CONVERSE BULLETIN
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Progress
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Alumnae News Editor:

I am writing to compliment you on the recent Converse magazine! I was especially delighted to read the article “A Road to Nowhere” and to know that one of our Converse alumnae is a big part of this law suit. Hoorah for Laura Calloway Hart ’75 and her part in presenting this case to the courts. My church, Trenholm Road United Methodist in Columbia, is helping with books, supplies, painting etc. in one of the school districts effected in this law suit. Another Converse alumna, Gigi Dawson ’85, is leading us in this endeavor. The “Corridor of Shame” is a blight on the whole state and we are hopeful that when more people know about this disgraceful situation, there will be some appropriate resolution. In the meantime I am proud of my fellow alumnae, Laura and Gigi. Keep on keepin’ on!!!

Sincerely,
Madge Graydon Major ’45
Opening Convocation at Converse College is synonymous with new beginnings. This past September, as we officially ushered in the 2007-2008 academic year, I introduced a new strategic vision for the College—our blueprint to expand, enhance and energize the Converse community for the twenty-first century. An outgrowth of months of collaboration and conversation, extensive meetings and research, our ambition is to lead in the cultivation and development of creative thinking and problem-solving across all disciplines in and out of the classroom. Our vision for Converse in the year 2012 and beyond is to become the most creative college in the Southeast and the community for producing engaged citizens who effect positive change. Our vision for Converse in the year 2012 and beyond is to become the most creative college in the Southeast and the community for producing engaged citizens who effect positive change. Our vision for Converse in the year 2012 and beyond is to become the most creative college in the Southeast and the community for producing engaged citizens who effect positive change. Developed by the Converse Strategic Leadership Team, which includes faculty, staff, students, trustees and alumnae, the plan outlines specific goals to achieve and action steps to take during the next five years. It prioritizes: the enhancement of student housing, student life programs and our physical plant; the expansion of study-travel, student-faculty research and academic programs in high demand with established and/or growing reputations; the advancement of intercollegiate athletic programs; and campus-wide implementation of the latest technology. We initiated a series of campus-wide sessions in to introduce the plan in December. I invite your participation: visit the web site at www.converse.edu/strategicplan. Ambitious and flexible, dynamic and realistic—our emphasis on distinguishing the Converse experience by cultivating creativity and community is specifically designed to best equip our twenty-first century students for the evolving demands of the professions, workplaces and communities that await them. Converse's founding mission to educate students to “see clearly, decide wisely and act justly” for “the well-being of any country depends much upon the culture of its women” requires, in this century, that we develop engaged, adaptable and ethical citizens committed to progress. Seven core values of Converse—excellence, integrity, exploration, diversity, respect, community and progress—will guide this work, transcending time and inspiring actions and decisions across the entire institution.
Today, Converse is committed to preparing students for success in an ever-changing world that is characterized by explosive amounts of information, accelerated communication and rapidly evolving jobs and technologies. We are, therefore, committed to facilitating the acquisition of knowledge through distinctive and interdisciplinary hands-on learning opportunities. We are committed to nurturing each individual’s capacity for creativity, flexibility and problem-solving. We are committed to developing individuals who can imagine the unseen and unknown, who can communicate and collaborate within a diverse multifaceted landscape, and who can effectively build relationships and make decisions.

A Converse education in the twenty-first century promises graduates who are thinkers and doers, creators and explorers, professionals and curious individuals who lead balanced, fulfilled lives.

Themed “progress” from our core values, this issue of the Converse Bulletin highlights recent accomplishments and exciting new developments. We are a small college, big on opportunities. The momentum is readily apparent in the vast array of achievements and initiatives percolating across the Converse community—a growing athletic program with a fabulous new mascot, our first-ever South Carolina Professor of the Year, a newly endowed chair in the history department, a dual degree program in engineering developed in partnership with Clemson University, a Creative Minds Conference on February 16 and new creativity scholarship awards, the introduction of Arabic into our foreign language offerings to compliment Converse’s leadership in the national Model Arab League program, and notable scholarship, research and publications by faculty.

Converse is on fire! Achieving fully our vision to lead in the cultivation and development of creativity across all disciplines in and out of the classroom will inspire the best of Converse—collectively and individually. I invite you to join this important venture, to invest in the Converse community and to share in the shaping of great things to come.

Elizabeth A. Fleming, PhD
President
President Betsy Fleming has coined a phrase when speaking sports: “The Converse athletics program is ON FIRE!” When one considers the transformation of the program within the last year alone, it’s clear that the words ring true.

