



# Rock the Tower Rings

OFTEN WHEN YOU DONATE TO AN ORGANIZATION YOU HOPE YOUR GIFT BENEFITS PEOPLE AROUND THE CORNER OR AROUND THE WORLD. BUT DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR MONEY REALLY GOES? CONVERSE ALUMNAE DO WHEN THEY ROCK THE TOWER.

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*We became project-based last year. We wanted donors to see exactly where their money was going and to be able to support Converse in a way that was meaningful to them.*

**Kristina Pisano**  
Associate Director of the Annual Fund

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**These are the projects made possible by the record-setting \$102,797 raised during 2018 year's 24-hour Rock the Tower blitz:**

**Art & Design:** Meeting the campaign's full \$15,000 goal, with Jane Schwab '77 matching every gift up to \$7,500, the department gave students a place to sit while they work. New drafting chairs replaced old folding ones that had become too few for the growing program.

“Overnight, three classrooms were transformed and the morale and pride in the Milliken Building soared,” says Dr. Susanne Gunter, Department Chair. “The simple gift of chairs has made the process of teaching and learning more effective and improved the aesthetics and comfort of students taking long, intensive classes.”



# Fundraising Bell

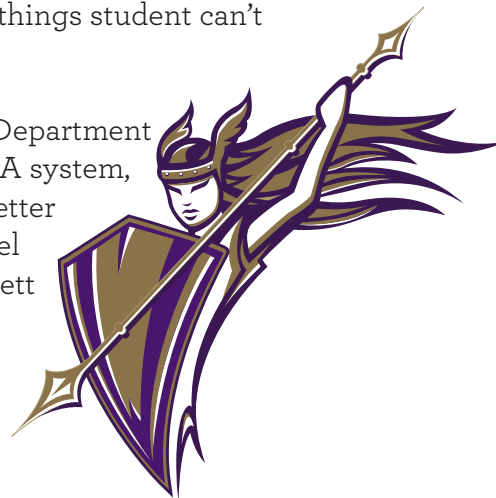


## Biology, Chemistry

**& Physics:** The department looked to the future—through high-tech, virtual reality goggles purchased with gifts given towards the \$25,000 goal, of which Sandra Morelli '78 matched up to \$8,000.

Converse is one of six private colleges in the nation to have virtual reality goggles in the classroom. Will Case, Associate Professor of Chemistry, explains: “Imagine the opportunity to see organs in a virtual, augmented-reality way without having to use cadavers. Imagine being able to see how atoms come together to make chemical lines and form compounds—things student can’t often visualize through a textbook.”

**Valkyries Athletics:** The Athletics Department scored with \$10,000 to finance a new PA system, upgrade facilities, acquire more and better equipment, and cover the costs of travel to regional competitions. Sandy Hartnett '75 matched every gift up to \$5,000.



## Mathematics & Computer

**Science:** Exabyte, Yottabyte, Zettabyte. Most of us don’t know what those are, but with the help of a \$3,000 matching gift from Henrietta Humphries '70, the department met its \$5,000 goal to purchase software to mine all this mind-boggling data.

“The amount of data that companies and businesses and governments have to deal with is overwhelming,” says Jessica Williams, Assistant Professor of Mathematics. Noting that the software makes Converse an innovator among small liberal-arts institutions, she says the acquisition adds to students’ job marketability.



**Music Therapy:** The need for more instruments that students can take into community classrooms struck a chord with alumnae, two of whom matched every gift up to \$4,000 toward the \$8,000 goal.

The gifts, says Megan Hoyt '16, founder of Heart Strings Music Therapy Services LLC in Greenville, “put the Music Therapy department on the cutting edge of an up-and-coming, well-established licensed profession.”



**Theatre & Dance:** Lights! Camera! Plumbing! It takes more than a stage to stage a professional production. That’s why the department is using \$8,000 to refurbish the plumbing, wiring, and air conditioning, along with new chairs, lighted mirrors and freshly painted walls, for Hazel B. Abbott Theatre’s dressing rooms. Thanks to an in-kind donation from Hodge Floors, the rooms also got new flooring.

“By having a quality space, we can then create something that is quality for you to enjoy,” says Layla Thurman '20, a theatre major and the president of Palmetto Players. “By contributing to us, you’re giving something to yourself and you are also helping to create a theatrical experience.”

**Mickel Library:** The library turned a new page when it met its \$5,000 goal. The funds support the purchase of ergonomic chairs, charging stations for mobile devices and a new bulletin board. The space was also spruced up with freshly painted walls in the Gwathmey wing. Ann Lanier Jackson '86 matched every gift up to \$2,500.

“The goal is to create a space that engages students and provides resources that help them explore topics independently or collaboratively,” Pisano says.



Rock the Tower also provided the opportunity for supporters to give directly to student scholarships, which continues to be a priority as the student population – and students’ financial need – grows.

Pisano, who has been at Converse only 18 months, says she has been researching how much better project-based fundraising resonates. “Younger donors in particular want to know exactly what their money is used for because our budgets are so limited,” she says.

“Specific projects also connected with a lot of alumnae who studied in one of the departments sponsoring a project, and we had many gifts from donors who had never given or had not given in a long while.”

Haley Thomas ’18 was one of nearly 90 first-time donors. The record number of tower rockers totaled 560. That’s up from 504 the year before.

“I loved the project-based giving opportunities for Rock the Tower,” said the former theatre major. “I was so excited to be able to give back to the department that gave me so much more than a degree. The dressing rooms turned out amazing, and I can’t wait for future students to use them.”

Converse alumnae and friends took to social media and were the real drivers of the campaign – from Facebook to Instagram to Twitter. They played a key role in reaching and inspiring the additional 56 donors and \$20,000 given this year, Pisano says.

“Rock the Tower is primarily driven by social media,” she says. “As we cultivate younger generations of alumni whose ongoing support will be critical to sustaining this institution for decades to come, that’s how they communicate and that’s how they show it.”

Take this Tweet, for instance:



**Valerie Dowling**  
 @valeriedowling  
 Hey @ConverseAlumnae!  
 #CountMeIn for  
 #RockTheTower!  
 I’m thankful for the friendships  
 & experiences that Converse  
 gave me. I’m proud to invest  
 in helping other young women  
 have the same opportunity!  
 #RedDevils Join the fun at  
[converse.edu/rockthetower/](https://converse.edu/rockthetower/)

In another #RocktheTower post, Katie Landon Fitch ’02 shared her appreciation of the fundraiser’s updated model:

“I love a good social media campaign. I’m a social media junkie and a student of philanthropy. But this one is extra-special. It’s a sweet opportunity to reflect on a transformative time in my life and a tremendous sisterhood of Converse alumnae.”

Dr. Susanne Gunter agrees.

“Rock the Tower is an amazing display of how alums, friends, faculty, and students can come together to support critical needs that impact the daily experience of every student. It demonstrated how our College family can come together to achieve goals.”

GET READY TO  
**ROCK THE TOWER**  
**11.07.19**