

# STRATEGIC VISION PLAN FRAMEWORK

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
SEPTEMBER 2022



In the following report, Converse outlines the framework for the developing strategic vision plan. This document lays the foundation for how Converse is looking to shape its future while highlighting the keys to success for plan implementation, management and evaluation.

CONVERSE

---

## 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.

---

## VALUES

Excellence  
Integrity  
Exploration  
Diversity  
Respect  
Community  
Progress



## Contents

4	Message from the President
5	Strategic Planning Process
6	Strategic Plan Framework
10	Goals and Objectives
15	Acknowledgements
17	Additional Resources





Boone J. Hopkins, Ph.D.

## Message from the President

At Converse, our mission is to empower our students to become transformative leaders who see clearly, decide wisely, and act justly. We take great pride in our collective work to foster wise leaders through the myriad of rich experiences we offer to prepare our students for successful careers. In this work, we cherish the ties that bind us as a community of scholars who celebrate one another and who believe that a rich educational experience should be open to all.

In September 2022, the university's Board of Trustees approved the direction for our 2023 Strategic Vision Plan, which sets forth three interconnected pillars centered around enriching Converse's programs, enhancing Converse's places, and empowering Converse's people. This strategic vision plan embodies our evolution as an institution and the positive momentum that stems from it, while honoring Converse's great legacy and its ongoing promise to open doors of opportunity to her students and alumni.

In this document, you'll learn more about this three-year plan which propels Converse towards realizing its long-term vision to advance a culture of belonging and collaboration that ignites creativity, innovation, and transformation, as we:

- Build a premier institution that becomes the first choice for learning;
- Position Converse to respond rapidly to a changing world; and
- Become an engaged and equal partner with our alumni, local, and national communities.

It's an exciting time to be a part of Converse University. Converse has a proven history of achieving excellence through bold, thoughtful innovation, and the success of this plan will be because of our mutual participation in and commitment to evolving and changing together. We can and we WILL accomplish this, together.



# Strategic Planning Process

Upon his announcement as the 12<sup>th</sup> President of Converse University in March 2022, President Hopkins launched a goal to deliver an ambitious and inclusive strategic plan that is created by our community, for our community.

Setting out under a charge to deliver a comprehensive set of strategic goals and objectives by Fall 2023, the Strategic Vision Planning (SVP) Committee was appointed in March 2022 and immediately began assessing institutional strengths, weaknesses and emerging issues to hone in on core needs and opportunities built upon the university's strengths and distinctive position in higher education.

The following timeline\* highlights the key activities already conducted within the first three months and those items remaining to be delivered before the end of the year.



**44** members of the SVP Committee

**2** in-person engagement, brainstorming and goal formation sessions

**265** individuals provided feedback through an online survey or feedback form

**62%** responses from students

# Strategic Plan Framework

The Strategic Vision Plan is the foundation that aligns our actions, energy and resources. This document provides Converse with a course that fosters alignment, creativity and continuous improvement critical to fulfilling our Mission and Vision while upholding our Core Values and foundational principles central to who we are.

The plan calls Converse to organize its focuses around four strategic priorities. Jointly called the Foundational Priorities, these priorities serve as the unifying ideologies across the plan's development and implementation. Both independently and collectively, each priority embodies the aspirational culture that Converse strives to obtain and the foundation of our promise to the community we serve.

In order to achieve these aspirational goals, Converse must excel in three equal and interconnected pillars: enriching our programs, empowering our people and enhancing our places. Herein referred to as Strategic Themes, these three areas of focus organize a set of goals and corresponding objectives that will guide our focused efforts for the next few years.

## Foundational Priorities

### LEADING

Remaining relentlessly

#### **Student Centered**



WE WILL keep students and the ability to achieve student success at the center of everything we do. Always. Central to our mission to develop transformational leaders, Converse is committed to academic excellence, providing distinctive, student-centered experiences every step of the way.

Committing to

#### **Inclusive Excellence**



WE WILL foster an inclusive, safe and vibrant campus community through our commitment to recognize, include and value the inherent worth and dignity of each person equally; foster sensitivity, understanding and mutual respect; and encourage and support everyone to strive to reach their own potential.