Since October, Converse athletics has changed its name from All-Stars to Valkyries, and has announced plans to add lacrosse and swimming to its roster of sports. These changes came on the heels of Converse gaining full membership in NCAA Division II Conference Carolinas, a record number of National Letters of Intent signed by incoming student-athletes, the establishment of a new Converse Athletic Booster Club, current student-athletes achieving a record for academic excellence with a 3.1 collective student-athlete GPA, the launch of webcasts of conference games through the Internet, a new Converse athletics web site (www.converse.edu/athletics)
converse.edu/athletics) and the College serving as the host site for Conference Carolinas cross country and volleyball tournaments.

Perhaps the most visible change was that of the mascot. Converse designed a public competition that provided all members of the greater Converse community the opportunity to participate in the naming process. Change often generates mixed emotions from those vested in a College, and this is especially true for an institution steeped in history and tradition as heavily as Converse. Online nominations and general comments were accepted for two weeks, bringing forth both enthusiastic reactions as well as rallies from those committed to the All-Stars name. Here is a sampling of the comments submitted:

- “Great idea to make us a part of the change. I do feel it will bring support to the athletes that may not have been there before!”
- “As a former athlete at Converse I never really thought All-Stars was the greatest mascot, but having been there and played as an All-Star I (now) feel like it’s great. Perhaps with a new mascot, there will be more support from the fans.”
- “All-Stars relates so well to the name Converse that I can’t imagine my alma mater being anything else!”

The list of more than 300 nominations – some serious and others obviously humorous – was voted on by the public and then pared down to the five most popular names for a final vote: 89ers, Lynx, Trail Blazers, Valkyries and The Victory. In the final round, voting was limited to one vote per person and 1,547 votes were cast. In what can only be viewed as a rout, Valkyries netted 50% of the vote. The 89ers came in second with 17%. Trail Blazers, Lynx and The Victory came in third, fourth and fifth place respectively.

Converse’s decision to change the mascot range from the need for an outward symbol of the immense growth and advancements being made to elevate the athletics program to the more practical issues that accompany an elevated status, such as the need to register a trademark and servicemark of the Converse mascot as athletics-related commerce increases. Many of these issues stem from competition in NCAA Division II and the College’s new conference membership in Conference Carolinas. “Stepping up our program to be competitive on a Division II level means lots of changes in athletics – changes that require significant investment in
our coaching staff, recruiting of talented athletes, and expansion of facilities,” said Beth Lancaster ’96, Director of Communications. “Converse needs to secure sponsorships that provide funding similar to that which our peer college athletic programs enjoy, and with an unofficial affiliation with a Nike shoe were unable to attract interest of other sponsors.”

The All-Stars mascot dates back to the 1970s, when Converse had a very limited athletic program. “It is appropriate to mark this new era by giving our teams a new mascot,” said Lancaster.

Dr. Madelyn Young, Associate Professor of Economics and Chair of the Economics, Accounting and Business Department, was one of many around campus sporting the “ARE YOU GAME?” t-shirt during the competition to help rally participation. “This new mascot comes on the heels of other exciting changes these past few years,” she said. “It is clear that Converse is moving creatively with the times while still maintaining cherished traditions, which is just one of the many reasons I love teaching here.”

As she stood at center court of the Hannah Gym to announce Valkyries as the overwhelming choice, President Fleming exclaimed, “From this day forward we are the Converse Valkyries – valiant women, strong and brave, heroes on and off the field. Any corporate marketing firm would be hard pressed to identify a more appropriate symbol of Converse in the 21st century.”

Originating in Norse mythology and also known as “Choosers of the Slain,” the Valkyries are beautiful, strong warrior goddesses, mounted upon winged horses and armed with spears and shields. Valkyries preside over battles, governing victory and choosing the greatest fallen heroes to bring back to Valhalla. In Bulfinch’s Mythology (1855), the armor of the Valkyries is said to “shed a strange flickering light, which flashes up over the northern skies, making what men call the ‘Aurora Borealis’ or ‘Northern Lights.’” Baye Williamson, a Converse senior from Kingsport, Tennessee and a standout member of the Valkyrie volleyball team, said she was impressed by the process undertaken by the College as well as the final product. “I think a strong woman figure is the perfect symbol of Converse. I am very happy about the way that the mascot competition involved people from the entire campus community and beyond.”

After the announcement of the Valkyrie selection, Converse officials turned to graphic artist Chad Patterson for the new logo design. The final product was unveiled during halftime for the Valkyries basketball match with Brevard College. The addition of a lacrosse program was also announced during halftime, just days after Converse announced a new swimming program.
“Swimming and lacrosse are a natural fit for Converse. These athletes are characteristically the type of students who fit well with Converse – students with very good grade point averages and who work hard at achieving a balance between commitment to their sport, doing well in the classroom and being engaged members of the community,” explained athletic director Joy Couch.

