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Fall 2015 • Volume 4 • Number 1

## Campus News

### International Painting Annual Showcases Works by Converse Art Professor

Select pieces from Professor Andrew Blanchard's current body of print-works were included in Manifest's International Painting Annual 4, a 200-page publication including 125 works by 92 artists from 9 countries. Manifest promotes visual arts, engaging people from around the world through accessible world-class exhibits, studio programs and publications.



### Converse Student Honored in National Ethics Contest

The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity named Converse II student Brenna Byler as one of 10 national finalists for its prestigious Prize in Ethics Essay Contest. Brenna is one of two finalists from a women's college and is the only honoree from the Southeast. Elie Wiesel and his wife, Marion, established the foundation to combat indifference, intolerance and injustice through international dialogue and youth-focused programs that promote acceptance, understanding and equality.



## Connect with Converse

Join us in making the most of these upcoming opportunities to connect, engage and show your Converse spirit!

- Grab some gear and check out the new array of merchandise at the new Montgomery Student Center location for the Converse bookstore, now managed by Follett.
- Come home for 1889 Week and take part in a few of our most time-honored traditions, like the tailgate for the Powderpuff football game on Saturday, November 7.
- Check out the School of the Arts 2015-2016 season at [culture.converse.edu](http://culture.converse.edu) and plan to attend an upcoming performance, lecture, reading or exhibition:

**September 22 | 8:00pm**

William Wright: Visiting Writer

**September 28 | 8:00pm**

Carlos Moseley Chamber Music Series: The Dover Quartet

**October 26 | 7:30pm**

Guest Artist Series: Coro Provincial de Villa Clara

**November 18-22**

Twelfth Night

**December 3 | 8:00pm**

Festival of Lessons and Carols

**April 22-23**

Alumni Weekend 2016

CONVERSE

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EAST MAIN

For Friends of Converse College

# A Vision for the Future

Our nation is abuzz about the future of colleges and universities. As momentum builds for innovative ideas to reshape higher education, and to communicate the enduring value of the liberal arts—Converse has been at the forefront, grappling with how we evolve to stay relevant in today's competitive marketplace while remaining true to our mission.

Converse responded to the call for an affordable quality education, making national news with our tuition reset in 2013. We set to

work again over the last year, with a focus on maximizing student outcomes.

This important work builds on the vision of our founders and the rich traditions revered by our Converse community. The result is an expansive plan for improving efficiency and effectiveness across our institution. In this issue, we share how these new strategic initiatives enhance programs, processes and service to students.

## A Message from the President

# Converse is leading the way in higher education by reshaping our business model for long-term sustainability.



Chris Keane Photography

Since 2009, Converse has undertaken strategic initiatives for growth. We have wrestled with dramatic change—digging deep into data and trends to understand Converse’s distinctive position, making bold moves and sometimes difficult decisions to realize fully opportunity and possibility. Such responsiveness to continual, ever-changing demands and constraints have become necessities for all higher education institutions.

With a commitment to L.E.A.D. (Learning, Enrollment, Access and Activation, Development), Converse launched a student-centered strategic planning initiative last fall that prioritizes continuous improvement in how we empower and equip students for personal and professional success. Nearly half of Converse faculty and staff took part in the process, and members of our Alumni Board, Board of Visitors and Board of Trustees received information and provided input along the way.



The L.E.A.D. Initiative promises both a continuation of our long-standing mission and new practices for Converse. It permits the College to adapt and evolve to support an undergraduate single-gender population that has grown over 30% in the last decade. It likewise ensures our relevance and excellence in an increasingly global higher education landscape.

The strategies and results of Converse’s efforts have been positively impactful. Our tuition reset dramatically broadened our national visibility and reputation, while also attracting record numbers of young women to the distinctive advantages offered by Converse College.