Building

#### **Financial Resiliency**



WE WILL all remain stewards in the management of resources to ensure the ongoing viability of delivering our mission. Under a successful comprehensive fundraising campaign, WE WILL build capacity and energy that prepares us for the unexpected, protects our assets and enables innovation and growth.

Promoting

#### **Health and Wellbeing**



WE WILL enrich the wellness of Converse's culture to reinforce an environment that prioritizes physical health, mental health and overall wellbeing as a foundation for lifelong success and happiness amongst our students, employees and the broader campus community.

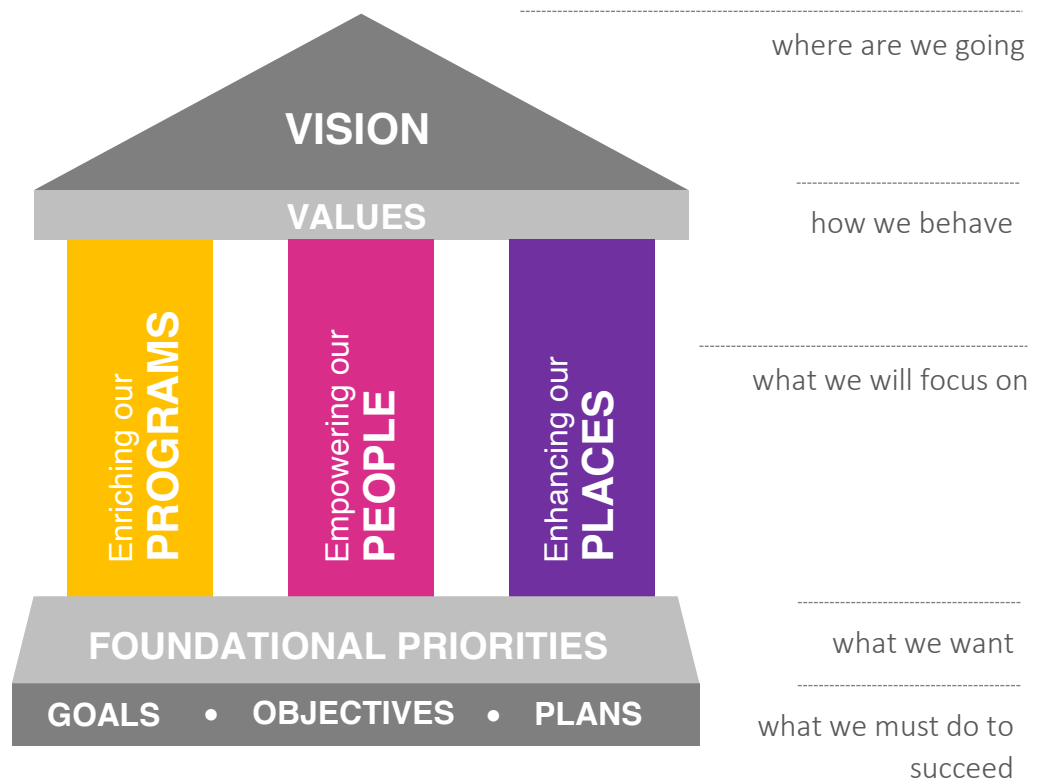
# SUPPORTING PLANS

Built upon a cascading framework, departments and units will be empowered and entrusted with developing aligned, supporting initiatives that will outline the specific actions needed to mobilize the Strategic Vision Plan.

Supporting plans should include:

- Diversity and Inclusivity Plan
- Enrollment Plan
- Compensation Plan
- Master Facilities Plan
- Three Year and Annual Operating Plans and Budgets
- Comprehensive Capital Campaign Plan
- Information Technology Plan

Each plan will be thoughtfully crafted and maintained with accountable ownership, clear guidelines and intentional communication of progress. Alignment and integration between the supporting plans and the Strategic Vision Plan will remain a focus of the President's Leadership Council and made available to campus through an online information hub.



# IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

The framework for the Strategic Vision Plan is designed to deliver an iterative and adaptable plan that outlines a common vision and defines how the university will prioritize its effort and resources during the next three years. While aggressively pursuing Converse's goals, it is imperative that Converse remain responsive to changes and challenges that may arise, adjusting plans as necessary and committing to the following set of guiding principles for an effective implementation.



