This endowment was established by the Trustees of The William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust and is restricted for undergraduate students in the UNCSA School of Drama. William R. Kenan, Jr. is one of the great American philanthropists of the 20th century. His life (1872-1965) spanned one of the most productive periods of American history, and Mr. Kenan took a role in many of the most important developments of the age. In 1965, the majority of his estate was used to create the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust, which is dedicated to supporting education and other initiatives that Mr. Kenan and successor trustees believe represent the most important values in American society.

This scholarship is a component of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Endowment Fund, created through the Talented Students in the Arts Initiative, a collaboration of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Surdna Foundation. Established in 2001-2005, this fund and its matching components support scholarships for students in the five arts schools of UNCSA, a faculty sabbatical program, and the Career Services program.

The mission of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is to improve the quality of people's lives by nurturing the arts, protecting and restoring the environment, seeking cures for diseases, and helping to protect children from abuse and neglect. The Surdna Foundation, a national family foundation established by John E. Andrus in 1917, focuses its grantmaking in five program areas: Environment, Community Revitalization, Effective Citizenry, the Nonprofit Sector, and Arts. Its Arts Program themes, aim, in various ways, to improve the artistic compatibility of teens.