The addition of lacrosse was made possible by a joint gift of $275,000 from three Charlotte, North Carolina-based Converse alumnae, who are also members of the Board of Trustees, and their husbands: Lisa Bell Weisiger ’84 and Ed Weisiger, Jane Spratt McColl ’60 and Hugh McColl, and Jane Boatwright Schwab ’77 and Nelson Schwab. The gift will cover startup costs of the lacrosse program including the hiring of a coach, field enhancements and equipment.

“We were inspired by the idea of jumpstarting a program in which Converse has extraordinary potential to take a leadership role – both in the conference and the region,” explained Jane Schwab. “Women’s lacrosse is an increasingly popular sport at the high school level, and Converse will be on the cutting edge of developing the sport at the collegiate level in the Southeast. We were compelled to support the energy and growth of the Converse athletic program.”

Components of a successful Valkyrie swim team are already in place. Converse has a competitive pool, complete with locker rooms and viewing bleachers. Spartanburg, South Carolina native and Converse assistant athletic director Susan Kunkler is set to coach the team. Kunkler swam competitively at the University of Georgia from 1985-87 where she was named an All-American and competed in the Olympic trials. She has coached a summer league team the past four years.

“I’m very excited because swimming has been a part of my life for 25 years,” Kunkler told the Spartanburg Herald-Journal. “I think the sport is a perfect match for Converse. It’s really a lifelong sport for women, and we’ve got a good facility with a great campus. It won’t be hard to get swimmers to come here.”

Coach Kunkler’s goal is to have at least ten swimmers on the roster by next season (the College swim season runs January to March) who can swim individual events all the way up to the NCAA championships, where you don’t have to qualify as a team. “Swimming is an emerging sport in our conference, and we will be on the forefront of that, which is a perfect opportunity for Converse to be competitive right away,” Kunkler said.

In the words of Betsy Fleming, the Converse Valkyries are indeed “ON FIRE!”
It's difficult to say that 2007 was a breakout year for Dr. Mellissa Walker. Since joining the Converse faculty in 1996, the history professor has earned every teaching award and nearly every other award granted by the College. Yet, 2007 has definitely been a year to remember for Walker as she was named South Carolina Professor of the Year by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). And in September, she was named as the College's first George Dean Johnson Jr. Chair in History, an endowed position made possible by a $2.5 million gift from Stewart and Ann Cobb Johnson of Spartanburg in honor of Stewart's brother.

Walker was flown to Washington, DC to receive her Professor of the Year award along with other state winners in November. Upon her return, Converse hosted a cocktail reception for the community to personally offer their congratulations.

Walker was nominated for the Professor of the Year award by Dr. Jeffrey H. Barker, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. In his nomination, Barker asserted: “Dr. Walker is one of our most respected and accomplished faculty members, a master teacher-scholar recognized as one of the premier scholars of oral history in the South. She has a superb ability to connect with students, bringing to life our nation's history and the significance of that history in each student's life. Dr. Walker's students are transformed by the excitement she brings to the classroom and they in turn are excited to be part of her courses. Her students find both challenge and support, a distinctive combination of scholarly expectation and true caring.”

The award seemed like the perfect way to put the wraps on an extraordinary year. In July, she led two week-long seminars funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities which attracted 100 public school teachers from across the country to Converse College to learn about the crucial role South Carolina played in the American Revolution. Her efforts for the seminar generated media coverage throughout the region. Additionally, her book *Southern Farmers and Their Stories* was awarded an Outstanding Academic Title Award from *Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries* for its excellence in scholarship and its value to undergraduate students. Finally, the endowed chair was a feather in Walker's cap that benefits Converse students and faculty alike.

Earnings from the Johnson chair endowment will support the faculty position and launch a Research and Development Fund for Converse's Department of History and Politics. This
While speaking at the Converse reception honoring her in November, Walker said “I guess I must have been called to be a teacher. My grandmother laughs that even when I was little and got a day off from school, I always wanted to ‘play school,’ and I always had to be the teacher. Once when I was about twelve, I was explaining something to my younger sister—probably in an obnoxious know-it-all way—and she said, ‘Melissa, stop teaching me.’ I’ve been teaching forever.

“This award means the world to me because it honors undergraduate teaching. I believe that good teaching is a product of the things you learn from every teacher and every student you ever have. I thank my parents who taught me to love history, took me to historic sites, bought me history books, and encouraged me to be curious and ask questions. I had wonderful teachers all along the way. One of the most influential was Penny Piper, my high school history teacher, who communicated her great passion for history. When I was an undergraduate, I went back to do my student teaching with Mrs. Piper, and I’ll never forget what she told me. She said, ‘Every student matters, even the ones who have given up on themselves. And if you’re going to be their teacher, you owe to them to give them your best every single day.’ I’ve always tried to remember her advice. I also learn from students. Students sometimes laugh when I say that, but it’s true. They often ask questions that make me look at things from a new angle, and that affects how I teach that material.”