## INTEGRATED REVIEWS

Environmental scans will be conducted often to remain astutely aware of changing conditions and emerging opportunities. Further, alignment and implementation of initiatives will be routinely imbedded in the agendas of the Executive Leadership Team, Leadership Council and Board of Trustee meetings to reinforce priorities, accountability and plan progression.



## MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Shared measurement tools through data collection and scorecards will create a mechanism for effectively measuring and communicating effectiveness.



## CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION

Plan progress will be shared to the broader university community through a variety of active and passive channels to enable information exchange, transparency and trust.



## REVISIONS AS APPROPRIATE

In order for the plan to remain relevant, revisions may be needed. Recommendations will be reviewed routinely to determine if any changes or adjustments are needed and appropriate.



## THOROUGH DOCUMENTATION

Recording progress will help ensure accountability and the ability to highlight progress and success, including to the satisfaction of accreditation needs.



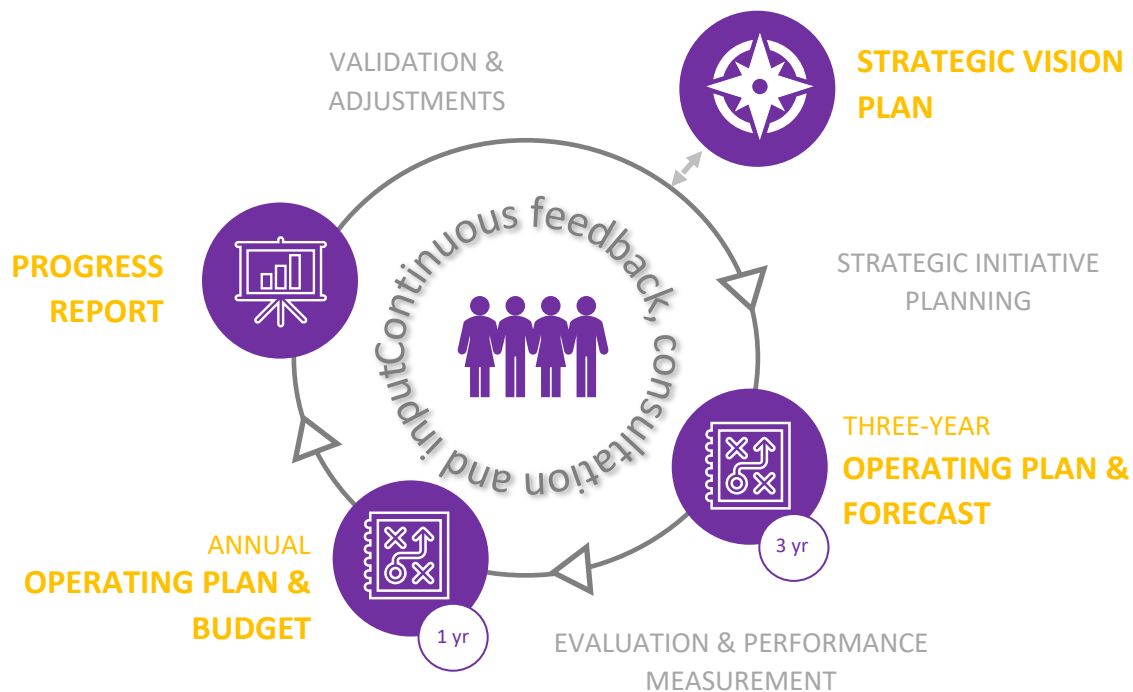
## RESOURCE ALIGNMENT

To ensure that the annual priorities are realistic based on available resources, the plan should be tightly interwoven into the annual budgeting and forecasting process.



# CONTINUOUS PLANNING CYCLE

Converse's Planning Process has a fourfold approach encompassing the overarching Strategic Vision Plan, a Three-Year Operating Plan & Forecast, an Annual Operating Plan & Budget and Progress Reporting.



## Strategic Vision Plan

Developed under the leadership of a formed committee and with direct community input. Updated every three to five years and adopted by the Board of Trustees. This plan serves as the long-term guide.

