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CONVERSE

The summer breeze is in the air and while students are having transformative experiences outside these walls, our beloved campus is abuzz with activity as we prepare for a new and exciting academic year. Let this issue serve as a reflection on a year of **progress** that also celebrated revitalized time-honored **traditions**.

Summer 2024

Investing in Future of Teachers



On Tuesday, April 16, 2024, Converse University, Wofford College, OneSpartanburg, and Spartanburg County School Districts Three and Seven announced their recent collaboration to invest in Spartanburg’s future through education with a signing ceremony for Wofford students for the 2024-2025 academic year.

This 4 + 1 cooperative alliance allows students to achieve their Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in five years. It will allow Wofford College undergraduate students a smooth transition into Converse University’s MAT programs and initial teacher certification.

Converse’s Dean of the Graduate School and Professor of Leadership, Lienne Medford, EdD shared, “It’s essential to address today’s most pressing educational issues, and even more critical to ensure that all students - regardless of their background - have access to motivated, professionally qualified, and well-supported teachers.”

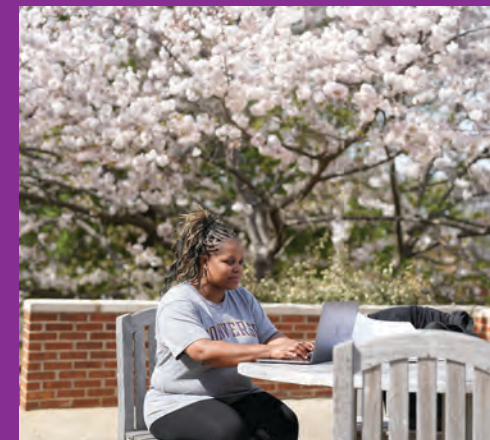
After earning an undergraduate degree or being admitted to the program early, participating Wofford students will complete at least one additional year of graduate study and any related requirements to satisfy the MAT degree and professional teacher certification.



Students “First Day Ready” With New Textbook Program

As part of our commitment to access and affordability for our students, Converse has made getting required course materials easy and stress-free through our First-Day Ready Program. This program ensures that traditional undergraduate students have the required materials and texts for their courses so they can focus on their studies instead of worrying about how they’re going to pay for those materials.

Research shows that schools that include textbooks and supplies within their tuition structures are seeing stronger student participation, retention, and success – so this is just one way we honor our students’ and families’ commitments. The program reduces stress on students and families by streamlining the often-complicated “bottom line” cost of education and takes the guesswork out of the books, editions, and supplies needed for class.



Snap for the full experience.

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CONVERSE

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May Day Weekend: A Campus-Wide Celebration

May Day Weekend was certainly a busy one for Converse! The Converse community celebrated our students with long-standing traditions like the Freshmen Pinning Ceremony and the Junior Ring Ceremony, and also added some new events, like a fun run and the inaugural Spirit of the Valkyrie Award. It was a wonderful weekend with students, family, friends, faculty, and staff as we rounded out the last few weeks of the academic year. Scan the QR code for a full recap of events, list of award winners, photo galleries, and more.



Commencement 2024

On May 18, 2024, the Converse community gathered to celebrate the graduating Class of 2024. The community commemorated the students' years of hard work and academic achievements, as well as the remarkable resilience and unwavering perseverance displayed by the graduating class.

About the Class of 2024 Undergraduate Students:

- 51 were first-generation college students.
- 9 were Converse II students, non-traditional students.
- 56 were student-athletes.
- 7 earned two undergraduate degrees.
- 7 were Converse International students.
- More than 47% held an internship while at Converse.
- 65% engaged in at least two high-impact practices, including research, community service, or study travel.
- 60% were involved in leadership roles on campus.
- 42% already had job placements at the time of graduation, at organizations including Prisma Health, Flat Rock Playhouse, OTO Development, South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind, USA Softball, AMS Global, and Hughes Development Corporation.
- 26% are continuing their education with graduate studies—with 12 continuing their education at Converse.

