

CONVERSE

580

EAST MAIN

For Friends of Converse College



## pro PELLed!

Propelled by the momentum of growing enrollments, growing visibility in the national media, growing scholarship endowments, and a growing legacy rooted in 125 years of excellence in education- the operative word at Converse these days is GROWTH!

With the renovation of Pell Residence Hall now fully underway, Converse's oldest dorm will be ready to welcome a new century of students in fall 2014! The modern-day makeover of Pell is just one of a number of projects that represent the momentum of a College on the move! Thanks to the generosity of more than 185 donors, the decorative details long admired in this historic hall will be preserved with a nod to progress. The gorgeous old porches and stained glass windows of 1891, will be given new life and light with the addition of 92 contemporary living spaces for today's 21st century students. And, the College's growing athletic program, now bursting at the seams with 10 Division II teams and an Equestrian program, will, at last, have ample breathing room in the newly constructed Marsha H. Gibbs Fieldhouse. Thanks to a \$2.5 million lead gift from Spartanburg's Marsha and Jimmy Gibbs, the state-of-the art facility will open its doors in April 2014.

For alumnae returning to campus this spring to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the founding of the College - Reunion Weekend will be a tribute to the best of old and new, an opportunity to salute the past and take pride in the progress that can be seen on every corner of the campus. In this second addition of 580, the new Converse tabloid for alumnae and friends, we'll fill you in on a few festivities slated for Reunion, and catch you up on all things Converse!



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## News from Around Campus

# Okra 2 OPERA

### Okra TO Opera 2: – April 15-19, 2014

Food. Food as comfort. Food as culture. Food as sustenance. Food as work. Food as ritual. Food as love. Food touches every aspect of Southern life, from religion to family, from cultural identities to economic pursuits. The second Okra to Opera will explore the growing, cooking, and eating of food in the South. Join chefs, cookbook authors, scholars, writers, musicians and storytellers for an engaging four-day conversation about food in the South. For more information, see [converse.edu/okratoopera](http://converse.edu/okratoopera).

### Cars on the Quad

More than 125 rare and classic automobiles rolled onto the back campus of the College this September for the first *Art in Motion* Campus Car Show.



As part of a new Campus Cruisers program, the eye-catching auto display is aimed at educating college

students about the importance of choosing, purchasing and caring for a car. Converse alumna Karen

Thomas '84, who coordinated the effort, said "Converse's beautiful setting was a natural fit for showcasing the charm of the antique autos."



### Sacred Sand

Through a joint project including Converse, Wofford and the Chapman Cultural Center, the Spartanburg community played host this fall to an inspiring group of Tibetan Buddhist Monks. Through the ancient ritual of sand painting, a stunning circular work of art, the *mandala*, is created in the span of a week. Rooted in the Monks study of wisdom and compassion, these colored sand mandalas represent a variety of outer, inner and secret meanings.



### Savoring the Spirit Cup

In posh Pink Panther form the Class of 2014 took home the 1889 Spirit Cup this year. Following the traditional week-long whirlwind of Class Skits, Poster Wars and Powder Puff football – the recap on Facebook and Instagram touted a good time had by all! Rest assured Red Devils, the strategies for next year's comeback are already in the works!

### Fieldhouse Follow-Up

From their perch in the Weisiger Athletic Center, the Converse Valkyries have a perfect view of the room next door – or, make that the burgeoning new Marsha H. Gibbs Fieldhouse. On schedule to be complete in April 2014, the new 14,000 square foot facility will house all ten Valkyries teams, coaching offices and even indoor hitting bays.

### SEP Talk

As an outgrowth of the College's new Strategic Enrollment Plan (SEP) you've likely heard a great deal about the tuition reset that takes effect at Converse in fall 2014 for undergraduate students. The new \$16,500 tuition reaffirms Converse's longstanding commitment to affordability and accessibility and continues to make national news and attract prospective students.



**2014 TUITION \$16,500**

**2013 TUITION \$29,124**

Learn more at [ConverseTuition.com](http://ConverseTuition.com)

**EDITOR/WRITER**  
Sally J. Hammond

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**  
Beth Lancaster  
Carrie Coleman  
Jeffrey Barker  
Chandra Hopkins  
Melissa Walker

**ART DIRECTOR**  
John Pryor

**PRODUCTION ASSISTANT**  
Donna Gardner

**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
Carroll Foster, Hot Eye Photography  
John Pryor  
Mark Olencki

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Throughout the fall, Converse alumni near and far shared their immense pride in seeing their *alma mater* featured in national stories in *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA TODAY*, the CBS Evening News, and most recently the front page of *The New York Times*. Since announcing the bold move to reset our undergraduate tuition to \$16,500, a 43% decrease over the current price, beginning fall 2014, the voice of Converse has been elevated as a national, innovative leader in the growing debate about the value of a college education. The reach and resonance of Converse’s vision, voice and values are expanding as we celebrate our 125th anniversary.