## Three-Year Operating Plan & Forecast

Developed by Converse leadership with community input. Updated annually and reviewed by the Board of Trustees. This plan serves as the rolling, short-term guide of what Converse can realistically achieve given the current and foreseen conditions.

## Annual Operating Plan & Budget

Derived from the Three-Year Operating Plan & Forecast and developed by Converse leadership with community input. Updated annually and reviewed by the Board of Trustees. This plan sets the efforts and institutional commitments for the current fiscal year.

## Progress Reporting

Developed by Converse leadership with community input. Reviewed periodically by the Board of Trustees and made available to the broader university community. This report documents highlights, activity and progress in support of institutional accountability and transparency.



## A COMMITMENT TO AN EVOLVING CONVERSE

A successful plan will require more than an agreement on priorities and actionable initiatives; it will require a commitment of the entire community to adapt and evolve. Heard throughout the planning process, a mindset of resistance to change will keep Converse in the past and inhibit effective progress in making a difference in carrying forth our mission and meeting the future needs of our students, our employees and our community.

At Converse, we believe that empowering our people will lead to empowered students and by leveraging our already strong culture of community and a student-centered mission, investing in ourselves to commit the time for proper research, self-study and addressing fundamental needs will enable us to SEE CLEARLY and have resounding impact on our ability to surpass the obstacles facing higher education today. As captured in our WE WILL campaign, Converse values the multiplying effect of change when a community can come together, under a unified set of goals and priorities, to make a difference. **TOGETHER, WE WILL** make a difference, and this strategic vision plan is our next step in that direction.

# Enriching our PROGRAMS

Through intentional programmatic evaluation and redesign, we promise to create a student-ready environment that promotes student success, wellness and belonging through excellence and innovation in academic programming and inclusive experiences.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### Goal 1.1

Elevate our undergraduate and graduate academic programs and experiences to meet the needs of our students and society

- Provide a comprehensive review of our undergraduate and graduate academic programs, including GEP and Jan term, to ensure alignment with the demands, interests and needs of our students and the workforce pipeline that will serve our community
- Provide flexible opportunities for students to achieve their educational goals
- Preserve and maintain Converse's historic commitment to a highly engaging, small educational environment while continuing to grow the student body
- Enhance and align institutional resources in areas that most effectively enhance student instruction and experiences
- Promote a culture of excellence and inclusivity in teaching, learning and advising practices

### Goal 1.2

Establish culture of career readiness

- Develop resources for robust data collection of student outcomes that can be used by academic departments and co-curricular programs to support career readiness
- Partner with faculty and staff to share goals and objectives on career readiness and what it entails to help students better prepare for post-graduation plans
- Develop and execute a plan for mapping career, major and experience for students.

### Goal 1.3

Develop transformative experiential learning opportunities through co-curricular engagement, workforce integrated learning and equitable access

- Develop and expand experiential learning offerings that support skill development and career readiness
- Leverage the university's location to create distinctive leadership, experiential learning opportunities and experiences
- Strengthen, publicize and recognize achievements and opportunities for research, scholarly and creative work across disciplines
- Ensure opportunities for experiential learning are accessible to all students
- Increase study travel opportunities and participation to expand global impact and awareness

#### Goal 1.4

Develop comprehensive plans to grow scholarships to ensure all students have full and equitable access to the academic services, learning experiences and resources that they need

- Develop need-based scholarship programs to improve access and encourage attendance
- Evaluate scholarship expectations and evaluate process to educate students about scholarship requirements and conditions
- Develop opportunities for grant-funded opportunities at the graduate level
- Develop mid-career scholarship programs to improve access, encourage attendance and academic progression
- Develop comprehensive fundraising goals focused on growing scholarships to ensure all students have full and equitable access to the academic services, learning experiences and resources that they need

#### Goal 1.5

Offer a vibrant and holistic student experience for all

- Reaffirm the institution's commitment to student support and success
- Grow first generation programming and services
- Continue to expand strong freshman and sophomore student experience programs
- Establish a campus environment that offers abundant spaces, activities and learnings to promote engagement and community for all, including non-residential students
- Define and develop programming and services that support students undergoing intense transition, at risk for transfer or lacking strong connection to the campus culture.
- Provide comprehensive medical and mental health services and outreach programming that meet the physical and mental health needs of the students and employees of our growing campus community

