

## HELM FINE ARTS CENTER

Black + Vernooy was commissioned in joint venture with RioGroup to carry out a master plan for 300 acres for this small, private middle and high school. The plan was accomplished through a “town meeting” format wherein students, faculty, parents, administrators, maintenance people and board members were asked to participate in hands-on planning through a series of workshops.

Ultimately the process produced a plan for creating a new infrastructure for the campus and a plan for the code compliance, maintenance, and management of the thirty-three buildings on the campus. A complete set of architectural, site design, and landscape design guidelines, coupled with a manual for management and maintenance of the buildings and landscape, was included in the master plan.

The plan also determined the site for remote parking, a new student center and middle school in renovated buildings, a new girl’s dormitory, and finally, a new fine arts center and theater. All of these projects have been completed with the dedication of the Helm Fine Arts Center in October, 1993.

The Fine Arts Center contains a 400-seat theater, exhibit space, rehearsal spaces, classrooms, offices, and painting and ceramic studios. Because of its program requirements, the Fine Arts Center is by far the largest building on the campus. In order not to compete visually with an adjacent chapel, the auditorium is built into a hillside to mitigate its apparent size. Low porches, which surround the 60-foot tall box of the auditorium, also bring down the scale. The porches are emphasized with thick walls and simple, natural materials, including native limestone.

