

2025 COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC *Engagement Summit*

**LEGACY IN
MOTION:**
FUELING WEALTH,
INNOVATION &
TRANSFORMATIONAL
IMPACT

**WEDNESDAY
OCTOBER 8**
9 A.M. TO 4:30 P.M.

**MIX AND MINGLE
NETWORKING MIXER**
4:30 P.M. TO 7 P.M.



ELM AND BAIN • 620B S. ELM ST. • GREENSBORO, N.C. 27406

AGENDA

8 A.M.

Registration Check-in and Breakfast

9-9:30 A.M.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Oliver M. Thomas, Ph.D. '06

Associate Vice Chancellor of External Affairs, North Carolina A&T State University

James R. Martin II, Ph.D., Chancellor

North Carolina A&T State University

Introduction of Elected Officials

Allyson Cobb '10

Director of External Partnerships, North Carolina A&T State University

Amos L. Quick, III

N.C. House of Representatives, Democratic Whip, District 58 and Chair,
Guilford County Delegation to the N.C. General Assembly

Melvin "Skip" Alston

Chair, Guilford County Board of Commissioners, District 8

J. Carlvana Foster

Vice Chair, Guilford County Board of Commissioners, District 1; and Senior Vice President,
Carl Chavis YMCA

Nancy B. Vaughan

Mayor of Greensboro

Victor Isler

Guilford County Manager

9:30-10:35 A.M.

Panel: Legacy in Motion: Reentry Pathways to Workforce and Community Impact

Introduction of the Moderator: Cyril Jefferson, Mayor of High Point

Moderator: Melissa S. Smith '12, Director of Workforce Development Solutions, Greensboro Chamber of Commerce

Panelists:

Jessica Schultz, Vice President of Career Development Services, Goodwill Industries of Central North Carolina

LaQuinta Downey, Reentry Coordinator, StepUp Greensboro

David Williams, President, Lorac Academy

Shawn Jackson, Community Health Worker, Triad Adult and Pediatric Medicine

10:35 - 10:45 A.M.

Sponsor Spotlight and Announcements

Leslie A. Garvin, Executive Director, North Carolina Campus Engagement

Allison Walker, Director of Community Partnerships and Experiential Learning, Wake Forest University

Bryle H. Hatch, Ph.D. '08, '10, '18, Senior Deputy Director, Division of Human Resources,
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

10:45-11:45 A.M.

Morning Keynote Speaker

Introduction of the Morning Speaker: James Jeter, Vice President of Business and Community Development,
Skyla Federal Credit Union

Roderick Harvey, Owner and Founder, StarStruck™ and Author, "The Favored Felon"

Q&A with Roderick Harvey - Manuel Dudley, Ph.D. '11, Chief Officer, Strategic and Industry Partnerships,
Guilford Technical Community College

11:45-11:50 A.M.

Sponsor Spotlight and Announcements

11:50 A.M. - 1:25 P.M.

Lunch and Special Presentations

Remarks & Introductions - Leonardo Williams, Mayor of Durham

Blackstone Launchpad: Student Service and Student Development through Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Antwon Foreman '13 - Professor of Entrepreneurship, Willie A. Deese College of Business and Economics and Director, Blackstone Entrepreneurship Launchpad, North Carolina A&T State University

A&T Student Participants:

Nhojony Torres '26
Arielle Primus '26

Patrick Cooper '27
Philemon Emmanuel '26

Aggie Innovators Pitch Challenge

Sean G. L. Johnson, Director of the Center of Excellence in Entrepreneurship and Innovation, North Carolina A&T State University

A&T Student Participants:

Justice Watson
Anjali Kumari

Isaac Lewis
Cori Brown

Guest Judges:

Kwame Molden '09, Co-Founder and President of Spring Break (SPGBK) Watches

Geoff Foster '90 & '96, CEO and President, Core Technology Molding Corporation

Catherine Edmonds, Ph.D. '92, Interim Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost, North Carolina A&T State University

1:25-1:30 p.m.

