

INTEGRITY

EXPLORATION

DIVERSITY

RESPECT

COMMUNITY

# EXPLORING OUR FUTURE



CONVERSE  
*Voice. Value. Vision.*

JUNE 2019





## A Letter from President Newkirk and Board of Trustees Chair Phyllis Harris

Dear Converse Community,

We recently announced our plans to work with you, our Converse family, as we begin outlining an exciting new chapter in the history of Converse College. On May 14, Converse hosted town hall meetings on campus for students, faculty and staff to discuss the option of placing our traditional women's college under the umbrella of Converse University, while also adding a co-educational residential undergraduate program as a separate college, as well as an international college. This plan is designed to preserve our single-gender residential and co-curricular program experience, and our status as a women's college, while increasing enrollment.

The Board of Trustees will soon appoint an ad hoc committee to thoroughly study options to expand Converse's enrollment to ensure a strong future while continuing to bring greater value to higher learning at Converse.

The committee will also study a name change to Converse University in an attempt to better reflect the recent additions of a doctorate program and expansions within its graduate programs, which have been co-educational since they began in 1964.

Our evaluation of this proposed new model cannot succeed without feedback and support from you, the alumnae/i, students, faculty and friends of Converse.

As we look to the future, Converse remains committed to producing strong women leaders and providing an empowering education and opportunities that have proven valuable to our graduates for generations.

This report outlines steps we have taken to move the college forward, information we have evaluated, and the proposed process and timeline for implementing our strategic plan to further develop a vibrant community, continue and expand upon our tradition of academic excellence, and work together to ensure a strong and sustainable future for Converse.

Thank you for joining the conversation and for your continued support of Converse.

Phyllis Perrin Harris '82  
Board of Trustees Chair  
Converse College

Krista L. Newkirk  
President  
Converse College



## Building a Stronger Future

Converse has taken many steps to increase revenue and reduce expenses.

- 2010 through 2015**
  - Facility updates
  - Tuition reset
  - Growth of athletics
  - Investment in recruitment
  - Addition of new degree programs
  - Consolidation of programs and positions to improve efficiency
- 2016 through Present**
  - Focus on fundraising with increased staffing and a campaign study
  - Reduction of operating budgets
  - New degree programs
  - Growth of the Converse International School
  - New instruction site at the University Center at Greenville
  - Development of a new Innovative Strategic Plan with the themes of Academic Excellence, Vibrant Community, and Sustainable Future, which includes:
    - Enhancement of existing successful academic programs to build on a legacy of strong faculty and student relationships to promote postgraduate achievement
    - New data analytics and virtual reality in the classroom
    - A level change to doctorate-granting institution and the launch of our new EdD program in Professional Leadership with strong enrollment
  - In progress:
    - New program to develop, document, and market professional and technical skills needed by students to be successful in the workforce

## Timeline of Proposed Model Change

- May 2019** ● Town Halls on campus
- Summer 2019** ● Town Halls at reunion and key cities
- Appointment of Ad Hoc Committee
- September through November 2019** ● Campus Committees formed to research questions raised; engage in further research of schools that have made this transition
- December 2019** ● Ad Hoc Committee recommendation to the Board of Trustees
- Early 2020** ● Board of Trustees' decision
- Fall 2021** ● If approved by Board of Trustees, a model change would be implemented and the first class under new model would be enrolled





## Why explore a co-educational model?

Cultural shifts, population trends, and different expectations for student engagement are prompting more single-gender colleges and universities like Converse to expand enrollment.

## Why consider a name change to Converse University?

Converse is now a Level V, doctorate-granting institution that offers diverse undergraduate and graduate programs. The school has offered co-educational graduate programs for 55 years. Most schools with graduate programs, and in particular doctoral programs, are universities.

Becoming Converse University will enhance recruitment, particularly for the international school, enhance marketing to prospective students, and support graduates in a global economy. The name change would not impact the school's status as a non-profit, private institution.

## Challenges Facing Higher Education and Women's Colleges



### Decline in High School Graduates

The population of 18-year-olds will contract dramatically by **14.5%** starting in **2025**

### Decline in Women's College Enrollment

Since 2000, there has been a 32% increase in overall college enrollment, but a **29%** decrease in women's college enrollment

### Decline in Interest in Single-Gender College

Currently only **2%** of female, college-bound high school students will consider a single-gender college

Converse is proactively addressing these new trends in enrollment by studying a model change to add a co-educational residential program alongside its current single-gender focus.