# Empowering our PEOPLE

We promise to dedicate investment into attracting, developing and retaining an exceptional workforce by empowering our team with the tools, resources and space needed to achieve excellence.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### Goal 2.1

Provide all faculty and staff fair and equitable compensation with attractive benefits

- Conduct a comprehensive review of compensation and develop plans to address equity issues or market disparities
- Develop a strategy to achieve a comprehensive and attractive compensation and benefits package, specifically including a phased plan to address salary compression, staffing levels and workload balance
- Routinely conduct market analysis amongst selected peer institutions to inform annual compensation targets and staffing levels

### Goal 2.2

Create an effective and inclusive rewards system that recognizes excellence and advances the quality of life in the workplace

- Develop and communicate recommendations to improve the total rewards package
- Revise policies with an eye towards encouraging healthy behavior and efficient use of services
- Develop a communication and education strategy about total rewards benefits to promote informed decisions and benefit optimization

### Goal 2.3

Develop hiring and retention practices that promote the attraction and retention of highly qualified talent to our institution

- Establish goals aligned with progressively increasing the number of underrepresented minorities at all levels of the organization to better align with the surrounding community and population served

- Increase diversity of faculty and staff through inclusive recruitment and retention practices
- Foster an inclusive work environment that allows achievement at the highest potential
- Align resources to deliver impactful and effective onboarding
- Implement best practices on ways to effectively re-recruit and retain our top talent
- Continue cultivating a culture of caring and offer avenues for concerns to be addressed timely and professionally

## Goal 2.4

Cultivate an environment where everyone feels included and valued

- Regularly evaluate the climate as experienced by the campus community, and communicate and respond with actionable strategy
- Reaffirm our commitment to transparency, timely communication and inclusive participation
- Fortify a culture of responsibility and accountability to our university, its mission and its goals
- Redesign the performance appraisal process to be grounded and aligned with institutional core values and goals
- Strengthen and expand professional development programs and offerings for our faculty and staff
- Review and expand policies and programs with a focus on supporting career advancement while also positioning the institution for success during times of succession

## Goal 2.5

Foster a healthy institutional culture around work life balance and holistic wellbeing

- Regularly assess our physical spaces to ensure they offer a healthy and safe place for our team to work
- Empower our supervisors through training and support on how to effectively support personal needs while also conducting an efficient and effective workplace
- Support programs and services that sustainably balance physical, mental and emotional wellness



## SEE CLEARLY

Driving vibrant transformation and progress demands continuous self-study, active listening and open communication



## DECIDE WISELY

Implementing data informed solutions aligned with growing capacities will enable Converse to remain adaptable and relevant in meeting needs



## ACT JUSTLY

Exploration, innovation and advocacy will enhance Converse's ability to best serve our students and community



# Enhancing our PLACES

Through proactive planning, fundraising efforts and stewardship of our assets, we promise to restore and expand our campus infrastructure to support tomorrow's growth in a way that is accessible, adaptable and sustainable.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### Strategy 3.1

Ensure technology, facilities and our systems are optimized to adequately support our operational needs and campus growth

- Assess current space utilization and re-allocate in purposeful manners to address current and future demands
- Develop a master plan for our physical facilities and grounds (including post COVID considerations)
- Address strategies to accelerate attention to deferred maintenance and end-of life assets
- Develop plans that maximize flexible classrooms and learning spaces
- Develop and implement a technology plan that accelerates learning and living space enhancements
- Recommit to technology project and procurement standard operating procedures to reduce redundancy and ensure purchases meet institutional goals and priorities
- Ensure technology systems bring value to the institution and student experience; reassess where they do not

### Strategy 3.2

Enhance safety, accessibility and community engagement

- Improve walkways, access points and other barriers to promote safe movement including control of our perimeter
- Invest in lighting infrastructure across campus
- Instill a priority towards improving accessibility in all future campus improvements and renovations
- Implement universal accessibility standards within the learning environment and campus

### Strategy 3.3

Develop automated and efficient processes for students, employees and those interacting with Converse

- Support an environment for continuous process improvement through best practices
- Implement data informed systems to drive business operations and decision making

