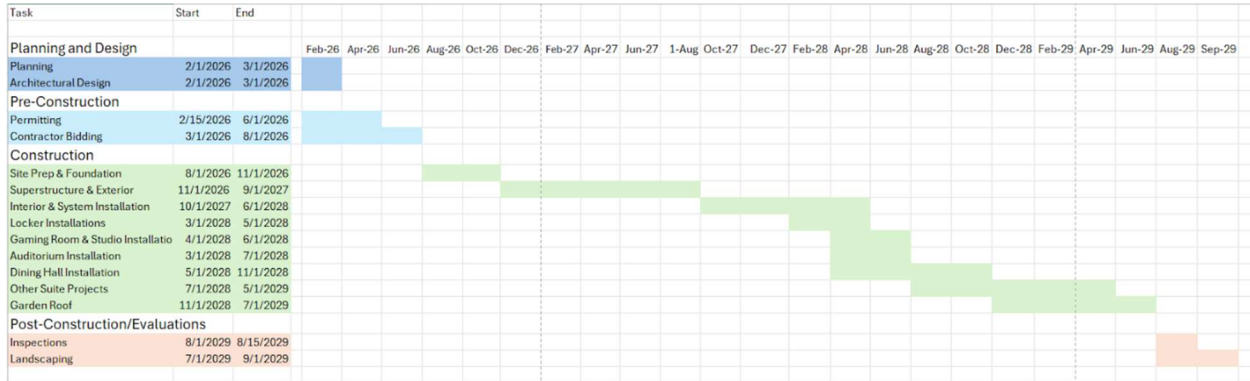


Fig. 14: Roof Plan



Fig. 14: AI Generated Visual Representation of The Roof Top

Construction Timetable



Costs and Benefits

The expected cost to build a new Student Center, including both hard and soft construction costs and a construction contingency of 10%, totals around 110 million dollars. However, some of the listed costs such as the Dining Hall are shared by other parties such as restaurant vendors, who will each shoulder around 5% of the listed price.

Item:	Cost (US Dollars)
Construction site/land	95,000 sq. ft. x \$800.00 = \$76,000,000
Construction soft costs: inspections, permitting	\$15,000,000
20,000 sq. ft Multipurpose Auditorium	\$8,000,000
Dining Hall – seating for 500 + facilities & equipment	\$7,000,000: Participating vendors share 5% of the cost
Garden Rooftop with Pedestrian Access	\$3,500,000
Makerspace	\$300,000
Locker Room – 700 lockers(?)	\$280,000

Digital studio and Gaming Room Equipment	\$125,000
TOTAL	\$110,205,000

Although the new Student Center has an estimated construction cost of approximately 110 million dollars, it would have a powerful, positive effect on academics and institutional benefits making it a great investment. Studies show that an increased amount of student engagement is linked to higher retention rates. For example, a study conducted by the University of Houston which analyzed 19,500 undergraduate students, found that without campus engagement, students had retention rates of about 78%, while students involved with four or more campus activities had retention rates as high as 92-93% (University of Houston, 2025). This goes to show that creating spaces such as a multipurpose auditorium and a dining hall will motivate students to stay on campus, be more socially active, and ultimately complete their degrees. These areas also could be used as rooms for events, organizations, and socializing. This helps to create a more engaged and connected campus community while also creating a lot of potential revenue through sponsors and partnerships.

To add on to engagement, the facilities that we propose will support academic success, collaboration, and student well-being. Research shows that a group study environment can increase information retention by almost 60% and improve participation and comprehension by about 50% compared to studying alone (MoldStud Research Team, 2024). Spaces such as makerspace and digital studio/gaming rooms provide access for student collaboration and technological environments that help improve creativity and innovation. Locker rooms will help

combat the issues that commuter students have by providing them with secure storage. This allows them to stay on campus longer without having to carry heavy materials. The Garden rooftop with pedestrian access creates a space for relaxation and more social interaction between students, contributing to a larger connected community, which is a very important factor that leads to an increased student motivation and academic engagement (Princeton University Research, 2021). Students who feel like they are well connected to their campus are shown to more likely succeed academically and complete their degrees.

Overall, by creating spaces for students to collaborate, create leadership opportunities, and foster student engagement, a brand-new student center would massively increase the campus community (Honor Society Foundation, 2023). If we change our perspective on the new student center from just an expensive construction job to a refuge for scholars where they can succeed, leading to institutional growth, and future competitiveness of the college.

