



# President

## Converse University

Converse University invites nominations and applications for the appointment of President



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# Converse University

Converse University is a private, liberal arts, residential, doctoral degree-granting institution located in Spartanburg, SC. Within the University umbrella, Converse maintains the Converse College for Women, an empowering undergraduate living-learning community that focuses on mentorship, service, and leadership that continues a sisterhood that spans more than 130 years.

## The Founder's Ideal

"It is my conviction that the well-being of any country depends much upon the culture of her women, and I have done what I could to found a college that would provide for women thorough and liberal education, so that for them the highest motives may become clear purposes and fixed habits of life; and I desire that the instruction and influence of Converse College be always such that the students may be enabled to see clearly, decide wisely, and to act justly; and that they may learn to love God and humanity, and be faithful to truth and duty, so that their influence may be characterized by purity and power."

- Dexter Edgar Converse, founder of Converse College



## History of the University

Although the doors of Converse opened in 1890, the first step towards the founding of the college was taken in 1889 when a prominent attorney assembled a group of Spartanburg citizens to discuss the project. Among the 13 men was Dexter Edgar Converse, a native of Vermont who had settled in Spartanburg before the Civil War and had become a successful pioneer in the cotton mill industry.

Mr. Converse was especially interested in establishing a college for women because his daughter, Marie, was approaching college age and he wanted her to have every possible educational advantage. His initial and subsequent contributions to the cause were so valuable that the college was given his name.

Beginning in the 1900s, Converse matured into one of the leading colleges for women in the South. It was during this period that the College's Petrie School of Music received a national rating as a professional school of music. Converse became a charter member of the National Association of Schools of Music, which is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the accrediting agency for music curricula.

### Other key points in Converse's history include:

- 1964: Converse introduced graduate programs, including the Master of Art in Teaching (MAT) program, the first degree of its kind in South Carolina.
- 1983: The college introduced Converse II to fit the schedules and ambitions of adult women.

- 2003: Converse completed the most successful capital campaign in its history with \$82.5 million in private gifts.
- 2006: Converse became the first women's college to attain the prestigious All-Steinway School distinction.
- 2013: Converse made national headlines by announcing a 43% reduction in tuition – leading the national movement for transparent college pricing and making a top-quality private education accessible at a public-university price.
- 2018: Converse expanded its reach by joining the University Center in Greenville (UCG), a center that focuses on advancing access and attainment of higher education degrees, benefitting the citizens and economic community of upstate South Carolina. Converse provides an array of co-educational degree programs on the UCG campus.
- 2019: Converse marked a historic milestone with its new status as a doctoral degree-granting institution following approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). In addition, SACSCOC approved Converse's first doctoral program, a Doctor of Education in Professional Leadership.

## Converse Today

On February 7, 2020, after many months of careful deliberation and research, Converse College decided to expand its undergraduate residential program from single gender to co-ed beginning in the Fall of 2020. The Board of Trustees also approved a name change from college to university, effective July 1, 2021, which acknowledges Converse's long-held university status and positions the institution to lead the charge for educational and economic excellence in the region.

Converse serves a diverse student body with a total enrollment of approximately 1500 students, of which approximately 850 are undergraduates. Students hail from 29 states and 9 countries. Converse offers these students a comprehensive academic program that merges the liberal arts and career-focused majors where every student can participate in experiential learning: internships, student research, leadership development, community service, and study-travel.

Converse provides students with *"The Converse Guarantee:*

Guarantee 1: We guarantee all undergraduate, full-time students will graduate from Converse in four years. We are committed to your success. If you don't graduate in four years, the rest of your classes needed to complete your degree at Converse will be free.

Guarantee 2: We guarantee all students will be employed full-time or enrolled in graduate school within six months of graduation or be eligible to return for a full year tuition-free."



Academic programs at Converse are offered through five schools and departments: The Arts; Education & Graduate Studies; Humanities, Sciences, & Business; Converse College for Women; and Converse International School.

Converse students are offered:

- 45 undergraduate major fields of study including options for double and self-designed majors.
- Graduate programs include: MIM, MLA, MMFT, MM, MAT, MFA, MEd, EdD, and EdS degrees. These programs include South Carolina's only Master's in gifted education program, only low-residency MFA in creative writing, the first Bachelor of Fine Arts in creative and professional writing, and the Upstate's first undergraduate music therapy degree program.
- Five online graduate degrees (EdS, MEd, MIM) and one low-residency MFA graduate degree.
- Five programs, including the EdD, are also offered at the University Center of Greenville.
- An environment that values creativity, innovation, and transformation where they engage in small, individualized classes with an 11-to-1 student-faculty ratio.
- 86% of courses taught by full-time faculty of whom 98% hold the terminal degree in their fields.



Of note is the Converse College for Women, a powerful force within the University. While Converse is now co-educational across all programs, through the programming of the Converse College for Women, Converse reaffirms the founder's conviction that a small undergraduate residential liberal arts college is a uniquely powerful environment for developing women's talents.