I revel in this heightened sense of pride among Converse alumni, friends, faculty, staff and students. I am also emboldened by the keen interest of stakeholders, colleagues and even our competitors, in Converse’s recent accolades and advances. Consider the top 5 Master’s University ranking again this year by *Washington Monthly* for research, service and social mobility, the ongoing commendation as a Best Value College by *USNews & World Report* and the recent recognition of Dr. Joe Dunn as the 2013 South Carolina Professor of the Year. The quality of the Converse experience continues to grow; transforming students’ lives every step of the way.

The life-changing stories on this campus spark my pride in the scope of possibilities afforded by a Converse education. Two of our seniors will graduate in May 2014 and set out on extraordinary professional journeys with Teach for America and the Peace Corps. These women readily credit Converse with their developing the confidence, competence and courage to step up as change agents in rural American schools and remote villages in Asia. In much the same way, students and alumnae who have participated in Converse’s renowned Model League program, are quick to applaud Dr. Joe Dunn’s ability to empower students to excel. “For 25 years,” states senior Kaylee Boalt, “Dr. Dunn has been hammering home the importance of women in leadership. It’s thrilling to see him recognized on a national level for his love of teaching.”

As we look to the Alumnae Reunion this spring and the

fabulous opportunity for *all classes* to come together to celebrate 125 years of Converse, it is evident that our successes today are due to the commitments and achievements of generations of faculty and students, and the generosity of donors and friends. Beloved professors Mac Boggs, Joe Ann Lever, Elford Morgan, John Stevenson among others paved the way for the passionate investment of Joe Dunn, Neval Erturk, Erin Templeton, Chris Vaneman, Melissa Walker and indeed all Converse faculty. I look forward to our celebrating together the indomitable spirit of Converse—past, present and future—and our collective gathering of pride and possibility.

In their book *The Art of Possibility*, Rosamund and Benjamin Zander suggest “the capacity to be present in everything that is happening, without resistance, creates possibility.” In the rapidly changing landscape of higher education, what’s next for Converse College? How will we further our founder’s vision to ensure that a quality college education is accessible and affordable to talented students who are driven to make a difference in the world? What collaborations and partnerships are on the horizon to enhance the experiences of our students? Openly addressing these questions and others provides Converse with new possibilities and greater pride in our capacity to transform lives, communities and the world.

*Betsy*  
Elizabeth A. Fleming, PhD  
President

# The ROADS Less TRAVELED

Sally Jeter Hammond '81  
Vice President for Enrollment and Marketing

**F**or Arnisha White and Melanie Springer the path to graduation has been one of abundant blessings. There were a few inevitable bumps along the way, but both seniors say they'll be picking up their diplomas in May with complete confidence that they're ready for the road ahead. With esteemed appointments to Teach for America and the Peace Corps those roads are likely to be remote and rural, undeveloped and dangerous and a very long way from home.

Recently, I had a chance to sit down with these soon-to-be alumnae to discuss their impending adventures, to find out where they're headed and what they hope to accomplish. As a 1981 Converse alumna, it was heartening to hear that their stories of sisterhood and school spirit were much like mine. Their talk of changing the world, of giving back and going places was a dominant theme in our discussion – and their exhilarating aspirations seemingly far beyond what my classmates and I were considering for our own lives 30 years ago. There's no doubt Converse has long been shaping leaders, has long been advancing women for personal and professional success – but it's fabulous to see this generation of Converse women boldly going anywhere they want to.

Melanie Springer



My questions for Arnisha and Melanie prompted a wonderful conversation. Their audacious goals and ambitions not only stirred my pride in Converse, but also made me wish that every single high school girl across the country had Converse in her sites.

**Arnisha, you'll be headed to Mississippi with Teach for America. Melanie, the Peace Corps will take you to Mongolia for a two year term. What motivated you all to move in this direction?**

**AW** I grew up in a low socio-economic environment so I know what adversity feels like. I want the children I'll be working with in rural Mississippi to see my black face, to hear my story and to know in their hearts that poverty doesn't have to hold them back. I love Teach for America's mission of education equality, it resonates with me because of my own background.