Our Team – Morphosis

Tarik Kandic is a first-year mechanical engineering student at The City College of New York after graduating from a vocational high school in Queens that yielded airframe and powerplant licenses in aircraft maintenance. He primarily speaks English and is mostly proficient in Bosnian, being ethnically Bosnian despite living his entire life in Queens. Although currently unemployed, Tarik has previously worked as an afterschool teacher for elementary students. From that experience, he has gained valuable skills in communication and leadership, while also gaining basic experience in a professional environment. Outside of academics, Tarik has a strong

interest in the car scene and aviation industry. When the weather is nicer, he enjoys biking, whether that means light mountain biking or cruising around the city with friends. Overall, Tarik brings a practical mindset shaped by his vocational background, a strong interest in engineering, and a set of hobbies and experiences that contribute to his perspective as a student.

Saraf Ohi (he/him) was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and relocated to New York City at the age of four, where he has spent most of his life in the Bronx. He is currently a freshman at the City College of New York (CCNY) as an undecided engineering major with plans to pursue biomedical engineering and subsequently attend medical school, reflecting his interest in integrating engineering and medicine. Saraf is bilingual in Bangla and English and has additional proficiency in Urdu and Hindi developed through early cultural exposure. His academic background includes several Advanced Placement courses, with a particular interest in AP Biology, as well as a college-level pre-calculus course completed at Columbia University. He enjoys walking, running, cycling, and participating in sports such as soccer and badminton, and maintains a long-standing interest in automobiles and automotive technology. Saraf is actively working to strengthen his skills in English grammar and punctuation and looks forward to engaging with and learning from his peers throughout the semester.

Roshni Ramprashad is a first-year biomedical engineering student studying at The City College of New York. A native New Yorker, she completed her secondary education at Brooklyn Technical High School as a biological sciences major and interned at the Mark Philips lab at NYU Grossman School of Medicine and NYU Perlmutter Cancer Center. The rest of her career consists of working as a volunteer teacher's assistant and tutor to middle school students studying for the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test at Helicon Inc., in addition to other

nonprofits such as FXB Climate Advocates and NYC Parks. Roshni is strongly skilled in programming, leadership, and advertising, while being a highly professional, empathetic, and persevering individual. In her free time, Roshni can be found studying foreign languages, voraciously reading, and rollerblading around the city.

Myesha Tasnim is an Urban studies student at City College of New York, offered by the Spitzer School of Architecture. She completed her third year in Architecture from CUET, Bangladesh, from the year 2022 to 2024 where she learnt site analysis, spatial planning, zoning knowledge, and technical drafting. She has technical skills such as proficiency in AutoCAD and 3D modeling software. She worked on nine major research projects as a Teaching Assistant in the Department of Architecture at CUET. The teaching assistant's experience comes with field surveys, CAD drawings, and documentation. In her spare time, she likes exploring outdoor cafes and listening to Bengali classical songs. She hopes to contribute more user-friendly and spatial knowledge in design one day.

Conclusion:

To bring this to an end, developing a new student center would significantly strengthen the campus community by creating an area where students can collaborate, nurture relationships, and easily locate useful resources outside of classrooms. As the population of students grows, so does the need for them to grow and evolve. The City College of New York must prioritize its facilities to support not only academic success but also garnering a social community,

establishing future leaders, and safeguarding the well-being of their students. A modern student center will bring together all of the vast student groups to embrace their diversities and differences, as well as encourage them to socialize with one another. This helps create a stronger sense of belonging throughout the campus community. Investing in a brand-new student center is an investment in the future of the students within the community, making sure that those who come to The City College of New York have an enriching experience, along with great opportunities to support their goals and aspirations during their time on campus. A lasting impact on our future engineers, doctors, and innovators even after graduation.

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Fig. 7. Visual Representation Of The Planned Digital Studio And Collaborative Learning Spaces- Generated using ChatGPT (OpenAI), 2026.

Fig. 11. Third-floor multipurpose hall. Generated using ChatGPT (OpenAI), 2026.

Fig. 12: Example student leadership and organization suite layout. Generated using ChatGPT (OpenAI), 2026.

Fig. 13. Visual representation of the Lab and private terraces. Generated using ChatGPT (OpenAI), 2026.

Fig. 15: AI-generated visual representation of the planned rooftop, generated using ChatGPT (OpenAI), 2026.