

# The Boston Globe

Founded 1872

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## EMERSON'S TRANSFORMATION

**T**HE INTERSECTION of Boylston and Tremont streets, once known for utilitarian office space and underused theaters, is now a thriving center of college life thanks to the gradual move of Emerson College from the Back Bay. Last week the college celebrated the opening of the Tufte Performance and Production Center, which will improve its ability to offer instruction in television production, the performing arts, and other communications skills.

Fifteen years ago, Emerson was about to make a major mistake. It planned to sell its Back Bay buildings and leave the urbanity of Boston for struggling Lawrence. Then the real estate market collapsed.

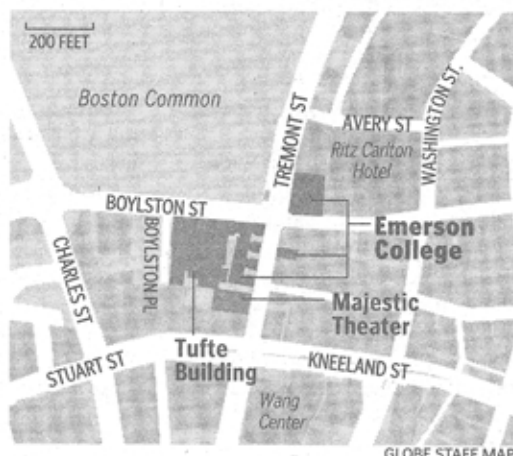
The college had bought the old Saxon movie palace on Tremont Street in 1983

(The theater itself will remain in use as a commercial theater.) And the Boston Redevelopment Authority this summer gave the college permission to build a dormitory on a vacant lot a few doors down from the Colonial. Construction is expected to start next spring, and when that is finished the move to the midtown theater district will be complete.

The Tufte Center, with two small performance spaces, two television studios, eight classrooms, and the latest video technology,

provides the college with first-rate facilities. But it is tucked out of the way and is barely visible to passersby except at night, when a portion is lit.

This mirrors Emerson's quiet transformation of the area. None of the old buildings underwent major external renovation. The area has the feel of the old neighbor-



and restored its interior and its old name, the Majestic. Once the market improved, Emerson officials realized that their Boston location was an essential part of the character of the college. They devised a new plan to make the Majestic the focal point of a new campus.

Under the leadership of president Jacqueline W. Liebergott and vice president Robert Silverman, Emerson bought four buildings near the Majestic. It constructed the Tufte Center on land left over from the old Park Plaza project and has agreed to lease the 10-story Colonial Theatre building for extra space.

hood, except that the Emerson buildings are much cleaner than they were 20 years ago. Their sparkling exteriors, combined with the bustle of 3,400 students, demonstrate the ability of educational institutions to fit into and revitalize an urban environment.

People outside the Emerson community will have an opportunity to visit the Tufte Center when an exhibit of CBS news and entertainment photographs opens next month. They can see for themselves how the presence of a vibrant college enhances the urban experience.