A Film School for Brooklyn College

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By SHELLY BANJO

Barry Feirstein has a vision for big ideas.

The former hedge-fund manager will this week announce a $5 million gift to Brooklyn College to create a Graduate School of Cinema at Steiner Studios at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, a project Mayor Michael Bloomberg made public at his 2011 State of the City address on Wednesday.

The film school at Brooklyn College, which is part of the City University of New York system, plans to open its doors in the fall of 2013. It will be the first public graduate school of film in New York and is thought to be the only film school in the country located on a working film lot.

The graduate building will lease two floors in a seven-story building that was built by the U.S. Navy in the 1940s and is part of the 15-acre Steiner Studios complex. The restoration of the 235,000-square-foot building is part of a $90.5 million expansion project that Steiner says it will break ground on in the coming months.

"I've been an investor all my life in things like Apple and Microsoft and have seen the creation of businesses and industries," says Mr. Feirstein, who is also the chairman of the Brooklyn College Foundation's board of directors. "To me, this investment is the same thing: We are going to create something that will have major impact on the film industry, Brooklyn College and New York City."

Mr. Feirstein received a bachelor's degree in economics at Brooklyn College in 1974 and went on to receive an MBA from Harvard Business School. In 1993, he founded hedge fund Feirstein Capital Management and closed it last year.

Brooklyn College says it still has to raise an additional $15 million for the school, which will be part of the newly-formed School of Media and Visual Arts.

The Graduate School of Cinema will offer five to seven academic degrees, including film production, musical composition and business management.

It will also come at a quarter of the cost of a private film schools, says Brooklyn College president Karen Gould who estimated the cost of a graduate degree in cinema from Brooklyn College to be about $35,000, compared with $150,000 at private schools.

Like many things in New York, the biggest attribute to the school is likely to be its location. Students will work in the same building as production companies and actors who come to Steiner on a daily basis to shoot films such as Men in Black III with Will Smith and Mr. Popper's Penguins with Jim Carrey, which both come out this year.

The location will offer classrooms, laboratories and spaces for production and post-production work.

"It will also give us a chance to create internship programs and partnerships with film companies and production studios leasing at Steiner," Ms. Gould says. "We're using New York City as our laboratory."

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