**MS** I have a knack for learning languages. As a Deaf and Hard of Hearing major, I've also experienced the joy of working with hearing impaired children. It's pretty cool to think that while I'm traveling and volunteering for the Peace Corps, others will benefit from my skill sets.

**What is it about the journey ahead that excites you most?**

**MS** To be honest, I'm most excited about the difficult living conditions I'll be faced with in Mongolia. Maybe that sounds strange, but as a woman who lives a pretty high maintenance life – I look forward to the shift of living with less, with having less. I am hopeful this experience will make me a better person. I'm also excited about taking my knowledge of special education and new learning methods to a country that has limited exposure to a more customized approach.

**AW** Considering this will be only the third state I have been exposed to (beyond Florida and South Carolina) even though I'm not leaving the country like Melanie – stepping out on my own in a new place will be foreign to me. I think I'm most eager to bring my confidence to the table. I'm proud of what I have accomplished at Converse and that successful track can be an example



Arnisha White

to the children I'll be teaching.

**What is one question that you have about yourself or your future that you hope you to answer in the next two years?**

**MS** I hope I'll determine if teaching is what I want to do with my life. My secret fear is that I might not want to come back – that I might love a life of traveling, serving and exploring.

**AW** Ultimately my goal is to establish a non-profit symphony program for underprivileged children. Music opened my window to the world and I believe it's an incredible turnkey for kids who have little exposure to life's possibilities. I hope I'll determine if I should go to graduate school to study public policy or, if I should move instead, through a business track.

**What's been especially meaningful about your experience at Converse?**

**AW** It's almost as if there's a hidden curriculum at Converse empowering us to become our best selves. There's a unique kind of leadership development that seems to be woven into the fabric of this College – building our confidence and our competence. It's funny because it just happens and you don't even realize you're getting it.

**MS** For me, it is totally tied to the relationship that students have with faculty. My professors are not just my teachers, they have become mentors and friends. My decision to join the Peace Corps is largely due to the encouragement of my professors.

# Converse Athletics

It's a great time to be a Converse Valkyrie. With a new field house on the rise and a growing number of student athletes, the College's Division II teams and IHSA Equestrian program are recruiting winners and racking up results. Below are a few recaps, highlights, and headlines.

## SOCCER

- Makes history – places 5th, participant in Conference Carolinas tournament second consecutive year.
- All Conference Players – Sophomores Natalie Johnson and Georgia Jones (both from UK)
- All Academic Players – Seniors Brooke Barr and Samantha Lockman (both from SC)

## CROSS COUNTRY

- Sophomore, Ashly Sutherland (SC), first Converse runner to qualify for National Championship, named Conference Runner of the Week.

## VOLLEYBALL

- Placed 6th in Conference, first tournament appearance in program history
- All Academic Players – Seniors, Meg Taylor (SC) and Kandace Griffin (AL)

## EQUESTRIAN

- Senior Sarah Kate Chatel (GA) – Qualifies for regional competition

## SWIMMING

- All- Women's Invite Champions – three years running
- Named a 2013 Scholar All-America Team by CSCAA, Top 25 in the country for Division II
- Eight swimmers honored as Scholar All-Americans since 2009
- Coach Corey White, featured speaker at 2013 SC Athletic Coaches Association, All Sports Clinic

# BEYOND THE BOOKS

Today's competitive world demands real experience from the very start. One way Converse responds to this demand is by building student confidence and "voice" through faculty-mentored undergraduate student research. As student researchers gain invaluable skills, make presentations at conferences, and publish their results, the value of their Converse education rises. Our students' vision of graduate school and a professional career becomes that much clearer.

Every Converse student has the opportunity to do research. Exciting opportunities take students from Converse's labs to Hobcaw Barony, a nature preserve on the South Carolina coast, and to the latest treatments for juvenile diabetes. Converse research is noted for its wide reach: virtually every major in the College has had students receive competitive research grants in the past five years.

One recent project brought together a future teacher and a gifted student artist and philosopher around the question, how can very young children learn to deal with diabetes? Their research resulted in the children's book, *A Day in Duckie's Shoes*, written and illustrated by the students, working with the Medical University of South Carolina and testing the book in MUSC's clinic. Student research helped create a brighter future for young patients.