The strategies range from the mundane to the expansive. Among the most transformative are: enhancing our everyday use of technology to replace traditional paper processes, launching a new conceptual framework for the School of the Arts that expands students’ professional preparation, and establishing a new Converse International School to support new degree-specific cooperative partnerships with two Chinese universities.

But in today’s dynamic and competitive environment, it is not viable for Converse to “rest on its laurels.” As we grow, we must also ensure that Converse continues to offer an exceptional and customized learning experience—activating students’ unique voice, deepening their sense of value, and developing their vision to make a difference in the world.

So, what can you as alumni and friends expect from L.E.A.D.?

- Greater efficiencies and effectiveness in our work with students (prospective and current), alumni, friends and community partners
- Graduates who are even better prepared for personal and professional success
- Increased collaborations and cross-divisional teamwork, enhancing all aspects of our work from



- performing arts productions to behind-the-scenes operations
- Ongoing introduction of new academic and co-curricular programs as deemed appropriate and beneficial
- Expanding student populations

In its entirety, the L.E.A.D. Initiative is about serving with synergy.

So, read on with great pride in Converse, and especially in our continued capacity to L.E.A.D. boldly in meeting the needs of students. As we continue to evolve, know that activating the unique voice, value and vision of each Converse student is our highest priority. May your delight in and devotion to Converse remain equally steadfast.

With heartfelt appreciation for the entire Converse family and immense confidence in our future,

*Betsy*

Elizabeth A. Fleming, PhD  
President

**See the full L.E.A.D. plan online at [converse.edu/LEAD](http://converse.edu/LEAD)**

# L.E.A.D. Learning Enrollment Access and Activation Development

A comprehensive plan for best supporting the ever-evolving needs of all student populations, from their time of inquiry through graduation and beyond.

## 3 Overarching Objectives

- Maximize outcomes for our students
- Align curricular programs with the needs and interests of current and future prospective students, graduate and professional schools, and career markets so as to position the College as a value leader in higher education
- Continue to deliver a high-quality, market-relevant education to diverse student populations at an affordable price

## Focusing on 5 Key Areas

- Operational process improvements
- Streamlined administrative structure
- Curricular enhancements and new academic programs
- Initiatives to support student success and outcomes
- New enrollment opportunities



# Transforming Student Success

**T**hrough L.E.A.D., Converse is providing collaborative channels for academic, intellectual, social and emotional growth. From enrollment through graduation, the new Division for

Student Development and Success will offer multiple platforms for student support and development under the leadership of Rhonda Mingo as Dean for Community Life, Witney Fisher as Dean for Professional Development and Brandt Bynum as Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs.



## A Comprehensive First-Year Experience

The transition from high school to college begins at Summer Orientation, Advising and Registration (SOAR), where new students connect with a first-year mentor and are grouped into cohorts. Mentors help student cohorts navigate Converse until students declare a major and are paired with academic advisors. First-year cohorts create a social and academic community that helps students forge broader connections across Converse.

As the excitement from SOAR and Welcome Weekend dissipates, our revitalized Student Success Seminar (SSS) brings cohorts together each week to discuss academic interests and explore topics related to social and personal success. These supportive learning environments foster a sense of belonging and deepen relationships with faculty, staff and fellow students.

By the end of their First-Year Experience, students begin assembling their own “A-Team”—a dynamic council designed to guide students throughout their Converse tenure. A student may choose to include her First-Year Mentor, Student Success Seminar instructor(s), Community Advisor, Peer Academic Coach, a major advisor, a campus employment supervisor, an internship coordinator, and/or others.

From cohorts to “A Teams,” Converse is constructing adaptable learning environments that help students:

- Grow in personal and professional confidence
- Have an increased sense of belonging
- Connect with mentors who support, encourage and challenge
- Gain clear understanding of available resources





## Integrating Professional and Personal Growth Beyond the First Year

Two new L.E.A.D. initiatives will help students integrate life and learning through practical application of their professional and personal growth: an experiential learning requirement and a professionalized student employment program.

