We are pleased to share this Donor Impact Report for the 2019-20 school year. Every gift to Columbus Academy tells a story of confidence, kindness and promise for the future. It is our honor to share these stories of philanthropy with you.
Academy Community Fund

We don’t have to tell you that 2020 is a year like no other, but we find comfort and confidence in knowing that we are tackling this together. When the Academy Community Fund was created in March, the goal was to have a way of keeping our community intact.

In three short months, 471 donors heeded the call for help, and gifts to the Academy Community Fund have enabled us to transform our campus for the safe return of our students. The Upper and Middle Schools have modified their daily schedules in order to offer more classes with fewer students in each. In the Lower School, associate teachers have transitioned to full-time, and we have hired additional teachers in order to increase the number of classes from 28 to 47. Fifteen outdoor classroom areas have been created, new air handling systems have been installed and temporary classrooms have been built in gyms, hallways and libraries.

Additionally, more than $206,000 from the Academy Community Fund has supported 50 students with emergency tuition assistance whose families are facing unforeseen financial hardship.

Danielle and George Skestos ’86 were some of the first donors to the fund in March. “The Academy experience is such an important part of our family’s daily lives—at this point, we can’t imagine our kids without it! We are so pleased to be part of the Academy community and to know that so many parents and alumni came together to support one another.”

Theatre Renovation

The reopening of the Schoedinger Theatre was a great moment last fall. Undergoing its first facelift since its construction in 1980, the theatre now has a balcony, new seats throughout, and acoustical panels on the ceiling and walls in addition to improved lighting and sound. Funding for this renovation came from gifts to the Annual Fund and conservative fiscal management. All of these enhancements are providing a professional aesthetic and auditory experience while also maintaining a sense of closeness for the audience to feel like the theatre is our community’s living room.

“Theatre renovation was exciting...it meant more room, which was nice because we were crowding in with extra chairs and some people were standing,” notes Nikki Turley ‘20, recipient of the 2020 Theatre Award and co-recipient of the National School Choral Award.

“The renovation changed a lot of things for us as performers and behind the scenes. As a techie, I was able to help make sure that wiring and equipment was put back safely and correctly as well as take part in figuring out how to best take advantage of the new acoustics. Our goal was to make sure people got the best sound and visual from wherever they’re sitting.”

During 2019-20, the theatre was used by all divisions for assemblies, Junior Speeches, concerts and plays, and we look forward to many more performances.

Athletic Expansion

After watching months of construction, last winter brought the long-awaited opening of the new 24,000-square-foot fieldhouse, athletic training area, wellness center, weight room and coaches’ offices.

Did you know that no additional gym, training or practice space had been built since the 1980s, when the school had 500 students? And although Academy went coed in the early 90s, there had not been any renovation or addition to our locker facilities, so we had been short three girls’ locker rooms.

These much-needed athletic enhancements became possible with the vision of Matt Walter ’87, P ’16 ’18 ’21. His family’s generous lead gift sparked great enthusiasm and support from a small group of other passionate donors enabling the school to reimagine its athletic complex.

“The fieldhouse has been heaven sent,” said Athletic Director, Jason Singleton. “It’s elegant, durable and truly a multipurpose facility. Multiple teams can practice at the same time, which allows our student athletes to get home earlier in the evening. Also, our outdoor teams can continue to practice when inclement weather would typically be a cause to cancel, and it’s allowing us to get more of our youth involved in sports at an earlier age.”

These spaces are proving even more invaluable now, as other gym spaces have had to be transformed to temporary classrooms during the pandemic.

50th Reunion Scholarship

Bob Mathews ’68 spent the last school year reaching out to classmates to create an endowed fund—the Class of 1968 Scholarship—in honor of their 50th class reunion. To date, the class has contributed over $268,000 through a variety of methods ranging from cash gifts and five-year pledges to matching gifts, appreciated stock transfers, donor advised funds and retirement plan distributions.

“Your 50th reunion gets you thinking,” Bob shared. “I still remember my interview to get into the Academy—it surely doesn’t feel that long ago.”

When asked why a scholarship for financial aid is so important, Bob explained about his own Academy experience. “My parents were working people, so for me, security was knowing my family had enough money for food, if little else. My mother, who had not finished high school, imagined what doors the Academy would open for me, and she insisted I interview for admission.”

“I was offered a full scholarship, and my Academy education gave me access to a college and graduate education, an exciting career, and a life of travel and engagement with ideas that I would never have known.”

The Class of 1968 Scholarship is supporting its first student this fall, and the fund will grow in perpetuity.

“Our class scholarship is supporting our alma mater, and just as important, it is a gift supporting driven students.”
Total Philanthropic Gifts Received 2019–20

- **2019-20 Annual Fund**: $1,233,512
- **Building projects**: $1,192,126
- **Grow the endowment**: $346,145
- **Academy Community Fund**: $302,056
- **Special initiatives**: $189,083

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**2019-20 Annual Fund**

The Annual Fund continues to play a vital role in providing the flexibility needed to support all areas of the school: visual and performing arts, athletics teams and physical education, curricular innovation, faculty support and student financial aid. Annual Fund gifts also allowed for the flexibility to address overdue needs such as the Schoedinger Theatre renovation.

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**Academy Community Fund**

In just a few short months, more than $300,000 was received for the Academy Community Fund, and another $480,000 in pledges—including tuition credits—are scheduled to be fulfilled this school year. These gifts are providing invaluable tuition assistance as well as other pandemic-related needs.

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**Gifts to grow the endowment**

A key to Academy’s long-term sustainability is the growth of the endowment, and the Class of 1968 Scholarship is playing a great part this year. Other endowed funds exist to support financial aid, faculty salaries and professional development, but most are unrestricted. Estate gifts and memorial gifts have also been contributed to the endowment this year.

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**Gifts for building projects**

In addition to gifts received for the athletics expansion and renovation project, pledges to The New Quest capital campaign are still being fulfilled. The holistic campaign objectives completed in 2016 encompassed nearly every building on campus.

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**Special initiatives**

Special initiatives include funds raised through events such as the annual Golf Outing for financial aid and PACA’s Charlie David Dinner (athletics). Parents and alumni have also contributed to Chinese New Year celebrations for the school as well as unique teacher grants and student scholarships.