Sponsor Spotlight

1:30-2:30 pm

Panel: Measuring Impact: NC A&T's Role in Promoting Regional Economic Development and Innovation

Introduction – **Mac Sims '74** President, East Greensboro NOW

Moderator/Speaker: Alfredo Romero, Ph.D., Associate Professor/Chairperson, Willie A. Deese College of Business and Economics, North Carolina A&T State University

Panelists:

Cephas B. Naanwaab, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Willie A. Deese College of Business and Economics, North Carolina A&T State University

Kenrett Jefferson-Moore, Ph.D., Professor & Chairperson, College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, North Carolina A&T State University

2:30-2:45 p.m.

Break (15 minutes)

2:45-3:45 pm

Sponsor Spotlight

Michelle Eley, Ph.D., '96, Assistant Professor of Practice - Community & Economic Development, Cooperative Extension at North Carolina A&T State University

Afternoon Keynote Speaker

Introduction of Afternoon Keynote Speaker

Willie A. Deese '77, retired pharmaceutical executive of Merck & Co., Inc. and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Pharmaceuticals, PLC

Kwame Molden '09, Co-Founder and President of Spring Break (SPGBK) Watches

Q&A with Kwame Molden and Willie A. Deese

3:45 - 4 p.m.

Wrap-Up & Closing Remarks

Lovelle McMichael, M.Div., M.Ed., Director of Community Engagement, North Carolina A&T State University

Immediately after the Summit ends
Mix 'n Mingle Networking Mixer with **Victor Solomon '22**
Seen on NBC The Voice and ABC American Idol

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP



JAMES R. MARTIN II, PH.D.

James R. Martin II, Ph.D., was elected the 13th chancellor of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University on June 21, 2024, by a unanimous vote of the University of North Carolina System Board of Governors, following his nomination by UNC System President Peter Hans.

Under his leadership, North Carolina A&T has continued to America's top producer of African-American STEM graduates, engineers and agricultural scientists and to play a singular role in representation of Black professionals in the knowledge economy. Chancellor Martin presides over America's largest historically Black university, with the largest student body ever enrolled at any of the nation's more than 100 HBCUs.

He came to N.C. A&T following service as vice chancellor for STEM Research and Innovation at the University of Pittsburgh, where he drove initiatives ranging from developing the university's STEM landscape to leading research strategy and development for Pitt's four regional campuses around Pennsylvania.

Focused on enhancing Pitt's \$1.3 billion research portfolio and expanding STEM access, he led collaborations that foster research growth, built innovation ecosystems and connected rural areas to city centers via urban-rural research bridges. As a senior advisor and thought leader, he influenced national action from the White House to major funding agencies to think tanks. He was a board member for Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority and a foundational advisor for Neighborhood 91 at Pittsburgh International Airport.

Before his vice chancellor role, Martin served Pittsburgh as the U.S. Steel Dean of Engineering. Under his leadership, Pitt's Swanson School of Engineering achieved unprecedented milestones, logging record research expenditures, doctoral and first-year student enrollment and diversity in faculty and student representation. He also led the Swanson School to best-ever retention and graduation rates and annual giving participation rates, as well as ushering in novel industry and government partnerships, including relationships with national labs. He played a pivotal role in the university's COVID-19 response, co-chairing the central task force with the provost.

Prior to Pittsburgh, Martin was Clemson University's Bob Benmosche Professor and Chair of the Glenn Department of Civil Engineering. In that role, he led development of new curricula and degree programs, fostered record research growth and produced innovative industry partnerships. He also served as founding director of the Risk Engineering and Systems Analytics Institute, a pioneering collaboration between academia and industry.

Martin began his career with more than two decades at Virginia Tech as a professor of civil engineering and six years as a university center director. He built an international reputation for his work in geotechnical earthquake and risk engineering, research that had a significant impact on national building codes. Leading global field teams following major earthquakes, Martin contributed to field studies in Turkey, Japan and throughout the United States while serving as director of the Disaster Risk Management Institute at Virginia Tech.

Martin earned a B.S. in civil engineering from The Citadel. He completed M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in civil engineering at Virginia Tech. He has received numerous national, state, and university awards for research, teaching, scholarship, and service, including the American Society of Civil Engineer's Norman Medal, the highest honor for published work in his field. He has provided international engineering consulting for nearly 100 firms and government agencies on major infrastructure projects.

In 2025, Martin was elected chair of the National Science Foundation's Committee on Equal Opportunity in Science and Engineering. He was also inducted into Virginia Tech's Civil Engineering Department's Academy of Distinguished Alumni. His dedication to broadening participation, as well as fostering innovative collaborations and regional engagement, continues to shape STEM education, research and innovation.