Sarah Walters, a Converse senior from Midlothian, Virginia majoring in politics and history, explained what makes Walker an outstanding teacher: “Dr. Walker is the one Converse professor I try to take every semester. She presents a varied approach to history, allowing students to explore subjects through film, memoirs, craftwork and field trips to local museums and historical sites. Every day in her class presents an opportunity to grasp a better understanding of history in a new way. I’ve even had breakfast at her home for readings with my classes. Dr. Walker facilitates an engaging classroom with lots of discussion. Her careful instruction and recommendations for my work have helped me to become a better student in all of my classes. Simply put, she is the best teacher I’ve had in my life.”

Valerie Dowling graduated from Converse in 2007 with a degree in history and politics, and is currently working as a federal employee. She was eager to add her praise, noting “Dr. Walker is a professor who has had a profound impact on my life both inside and outside the classroom. In the classroom, she engages students through a variety of methods to challenge them to think critically about important subjects and to develop their own conclusions after a taking a thorough look at each topic from several points of view. Dr. Walker continues to support students outside of the classroom, encouraging and challenging them in both their academic and personal pursuits. The critical thinking skills I developed in Dr. Walker’s classroom have enabled me to pursue my career with the confidence needed to tackle every challenge that may come my way.”

Recently, Walker provided her students with opportunities to experience life as professional scholars while serving the Spartanburg community in a vital way. She did this by leading her African-American History course in researching urban renewal in Spartanburg, with the resulting student essays breaking new ground in understanding the historical impact of the renewal effort. The essays were judged to be of such superior quality that they were published as part of two chapters in the Hub City book, South of Main.

For Walker’s distinctive and dynamic style in the classroom that cultivates creative and critical thinking in her students and encourages them to draw independent conclusions well grounded in historical fact, and her exceptional scholarly achievements, the South Carolina Professor of the Year Award is a most appropriate honor.
When the Spartanburg County History Museum made plans to set up shop in the Chapman Cultural Center, they approached Converse’s Dr. Suzanne Schuweiler-Daab to curate the inaugural exhibition in their new home. Featuring the museum’s collection of works by Converse alumna Margaret Law, the exhibition ran October 16 – December 30 with demonstrations, lectures and a special Converse Night.

In addition to serving as guest curator for the exhibit, Schuweiler-Daab, Associate Professor of Art History at Converse, also authored the exhibition catalog *From Fields to Mills: The Art of Margaret Law* and served as the interviewer for a video in the exhibit that includes comments from a cotton picker, peach farmer and family members. Assisting Schuweiler-Daab with the exhibit was Converse II art history major Monica McKiernan, who had just completed an internship at the Spartanburg History Museum.

“I was first introduced to Margaret Law’s work when the Spartanburg Art Museum invited me to write a catalog for their exhibit of her works in 1999,” explains Schuweiler-Daab. “I was very interested in her work, particularly since she’s a Converse alumna, but also because of its beautifully expressive qualities. She was such a free spirit that I find studying her to be quite inspiring.

“During the summer I asked Monica to research the agricultural and textile history of Spartanburg County, and the history of African American life in the region so that I could use that in my discussion of Law’s work.” McKiernan also wrote a short biography about Law and assisted with hanging the show.

The fourth of seven children, Law was the first art major to graduate from Converse. Following her graduation in 1895, she embarked upon what would become nothing short of an incredible life and career.

After studying at the Pennsylvania Academy of Art in Philadelphia, Law moved to New York to expand upon her talents at the Cooper Art School, the Art Students League and the Chase School (officially called the New York School of Art). She spent a year in Paris, France under the tutelage of Cubist painter Andre Lhote, and also studied under the Ashcan School leader Robert Henri and American Impressionists William Merritt Chase and Charles Hawthorne.

Law was particularly intrigued by the work of Henri. In *From Fields to Mills: The Art of Margaret Law*, Schuweiler-Daab states “Under his tutelage she adopted the Ashcan school style of informal, slightly caricatured, painterly scenes of the everyday life of working class
people. In 1924, years after she studied with Henri at the Art Students League, she wrote to him thanking him for his book *The Spirit of Art*. She states that ‘I used it last summer when I was really out of touch with the profession painting in my native burg; ...Your pages...roused me to a technique overlooked in the interest of my subject; yet the big ideas on self education, patriotism, etc. were for the whole race...The book was the event of the summer.’”

Henri’s pledge to innovation in *The Spirit of Art* clearly impacted Law. Schuweiler-Daab said “(Henri) stressed that ‘We are not here to do what has already been done.’ This became a freedom cry for American artists to claim what is unique about their heritage, and not try to copy the subject matter of Europeans. Margaret Law clearly embraced this idea and many of Henri’s other ideas as she sought to express what she saw and felt about her own people. As a co-founder of the Arts and Crafts Club in 1907, which evolved to become the Spartanburg Art Museum, she helped organize an exhibit of Robert Henri’s paintings.”