The School of the Arts will pilot the experiential learning requirement this year, and it will be implemented for all majors across the College in fall 2016. Before graduation, every student must participate in an internship, study abroad program, independent research or service learning initiative that integrates academics with the development of personal, social and professional capacities.

As an accompaniment to the experiential learning requirement, the newly formed Center for Professional Development will provide services and resources throughout the college career, ranging from skill assessment exercises to a comprehensive inventory of internships and employment opportunities. Working with the new Division of External Affairs and University Relations, the Center will strengthen its connections with the Board of Visitors and Alumni Association Board to increase internship and professional opportunities.

An intentional approach to the traditional work-study program has transformed it into a professionalized student employment program to bolster student resumes, hone interviewing techniques and provide practical work experience. The program adopts a skills-based method to matching students with

campus employment opportunities, and includes resume submission, interviewing, job training and performance evaluation. It will play a valuable role in helping students develop the confidence and skills necessary to begin working in a professional environment or pursue advanced studies after graduation.

“These new initiatives will better equip students with the tools necessary to enter a competitive job market,” says new Dean for Professional Development, Witney Fisher. “Graduates are prepared with a strong academic foundation and the interdisciplinary skills necessary to be adaptive and responsive in a global economy.”

**See the full L.E.A.D. plan online at [converse.edu/LEAD](http://converse.edu/LEAD)**



## Meet Val

**So, how does L.E.A.D. play out in the life of a student? Let's take a closer look.**

Val is an accomplished musician who wants to major in music performance, but isn't yet sure of her career path. A softball standout in high school, she hears about Converse's new NCAA Division II softball program and decides Converse is the perfect place to combine her interests!

Val's Converse journey begins at Summer Orientation, Advising and Registration (SOAR), where she meets her First Year Mentor, registers for classes, and gets to know other members of her First Year Cohort. After SOAR, Val feels connected

to the Converse community and confident about starting her college experience. In fact, she comes to value the camaraderie and support of her cohort even more over the course of her first year as she navigates the new world of college.

Because Converse's class schedule sets aside time for co-curricular activities, Val and a few music major friends decide to create the Clara Schumann Ensemble, a group dedicated to playing music by women composers. The idea sparked in a music history class discussion. Val loves

that the Adaptable Ensemble Program enables faculty and students to form new groups for a term or year so they can explore different genres.

As her first year comes to a close, it is time for Val to assemble her "A-Team." She carefully chooses faculty and staff members with diverse perspectives and expertise to offer her counsel over the next three years, and each gladly accepts.

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# Creativity THAT WORKS

## Transformative Career Preparation in the Arts

The School of the Arts is transforming its academic experience to provide a more comprehensive complement of skills, knowledge and talent development to prepare students for careers in the arts.

*Creativity that Works* is a new, faculty-driven initiative to expand cross-departmental collaboration, revitalize the arts curriculum and build community engagement. It draws from the diverse array of opportunities for student learning across the School of the Arts and facilitates student-faculty engagement across disciplines.



See the full L.E.A.D. plan online at [converse.edu/LEAD](http://converse.edu/LEAD)



"We have a rich history of preparing great artists at Converse College," says new School of the Arts Dean, Dr. Boone Hopkins. "Our faculty and staff are building on that tradition with a strategic plan that strengthens career preparation and interdisciplinary learning to launch our students into successful arts careers."

*Creativity that Works* incorporates cross-arts training and critical skill-building such as artistic marketing and career management into Converse's discipline-specific curriculum and core liberal arts tradition. The interconnected elements create a distinctive environment that reflects the College's focus on developing each student's unique voice, value and vision.

Beginning in the first year, all School of the Arts students will take foundational courses to gain inter-disciplinary skills essential for all Arts careers. These courses will be team-taught by faculty from each discipline within the School of the Arts.

