



FOR RELEASE
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Converse College and Spartanburg School District Seven Launch Valkyrie Middle College Program to Build K-12 Teacher Pipeline



SPARTANBURG, S.C. - Converse College and Spartanburg School District Seven announce a new collaborative program aimed to create a pipeline for highly qualified K-12 educators in the Upstate. The Valkyrie Middle College will enroll selected Spartanburg High School (SHS) students who wish to pursue a career in education, enabling them to earn up to a full year of college credit on the Converse campus during their junior and senior years of high school. Students who successfully complete the program will be eligible for priority acceptance into Converse College's teacher education program and will receive priority consideration for teaching jobs with District Seven after graduating from Converse with teacher certification.

Spartanburg High School students will be identified, screened and admitted into the Valkyrie Middle College during the spring of their sophomore year. They will begin coursework in the fall of their junior year, attending classes at Converse for the first half of their school day then returning to SHS in time for lunch and afternoon classes. Valkyrie Middle College students will graduate from SHS with approximately 30 transferrable credit hours at Converse College and will be eligible to enroll in advanced level courses to complete the Bachelor of Arts in education. The first cohort of Valkyrie Middle College students will be admitted this spring and will begin classes in Fall 2020.

"We are thrilled to partner with Spartanburg School District Seven for this innovative approach to developing high quality K-12 educators through the Valkyrie Middle College program," says Converse President Krista Newkirk. "Students selected for this program will be welcomed into the Converse family and benefit from undergraduate level instruction and mentorship from Converse's full-time faculty members. As our community aims to retain workforce talent through initiatives such as ONE Spartanburg, this partnership between Converse and District Seven will lend support by inspiring and equipping teachers we hope will reinvest their talents right here in Spartanburg."

Courses for the Valkyrie Middle College will focus on subject areas in both teacher education and general education. Courses will be taught solely to Valkyrie Middle College program participants by Converse faculty members.

“A Converse degree is recognized throughout the Southeast as a mark of a quality educator and we look forward to having more Converse graduates teach in Spartanburg District Seven classrooms,” said District Seven Superintendent Dr. Russell Booker. “District Seven has a long tradition of providing early college programs that advance our students’ educational and career opportunities and we are very pleased to add the Valkyrie Middle College to this roster. It is our hope that our students’ passion for teaching will be ignited through the Valkyrie Middle College and that this experience will set them on course to join the next generation of educators here in Spartanburg and beyond.”

About Converse College

Converse College was founded in 1889 by citizens of Spartanburg, S.C. who aimed to create an educational experience that enables women “to see clearly, decide wisely, and act justly.” Effective July 1, 2021 it will acknowledge its university status under the name Converse University, and in fall 2021 it will welcome its first undergraduate co-educational incoming class. Converse is a creator of opportunity for all academically-qualified students through a personalized education that is combined with the professional and technical skills graduates need to be successful in their careers. Converse pushes beyond traditional boundaries to make a quality educational experience available to every student who seeks it – both at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels. Converse College’s mission is to help students develop their unique voice, a sense of value, and a vision for the future.

About Spartanburg School District Seven

Established in 1884, Spartanburg School District Seven’s mission is “to inspire and equip students for meaningful lives of leadership and service as world citizens.” As a majority-minority district with a poverty index of 70% and a graduation rate of 85%, District Seven enrolls approximately 7,600 students. In 2013, the district forged a bold path to eliminate the digital divide among students by implementing a 1:1 technology program that put mobile devices in the hands of every student in grades 2-12. Cited by The League of Innovative Schools, Apple, Inc., and Future Ready Schools for its best practice efforts, the district’s commitment to blended and digital learning continues to advance student outcomes. District Seven’s flagship Spartanburg High School is recognized among the top 4% of public and private high schools in S.C. and the top 10% in the nation by the Jay Matthews Challenge Index (formerly named the *Washington Post’s* “America’s Most Challenging High Schools”) and is consistently recognized as a top high school in the nation by *US News & World Report*.

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