- Transition more administrative forms and processes online
- Establish redundancies and capacities to minimize critical business operation disruptions from unforeseen events
- Re-evaluate the ongoing changes needed to support an effective intercampus communications strategy
- Create more transparent and inclusive budgeting processes including the development of multi-year budgets at the department level

### Strategy 3.4

Build a future ready infrastructure that is flexible, reliable and scalable

- Promote sustainability and energy conservation efforts across campus
- Adopt flexible design into spaces to allow for changes in demand including social and culture norms
- Improve and enhance utility systems and storm water mitigation
- Develop comprehensive campus GIS mapping

CONVERSE UNIVERSITY:  
**THIS IS OUR** FUTURE



# Acknowledgements

A special thanks goes out to the incredible number of individuals that contributed to the plan's formation including the Strategic Planning Committee and the many other students, faculty, staff, administrators, donors, community members and trustees who have contributed their insights, knowledge and time to the development of this plan.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

### Co-Chairs

**Boone Hopkins**, President

**Kristin Lacey**, Vice President for Operations and Strategic Planning

### Programs Committee

**Rhonda Mingo**, Dean of Students (Team Lead)

**Erin Templeton**, Dean of the School of Humanities, Sciences and Business; Professor of English (Team Lead)

**Matt Cash**, Director of Admission

**Neval Erturk**, Associate Provost of Research and Engagement; Professor of Biology

**Lee Givins**, Assistant Professor of Education; Director of Professional Leadership Program; Associate Dean of Graduate Studies

**Tori Good**, Director of Career Development and Employer Relations

**Chandra Hopkins**, Dean of Converse College for Women

**JW Kellam**, Associate Vice President for Student Financial Services

**Danielle Stone**, Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion; Title IX Coordinator

**Kendra Woodson**, Registrar

### Places Committee

**Zach Corbitt**, Chief Information Officer (Team Lead)

**Gladden Smoke**, Director of Facilities (Team Lead)

**Neval Erturk**, Associate Provost of Research and Engagement; Professor of Biology

**Larry Jones**, Director of Campus Safety

**Sher-Ron Laud**, Director of Residential Life

**Randy Loggins**, Deputy Director of Athletics

**Rebecca Parrish**, Director of Institutional Grants

**Evan Thomas**, Assistant Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy; Chair and Director of Marriage and Family Program

**Debbi Thompson**, Director of Event Services

**Chris Vaneman**, Dean of the School of the Arts; Associate Professor of Flute

**Wade Woodward**, Director of Mickel Library

## People Committee

**Claire Gregg**, Director of Human Resources (Team Lead)

**Margaret Moore**, Faculty Senate President; Associate Professor of Physical Education (Team Lead)

**Kristina Pisano**, Director of Annual Giving and Staff Council President (Team Lead)

**Doug Busch**, Associate Professor of Hispanic Studies

**Daphnie Glenn**, Director of First-Generation Student Programs

**Pamela Greenway**, Senior Executive Assistant to the President and Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees

**Emily Harbin**, Associate Professor of English; Director of the Writing Center

**Beverly Lowrance**, Associate Director of Student Financial Services

**Jeff Martin**, Assistant Professor of Education

**Rob Miller**, Head Coach Men's Soccer

**Eliza Smith**, University Chaplain

**Danielle Stone**, Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion; Title IX Coordinator

**Lexi Stoneburner**, Director of New Student Experiences

## Student Advisors

**Angela Brobson**, Class of 2023, SGA President

**Maddie Buisch**, Class of 2022, SGA Vice President

**Karen Mims**, Class of 2022, SGA President

## Administration

**Jenn Bell**, Director of Intercollegiate Athletics

**Will Case**, Associate Provost for Student Success; Associate Professor of Chemistry; Co-Director of Nisbet Honors Program

**Dianne Crocker**, Vice President for Finance and Business

**Holly Duncan**, Vice President for Marketing and Communications

**Jamie Grant**, Vice President for Enrollment Management

**Mike Kennedy**, Interim Vice President for Philanthropy and Alumni Relations

**Lienne Medford**, Interim Provost; Dean of Education and Graduate Studies

**WE**  
**together**  
**WILL**

CONVERSE