While in New York, Law made the transition from pupil to mentor in 1915 by giving up her job as an illustrator to teach at Bryn Mawr. Her tenure at the Baltimore, Maryland private school for women lasted twenty years. “Just as she gained a reputation for her artwork, she also gained recognition for her teaching,” wrote Schuweiler-Daab. “The French journal *Revue du Vrai et du Beau* wrote a review about her students’ art in 1924. Also in 1924 she sent some of her students’ drawings to Robert Henri who wrote back: ‘I congratulate you on the life and humor of your children’s drawings. It is a big thing you are doing for them...The freeing of children will eventually revolutionize the world. You are much more of a revolutionist than the man with a gun.’”

Law spent many summers with her sister, Mary Hart Law, in Spartanburg. “She would often drive her Ford along the country roads, stopping to make oil sketches of the fieldworkers,” said Schuweiler-Daab. “While her oeuvre includes genre scenes of white Southerners, such as men listening to the Rose Bowl on the radio, women at the hairdresser and at the mill store, it appears that the majority of her works depicted African Americans. This subject matter was typical of a number of artists during the first few decades of the twentieth century, for whom the South was represented nostalgically, with romantic notions of a bygone era. Unlike the sentimental stereotypes typical of the Northern artists’ portrayal of African Americans, a reviewer of an exhibition at Converse College in 1931 comments that Law ‘does not portray the black race as is so often shown, overwhelmed with melancholy, nor as the carefree individual with no thought of responsibility. Miss Law knows the negro [sic]...she has seen the workings of his mind, all too seldom probed by the white race, and she paints him as he is.’ Reviewers praised her scenes of African American farmers and one of Law’s watercolors, *A Short Crop*, as ‘a study of negro [sic] women picking cotton’ was purchased by Duncan Phillips for the Phillips Memorial Gallery (now known as the Phillips Collection) in Washington, DC.”

In 1935, Law decided to return to her native Spartanburg for good and she accepted the art supervisor position for Spartanburg County School District, a position she would hold until her retirement in 1946. Just as at Bryn Mawr, Law’s Spartanburg students benefited greatly from her tutelage. Schuweiler-Daab writes “In 1936 the Brooklyn Museum in New York hung nineteen paintings by her young pupils, and the American Crayon Company exhibited some of her Spartanburg students’ art in their annual exhibit in New York. In addition to her job as art supervisor for the schools, she somehow managed to find time to give regular classes for adults on relief in the Spartan Mills community.”

Even when she was well into her seventies, Law showed her zest for life. “Family lore recalls that she took up tap dancing when she was in her seventies, saying it was something she had always wanted to do,” writes Schuweiler-Daab. “Glenn Robertson (Law’s great nephew) recalls seeing her demonstrate her new tap dance while wearing ‘crazy’ sneakers. The sneakers weren’t all that unusual on a boy, but for a lady at that time to wear them with her dress seemed crazy to most people. She also drove herself to Mexico when she was in her seventies — her second trip there. She had first been to Mexico in 1936 when she studied the Mexican muralists. It was her habit to fearlessly drive herself in her small car whether from Baltimore to Spartanburg or to Mexico.”

Conventional is not an adjective that applies to the life of Margaret Law. “Although I am not an artist (except on Sundays) but an art historian, I think anyone would find her life inspiring,” said Schuweiler-Daab. “She had the guts to do what she wanted, and not let convention and growing up in a very small town (Spartanburg in the late 1800s) hinder her ambition.”
On October 31, Dr. Jeffrey R. Willis was presented with the Governor’s Award in the Humanities at a luncheon at the South Carolina State Museum in Columbia.

“This award is about saying ‘thank you’ to Jeff for the contributions he’s made to the humanities and to local history through his tireless efforts as a teacher and volunteer,” said South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford. “Whether it has been sharing his expertise about local and European history in the classroom, speaking for civic organizations, or authoring numerous books and articles, he continues to be a real resource for history in the Upstate.”

The award was established in 1991 to recognize outstanding achievement in humanities research, teaching and scholarship; institutional and individual participation in helping communities in South Carolina better understand our cultural heritage or ideas and issues related to the humanities; excellence defining South Carolina’s cultural life to the nation or world; and exemplary support for public humanities programs. Since 1991, 44 individuals and organizations have received awards. The Humanities Council SC is completing its 34th year as the state-based program of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

A native of Greenville, South Carolina, Willis is the Andrew Helmus Professor of History Emeritus at Converse and serves as the College archivist. He retired from the classroom in 2005. Before joining the Converse faculty in 1967, Willis taught at The Citadel and Randolph-Macon Woman’s College. He earned his bachelor’s degree from Furman University and his masters and PhD from the University of Virginia.