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP



CATHERINE EDMONDS, ED.D. '92

Catherine Edmonds, Ed.D. '92, an established leader in public and higher education, serves as interim provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, her alma mater. She assumed the role on July 1, 2025.

As the university's chief academic officer, Edmonds oversees academic and student success operations across 22 units, including N.C. A&T's 11 colleges and schools, supporting the institution's land-grant mission and continued status as the nation's largest historically Black university.

Edmonds brings more than 30 years of experience in North Carolina's public education system, including a decade of leadership across the University of North Carolina System and the N.C. Department of Public Instruction. She previously served as interim chancellor of Elizabeth City State University (ECSU), where she led the university to record enrollment gains, including its largest entering and transfer classes in more than a decade.

Prior to ECSU, Edmonds served as chief of staff at North Carolina Central University, where she advised and supported the chancellor on strategic initiatives, managed daily operations for the Office of the Chancellor and represented the institution in key leadership forums. She also served as deputy state superintendent at the Department of Public Instruction, where she spearheaded statewide efforts to advance educational equity, inclusion and student achievement across North Carolina's K-12 system.

Her career also includes roles as superintendent of Bertie County Schools and Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools, director of Educational Leadership and Development for the UNC System, and executive coach with NC State University's Northeast Leadership Academy.

A sought-after speaker and thought leader, Edmonds has presented at national and regional conferences on topics including educational equity, diversity in leadership, pandemic learning recovery and the economic impact of HBCUs.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in mathematics education from N.C. A&T, and both a Master of School Administration and Doctor of Education in educational leadership from North Carolina State University.

Edmonds serves on the boards of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association, the N.C. State Education Assistance Authority and the Regional Education Laboratory Southeast. She also previously served on the advisory board for A&T's College of Education.

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP



WILLIE A. DEESE '77

Willie A. Deese '77 is a proud champion of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and a retired pharmaceutical executive from Merck & Co., Inc., a global leader in healthcare.

Deese is a highly accomplished senior executive with an extensive background in Fortune 200 leadership. Over the course of his career, he has actively engaged with corporate boards as a senior leader at Merck and GlaxoSmithKline and currently serves as a director on four domestic and international company boards, with significant participation in audit, governance, and compensation committees. With 39 years of experience in manufacturing, supply chain, and procurement management, he has successfully led complex organizational restructurings, productivity initiatives, turnarounds, consolidations, and integrations. He is widely recognized for cultivating healthy, engaged corporate cultures with a focus on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) standards, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, succession planning, compensation strategy, and leadership development.

During his 12-year tenure at Merck, Deese served as President of Merck Manufacturing, where he oversaw global manufacturing, supply chain management, logistics and distribution, procurement, and Lean Six Sigma. He managed 42 manufacturing sites (98 at the time of a merger) across 30 countries, with responsibility for an annual operating budget of \$9 billion and a capital budget of \$2 billion. He originally joined Merck in 2004 as Senior Vice President of Global Procurement.

Prior to Merck, Deese was Senior Vice President of Global Procurement and Logistics, GMS at GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals, PLC, where he developed and integrated the Procurement function following a major merger and led a cost-improvement initiative exceeding \$1 billion.

Deese earned his MBA from Western New England University and his B.S. in Business Administration from North Carolina A&T State University. He has been honored with multiple degrees, including an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities from North Carolina A&T in 2011 and an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Davidson College in 2021. In 2020, North Carolina A&T named its College of Business and Economics in his honor.

In 2022, Deese was appointed to President Biden's Advisory Board on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Over the past 22 years, he and his wife have provided more than 300 full and partial scholarships to A&T business students. He has mentored and coached countless others over the past 25 years and has been a steadfast advocate for hiring and developing HBCU graduates in corporate America.

Most recently, in 2023, Deese was awarded the Distinguished Citizenship Award by the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce in recognition of his leadership, philanthropy, and enduring impact.

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP



LOVELLE MCMICHAEL, M.DIV., M.ED.