Dr. Russell Booker, CEO of Spartanburg Academic Movement, served as this year's commencement speaker. Scan the QR code on the back for a full recap of all Commencement activities, along with photo albums and video highlights of all ceremonies.

Converse Awarded Center of Excellence

The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education has awarded Converse a three-year grant to support a new Center of Excellence in Teacher Leadership, making Converse the first private institution in the state to receive a second Center of Excellence. We were previously awarded in 2020.

The new Center will provide opportunities for classroom teachers in primarily rural and underserved counties and school districts to develop their leadership skills. Converse will partner with all seven Spartanburg County school districts plus Union County. Over three years, this program aims to certify 66 new building administrators and offer professional development to 132 teacher-leaders.

Participating teachers will enroll in either Converse's Administrators Academy or one of its certificate-based leadership programs. The Community Advocacy Leadership certificate track incorporates courses from Converse's new Master in Management in Community Advocacy, while the Leadership for Classroom Teachers track combines courses from the Master in Management in Professional Leadership with education courses.



“You have not only risen above challenges with courage and conviction, but you have also navigated your time here with a grace and an unwavering enthusiasm that has transformed this campus. You truly embody the spirit of the Valkyrie.”

– President Boone Hopkins, Ph.D.

Reminiscing on Reunion

More than 175 Converse alumni gathered on campus for Reunion 2024 on April 19-20 to reunite with old friends, walk down memory lane, and see how our campus has revitalized over the years.

Reunion attendees had the opportunity this year to join in on Founder's Day, where we honored the Class of 1974, who were inducted into the Golden Club to mark their 50th reunion. With their 25th reunion, we celebrated the Class of 1999 as they joined the Silver Club. Many alumni from class years ending in 4 and 9 celebrated milestone reunions as well.

This year's Class Act Gift award winners are the Class of 1968, raising a whopping \$116,575 for the Converse Annual Fund. This year's Participation Award Winners are the Class of 1999, with the new Golden Club, the Class of 1974, coming in a very close second.

Save the date for next year's Reunion on the weekend of April 25, 2025!



Preparing for a Data-Driven Future

Interest in data science is growing, and with the announcement of Converse's new data science major, the university is equipping its students to enter an increasingly data-driven modern workforce to meet that demand.

The success of the Data Science minor, following its launch in the fall of 2020, led to the development of our Data Science major, which officially launches in Fall 2024. Converse's major ensures that students develop the right technical skills through the core data science courses but also allows them to select a concentration area of interest. The program prepares students to succeed in the job market and graduate studies.

In January of this year, Dr. Jessica Sorrells was named the inaugural Dean of the School of Business and Data Science. “A Data Science degree is not very common among undergraduate institutions,” Dr. Sorrells shared. “Data is everywhere, and how we collect it and study it is important. We are distinguishing Converse by creating a Data Science degree that emphasizes communication and leadership skills, which make our students stand out to future employers.”

Planned Giving Ensures Lasting Legacy

Converse supporters have a unique opportunity to support our mission and traditions through the Mary Wilson Gee Society. Named for a member of the first graduating class of Converse and a prominent faculty member, this society comprises some of Converse's closest and most generous friends who desire to leave a lasting legacy on our beloved institution.

Planned gifts such as bequests or charitable remainder trusts serve as the driving force propelling Converse into the future. These visionary contributions not only enrich our programs, empower our people, and enhance our places, but also set the stage for a dynamic and innovative era.

Mary Ann Cleland has recently joined the Converse Philanthropy team as a Major and Planned Giving Officer. She would be happy to meet with you to discuss your philanthropy goals and tell you more about The Mary Wilson Gee Society. Please reach out to her at 864-596-9390. If you have included Converse in your estate plans, please let us know so you may be properly welcomed to the Mary Wilson Gee Society.

