

Dear faculty colleagues,

I write today to tell you that I will be retiring as provost of Converse at the end of this academic year. It has been a privilege and an honor to serve you, the students, and my staff colleagues at Converse. I thank you for your support and especially for the community that you have helped build.

Beginning this coming fall (2021) and for a few years, I will teach full-time at Converse as an untenured professor. This option has been part of my agreement with the college and something that I have been planning for some time. I wanted to see our change to a doctoral-granting institution and the first doctoral degree through to completion, and I especially wanted to see our Model Change through to implementation. The first has been completed very successfully, largely due to the great work of Dean Medford and of course, with wonderful teaching by program faculty. The acceleration this year of implementing the Model Change makes this coming summer a good time for my own change.

I appreciate the full support of President Newkirk in this move. I want all of you to know that my decision has nothing to do with the pandemic or any issues at the college, and it is entirely my initiative. It has to do with the arc of my career. I have been teaching in higher education since the spring of 1978. Thirty of those years have included an administrative role. I have enjoyed my work tremendously and still do. As I look back on what I've been able to do, working with wonderfully talented people, I think I've been able to make a difference in both my teaching and my administrative roles.

My first love was and is teaching. I have taught every year of my career, including here at Converse, and as I look toward the next phase of my career, it will be a privilege to return to teaching full time. My department chair has been very supportive of this move and he and I have a raft of ideas about what I could contribute to the academic program at Converse, teaching in a number of different topical areas where I am SACSCOC-qualified, where other faculty have asked me repeatedly to do more teaching, and where Converse has needs that I could help fill.

I am delighted to work with President Newkirk and all of you this year on advancing important program developments and continuing to implement the Model Change. Beginning next year, I am excited about returning to the classroom full time. The old phrase for this move by Chief Academic Officers is a "retreat to the faculty." I don't see my move that way at all: I regard it as an advance, and I look forward to it.

Best regards,

Jeff Barker