### Following a Path of Successful Transition

#### Women's Colleges to Co-Ed: Growth in Enrollment

Model changes at single-gender schools have resulted in an overall increase in enrollment, **particularly among female students.**

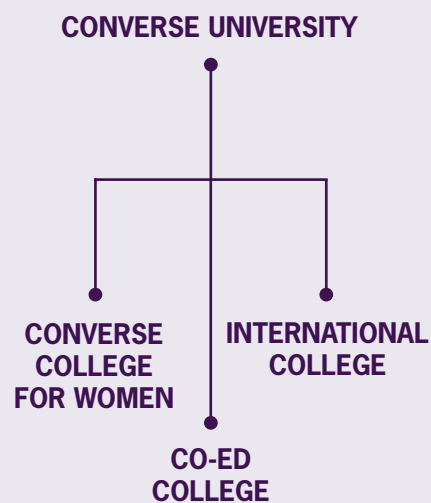
**Studies from 15 colleges show growth in total number of new freshman**

**74%** Two-year average growth

**86%** Four-year average growth

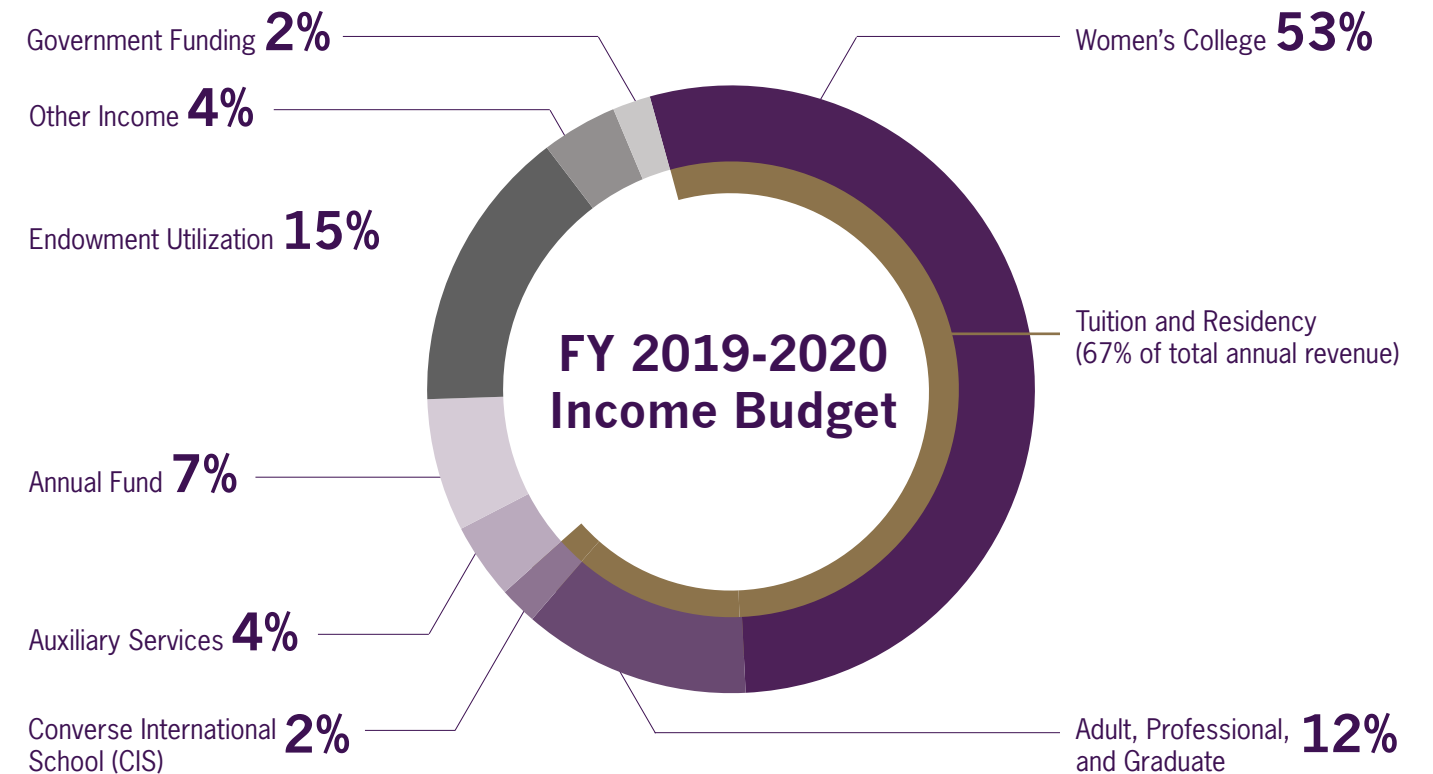
### Planning the Future While Preserving the Past

#### Proposed Model Change



## Sustaining Converse's Financial Health

Almost 70% of Converse's revenue every year comes from the tuition paid by all students, endowed scholarships, or government-funded financial aid, with 53% coming from undergraduate tuition. This means that Converse is highly tuition-dependent. Converse also relies on its Annual Fund (7%) to help students pay for their tuition, programming and experiences. Without scholarship funds from endowments and the Annual Fund, many students would be unable to attend Converse. Furthermore, merit scholarships make it possible for Converse to recruit highly-qualified, and highly-sought after students that raise the reputation of the institution. The Endowment (15%) also provides funding for faculty and other programs within Converse.



## Your Gift to the Annual Fund Matters

When you give to the Converse Annual Fund, your gift helps provide vital support across campus. These funds help pay for student scholarships, student research projects, summer internship stipends, and so much more. The percentage of alumni who contribute to the college each year is often a factor grants consider when making awards. Converse's current alumnae/i giving rate is 7%. Every gift, no matter the size, adds up to create the distinct Converse student experience that is like no other. By making a gift of any amount, you contribute to the success of our students and become part of Converse College's enduring legacy and growth.