Lovelle McMichael, M.Div., M.Ed. is the director of community engagement at North Carolina A&T State University. McMichael previously served as the assistant director of the Center for Community Engagement at High Point University. There, he oversaw the student-led volunteer center, was the program director for the AmeriCorps VISTA cohort, and collaborated with more than 14 community partners within the city of High Point. He previously managed Turning Point Youth Facility, a comprehensive residential program which integrated prevention and intervention services for young men in foster care. He is also the senior pastor of Greater New Hope Baptist Church in High Point, N.C. He serves as a commissioner on the One High Point Commission, which seeks reparations for African American citizens of High Point.

McMichael earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Millersville University, a master's degree in secondary education from the University of Phoenix, and a teaching certificate in African American Studies from the Arizona Department of Education. He also holds a master's degree in divinity from Wake Forest University School of Divinity and completed the Chaplain Residency Program at Moses Cone Hospital in 2022. Currently, he is in his third year pursuing a Ph.D. in leadership studies at North Carolina A&T.



OLIVER THOMAS, PH.D. '06

Oliver M. Thomas, Ph.D. '06, is the associate vice chancellor of external affairs at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. He is a gifted servant-leader with 17+ years of experience in preparing future leaders, strategic planning, and community building in the public and ecclesial sector. He has held roles in higher education as a faculty member and administrator.

Prior to serving over external affairs, Thomas taught African American History in the Department of History and Political Science at North Carolina A&T. As the AVC of External Affairs, his primary responsibility is to develop and enhance relationships with local, regional, state, federal, and elected officials, as well as key stakeholders, alumni, and the community at large. He strives to promote North Carolina A&T so that representatives and leaders have a greater understanding of the university's values and its impact on the City of Greensboro, the State of North Carolina, the United States, and the world.

Thomas holds a bachelor's degree in political science from North Carolina A&T, a master's degree in divinity from Wake Forest University, and a Doctor of Philosophy in educational studies with a concentration in cultural foundations from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

MORNING KEYNOTE SPEAKER



RODERICK HARVEY

A true son of Memphis, **Roderick Harvey** is no stranger to conflict—or to God. His life is a testament to the delicate tension between heeding divine instruction and resisting it. For years, he navigated the chaos of his own choices, often running from the very purpose he was destined to fulfill.

It wasn't until a deferred prison sentence placed him on probation that he reached a defining crossroads in his life. In that moment of forced stillness, Roderick's purpose was not only revealed but also incubated and refined.

Today, Roderick stands as the visionary behind The Starstruck Collection, a multimillion-dollar fashion brand that has captured the attention of tastemakers and trendsetters alike. His journey from adversity to achievement has uniquely positioned him to offer coaching and mentorship to aspiring designers—helping them not only launch their brands, but also transform them into profitable, purpose-driven enterprises.

Above all, Roderick is a man of faith. He firmly believes that his life's calling extends far beyond success in business; it is rooted in service to others. Through the wisdom forged by his trials and the strength gained from his testimony, he has made it his mission to empower others to rise above their circumstances, walk boldly in their purpose, and experience the power of redemption through his book, "The Favored Felon."

Roderick Harvey's story is not just about overcoming adversity—it is a living example of how faith and resilience can transform the impossible into the inevitable.

AFTERNOON KEYNOTE SPEAKER



KWAME MOLDEN '09

Kwame Molden '09 is the co-founder and president of Springbreak (SPGBK) Watches, a North Carolina-based designer watch brand celebrated for its stylish, colorful, and affordable timepieces that carry cultural and community impact at their core.

Inspired by his Fayetteville upbringing, childhood experiences, and a deep passion for education, Molden created SPGBK to reflect the vibrancy of community and culture. Each watch and band is symbolic, named in honor of schools and neighborhoods in his hometown. Under his leadership, SPGBK has grown into a nationally recognized brand with distribution in more than 350 stores, including Nordstrom, Macy's, Belk, and Nordstrom Rack.

The brand's momentum has earned widespread recognition, including being named one of Oprah's Favorite Things in 2023 and receiving features in Good Morning America, Oprah Daily, The New York Times, AfroTech, and other major outlets. Molden's commitment to giving back is equally impactful—through SPGBK's Annual School Giving Program, he has donated more than \$35,000 worth of watches to educators and staff across the country, including his alma mater, E.E. Smith High School.

Beyond entrepreneurship, Molden brings over a decade of experience as a senior process engineer, where he has led operational improvements, technology solutions, and project management initiatives for Fortune 100 companies in finance and retail. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology from North Carolina A&T State University in 2009 and an MBA in Marketing from UNC Charlotte in 2012.