Students are funded through research grants from statewide organizations, foundations and Converse's own Nisbet Honors Program. Our student researchers go on to top-flight graduate and professional programs and careers. They are doctors, research scientists, teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, artists, psychologists, musicians...and so much more.



Students at Hobcaw Barony

THEATRE CONVERSE

# Sell OUT Season

The Department of Theatre & Dance is enjoying rave reviews this year with the addition of new faculty, new programming and growth in new majors. Professor Melissa Owens, in her second year at Converse, directed *The Tempest* this fall for Theatre Converse and teaches Costume Design and Musical Theatre Acting. Also in his second year, is Dr. Boone Hopkins who teaches Theatre History and Directing, and will direct the musical *Legally Blonde* this spring. New to the department is Professor McCree O'Kelley who teaches Dance and will be choreographing the spring Dance Concert, and Dr. Chandra Hopkins who teaches Musical Theatre and Public Speaking and also directed an inspiring performance this fall with Converse students and staff entitled, "One Day... Women on Aging."

In the leading role as Chair of the Department, Professor John Bald will celebrate nearly 40 years of service to Converse this spring. He continues to teach, and to work as Scenic Designer for Theatre Converse productions. With the biggest box office sales in years, theatre and dance students hit the stage this semester with, *The Laramie Project*, the musical, *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*, "One Day... Women on Aging," and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The next production is an action-packed study travel trip to London this winter with a whirlwind line up of the West End theatre district, the British Museum and Stratford-upon-Avon.

# Headline News

Despite being described recently as a “tiny” women’s college, Converse’s decision to “reset” undergraduate tuition for fall 2014 continues to make big news. The latest article appearing on the front page of The New York Times on December 26 offered a positive take on the College’s decision to drop tuition by 43% for fall 2014.

In what has turned out to be coast-to-coast coverage, reporters from Delaware to Denver are paying attention to Converse’s decision to buck the high-tuition pricing trend higher education. With the national visibility comes an exciting opportunity for the College to expand its reach and showcase the value of a Converse education, an opportunity to address broadly the issue of affordability and pique the interest of students and families who may have shied away from the prospect of a private college.

From television and radio to print journalism and social media, The Converse “reset” story has been featured by more than 458 news outlets across the nation since September. The following list includes a handful of the most widely known organizations.

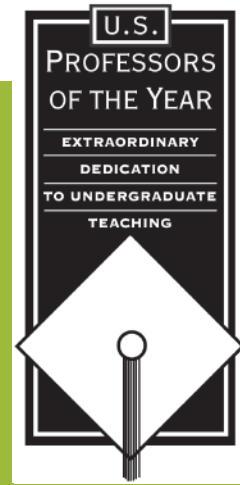
**The New York Times**

**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**

**CBS NEWS**



**THE CHRONICLE**  
of Higher Education



## Dunn Named SC Professor of the Year

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) have named Dr. Joe Dunn as the 2013 SC Professor of the Year. Dunn was selected from more than 350 top professors in the United States, and is Converse’s third professor to receive the award since 2006.

A member of the Converse faculty for 37 years, Dunn is Charles A. Dana Professor of History and Politics. “Teaching is what I do; it is who I am; I can’t be other,” he says. “Next to my wife, son, and daughter-in-law, who are the pillars of my life, is this college – its students, alumnae, history and future. If this award is testament to that commitment, then I am most pleased with the recognition.”

A scholar with six books and more than 75 published articles to his credit, Dunn’s research and writing are as eclectic as his teaching. While he has gained national standing as an authority on the Vietnam War and the Middle East, he also has published on a variety of other topics. He has held virtually every faculty leadership position and earned nearly every teaching award at Converse, and has served as chair of the history and politics department for 25 years.

Among his greatest contributions at Converse is developing our nationally award-winning Model Programs. He and his students provide training for model programs at other colleges in the US, and have traveled to the Middle East twice to help establish programs there.

Three elements consistently characterize Dunn in his award nominations: an unwavering demand for excellence and for a student’s best – even beyond her own expectations; a requirement for students to invest in their own education; and a dedication to mentorship that goes beyond the typical. President Fleming praises Dunn as “an extraordinary teacher whose passion for history and politics brings excitement to the classroom and truly transforms the lives and perspectives of students.” Similarly, Class of 2013 graduate Morgan Roach, who was awarded a full fellowship to pursue her doctorate at Ohio State University, reflected, “There is something about Joe Dunn that makes every one of his students strive to please him....He has an uncanny ability not only to see potential in us that we cannot see in ourselves, but also to convince us of that which he sees.”

# MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Vicki Cox Grady is used to living life in the fast lane, so settling into a relaxed retirement may be easier said than done. A jet setter in the literal sense of the word, she recently retired from the Federal Aviation Administration following a 34-year career of accomplishments that included transforming the trajectory of the nation's air transportation system. For a soft-spoken girl from Spartanburg, South Carolina, who stepped into a predominantly male arena, Cox Grady has been making phenomenal leaps for "womankind" since graduating from Converse in 1972.

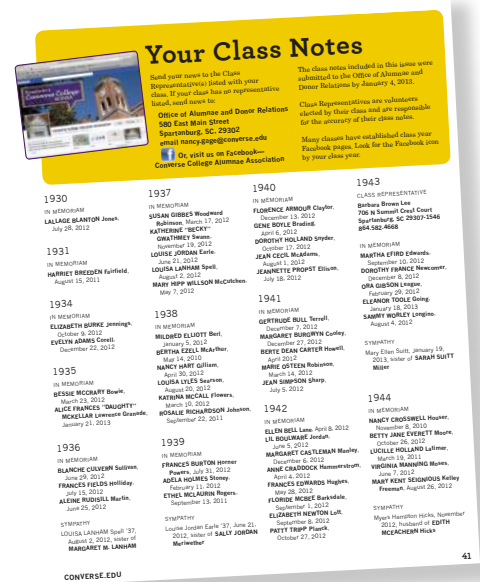


If you travel by plane, Cox-Grady says there should be no doubt in your mind that commercial aviation is the safest mode of transportation. Despite the routine challenges that come with using a steel air bus to move billions of folks around on a daily basis, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), she says, is tireless in its commitment to safety. In fact, we can thank this Converse alumna for paving the way for the FAA to adopt the most innovative advancements, to date, in air transportation. In a career that took her from NASA to the FAA, and most recently to the frontline of a Federal effort called Next Gen, Vicki's leadership can be seen in the most significant change in air transportation since World War II. In what will be a shift from radar-based air traffic control to satellite systems, Cox-Grady has been instrumental in developing new systems for air traffic management.

The recommendations for these critical changes, says Cox-Grady, resulted from the work of a Blue Ribbon panel commissioned by Congress in 2004. "It was understood then, that without a vision for the future, we would be dealing with massive gridlock in air traffic by 2020. Although the panel produced an impressive proposal, it didn't come with a budget or a timeline for action. I think because I was so persistent in pushing for the development of both, I inherited the job of putting it together." In 2009, Congress rewarded her effort by fully funding a budget to execute Next Gen's strategies.

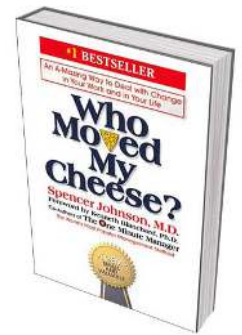
"So much of what I have done in my professional life," says Cox-Grady, "is tied to the opportunities I was afforded at Converse. Although I loved Dr. John Stevenson and was initially interested in majoring in English or literature, ultimately it was my need for the more predictable; the more precise that led me to the study of physics." As a student, she remembers being encouraged to try everything. And with that kind of freedom to explore, she said, you come to learn a great deal about yourself. "I majored in physics and minored in math at Converse, and I don't think I would have been nearly as successful doing the same thing at a larger institution. I am keenly aware that it was the enthusiasm of dedicated professors like Phil Highsmith and Andy Howard who fueled my passion for physics."

"Whether I was travelling around the world to collaborate with physicists in Russia, or visiting science labs in South Africa, whether it was getting my private pilot's license in order to land a better job, or having a hand in the development of the Hubbell Telescope, I have been fortunate to experience, first-hand, the power of collaboration, the benefit of partnership and the importance of building bridges beyond our borders. I tell young people all the time not to be afraid to take a chance and to change. The best journeys in life don't begin until you leave your comfort zone."



## Who Moved My Notes?!

There's nary an organization that hasn't drawn from the wisdom of Dr. Spencer Johnson's best-selling business book *Who Moved My Cheese?* This fun little fable about dealing with the fear of change may come in handy for all of us as we move through the process of finding the most appropriate platform for Converse's Class Notes. Because, if you haven't noticed, we've moved your class notes!