### Foundational courses:

- Develop strong cohorts of peer student artists
- Increase collaboration across disciplines
- Show students how other artists work and market their work
- Foster faculty mentorship in planning successful careers
- Maximize benefits of Converse's robust guest artist program as students learn how working professionals build their careers

"The Arts Foundations coursework will be vitally important for students not only during their years at Converse but for the rest of their professional lives," says Dr. Chris Vaneman, Head of the Petrie School of Music. "Students today need a comprehensive understanding of how the arts work together in order to be effective advocates for their programs and their art, both within their institutions and in their communities at large."

Students will directly apply their learning as they participate in the plan's new experiential learning requirement. In completing their degree, all School of the Arts students will put their skills into practice through professional internships and faculty mentored arts-based research during the final two years of their training.

"Experiential learning is not a new concept in the School of the Arts. Our professional programs such as art therapy, music therapy, interior design, music education and art education already have strong internship programs in place. After seeing the incredible benefits, we are expanding these opportunities to all of our students to provide real world experiences toward chosen career paths," states Dr. Susanne Floyd Gunter, Chair of the Department of Art & Design.



Throughout the student journey, the School of the Arts will serve as an interactive, collaborative environment that involves the creation of student websites, documentation and promotion of student work, and the application of necessary business skills in the arts such as contract negotiation. Students will not only benefit from faculty expertise, but also gain valuable insight from community leaders and professional artists in the Upstate, as *Creativity that Works* promotes collaboration beyond the gates of Converse.

"As opposed to starting career preparation as a junior or senior, Converse students will begin professionalizing on the front-end of their college

career so that as graduation nears, they can capitalize on their strengths and be ready to launch as working artists," says Hopkins.

The School of the Arts is realizing its vision to provide a deeply engaged, high-impact educational experience that advances liberal education outcomes, provides students with a more purposeful pathway through college, and equips them to actualize their professional goals following graduation.

#### SCHOOL OF THE ARTS LEADERSHIP

- Dr. Boone Hopkins, *Faculty Dean*
- Dr. Chris Vaneman, *Head, Carroll McDaniel Petrie School of Music*
- Dr. Susanne Floyd Gunter, *Chair, Department of Art & Design*
- Professor Melissa Owens, *Chair, Department of Theatre & Dance*
- Dr. Valerie MacPhail, *Director, Lawson Academy of the Arts*

All faculty members have new joint appointments, increasing collaboration across departments and providing students with robust cross-arts instruction.



## Meet Val (continued)

An opportunity piques Val's interest during her sophomore year, and she spends Jan Term with a team of researchers studying the impact of music on abused children. The experience opens up new career interests for Val, and her Major Advisor suggests adding the new Arts and Cognition Certificate to her degree program. Members of her "A-Team" agree, and also suggest she apply for a position as a Student Employee with the

psychology department for some on-the-job training within the field.

As her junior year begins, Val consults with The Center for Professional Development about how to fulfill her experiential learning requirement for graduation. She parlays inspiration from a cross-departmental School of the Arts production into creating her own performance project with the help of SOA friends from Converse's new

Contemporary Music/Media Applications program and art therapy. Thanks to Converse's Bring Your Own Device program, they all have laptop computers that can connect any time, anywhere, making it easy to work both together and separately on various aspects of the project.

*(continued next page)*

# Expanding Converse

# HORIZONS

*“As we grow, we must also ensure that Converse continues to offer an exceptional and customized learning experience.”*

*–President Betsy Fleming*

## New Strategic Growth Opportunities

### Academic Programs

#### School of the Arts

- Contemporary Music/Media Applications degree program
- Music Business and Technology Certificate program
- Arts and Cognition Certificate program
- Digital Arts Interdisciplinary program
- Adaptable Ensemble program

#### School of Humanities, Sciences and Education

- Healthcare Administration degree program
- Business Professional Development Certificate program
- Interfaith Studies Program
- 4 +1 M.A.T. degree program

### NCAA Division II Softball

Converse is adding softball, anticipating a full roster of 25 students by fall 2017. The Valkyrie athletic experience balances athletic and academic achievement with a well-rounded student life. Softball fits well with that philosophy, as it attracts many academically high-achieving students. And with more than 5,000 female athletes in the state of South Carolina alone, softball also provides a new opportunity for Converse to meet the needs of students. Converse has partnered with the County of Spartanburg to provide field and other facilities just a short distance from campus.

