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## **Converse College Names Chandra Owenby Hopkins as the First Dean of the Converse College for Women**

**SPARTANBURG, S.C. (May 11, 2020)** – Converse College announces it has named Dr. Chandra Owenby Hopkins as the first Dean of the Converse College for Women, effective July 1, 2021. Converse announced in February 2020 that it would be expanding its undergraduate residential program from single-gender to co-educational, and changing its name from college to university while maintaining the Converse College for Women and expanding the international school into an international college, both under the university umbrella.

In her role as Dean of the Converse College for Women, Dr. Hopkins will lead the programmatic planning for the Women's College along with recommendations from the Student Experience Transition Committee and will develop the signature experiences and possible courses that will distinguish the Women's College within Converse University. She will also build on the historic and important tradition of the Women's College and continue the invaluable connection between the strong alumnae network and current students of Converse. Dr. Hopkins came to Converse in 2013 and currently serves as an Associate Professor of Theatre, teaching courses in Theatre History, Dramaturgy, and Performance Studies.

“Dr. Hopkins brings an effective blend of leadership honed from years of campus service, community-building, and creative resource mapping that will serve Converse and the Women's College well as higher education enters a new era, one filled with uncertainty and also rich in possibility,” said Krista L. Newkirk, Converse president. “Her experience and success as an educator, director, scholar, and a mentor who encourages each student have prepared her to serve the dynamic students and talented faculty and staff of Converse.”

Known for her passion for student mentorship and empowering Converse students toward achieving personal and professional success, Dr. Hopkins possesses both an open-hearted commitment to healthy collaboration and a proven standard of academic and professional excellence. An award-winning teacher and scholar, Dr. Hopkins has received the Cato Award for Faculty Excellence from Converse College and the Robert A. Schanke Theatre Research Award from the Mid-America Theatre Conference. She was most recently recognized with the 2020 SCICU Teaching Excellence Award, which celebrates top faculty within SCICU-member institutions who encourage and foster serious inquiry, critical thinking, and a broader understanding of the world in which we live.

“As a proud graduate of a women's college myself (Brenau University), I have lived a life transformed by the incredible mentorship and empowerment that can come from a women's college experience,” said Dr. Hopkins. “I honor the pivotal role my own education played in the development of me as an educator, theatre artist, and female leader in higher education. I embrace the larger mission of Converse, support our Founder's Ideal, and am passionate

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about the power of a living and learning environment dedicated to empowering the next generation of female leaders. I believe in the incredible value of every student and the vital contributions each student can make to their profession and in their individual communities. I am eager to build the Converse College for Women.”

Among her colleagues, Dr. Hopkins has established a track record of committed, effective service on broad cross-campus initiatives, including co-chairing full campus committees and her current service as the Faculty Athletics Representative. As the Faculty Athletics Representative, she has strengthened the communication between academics and athletics and the academic support and retention of student-athletes. Additional campus roles have included serving on the Converse Faculty Senate, School of the Arts Recruiting Team, and the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. In these roles, she has honed interpersonal and communication skills through her work with fellow faculty, Converse students, and their families and has fostered important conversations about Converse’s identity and future.

With proven ability to work with a broad range of stakeholders, Dr. Hopkins has developed several grant-funded theatre projects that included the larger Spartanburg community and Converse alumnae. One such project was her 2019 AARP Foundation and Council of Independent Colleges production of *Growing Old: Food and Oral History in Performance* which was created from community service with partners ranging from the Spartanburg Soup Kitchen to Habitat for Humanity. In this project, which explored social isolation and food insecurity among the older adult community, she taught students to use theatre as a means to listen and to serve through devised work.

As an actor, director, and dramaturg, Dr. Hopkins has worked with the Richmond Triangle Players, Kansas Summer Theatre, Georgia Shakespeare, and Tennessee Shakespeare Company. Her directing and teaching approach honors each student and creates an environment that encourages and expects students to be active partners in learning through personal accountability. In addition, she has created courses in public speaking and interdisciplinary studies that teach students transferrable skills useful for any career field.

Dr. Hopkins received her bachelor’s degree in Theatre from Brenau University, her Master of Fine Arts from Virginia Commonwealth University, and her Ph.D. in Theatre and Performance Studies from the University of Kansas. Her research explores the intersections of identity and memory embodied in the performances and cultural histories of the American south. She has published articles and reviews in *Theatre History Studies*, *Theatre Annual*, *Theatre Survey*, *Theatre Journal*, and a chapter in Palgrave’s *Performing Objects and Theatrical Things*.

### ***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 2020 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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