

Kalamazoo College

Hicks Student Center

Kalamazoo, Michigan



Client Challenge

Built in phases from the 1930s to the 1970s, this building was built to be the center of student life. But over time, it had failed to function effectively. The interior had twelve distinct levels and was inaccessible to the handicapped. The building was energy-inefficient, contrary to the College's goals of sustainable use of resources. Wayfinding was also very difficult.

TowerPinkster Solution

The goal of the project was nothing less than the total transformation of the building as the revitalized centerpiece of student life – demonstrating its value as the “heart and hearth” of the campus. Through inclusive programming and design, this project aligned the mission and vision of the College with the new contemporary function of the building, while retaining the character and context of its traditional setting.

The center portion of the building was removed and redesigned to create a new atrium while keeping critical functions, such as food service and the bookstore, in operation without disruption. All major functions radiate from this central atrium to provide clear visual orientation within the building and dramatic views to the campus green. Multiple floor levels were reduced to three, providing complete accessibility throughout. A variety of student gathering spaces were created, seven existing fireplaces were all reactivated, and historic portions of the building were also protected and enhanced.

Size: 75,000 SF

Firm Role: Architecture, Engineering, Interior Design and Landscape Architecture Services
LEED Status: Silver