### Converse International School

The Converse International School (CIS) is a separate administrative unit of the College established to support distinct cohort partnerships with universities in other parts of the world. Converse expects its first international cohort in fall 2017.

Converse has formed contract agreements with two highly selective Chinese universities, Anhui Medical University and Anhui Agricultural University, to offer 2+2 degree programs in two longstanding Converse undergraduate degree programs, accounting and medical technology. Combined, these two programs will enroll up to 70 new students per year, for a total of up to 140 students by fall 2018.

The CIS framework includes co-educational enrollment for undergraduate degree attainment, specially negotiated comprehensive tuition and fee structures, highly-selective recruitment with focus on high TOEFL scores and rigorous language requirements, special student support programs, and institutional faculty exchanges. CIS will enrich the learning environment for all Converse students by bringing new global perspectives to our campus and the greater Spartanburg community.

## A Redefined Administration Structure

Newly formed divisions will optimize skill sets, efficiency and collaboration to:

- Enhance connections between academics and student life
- Strengthen the student experience and increase retention
- Maximize enrollment management and support
- Build external partnerships and community relations

### Provost's Office

(Dr. Jeff Barker, Provost)

- Converse II and Special Programs
- Institutional Research, Assessment and Effectiveness
- Graduate and Post-traditional Programs
- Mickel Library

### Academic Affairs

- School of Humanities, Sciences and Education (Dr. Ann Pletcher, Dean)
  - Biology, Chemistry and Physics
  - Economics, Accounting and Business
  - Education
  - English
  - History and Politics
  - Languages, Cultures and Literatures
  - Mathematics and Computer Science
  - Psychology
  - Religion and Philosophy
- School of the Arts (Dr. Boone Hopkins, Dean)
  - Art & Design
  - Lawson Academy of the Arts
  - Petrie School of Music
  - Theatre & Dance

### **Student Development and Success**

- Academic Advising and Support Services (Dr. Brant Bynum, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs)
  - Accommodations
  - Advising
  - First-Year Seminar
  - Retention
  - Tutoring
  - The Writing Center
- Community Life (Rhonda Mingo, Dean of Community Life)
  - Community Service Activities
  - Leadership and Orientation
  - Parent and Family Communications
  - Residential Life and Student Conduct
  - Student Activities, Clubs and Organizations
  - Traditions and Events
  - Wellness Center
  - Community and Inclusion
- College Chaplain (Jason Loscuito, Chaplain)
  - Religious Life
  - Community Service Partnerships
- Professional Development (Witney Fisher, Dean of Professional Development)
  - Career Development
  - Commencement
  - Experiential Learning
  - Internships
  - Student Employment
  - Student Success Seminar

### **Intercollegiate Athletics**

(Joy Couch, Director of Athletics)

- 11 teams competing at the NCAA Division II level

### **Business and Finance**

(Robin Leslie, Vice President for Finance and Administration)

- Accounting and Administration
- Campus Safety
- Campus Technology
- Facility Services and Planning
- Risk Management
- Mailroom
- Sodexo Dining Services
- Sodexo Facilities and Grounds Management
- Follett Bookstore

### **Human Resources**

(Dennis Hughes, Director of Human Resources)

### **Enrollment Management and Services**

(Trevor Pittman, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Services)

- Admissions - Undergraduate
- Admissions - Graduate and Post-traditional
- Financial Planning
- Registrar

### **External Affairs and University Relations**

(Charlotte Smeak Verreault '79, Vice President for External Affairs and University Relations)

