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Converse University Mourns the Death of President Jeffrey H. Barker

SPARTANBURG, S.C. (July 22, 2021) – The Converse University community mourns the death of President Jeffrey H. Barker. Dr. Barker suddenly and tragically died the evening of July 21, 2021, in a fatal bicycle crash in Spartanburg.

The Converse Board of Trustees held an emergency executive session early Thursday morning, July 22, 2021 and appointed Dr. Boone Hopkins as the Interim President of Converse, effective immediately. Dr. Hopkins previously served as Converse Interim Provost, and Dr. Lienne Medford has been appointed Interim Provost for the 2021-2022 academic year. Additional appointments for the resulting open leadership roles will be announced in the near future.

Converse is providing support and resources for those in the campus community. For Converse students, the [Wellness Center](#) is open Tuesday - Thursday 9 am - 4 pm for counseling services for students. Employees may seek counseling through the [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP).

Dr. Barker became Converse's 11th President on July 6, 2021, to lead the university during the 2021-2022 academic year while [a search for Converse's next President](#) is conducted. Dr. Barker was appointed to the position as President Krista Newkirk departed Converse to become President of the University of Redlands in California.

Dr. Barker most recently served as Converse's Provost and as President had planned to draw from his more than 20 years of experience at Converse to oversee the transition that would position the university to attract exceptional students from all over the United States and internationally.

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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