Of the more than **\$4.5 million** provided to students each year for scholarships by Converse, **\$2.4 million** comes from unrestricted money, including **\$1.5 million** raised per year by the Annual Fund.

The Annual Fund also provides for new programs and equipment such as:

- Data analytics software for our new program
- Virtual reality headsets to enhance the educational experience
- Better learning environments in the Mickel Library
- Athletic equipment and team travel for Converse Valkyries sports teams
- Musical instruments and support for Music Therapy courses

### To give to the Annual Fund:

Mail back the enclosed envelope or donate online at [converse.edu/give](http://converse.edu/give)



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What factors are driving this decision?

The number of women's colleges has dropped from 230 in 1960 to 34 in 2018, with only 17 expected to remain by 2026. A co-educational structure would enable Converse to make its distinctive learning environment available to an increasing number of women who would not otherwise have considered the institution. In fact, trends show that the average growth from admitting male students at historically all-female institutions boosts the enrollment of women by approximately 30% after two years. Male students would benefit from Converse's strong academic programs, low student-to-faculty ratio, new academic programs, experiential learning, and unique vision for student-faculty collaboration and research.

Converse must also meet financial requirements set by its accreditor that have become more stringent over the last decade, causing many small colleges to struggle to meet these new standards.

Converse needs to be in a stronger financial position to be successful in the future. Through Converse's addition of new programs based on market demand and increased enrollment, significant progress has been made, but additional annual revenue is still needed to meet these standards and to secure a sustainable future for our Converse community.

### Is the committee evaluating all classes becoming co-educational?

Yes. The committee will evaluate the benefits and challenges of changing to teaching in a co-educational setting, ensuring that men and women have the opportunity to explore leadership and learning together in a positive and inclusive manner. The committee will also evaluate single-gender programming opportunities for students who enroll in our undergraduate college for women.

### Isn't Converse mandated to be women only?

No, not according to the 1896 Act to Incorporate Converse which states: "That the said corporation shall have, and it is hereby given, the power to maintain and operate... a high grade college for the liberal education of women, **or of both men and women**, if it shall be deemed expedient."

### Will the academic programs change?

No, Converse would maintain the School of Humanities, Sciences, and Business; the School of the Arts; and the School of Education and Graduate Studies. Current courses, faculty, and departments within each of the three Schools would serve the expanded student population. Current co-educational programs and courses at Converse already include:

- Graduate programs
- Online programs
- Dual listed graduate/undergraduate courses
- University Center of Greenville programs
- Summer courses
- Converse's International School
- Converse's cooperative agreement with Wofford, which allows for cross-enrollment in classes between the two institutions

### What is Converse doing to ensure longstanding traditions are upheld?

Tradition is a strong part of Converse's fabric. A committee that will include students and alumnae will be selected to evaluate Converse's many traditions to determine the proper ways to preserve them for future generations. Students and alumnae are encouraged to provide feedback on Converse traditions as part of the evaluation process by email at [feedback@converse.edu](mailto:feedback@converse.edu).

## Town Hall Schedule

### Converse College

Friday, May 31, 2 pm and 3 pm  
Saturday, June 1, 3 pm and 5 pm  
(Reunion Weekend)  
Montgomery Student Center

### Greenville

Monday, June 10, 6 pm  
Embassy Suites  
670 Verdae Blvd  
Greenville, SC 29607

### Rock Hill

Thursday, June 13, 8:30 am  
Arts Council of York County  
121 E. Main Street  
Rock Hill, SC 29730

### Charlotte

Monday, June 17, 4:30 pm  
Omni Hotels & Resorts  
132 E. Trade Street  
Charlotte, NC 28202-5399

### Charleston

Tuesday, June 18, 4:30 pm  
Harbour Club  
35 Prioleau Street  
Charleston, SC 29401

### Columbia

Wednesday, June 19, 8 am  
Columbia Marriott  
1200 Hampton St  
Columbia, SC 29201

### Atlanta

Saturday, June 22, 10 am  
The Georgian Club  
100 Galleria Parkway, N.W., 17th Floor  
Atlanta, GA 30339

### RSVP

Email [AlumnaeEvent@converse.edu](mailto:AlumnaeEvent@converse.edu) or call 864.596.9011. Please be sure to specify the date and time of the Town Hall you wish to attend.

### Registration Required.

Converse is exploring the possibility of hosting a "virtual" Town Hall. We will continue to keep our alumnae informed as additional opportunities for feedback are made available.

# JOIN THE CONVERSATION

We continue to receive feedback to the proposed model change. Converse encourages students, alumnae/i, and friends to use their voices to express their opinions.

## ONLINE

[converse.edu/feedback](https://converse.edu/feedback)

## EMAIL

[feedback@converse.edu](mailto:feedback@converse.edu)

Not receiving our emails?  
Visit [converse.edu/reconnect](https://converse.edu/reconnect) to receive future communications.

## IN PERSON

Attend an Upcoming Town Hall Meeting





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# HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF CONVERSE