For colleges and universities that have long made it a point to distribute a printed magazine or tabloid, chock-full of alumni news, the preeminence of social media has called into question the cost-effectiveness of mailing those beloved missives between friends. "Facebook has changed the game", says Alumnae & Donor Relations Director Carrie Coleman, "despite our best efforts to help alumnae connect through the College's official publications, it's a challenge to provide updates when conversations among alumnae now happen in real time."

Bear with us as we figure out how best to keep you in the loop and deliver the scoop from your class representatives. Until we land on the perfect solution, we promise to upload *Class Notes* to the web on a regular basis. **Go to [converse.edu/classnotes](http://converse.edu/classnotes) to see the latest issue of Class Notes.** Thanks for your patience as we Hem and Haw our way through the process of change.

# The Purple and Gold Society

Carrie Hill Coleman '96  
Director of Alumnae and Donor Relations

**A**mong those alumnae who personify loyalty, allegiance and devotion to Converse College, Mary Lib Spillers Hamilton '57, always comes to mind.

Mary Lib gave her first gift to Converse in 1958, less than one year after she graduated. "It was very little," she said. "It was all I could afford at the time, but I knew I had to do it."

Since that gesture 58 years ago, she has never missed a year of giving back to Converse. When asked if she could remember what inspired her to contribute so early on, Mary Lib named another notable alumna. "Mae Kilgo (Alumnae Director, 1949–1967). I loved her so and she always stressed the importance of giving back to your alma mater."

A few years later, Ms. Kilgo invited Mary Lib to speak to the Class of 1964 (then in their senior year at Converse) about the importance of giving back to Converse. Mary Lib still remembers walking from Wilson Hall down to the Montgomery Student Center to make that speech. She also recalls the conversation she had that day with Ms. Kilgo.

"Ms. Kilgo, one day I'm going to have a gold tower" (an honor bestowed upon donors who give consistently at a certain level for several years). Kilgo responded, "That's all we want - for you to want it. If you want it, then one day you'll have it."

Over the years, Mary Lib increased her gifts to the College, and she earned that prized gold tower, a pendant she now wears with pride at every Converse function. Much like Mae Kilgo, Mary Lib Hamilton has inspired many other Converse alumnae and donors to do the same.

In honor of the College's 125th anniversary, and the devotion demonstrated by so many like Mary Lib Hamilton, Converse is excited to launch a new giving circle - The Purple and Gold Society - in recognition of almost 1000 individuals who have made a gift to the College for three consecutive years or more.

For more information on Mary Lib's inspiring story, a complete listing of the inaugural members of The Purple and Gold Society, and how to become a member of this elite corps of Converse donors, visit [www.converse.edu/???](http://www.converse.edu/???).



Illustration by John Kascht

## Calling All Alumnae!

125TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

# REUNION 2014

APRIL 25-26

**It happens every year. And every year, it is one of Converse's most exciting events. REUNION. But this year will be different. This year is unique. This year will be BIG.**

2014 marks the 125th anniversary of our alma mater's founding, and Reunion Weekend is your chance to help us celebrate this important milestone in Converse's history!

In honor of this special moment in the College's history, we invite ALL ALUMNAE to attend Reunion 2014 and take part in what is sure to be a weekend that no alumna (Pink Panther or Red Devil) will forget!

Join us on Friday, April 25, as we celebrate Dexter Edgar Converse during the institution's 125th Founder's Day Convocation, followed by our traditional lunch on the lawn (including Dexter's favorite dessert – strawberries and cream!) We will be hosting Drinks before Dinner for all alumnae Friday night, followed by a seated dinner on campus for Non-Reunion classes as well as Class Dinners for Reunion Classes.

On Saturday, April 26, we will honor 125 Outstanding Converse Alumnae followed by a brunch in Gee Dining Hall. That evening all classes will convene on back campus for an All Class Cocktail and BBQ dinner, followed by what promises to be the biggest and best Spring Concert yet on the Quad!

Stay tuned for many more big and exciting details to be announced in the coming weeks – including guest speakers, honorary degree recipients and the headlining band for Spring Concert. In the meantime, reach out to your classmates, hall mates, big sisters and friends of the College to help us spread the word. Let's build on the momentum we experienced in 2013 to create as much excitement as possible for our alma mater's 125th anniversary – the way that ONLY Converse can!

**REGISTER NOW!**  
[converse.edu/reunion/register](http://converse.edu/reunion/register)