- Advancement Services
- Development
- Engagement
  - Alumnae Relations and Advisory Boards
  - Donor Relations and Special Events
- Outreach
  - Camps, Conferences and Rentals
  - Patron Services and Audience Support
- Communications and Marketing



## **Meet Val** *(continued)*

During her senior year, Val meets the Executive Director of High Notes Music Center during a Guest Artist Program workshop. He tells her about a position opening up the following summer and encourages Val to submit her resume. The following day, Val heads back to the Center for Professional Development to

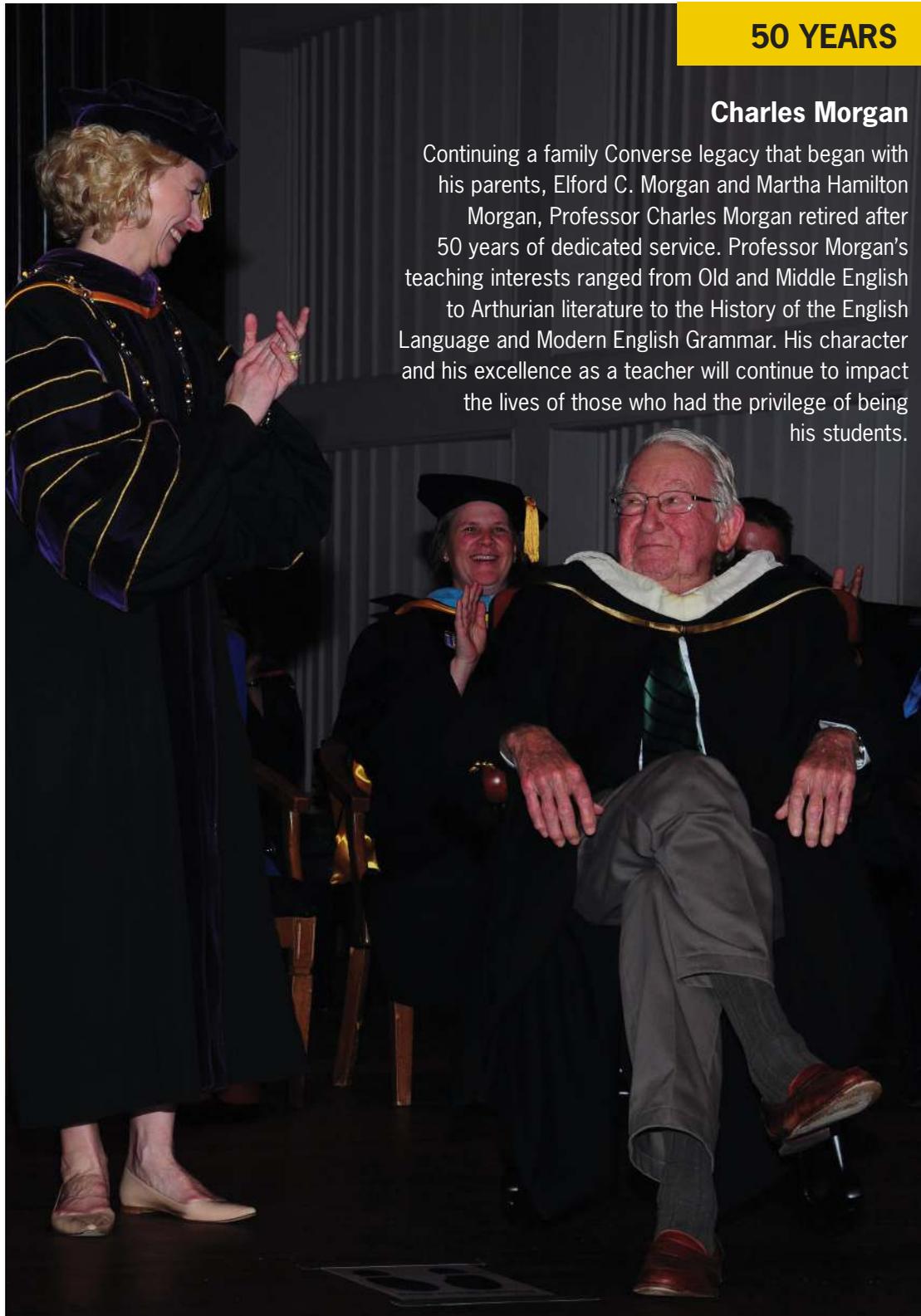
take advantage of additional resources to help her land the job.