A confessed Anglophile, Willis taught a wide range of Converse courses in modern European history with specialties in British history, Russian history, Irish history and twentieth century Europe. He is the founder of the popular Converse College London Term, during which students live and study in London, England for a term. He has also taken students abroad to Ireland and Russia.

In the Spring 2004 issue of the Converse Bulletin, Willis wrote “I have always had a passion for history. When the attraction first began, I cannot remember. It was always there. When young, I was more attracted to the history of Europe than to the past of my own country. Perhaps it was the lure of distant lands and all the kings and emperors that fascinated me. After teaching European history for almost forty-three years, I now find my interest shifting more to the area of local history and to the history of Spartanburg County and the South Carolina Upcountry in particular.”

In 1991, Dr. Willis was presented with the Kathryne Amelia Brown Award for excellence in teaching. A colleague noted “I can think of no other professor at Converse who demonstrates any more completely the ideal of a dedicated, outstanding faculty member.”

Willis is a past president of the South Carolina Historical Association and the Spartanburg County Historical Association. He has served as a board member of the Greenville Historical Society and the Historic Greenville Foundation, and has been a member of the Walnut Grove Plantation Committee. In addition to his three photographic history books (Spartanburg: A Postcard History, Converse College, and Remembering Greenville: Photographs from the Coxe Collection) Willis has published numerous articles and essays on local history and also serves as editor of The New Greenville Mountaineer and The Papers and Proceedings of the Greenville County Historical Society. He wrote a number of articles for the Hub City Writers Project’s Textile Town, a history of Spartanburg County’s textile industry and its workers. He was also editor of The Drover’s Post, the newsletter of the Spartanburg County Historical Association, for many years. An in-demand speaker in the Upstate, Willis has presented programs for countless organizations.
A few facts about Arabic:
• It is spoken by more than 300 million people worldwide.
• By 2050, Arabic speakers could outnumber speakers of English.
• Because of Islam’s significant impact on Western civilization from the seventh and thirteenth centuries, Arabic is a leading language of art, history, literature, music, philosophy, science and theology.
• North America imported $66 million and exported $34 million worth of merchandise to and from Arabic-speaking countries in 2005.

These facts offer compelling evidence of the impact that the Arabic language has and will have upon the world, yet only 10% of US universities offer courses to study the Arabic language. Starting in the Fall 2007 Term, Converse joined this elite group of institutions by offering Spartanburg’s first Arabic course.

Dr. Mirko Hall leads the Arabic 101 course three hours each week. He was recruited to Converse to instruct German, and his background in Arabic offered an attractive bonus for the College. The language instruction compliments Converse’s national leadership in the Model Arab League program.

A native of Germany, Hall immigrated to the US with his mother when he was four years old. The two settled in Minnesota. Hall later earned his undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees in German studies from the University of Minnesota. In 1990, he began four years of active duty with the US Army as a linguist. “In those days, if you were a linguist in the military, you were either a voice interceptor listening to enemy transmissions or you were an interrogator. When we shipped out after the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, we were told that the language we would study would be decided after completing basic training and taking an aptitude test which was comprised of a fake language to see if we could decode it.”

Hall learned Arabic in earnest at the Defense Language Institute in Monterrey, California. “The residential course was intense to say the least. (It lasted) for 72 weeks, Monday through Friday, eight hours per day, in a classroom of 10 people with instructors. By the end of this ‘basic course’ in modern standard Arabic with a bit of colloquial, we had a very good working proficiency in the language. Half of my enlistment was spent just learning the language.”

Hall’s expertise in Arabic language was even put to use by the Kuwaiti government in the mid-1990s when he helped to translate documents from Arabic to English, and vice versa.

The language can be difficult to learn for English speakers, particularly because of its unique alphabet, which has different letters and is written from right to left. But the language also is phonetic, meaning once the writing is grasped, the language can be understood with more ease. “It’s not that Arabic is really difficult but the grammar is different than English for sure, and it’s a new script, and has some new sounds (that are) so different than Spanish or French or Italian. So (language experts) reckon it takes four times as long to learn Arabic.”

Jennifer Kaeser, a Converse senior from Woodstock, Georgia, enrolled in Hall’s course for the Fall Term. “I really enjoyed the Arabic course,” she said. “As a modern languages major, I’ve taken quite a few languages, but Arabic is completely different than any I’ve learned before. Dr. Hall made it interesting and fun so that by the end of the semester I knew more Arabic than I had realized I was learning.”

