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Converse College Announces Addition of Co-Educational Undergraduate Cohort Beginning Fall 2020
The Spartanburg institution's addition will take place one year earlier than anticipated

SPARTANBURG, S.C. (April 28, 2020) – Converse College has announced that the Converse Board of Trustees unanimously approved the admission of men into the undergraduate residential cohort beginning in fall 2020, one year earlier than anticipated.

The College announced in February 2020 that the coeducational undergraduate residential component would be implemented beginning fall 2021. The Board noted that the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has changed the plans of many students and families, including those in the Upstate. In particular, regional students may need a more affordable option and may desire to remain closer to home. Converse recognizes that the current situation is anticipated to cause a 10-20% decline in enrollment across higher education and determined that this early adoption will help ensure a thriving future for Converse and for its current and future students.

“The careful, proactive planning that brought Converse to the February 2020 announcement and timeline was part of ongoing efforts to ensure a thriving future for Converse as it continues to build on its history of academic excellence,” said Converse president Krista L. Newkirk. “When we made the announcement in February to add an undergraduate coeducational college in 2021 alongside our women’s college, we never anticipated the current challenges. Today, students and their families are reconsidering what their fall semesters will look like as they face financial impacts that may require them to put a pause on spending.”

Newkirk continues, “Some students may wish to remain closer to home should a second wave of the novel coronavirus hit in the fall of 2020. Without a doubt, the preparation for the fall 2020 semester will be unlike any experienced in recent history for colleges and universities across the world.”

Phyllis Perrin Harris, ’82 alumna and Chair of the Converse Board of Trustees said, “The decision to accelerate the date to admit undergraduate residential men was made to open Converse to as many qualified students as possible so that they have the opportunity to learn from our dynamic faculty and be a part of the distinctive programming that Converse has to offer. Admitting males will also provide valuable input opportunities for our transition committees as we work to ensure a smooth transition where each student is supported and placed on a path for success.”

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Immediately following the co-educational announcement in February 2020, Converse formed committees and charged them with thoughtfully and deliberately addressing the transition in areas such as traditions, athletics, student life, housing and security, communications, and more. Members of these committees represent Converse students, faculty, staff, alumnae/l, Board of Trustees and community members. Their work will continue as they examine the transition areas in depth and will be meeting over the summer and through 2021, providing reports and recommendations to the senior administrators at Converse and to the Board of Trustees. As Converse accelerates the admission of men to their undergraduate cohort, they will evaluate these areas as they apply to fall 2020 and make thoughtful adjustments as needed.

Converse's plan for fall 2020 is to return to campus and resume a face-to-face learning environment. Converse administrators and the Board will constantly evaluate this situation and the projections and provide updates as they make these decisions, always placing the safety and health of the Converse community first.

About Converse College

Converse was founded in 1889 by citizens of Spartanburg, SC 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 qualified 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.

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