By taking Women's College designated courses spread across their time at Converse, participating in fun, monthly community events, and engaging in annual traditions each year, students will:

- Be welcomed into a sisterhood that spans more than 130 years.
- Gain invaluable networking opportunities with passionate alumni who want to see them succeed.
- Feel empowered through close mentorship and goal-setting that helps them achieve their dreams.
- Find their place within the larger world through impactful service opportunities.
- Share their unique power through leadership within a supportive community.

Converse is located in the vibrant city of Spartanburg, in Spartanburg County, the 5th-largest county in South Carolina. The County is home to nearly 328,000 people and 13 unique municipalities. At the intersection of Interstates 85 and 26 in the heart of Upstate South Carolina, Spartanburg is within driving distance of Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport, Charlotte Douglas International Airport, and Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, and less than a half-day's drive from several major regional destinations.

Unmatched statewide in economic development for new investment and job creation, Spartanburg is a higher education hub with seven diverse institutions; home to a thriving cultural district with public art on nearly every corner; and community-minded approaches to education and public health. With a growing downtown including new shops and restaurants, international companies and countless small businesses offering career opportunities, organizations to help individuals get involved civically and professionally, award-winning wellness initiatives, breathtaking outdoor recreation opportunities, and more trails than any other county in South Carolina, there's something for everyone in Spartanburg.

For more information on Spartanburg, please visit: <https://seeyourselfinspartanburg.com/>



Athletically, Converse competes at the NCAA Division II level as a member of Conference Carolinas. Converse has 17 DII sports teams including acrobatics & tumbling (emerging), field hockey, women's golf, women's lacrosse, softball, women's swimming, and women's volleyball, as well as men's and women's programs for basketball, cross country, soccer, tennis, and track & field.

In addition, the University offers co-ed programs in eSports and IHSA equestrian. Converse athletes recently ranked 12th in the nation among Division II teams for their community service.

## Mission

Converse empowers students to become transformative leaders who see clearly, decide wisely, and act justly.

## Vision

Converse advances a culture of belonging and collaboration that ignites creativity, innovation, and transformation.

clearly  
wisely  
justly

CONVERSE

## Core Values

Converse prides itself as a culture of belonging and collaboration that ignites creativity, innovation, and transformation. Supporting our mission are seven core values that guide Converse's commitment to creativity and the development of wise leaders.

These enduring beliefs serve as the compass for Converse. They transcend time, extend across the institution, and guide our actions and decisions

- **EXCELLENCE** drives us to achieve the best in all that we pursue; to develop competence, confidence, and courage to realize full potential in mind, body, and spirit.
- **INTEGRITY** calls us to cultivate and exercise honor, character and vision in daily decisions and actions; to act honestly and justly when confronted with ethical dilemmas and life's challenges.
- **EXPLORATION** compels us to think critically and creatively in the acquisition of knowledge and skills; to discover and enrich scholarship and research, disciplines, methods and vocations through hands-on learning and leadership and through discovery, discourse, and debate.
- **DIVERSITY** inspires us to embrace the different perspectives, experiences, cultures, backgrounds, talents, and contributions that comprise a global society; to enhance and expand inclusivity as we build a stronger multi-dimensional community.
- **RESPECT** leads us to value self and others, recognizing the legitimacy of individuality in belief, expression, and perspective; to exercise civility, mindfulness and responsibility in words and actions.
- **COMMUNITY** motivates us to develop a dynamic network of relationships through a balance of work and play that nurtures the abilities of each member in order to establish a better whole; to mentor, collaborate and communicate as engaged citizens who effect positive change.
- **PROGRESS** challenges us to think strategically toward the future by employing creativity, adaptability, ingenuity, and innovation; to advance and transform the world around us.





## President

### Overview

The President serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the University with responsibility for ensuring the success of the institution's mission, academic integrity, fiscal stability and viability, enrollment management, fundraising efforts, personnel development, and physical plant management. In doing so, the President works closely with the Board of Trustees in developing, communicating, and executing a strategy consistent with the overall mission, vision, and core values of Converse. As such, the President serves a community of scholars, where students and faculty pursue scholarly excellence and collaborate in the search for truth while developing each student's personal honor, confidence, curiosity, and skills to be life-long learners.

### Reporting Relationships & Responsibilities

The President of Converse is appointed by, and reports directly to, the Board of Trustees. Positions reporting directly to the President include Provost; Vice President for Finance and Business; Vice President of Marketing and Communications; Vice President for Enrollment Management; Vice President for Philanthropy and Alumni Relations; Vice President for Operations and Strategic Planning; Director of Intercollegiate Athletics; and Senior Executive Assistant to the President and Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees. In addition to these direct reports, the President's Cabinet also includes academic and student deans, key managers, and leaders appointed as staff and faculty presidents.

Overall, the President provides leadership for the University's 92 faculty and 143 staff.

In addition to relationships internal to the University, the President is expected to develop and maintain productive relationships with a wide variety of additional Converse stakeholders, including but not limited to alumni; donors; local, state, and regional community leaders, educational, and governmental leaders; corporate partners; and foundations.

As the Chief Executive Officer of the University, the new President should become personally invested in the future of Converse, continue to raise the profile of the University, and promote its mission. As such, the President will provide innovative and visionary leadership in academic, fiscal, administrative, and professional matters, relative to all faculty, staff, and students at the University.