Hall spices up his class by showing some humorous, mainstream uses of Arabic. In class, he discussed Arabic discourses on such topics as the US visit of Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the media obsession with Paris Hilton. “I like to bring a lot from popular culture into it. Everyone is bright, articulate and motivated, which makes it a lot of fun.”
I spend several weeks visiting my extended family in Damascus every summer, and I try to make my time there as profitable as possible. During the last couple years, I have volunteered in the Damascus Community School and worked with the Syrian Family Planning Association in Lebanese refugee camps. This past summer I had the most meaningful experience yet as I served as an intern at the Syrian Enterprise and Business Center (SEBC). It was a wonderful opportunity to meet interesting people and to engage in important research.

The SEBC is a private foundation dedicated to the development of an internationally-competitive Syrian private sector. Among its activities are support for qualified industries and businesses, including administration of a 1.5 million Euro grant from the European Union earmarked for the development of small and medium enterprises. The SEBC also conducts and publishes public reports on various industries in Syria, including the pharmaceutical and olive oil industries, and it attempts to lobby the Syrian government on various economic issues.

On September 29, Wofford College celebrated its new sculpture “A Green Season” by Converse Professor of Art Mayo Mac Boggs. The ceremony was held around the multi-piece sculpture located among the trees across from the Sandor Teszler Library. “A Green Season” was commissioned by and donated to the college by professors Linda Powers, Ana María Wiseman, Dennis Wiseman and retired professor Victor Bilanchone.

Boggs designed the sculpture as a piece of environmental art to draw attention to the space around it. Wofford President Benjamin Dunlap commented, “Much modern sculpture transforms our perception of the world by helping us see underlying structures and analogies. The different parts of ‘A Green Season’ do precisely that, echoing the natural forms around them during spring and summer and subsequently, during the fall and winter, making us think of what has been and will be again. A college education is about thinking as well as seeing, and this delightfully provocative work is a festive addition to our arboretum.”
I was assigned to a team working on “Vision 2025,” a report that projects a vision for Syria by the year 2025 and provides the strategic objectives and recommendations necessary to accomplish this task within the economic, social, political and environmental arenas. This was an appealing project for me that combined my interests in Arab political and social issues as well as my budding interest in economic development.

Vision 2025 is directed toward a range of audiences including the Syrian business sector as well as transnational organizations including the European Union and the United Nations. However, the primary intended one is the Syrian government. Economic issues addressed by the report included the need for institutional reform within the economic infrastructure, the most important of which are a more functional Central Bank and the problem of extensive subsidies within the Syrian economy. The Syrian economy has been unduly dependent upon oil revenues, but the decline in Syrian oil production means that unless new discoveries are located, Syria will become a net oil importer within ten years. Since the subsidies and government programs have relied upon oil monies, a crisis is looming. The Vision 2025 report highlighted the necessity of eliminating many subsidies. Emphasizing the interrelatedness of the political, social and economic spheres to maintain lasting and stable economic growth, the report also called for wide scale reform to encourage a climate conducive to the development of human capital and the creation of economic, social and political opportunity.

The staff of the SEBC is a talented group of people who hold diverse views on politics, economics and social issues. Lunchtime discussions ranged over disagreements about religion, Iraq, the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, women’s issues, and many other topics. Specific issues of the summer included the massive influx of Iraqi refugees to Syria, the civil strife in Palestine and Lebanon, the war in Iraq, Iran, and the Turkish elections to touch on only a few topics. On one subject there was general consensus—that a change in the US administration cannot come soon enough.

The Vision 2025 report, which includes my name as a contributing author, will be launched in the near future, and I am very interested in observing the Syrian government’s reaction to the report. However they respond, my experience at SEBC this summer was a totally positive one. The people that I encountered, those with whom I worked and debated, made a strong impression on me. The research and writing experience gained will prove invaluable to me as I continue to graduate school. In sum, my internship was a most rewarding opportunity.

Faculty Accomplishments

**Dr. Jeff Barker**, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and **Dr. Scott Robbins**, Associate Professor of Musicology and Composition, had their proposal for a panel discussion of the relationship between student honor codes and the obligations of faculty accepted for presentation at the Center for Academic Integrity Conference at Christopher Newport University.

**Dr. David Berry**, Associate Professor of Music Theory and Music History, had his composition “Modular Concerto for Cello Solo, Chamber Ensemble and Percussion” selected as winning commission from the South Carolina Music Teachers Association and it was premiered at their conference in November at Coker College.

**Dr. Patti Foy**, Associate Professor of Music Education and Chair of Music Education and Pedagogy, conducted the Music Technology Institute for the seventh consecutive summer with a grant from the South Carolina Arts in Basic Curriculum Project. This is the only institute of its kind in South Carolina, and serves to educate music teachers in the uses of music technology.

