

# Inclusive Excellence Action Plan: *Belonging @ Converse*

At Converse, we are committed to fostering inclusivity, celebrating differences, educating the community on the benefits of diversity, promoting equality, eliminating discrimination, and advancing equitable access to all opportunities. Converse offers cultural development opportunities grounded in social justice and inclusiveness for students, faculty, staff, and our community through various programs and involvement. Through this programming and engagement, we strive to create a safe and supportive campus environment that encourages achievement and success for all. The institution recognizes that these opportunities are crucial for developing the requisite skills to thrive as a member of a pluralistic society and as a responsible global citizen.

In pursuit of its goal of inclusive excellence, the University actively seeks to attract and support students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds and life experiences, including but not limited to: race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic and/or socio-linguistic background, cognitive ability, physical ability, religion and spirituality, value system, national origin, immigration or refugee status, and veteran status.

Based on extensive consultation with our campus and community stakeholders, and an investigation of best practices and policies at Converse and at other comparable institutions, this plan sets the course for institutional change through focused work on the following priorities.

## **Inclusive Excellence Priorities:**

*Below are 3 priorities that capture areas where the university will focus to make immediate progress regarding the Inclusive Excellence Plan. These priorities for action are extensions of goals 3, 4, and 6 of our original Diversity Strategic Plan. Please note that this is a working document intended to spark conversation and dialogue.*

### **1. INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO**

Inclusive Excellence is when the institution adopts the means for the cohesive, coherent, and collaborative integration of diversity and inclusion into our shared pursuit of excellence. The institution commits to continually build capacity that embeds diversity, inclusion and equity into the work of the university and the belief that the ongoing success is dependent upon this ongoing commitment. Inclusive excellence is achieved when an institution values, engages, and includes the rich diversity of its community members, including its students, faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, friends, employer partners, and affiliates.

### **Action Items:**

1.1 Acknowledge and memorialize the impetus for the development of the Diversity Strategic Plan in a “Forward”.

## **2. RECRUIT and RETAIN A DIVERSE COMMUNITY**

Converse is becoming a more diverse university community that reflects the shifting demographics of the college-going population. To recruit, retain, and support prospective students, faculty, and staff we must focus particularly on underrepresented populations and on our opportunities to cultivate a sense of belonging for all who consider Converse. Providing strategic support for underrepresented populations will build our capacity to engage across differences in identity and experience. We must also attend to the difference between compositional diversity and an inclusive community. This work goes beyond census counts and refers to community outreach efforts to build awareness for Converse as a destination of choice for students, faculty, and staff, enhancing professional development to support intercultural competencies, and engagement opportunities to cultivate an inclusive culture that promotes connection among and between groups that are underrepresented.

### **Action Items:**

#### Employees:

- Formalize processes to recruit, hire, develop, evaluate, recognize, and retain staff and administrators that promote access and equity.
- Create model language and assessment criteria for advancing diversity, equity and inclusion to include in all position descriptions.
- Integrate information regarding Converse’s commitment to inclusive excellence in new employee orientation programs and materials.
- Formalize mechanisms to enhance effective faculty mentoring to support all faculty members in the promotion, tenure, and advancement process, as well as develop support mechanisms to enable progression into academic leadership.

#### Students:

- Supporting underrepresented students and their need to know that they will belong on campus before they arrive by cultivating a participation-to-acceptance pipeline. We will develop a program that allows prospective students to stay overnight, experience Converse, learn of the various resources on campus, and get an automatic acceptance to Converse, if qualified, based on participation in the program.

## **A CAMPUS CLIMATE OF BELONGING**

Cultivate a sustainable and inclusive community where all members from all backgrounds, identities, abilities, and life experiences are welcomed, valued, and

supported. We will establish the conditions to help each individual feel like they belong at Converse.

***What institutional prioritization is needed to advance this plan?***

**Action Items:**

- Develop infrastructure needed to support and expand campus-wide diversity and inclusion efforts by establishing essential positions, plans, and offices that are needed to implement diversity-related initiatives and document institutional progress.
- Equip campus leaders with data on diversity, inclusion, and campus climate to identify gaps, make informed decisions, establish priorities, and monitor institutional progress.
- Develop an Inclusive Excellence Dashboard to provide information on progress related to institutional diversity and inclusion goals. This dashboard and these data points will be integrated with dashboards currently under development with a focus on leveraging data that already exists, and augmenting it where data needs to be developed.
- Increase and diversify the professional development opportunities and training for staff, faculty, trustees, and administrators that assist with the development of greater awareness and skill-building related to cultivating an inclusive campus climate.

# *Glossary*

**Diversity-** refers to the full range of human differences within overarching similarities. These differences can be visible or invisible, mutable or not.

**Underrepresented Minority-** is someone whose racial or ethnic makeup is from one of the following:

- African American / Black
- Asian: Filipino, Hmong\*, or Vietnamese
- Hispanic / Latinx
- Native American / Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander
- Two or more races, when one or more are from the preceding racial and ethnic categories in this list

**Belonging-** the emotional and experiential outcome of inclusion. All humans share the need to be taken in, cared for, protected, and valued by a group, community, or organization. Belonging gives people a voice in a community and encourages and enables them to contribute to it and to expect support from it as well.

**New Majority Students-** Individuals from racially/ethnically diverse, low socioeconomic, and/or non-traditional backgrounds who now comprise the majority of undergraduate students in US institutions of higher education.

**Inclusive Excellence-** is a framework designed to integrate diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.