As her senior year comes to a close, Val has a vision for the future. She understands her strengths and abilities and how they add value for an employer. Her network of professional contacts

is on the ready, and she is armed with a solid foundation of knowledge and experiences that give her an edge. With a smile, Val hugs a few of her favorite professors and lines up to receive her Converse diploma.

# A Legacy of Service

## Celebrating Our Retirees



### 50 YEARS

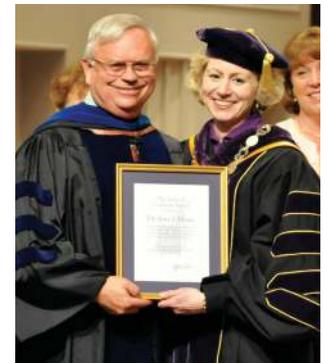
#### Charles Morgan

Continuing a family Converse legacy that began with his parents, Elford C. Morgan and Martha Hamilton Morgan, Professor Charles Morgan retired after 50 years of dedicated service. Professor Morgan's teaching interests ranged from Old and Middle English to Arthurian literature to the History of the English Language and Modern English Grammar. His character and his excellence as a teacher will continue to impact the lives of those who had the privilege of being his students.

### 40+ YEARS

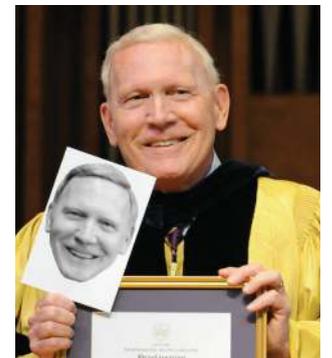
#### Jerry Howe

Having trained generations of highly successful chemists and biochemists at Converse and nurtured budding scientists through the South Carolina Junior Academy of Science, Dr. Jerry J. Howe inspired students to pursue science careers at a time when few women were recognized in the field. He played a key role in developing Converse's student advising system and our modern-day science program, and became an early recipient of the Kathyne Amelia Brown Award for Excellence in Teaching.



#### Tom McDaniel

Dr. Thomas R. McDaniel has served Converse in nearly every capacity, from faculty member to dean to interim president. He retired as Senior Vice President after nearly 45 years of cultivating the community that is Converse. He is author of eight books, 35 textbook chapters, and articles in more than 60 journals; and has taught teachers and education administrators across South Carolina and beyond. Dr. McDaniel was awarded the Order of the Silver Crescent from Governor Nikki Haley during the graduate commencement ceremony in August.



#### Kathy Worley

With a friendly smile and an unwavering dedication to service, Kathy Worley graciously welcomed visitors to Twichell Auditorium for decades in her role as auditorium manager. Her selfless devotion to the College and her can-do spirit created a lasting impression for colleagues and community-members alike. A 1993 recipient of the Spirit of Converse award, she has been a great ambassador for the College.