**Miles Hoffman**, Dean of the Petrie School of Music, performed a series of concerts with the American Chamber Players, including engagements at the Library of Congress, the Kreeger Museum in Washington, DC, and Indiana University at Bloomington. He also presented a recital with harpsichordist J. Reilly Lewis at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC, taught and performed at the Harlaxton International Chamber Music Festival (United Kingdom), where he presented a solo lecture/recital on the music of J. S. Bach; and performed at the Highlands-Cashiers Chamber Music Festival.
Dr. Jim Hymas, Associate Professor of Mathematics, gave a presentation at Nova Scotia's Responsible Gambling Conference in Halifax. He was one of sixteen guest speakers to be invited to the conference.

Sarah Johnson, Associate Professor of Violin, once again coordinated the development of the North Carolina School of the Arts Summer Chamber Music Institute for Strings and Piano.

Kenneth Law, Assistant Professor of Violoncello, served on the faculty of the Harlaxton International Chamber Music Festival (United Kingdom), on the North Carolina School of the Arts' Summer Music Festival faculty, and on the Florida International University's "Animato!" string camp faculty.

Dr. Anne Lipe, Assistant Professor of Music Therapy, provided music therapy support to the "Living Nonviolence" held in Ramallah, in the Palestinian territories. She developed the music portion of the curriculum, and shared the music leadership with a Palestinian singer and oud player.

Dr. John Theilmann, Professor of History and Politics and Co-Director of the Nisbet Honors Program, and Stacy Thrall '07 presented a paper, "Modeling the Black Death," at the 33rd Southeastern Medieval Association Meeting.

Dr. Siegwart Reichwald's "Mendelssohn's Tempo Indications" was presented at the Fall 2007 meeting of the Southeast Chapter of the American Musicological Society in Chapel Hill. He was also elected Chapter Representative at that meeting. Reichwald is Associate Professor of Musicology.

Dr. Rafael E. Hernandez, Reeves Brothers Professor of Spanish and Chair of Foreign Languages and Literature Department, presented a research paper titled “Time and Memory in Garcia Marquez’s Living to Tell the Tale” at the 50th Conference of the Linguistic Circle of Manitoba and North Dakota hosted by North Dakota State University. He also chaired a session on Latin American literature at the 57th Mountain Interstate Foreign Languages Conference in Roanoke, Virginia.

Geri Hurlbut, Assistant Professor of Art Therapy, has been awarded board certification in art therapy.
Student Accomplishments

Marriage and Family Therapy graduate students Landa Basham, Chuck Hall, Marianne Peeler and Vicki Rissmiller presented research posters at the regional conference of the South Carolina Association for Marriage and Family Therapists. The posters were based on each individual student's area of clinical interest and included the topics Post-partum Depression, Wilderness Experience as an Intervention, Treatment of Rage Responses and Medical Family Therapy.

Artwork by BFA studio art major Brandy Greenwell ’08 was featured in a month-long exhibition at Hub-Bub's Showroom Gallery in downtown Spartanburg. Her various photographic works were joined by the works of two other local artists, a painter and sculptor.

Against 75 college and university delegations, including three universities from Nigeria, the Converse Syria delegation was judged the best delegation at the Southern Regional Model United Nations in Atlanta. Converse senior Nora Nassri ’08 earned top honors against more than 100 competitors in the General Assembly Plenary Committee. Amanda Stevens ’10 achieved the same honor in the equally large International Atomic Energy Agency. Chelsey Boggs ’09 earned best delegate honors in the highly-competitive Security Council (where most delegations place their strongest individual). Megan Madison ’09 was the runner up to best delegate in the League of Arab States committee. Sarah Moser ’08 served as chair of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

University of South Carolina, Clemson University and Furman University for use in their school law classes. Additionally, his school law essay “Bullies Beware – Here Comes The Safe School Climate Act!” is the lead article in the fall issue of Palmetto Administrator. He also appeared on the October 29th edition of South Carolina Educational Radio's “Speaking of Schools,” which airs throughout the state. McDaniel is the Senior Vice President at Converse.

Rick Mulkey, Associate Professor of English and Director of Creative Writing has published Toward any Darkness (Word Press). During the December 1 edition of Garrison Keillor's nationally broadcast program “The Writer's Almanac,” the host read one of Mulkey's poems from the publication. The episode can be downloaded at http://writersalmanac.publicradio.org.

Crystal Records has released a CD entitled Trumpet Colors which includes “Three Blues for Cello and Trumpet” composed by Dr. Scott Robbins, Associate Professor of Musicology and Composition.
Jason Mraz
Performs for Upstate Community on Converse Back-Campus

Jason Mraz is one of the hottest names in music today. His studio efforts have been very well received: “Waiting for My Rocket to Come” (2002) soared to #55 in the US charts while the 2005 release “Mr. A-Z” reached #5.

On September 15, Converse was the place to be for Upstate college students as Mraz headlined a concert on the back lawn of the campus. Joining Mraz on the bill were The Working Title and Doug Jones.