LIVE PERFORMER



VICTOR SOLOMON '22

Victor Solomon '22 is a talented singer, performer and creative visionary originally from Chicago, Illinois. At a young age, he relocated to Peoria, Illinois, where he discovered his passion for music and performance. Growing up, he honed his craft by singing in church and participating in school choirs, experiences that laid the foundation for his artistic journey.

Solomon pursued higher education at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, where he immersed himself in leadership, service and music. During his time at A&T, he was deeply involved in campus life, serving as an Aggie Success Leader, a member of both the Gospel and University Choirs, and holding several prestigious titles, including Mr. 1913, Mister North Carolina A&T State University and 17th Mister HBCU. He became a Spring 2020 initiate of the Beta Epsilon Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Solomon graduated in 2022 with degrees in business management and musical performance.

He rose to national prominence through his television appearances. In 2021, he competed on Season 20 of NBC's *The Voice*, earning a spot on Team Legend and finishing as a Top 5 finalist. Building on that success, he later competed on Season 23 of *American Idol*, where he placed in the Top 20.

Now based in Los Angeles, Solomon is pursuing his career full time as a freelance artist, with ambitions to record new music, launch his own record label, host live events and expand into acting, both in feature films and on Broadway. His journey reflects an unwavering dedication to excellence and a commitment to inspiring others through his artistry.

MODERATORS AND PANELISTS

Panel: Legacy in Motion: Reentry Pathways to Workforce and Community Impact



MELISSA SLADE SMITH '12

Melissa Slade Smith '12 is the director of workforce development solutions at the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, where she leads initiatives that unite business, education, government and community partners to strengthen the workforce and foster inclusive economic growth. She has played a key role in attracting businesses, creating jobs and positioning Greensboro as a hub of opportunity. Through the Workforce GSO Collective, she expands apprenticeships and workforce pathways for reentry populations, refugees, immigrants and veterans.

In 2025, Smith partnered with HondaJet, Guilford County Schools and the Greensboro Swarm to launch the region's first STEMfest, drawing more than 5,000 families and 100 community partners. A North Carolina A&T alumna, she is pursuing a master's degree in training and development at North Carolina State University and frequently shares her expertise at state and national conferences.

A survivor of domestic violence, Smith channels her experience into advocacy and mentorship. She serves on the boards of the Southeastern Employment and Training Association (SETA), The Forge Makerspace Greensboro and Reading Connections, and is active in Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and Trinity AME Zion Church. Named one of the Triad Business Journal's Top 25 Outstanding Women in Business (2024), she lives in Greensboro with her husband, Brad, and their sons, William and Langston.

MODERATORS AND PANELISTS



JESSICA SCHULTZ

With more than 25 years of nonprofit leadership experience, **Jessica Schultz** serves as vice president of career development services for Goodwill Industries of Central North Carolina. After earning her bachelor's degree in social work, she began her career supporting at-risk youth in Washington state.

Since joining the Goodwill network in 2005, Schultz has spearheaded disability employment and training programs, elevating outcomes and revenue across a 13-county region. Promoted to senior mission leader, she continued to expand workforce initiatives and drive impact across the organization.

Schultz earned her MBA in 2015 and later relocated to North Carolina, where she joined Triad Goodwill to lead innovative career development strategies. Active in her community, she serves on several boards, including the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater High Point. She resides in Asheboro, North Carolina, with her husband and two daughters.



LaQUINTA DOWNEY

LaQuinta Downey is a proud native of Oxford, North Carolina, and a graduate of J.F. Webb High School. With more than 17 years of dedicated service to justice-involved individuals, she currently serves as the reentry coordinator for the Guilford County Local Reentry Council under StepUp Greensboro. In this role, Downey leads collaborative initiatives that reduce recidivism, enhance public safety and strengthen networks of support for successful community reintegration.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in business management with a minor in human resources management from Guilford College, as well as a certificate in accounting systems technology from Brookstone College of Business. Downey is also a certified peer support specialist and community health ambassador, bringing both professional expertise and lived empathy to her work.

Her career includes impactful roles in law firms assisting individuals with criminal and civil cases. Downey also spent more than 12 years with the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction at Orange Correctional Center, a minimum-security facility for adult men. Since 2021, she has been a driving force behind Guilford County's reentry efforts, building bridges between agencies, stakeholders and the individuals they serve.