## 30+ YEARS

### John Bald

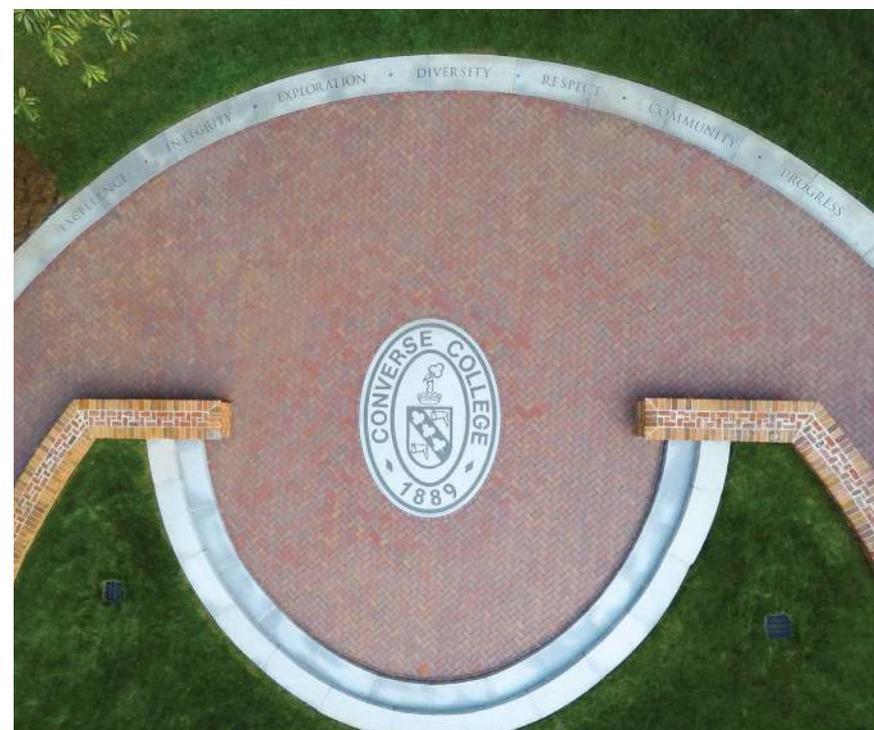
Since 1982, Professor John Bald has served Converse as an exceptional teacher and colleague. An instrumental force in building Converse's theatre program, Professor Bald dedicated much of his life to serving his students in and through his craft. Often behind-the-scenes, his quiet, supportive approach to teaching has produced the finest quality results.



## 20+ YEARS

### Jean Dunbar

Dr. Jean Dunbar came to Converse in 1986 and has contributed a remarkable combination of energetic teaching and advanced scholarship that has received international recognition in her field. Dr. Dunbar combined a rigorous approach to her subject with a caring response to student concerns, continually seeking better ways to help students understand the mysteries of math.



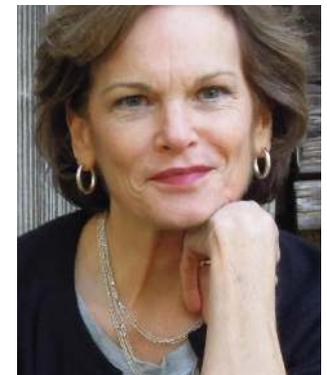
### Paula Morgan

Paula Siegler Morgan '73, an accomplished pianist, took the reigns from her mentor, Alia Lawson, to become director of the Pre-College program in 1993. The Lawson Academy of the Arts, as it is known today, flourished tremendously under her leadership, and serves students of all ages as a primary cultural resource for Spartanburg. This spring, Lawson Academy faculty and supporters celebrated Paula Morgan by naming the program's scholarship fund in her honor.



### Elizabeth Simons

Elizabeth Simons retired as Associate Director of Alumnae at the end of May. During her Converse tenure, the Office of Alumnae Relations became Ms. Simons' home and the alumnae she served became her family. Her kind disposition was instrumental in engaging Converse alumnae at the many events she planned for them over the years.



## ADDITIONAL RETIREES

We congratulate and honor additional members of our faculty and staff who retired from Converse during the 2014-2015 academic year. We are profoundly grateful for their countless contributions to the College.

- Dianne Ansley**, *Director of Gift Planning*
- Linda Blackwood**, *Assistant to the Registrar*
- Richard Higgs**, *Dean of the School of the Arts*
- Cynthia Mercer**, *Senior Accountant*
- Becky Poole**, *Circulation Supervisor*