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## **Converse University Announces Faculty Promotions**

SPARTANBURG, S.C. (February 13, 2023) - In recognition for their commitment to teaching, scholarly and/or creative achievements, and service, the Converse University Board of Trustees has awarded the following five faculty members with tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor.

- Dr. Joe Barrera, Mathematics and Computer Science
- Dr. Mary Carlisle, Art and Design
- Dr. Margaret (Meg) Lee, Education
- Dr. Mandy Mangum, Mathematics and Computer Science
- Dr. Chris Varnon, Psychology

“Converse is incredibly proud of these members of our faculty, all of whom have demonstrable records of excellence in teaching, scholarly or creative achievement, and service to the university and to their respective fields,” shared Dr. Joe Wilferth, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Converse. “We celebrate their professional achievements, and we’re especially grateful for their commitment to outstanding teaching and to the mentorship of our students.”

### **About the Faculty**

**Associate Professor Dr. Joe Barrera** holds a Ph.D. in Mathematics, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. His publications appear in *Asymptotic Analysis and Journal of Differential Equations*, with one forthcoming in *Communications on Pure and Applied Mathematics*. Dr. Barrera has given panel and/or poster presentations at regional and national mathematics conferences and has mentored undergraduate research, helping students prepare for graduate school. Active on the faculty, he serves on the Curriculum Programs Committee, Male Student Programming Committee, Appeals Board, Faculty Senate, Faculty Environment Committee, and several faculty search committees; he also serves as a faculty mentor and participates regularly as an interviewer during Scholars Day.

**Associate Professor Dr. Mary Carlisle** holds an MFA in Studio Art from Lesley University and an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Management from Drexel University. She maintains an

active studio practice, and her series of works include “Work = Worship, Remnants, Tracing Time, and Assembled Memory,” which have been exhibited at galleries across South Carolina, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maryland, and Florida. She has given presentations at regional and national conferences and has been an invited speaker at national, state, and regional conferences. In addition to her administrative responsibilities, Dr. Carlisle serves as Program Coordinator for both the BA in Studio Art and the Minor in Arts Administration; she is an active member of the National Art Education Association and the local South Carolina Art Education Association and has successfully administered and directed three AP Summer Institutes at Converse.

**Associate Professor Dr. Margaret (Meg) Lee** holds an Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Gardner-Webb University. Her published scholarship is a mix of peer-reviewed articles and invited book chapters. She has presented at seven national meetings, in addition to invited talks at state-wide and regional events. In this 2022-23 academic year, she has secured, directed, and maintained nearly \$1.1 million in South Carolina Department of Education grants. Dr. Lee is a member of the Leadership Development Committee for the National Association for the Gifted Child, serving on the All-Network Leadership subcommittee and as chair of Professional Development Network Communications. She is a board member of the South Carolina Consortium for Gifted Education and supports statewide and regional organizations, including Spartanburg District 7’s Odyssey Program. At Converse, her service extends to the Graduate Council, Faculty Senate, Athena Summer Camp, Admissions Committee, Scholars Day, Awards Committee, and service on numerous doctoral committees.

**Associate Professor Dr. Mandy Mangum** holds a Ph.D. in Biomathematics from North Carolina State University. She has two peer-reviewed publications and one that is currently under review, with three additional articles in progress. She has given numerous talks and led sessions at regional and national conferences, including the Conference for Undergraduate Women in Mathematics and the highly competitive national Joint Mathematics Meetings. Dr. Mangum directs undergraduate research and often involves students in her studies; her students have presented work to the Upstate Family Resource Center, at the RISE Symposium, and at regional meetings of Undergraduate Women in Mathematics. Her research and scholarly activity extend to numerous successful grants, and she launched Converse’s Data Science minor. Dr. Mangum serves the university as faculty advisor of the Math Club, through membership on the Institutional Review Board and the Awards Committee, and with her participation in Scholars Day. She has been a judge for student research poster presentations at MathFest in Philadelphia, chaired student-focused sessions at the Conference for Undergraduate Women in Mathematics, and served as a manuscript reviewer/referee for PRIMUS and for the textbook *Statistics: Unlocking the Power of Data*.

**Associate Professor Dr. Chris Varnon** holds a Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology from Oklahoma State University. He has mentored or co-mentored 20 Converse students in the last five years. Dr. Varnon is an experimental psychologist who specializes in comparative

psychology and behavior analysis. His published works – 11 peer-reviewed publications since his employment at Converse alone, for most of which he is the lead author – appear in top journals in his field, including *International Journal of Comparative Psychology* and *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Animal Learning and Cognition*. He has given numerous invited lectures and participated in regional, national, and international professional meetings. He has been involved in a number of South Carolina INBRE grants, including a current grant for \$122,000. Chris was the 2022 recipient of the Dukes Family Award for Faculty Scholarly and Creative Achievement. He serves Converse on the Diversity Advisory Committee, Special Lectures Committee, Title IX Task Force, Internal Animal Care and Use Committee, Undergraduate Research Committee, and he has been a member of numerous faculty search committees, the Awards Committee, and others. Dr. Varnon is a reviewer for the National Science Center Poland, for the SC INBRE Developmental Research Project, and for the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*. He is currently on the review boards for *Insects* as well as the *International Journal of Comparative Psychology*.

### ***About Converse University***

Converse University empowers students to become transformative leaders who see clearly, decide wisely, and act justly. Converse was founded in 1889 by citizens of Spartanburg, SC, who aimed to create an educational experience for women, and in fall 2020 it welcomed its first undergraduate co-educational incoming class. The University encompasses the School of Humanities, Sciences, and Business; the School of the Arts; the School of Education and Graduate Studies; and the Converse College for Women. Converse students experience deep scholarship, transformative mentorship, experiential learning, and wonderful support for and belief in each other. Through this unique formula, Converse is a creator of opportunity for its students through a personalized education that also includes the professional and technical skills graduates need to be successful in their careers.

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