Special universities require special experiences. The Garden Gateway Project at Duke Gardens will enrich the experience for Duke’s students, faculty, and visitors from around the world while strengthening ties between the Duke and Durham communities.

Duke Gardens is a front door to Duke University; a place for big moments and “firsts”; a sanctuary for mindfulness and wellness; a tangible link between university curriculum and practice. As a welcoming entryway to the university, it is a powerful, enchanting attraction drawing students and faculty to Duke and residents to Durham.

The Gardens creates and nurtures an environment in the heart of the university for learning, inspiration, and enjoyment through excellence in horticulture. Its living collections promote knowledge of the vital connections between people and plants, fostering an appreciation of the natural world, environmental awareness, and sustainable practices. It is an indispensable and lasting feature of life at Duke, accessible to all.

Since 2007, the university and Gardens donors have together invested more than $30 million in the Gardens. Now it is time to upgrade the entrance and more—the Garden Gateway. These enhanced facilities will create more opportunities for special experiences in the Gardens, and will cultivate income streams to sustain the Gardens well into the future. That benefits the university, the community, and anyone who sets foot inside this world-class botanical showplace.
How the Gardens have grown

The Gardens now sit within a new university arts district that includes the Nasher Museum of Art and the new Duke Arts Center on Anderson Street. The resulting visitors and additional foot traffic to this arts hub will increase the visibility and importance of the Gardens’ front door as a prominent portal to the university even more.

The dramatic growth of the last decade, coupled with the growth anticipated in the coming years, means that the Gardens must keep pace. The Gardens must improve its ability to welcome visitors and connect with students in this new environment.

Expansive horticultural upgrades are only one aspect that makes the Gardens a busier, more consequential place than many alumni and visitors remember. When the Doris Duke Center was built in 2001, it was intended to serve as a welcome center, administrative office, and principal event space of the Gardens. But because of budget constraints at the time, only half of the planned square footage was built. Since then:

- Durham visitation increased by 65 percent, and the Gardens is its No. 1 attraction
- University enrollment increased by 25 percent
- Gardens volunteers and program participants have doubled
- Gardens staff increased 60 percent, including the first-ever full-time director
- More than 4 million square feet of buildings were constructed on campus
- The population of Durham grew by over 30 percent and is predicted to again by 2030
- Duke Gardens has been named among the top 10 botanic gardens in the United States and in 2013 received the Horticulture Magazine Award for Garden Excellence. Tripadvisor.com consistently ranks Duke Gardens as the No. 1 thing to do in Durham.

Opening doors to serve visitors better

The Garden Gateway project will position the Gardens for the 21st century. Creating a pleasing and more functional main entry will provide a welcoming sense of arrival. Additionally, it will provide enhanced visitor amenities, in keeping with the dramatic improvement to campus facilities achieved during the Duke Forward campaign. Faculty, staff, and students frequently cite Duke Gardens as a determining factor in moving to the area. Duke Gardens has a number of goals in its strategic plan focusing on the visitor experience, include the following:

- Be recognized as one of the best public gardens in America
- Enhance the Duke student experience
- Enrich the Gardens experience for visitors
- Embody environmental sustainability throughout Gardens operations
- Develop resources and manage operations for long-term financial strength, including increased capacity for facility rentals, events, and weddings

A clear vision of the Gardens’ future

The Gardens have become ever more popular as a venue for student events, musical and theatrical performances, academic and business conferences, educational programming for schoolchildren and adults, and weddings and celebrations of all kinds.

Connections between the university’s curriculum and Gardens programming have also grown, leading to increased demand for classroom and meeting space. The need is now critical to create spaces that enable the Gardens to accommodate the requests of students, faculty, alumni, and community members for these purposes. The Garden Gateway will bring students closer to the Gardens and enhance campus connectivity by revitalizing its historic former “front door” on Flowers Drive.

The Garden Gateway project, estimated at $30 million, enhances 8,000 square feet of existing space and constructs a 25,000-square-foot addition. It includes extensive site work and new outdoor spaces. Gift opportunities from $100,000 to $10 million will support:

- A visitor entry pavilion, including lobby, café, restrooms, and gift shop
- An event lawn for concerts and other activities
- An enlarged events hall
- An entry plaza with gardens and water features
- A rooftop terrace
- Conference/breakout rooms
- A catering kitchen, bridal lounge, and events office
- Additional classrooms and restrooms
- A redesigned main parking lot with sustainable features
- Offices
Why the Gardens matter

ASHLEY WONG ’16
Work-study marketing assistant
On my treks through the Gardens, I began to recognize and put a name to plant species that I learned about in my biology and environmental science classes. When I first saw the carnivorous plants near the new Piedmont Prairie and could identify them, I felt an immense rush of excitement from seeing my academic studies and daily experiences intertwine. Being able to see the connection between my coursework and real-world settings has been immensely gratifying—and only one of the numerous reasons why Duke Gardens has been an invaluable part of my Duke experience.

TYLER COE ’17
Board of Advisors student representative
Coming to the Gardens is more than just admiring the beautiful scenery around me. My time in the Gardens is equally important for the experience it provides, a blocked-off period of time in my day that is truly tranquil. Walking through the Gardens provides a refuge to just think. If you say that Duke has been a whirlwind for me so far, then Duke Gardens has been the calm eye of that storm.

ABIGAIL HULL M.DIV.’16
Work-study student
I’ve seen that the work of caring for plants is a type of ministry. You’re looking to promote the growth of individual plants and also the whole garden. So you ask questions about flourishing such as, “How can we care for these plants in a way that enables them to become the full, flourishing, beautiful plants they were intended to be?”
The kinds of questions I’m asked as a divinity student translate into the garden, and the kinds of skills I’m developing as I garden translate back into the work of ministry. It’s been a gift to learn from professionals that care deeply about Duke Gardens.

Other Support
Contributions to the Gardens’ annual fund support pressing needs and are vital to maintaining world-class horticulture and programming. Half of the Gardens’ annual operating budget comes from donors who help sow the seeds for our future.

Creating or supporting an endowment for Duke Gardens ensures a permanent, self-sustaining source of funding that would benefit the Gardens now and into the future. Please consider adding to our Gardens maintenance fund or creating a restricted endowment to education programs for children or adults.

A planned gift to the Gardens that meets your financial and philanthropic goals—such as a bequest, a retirement account, or other testamentary gift plan—may help you reduce tax burdens and make a more substantial gift than you imagined possible.

Contact
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