A proud Granville County native, Downey is the devoted mother of two children and the joyful grandmother of one grandson. She finds fulfillment in spending time with her family, traveling and giving back through her church and community service.

2025 COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMIT



DAVID WILLIAMS

David Williams, a Greensboro native, is the owner and president of Lorac Academy Truck Driving School, which operates in Guilford and Durham counties. Deeply committed to reentry initiatives in Guilford County, Williams understands firsthand the challenges individuals face when reintegrating after incarceration.

Through his family-owned business, he has created pathways to meaningful employment for formerly incarcerated individuals, helping to expand opportunities and reduce recidivism. Williams' leadership reflects his dedication to community empowerment and economic mobility through workforce development.



SHAWN JACKSON

Shawn Jackson, originally from Queens, New York, discovered his passion for community service early in life. After relocating to North Carolina and joining the Gate City team as a supervisor, he gained valuable experience that inspired him to establish his own nonprofit focused on mentorship.

Jackson later launched a company centered around entertainment and family engagement, creating opportunities to connect people and strengthen the community—all while serving as a maintenance technician for more than 13 years.

Recently, Jackson began a new career with Triad Adult and Pediatric Medicine, where he is eager to contribute his skills, collaborate with colleagues and continue serving the community. In addition to his professional work, he is a talented musician and has performed as a professional drummer for more than 15 years. Jackson brings the same rhythm, energy and creativity that define his music to his mission of community service.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS BY AGGIE STUDENT ENTREPRENEURS



ANTWON FOREMAN '13

Antwon Foreman '13 is an accomplished educator, entrepreneur and strategist with deep expertise in business scaling, innovation and economic activation. He currently serves as a professor of entrepreneurship and management at North Carolina A&T State University, where he has designed and taught a wide range of experiential business courses and led study abroad ventures to four countries, combining international immersion with entrepreneurial execution.

In addition to his academic leadership, Foreman is the founding director of the A&T Blackstone LaunchPad, where he has secured more than \$1 million in funding, created 52 student-run businesses that have collectively generated over \$5 million in revenue and helped more than 380 students secure six-figure job offers within the past three years. As network lead of the Blackstone LaunchPad HBCU Initiative, he oversees national engagement across 11 HBCUs and develops programming that has reached over 40,000 students. His lectures and programs have attracted participants from more than 30 universities.

Foreman holds an MBA in sales leadership and sales management from High Point University and dual bachelor's degrees in business management (with a concentration in innovation and entrepreneurship) and marketing from North Carolina A&T State University. He also brings more than 15 years of consulting and entrepreneurial experience as CEO of Support-U, a company he founded as a student at North Carolina A&T. He has guided more than 3,000 businesses across seven countries, worked with major organizations including USAA, Pepsi, the U.S. Department of Defense and H&R Block, and led projects in strategic planning, innovation strategy, commercialization, growth hacking and social entrepreneurship.

A recognized thought leader, Foreman has spoken at national and international conferences including SXSW, Morehouse College's Global Social Justice Summit, JFF Horizons, the Department of Defense Innovation Symposium, HBCU Empower, Sol Plaatje Entrepreneurship Week (South Africa), E-Live, SXSW EDU and the Defense Innovation Unit Critical Resource Summit. His work continues to drive innovation, equity and student success through strategic partnerships, entrepreneurial training and a steadfast commitment to economic and social mobility.



SEAN G. L. JOHNSON

Sean G. L. Johnson, a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, is a versatile and innovative professional with proven expertise in business development, financial administration and project management.

Johnson holds a Master of Arts in ministerial leadership from Wesleyan Seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University, a Master of Management from Northwestern University and a Bachelor of Arts in banking and finance from Morehouse College.

He played a pivotal role at Cincinnati State's Workforce Development Center, where he helped launch and manage IT noncredit accelerated courses. For five years, he also led the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program at Cincinnati State, a world-class learning experience designed to help entrepreneurs grow revenue and create jobs across the region.

An avid lifelong learner, Johnson holds multiple industry-recognized credentials, including PMI Agile Certified Practitioner (PMI-ACP), ITIL Foundations, and other professional certifications that reflect his commitment to continuous growth and excellence.