In addition to the broad responsibilities listed above, specific responsibilities include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Provide exceptional, transparent leadership, including recruiting, retaining, managing, motivating, and evaluating a professional staff, which in turn provides leadership through all functional disciplines associated with the University.
- Provide strategic, financial, and operational leadership and oversight in budgeting, financial management, and administration to maximize the effective and efficient acquisition and use of resources.
- Provide academic leadership, along with the Provost, in recruiting, retaining, and motivating a high-quality faculty committed to the values of the University; promote and foster academic excellence; strive to build and strengthen academic programs to be responsive for the future.
- Promote a culturally aware, inclusive, and welcoming environment with a strong commitment to recruiting and retaining diverse faculty, staff, and students.
- Champion liberal arts education: promote initiatives to attract qualified students, increase retention, and support completion of degree programs by students; create a culture that surrounds students with experiences that prepare them for successful careers and fosters wise leaders.
- Actively lead and participate in fundraising and development activities, major gift solicitations, and prioritization of growth in the endowment; create, sustain, and build relationships with multiple and diverse external constituencies with an eye toward diversifying revenue streams and continuing to build a sustainable financial model.
- Promote and foster a culture that: celebrates one another; actively embraces and encourages diversity and inclusion by recognizing the value and uniqueness of all individuals; and values the different perspectives, experiences, cultures, backgrounds, talents, and contributions that comprise a global society.
- Understand the importance of, and show support for, the arts, athletics, student activities, and student organizations; support activities consistent with helping students to become transformative leaders who see clearly, decide wisely, and act justly; understand the role of Converse's arts and athletics programs and Converse College for Women and how they can enhance fundraising, the total student experience, and alumni engagement.
- Actively engage with the student body (e.g., visible on campus; attend/participate in a variety of events on campus); serve as a role model for students.





- Serve as the face of the University and seek appropriate opportunities to promote and market the University in the community, the region, and nationally via the media, public relations activities, community activities, etc.; be active and visible in the Spartanburg community.
- Embrace the role of representing the University to all alumni, media, the academic community, the corporate community, and other institutions of higher education.
- Maintain regular and consistent contact with alumni, faculty, staff, and the student body to facilitate open communication; listen to ideas and concerns; collaborate in the development of opportunities and solutions.
- Suggest, develop, and implement strategies and/or directives as approved or determined by the Board of Trustees.
- Seek professional development opportunities and encourage others to take advantage of opportunities to further enhance professional knowledge, skills, effectiveness, and competence.

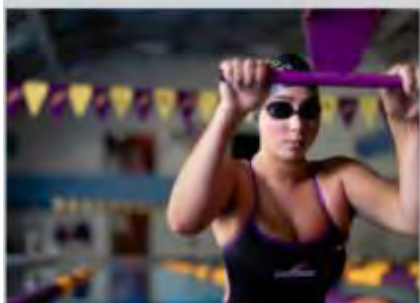
## Requirements

Preferred qualifications include the following:

- Passion and enthusiasm for, and commitment to, academically excellent, student-centered, liberal arts education in a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming environment.
- Espouse and model leadership principles based on integrity, honesty, sincerity, inclusiveness, collaboration, humility, servant leadership, and compassion.
- Visionary, strategic, and creative thinker; able to think innovatively and explore new ideas; understands the changing landscape in higher education; ability to articulate the University's vision and strategy.
- Proven record of successful leadership and managerial skills, whether within or outside of an academic environment.
- Exceptional people skills and interpersonal abilities; accessible; energetic and enthusiastic; able to build and maintain close relationships and engender trust; willing and eager to use these attributes for community relations and financial development.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills; experienced public speaker; listens well and appreciates suggestions and ideas of others.
- Fundraiser; preference for successful experience leading aggressive fundraising in support of endowment, programs, and/or facilities.
- Superior business management skills along with a strong financial acumen.
- Willingness to make decisions, including difficult but necessary decisions; willingness to take appropriate risk.
- Desires to be involved in campus activities and participate in the activities of the greater Converse community, the city of Spartanburg, and the state and surrounding region.
- Appropriate academic credentials: strong preference for a terminal degree; however, interested individuals with outstanding success in business or a professional career are encouraged to apply.

## Compensation

Compensation will be commensurate with experience including a competitive base salary, housing, car allowance, and competitive benefits package.







*To make a nomination, provide a referral, or for additional information, please use the contact information below. While applications and nominations will be accepted until a successful candidate has been appointed, interested parties are encouraged to submit their materials by, or preferably before, December 3, 2021. The targeted start date for the new President is July 1, 2022. To apply, please submit a resume and/or vita, and cover letter, to: [Converse@buffkinbaker.com](mailto:Converse@buffkinbaker.com)*

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*Converse University believes that a diverse faculty and staff are essential to achieving academic excellence; thus, we strongly encourage applications from candidates from all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.*

*Converse University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or any legally protected status in any personnel action regarding the recruiting, hiring, and promotion of faculty and staff members.*