MODERATORS AND PANELISTS

Panel: Measuring Impact: NC A&T's Role in Promoting Regional Economic Development and Innovation



ALFREDO A. ROMERO, PH.D.

Alfredo A. Romero, Ph.D. serves as chair of the Department of Economics in the Willie A. Deese College of Business and Economics at North Carolina A&T State University. He previously worked as a senior economist with the Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress, where he provided economic analysis and policy insights to federal lawmakers.

Dr. Romero has also been a member of the Wall Street Journal's Panel of Economic Forecasters and the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia's Survey of Professional Forecasters, contributing expertise on national trends in growth, employment and inflation.

At North Carolina A&T, he co-leads the university's Economic Impact Analysis, measuring A&T's contributions to the state and regional economy. His broader research explores foreign direct investment and its links to growth, culture and inequality, as well as the relationship between the yield curve, unemployment and inflation, and the dynamics of self-employment during recessions. Dr. Romero has presented his work at national and international conferences and published in both economics and interdisciplinary journals. In addition to his scholarship, he is deeply committed to advancing regional economic development through collaboration with colleagues, community leaders and industry partners to examine how innovation, investment and workforce strategies can generate long-term growth in the Piedmont Triad and beyond.



CEPHAS B. NAANWAAB, PH.D.

Cephas B. Naanwaab, Ph.D. is an associate professor of economics in the Willie A. Deese College of Business and Economics at North Carolina A&T State University. His research focuses on housing affordability, economic inequality and regional and international economic development, with applied expertise in economic impact analysis.

Dr. Naanwaab co-authored the university's economic impact study, which found that North Carolina A&T generates \$2.4 billion in annual economic activity statewide. He is a frequent contributor to local media, providing insight on current economic issues affecting the Piedmont Triad and the state of North Carolina. His consulting experience includes conducting impact analyses for organizations such as Nestlé Purina, Triad Goodwill Industries and the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce. Dr. Naanwaab earned a Ph.D. in applied economics with a minor in statistics and a master's degree in economics from Auburn University.



KENRETT JEFFERSON-MOORE, PH.D.

Kenrett Jefferson-Moore, Ph.D. is a professor and chair of the Department of Agribusiness, Applied Economics and Agriscience Education (AAEAE) and serves as director of the Agriculture Business Innovation Center at A&T. Since 2019, she has led the department's academic, research and operational initiatives, advancing innovation in agriculture and applied economics.

Her research focuses on the economic and market evaluation of local and organic foods, value-added agriculture and specialty crops. She collaborates extensively with 1890 and 1862 land-grant institutions and USDA agencies. Dr. Jefferson-Moore also serves as chair and 1890 representative on the USDA NAREEE Advisory Board (2017–2020; reappointed 2022–2025) and chairs the Southern Extension and Research Activity (SERA-47), a multi-state initiative addressing food system challenges in the South.

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



Melvin "Skip" Alston
Chair, Guilford County Board
of Commissioners, District 8



Allyson Cobb '10
Director of External
Partnerships,
North Carolina A&T
State University



**Manuel Dudley,
Ph.D. '11**
Chief Officer, Strategic and
Industry Partnerships,
Guilford Technical
Community College



**Michelle Eley,
Ph.D. '96**
Assistant Professor of
Practice - Community &
Economic Development,
Cooperative Extension
at N.C. A&T



Geoff Foster '90 & '96
CEO and President,
Core Technology
Molding Corporation



J. Carlvena Foster
Vice Chair, Guilford County
Board of Commissioners,
District 1, and
Senior Vice President,
Carl Chavis YMCA



Leslie A. Garvin
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North Carolina Campus
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**Bryle H. Hatch,
Ph.D. '08, '10, '18**
Senior Deputy Director
– Division of Human
Resources, NC Department
of Health and Human
Services



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NOW



Amos Quick, III
N.C. House of Representatives,
Democratic Whip,
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Nancy B. Vaughan
Mayor of Greensboro



Allison Walker
Director of Community
Partnerships and
Experiential Learning,
Wake Forest University



Leonardo Williams
Mayor of Durham

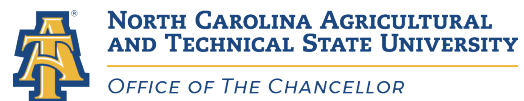
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