

2022 Carolinas Youth Mentoring Symposium

Opening Plenary

Youth Power: Leadership in Action

How can we hold the space for youth in program organization, operation, and planning? How can we ensure that youth opinions are taken seriously and valued? Participants will be introduced to youth-centered goal setting while learning about youth leadership from local youth leaders and how to make yourself heard in grown-up spaces.

Goals

1. Participants introduced to youth-centered goal setting
2. Participants learn about youth in leadership, planning

Speakers

★ Sonali Ratnasinghe, Executive Director, General Services Foundation



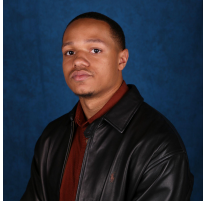
- Sonali Ratnasinghe is a freshman at UNC Chapel Hill and the founder of [General Services Foundation](#), a 501(c)3 teaching youth how to get involved in service at a young age. As the Executive Director, she works with students around Wake County to guide them through service projects impacting any of 40 local nonprofits they can support. Sonali is also the youngest board member of Activate Good, mobilizing the community for people-powered projects for good and is the 2022 Wake County Medallion Award Winner of the Governor's Volunteer Service Award.

★ DeLeon Gray, Founder & CEO, Black and Belonging



- DeLeon Gray is CEO of Black and Belonging (www.blackandbelonging.com) and an associate professor of educational psychology and equity at North Carolina State University, where he has developed three new doctoral courses on School Belonging, Equity-Focused Quantitative Methods and Community-Engaged Approaches to Educational Research. He is enthusiastic about working jointly with education stakeholders to disrupt structural aspects of schooling environments that leave historically marginalized student groups vulnerable to anxieties about belonging.

★ Jaylen Segers, Youth Project Assistant, City of Durham Office on Youth



- Jaylen Segers is a senior at North Carolina Central University, where he majors in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing. He is from Creedmoor, North Carolina. Jaylen has worked and gone to school in Durham his whole life. He has primarily worked in local government. For the past three years he has worked for the City of Durham Office on Youth as a Youth Project Assistant. A huge component of Jaylen's work has been centered around community engagement--specifically supporting young people, families and caregivers. Jaylen loves to communicate, engage, and interact with people. He envisions a career focused around marketing and communications focusing on relationship building within the community. Jaylen also has an interest around strategic planning while cultivating new and creative ideas.

★ Justice Skinner, Board Member, Youth Mentoring Collaborative



- Justice Skinner is in his third year at North Carolina State University, majoring in Animal Science; he plans to attend veterinary school upon completion of his B.S. Currently, Justice serves as a Youth Board Member at Youth Mentoring Collaborative. In his spare time, he enjoys archery, cooking, photography, and traveling. One of his professional and personal passions is working with youth in mentoring and advocacy capacities.

Morning Sessions (11:00am - 12:15pm)

Professional Track: Maintaining Equity and Authenticity in Storytelling

How can you tell a story that engages the audience and is authentic to your organization's brand? In what ways can you utilize storytelling to uplift equity? In this session, we will explore these questions with two Durham-based organizations that helped Youth Mentoring Collaborative come to life: Kompleks Creative and Pivot Point Media. We told a pretty incredible story through their internal activities and our mutual collaboration. Learn how to tell your own story in a meaningful, enjoyable, and accessible way, while gaining the skills you need to better articulate your work.

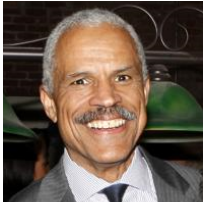
Goals

1. Participants see compelling examples of strong organizational storytelling
2. Participants walk gain skills to better articulate their work

Speakers

★ Gil Fitts, Founder, Pivot Point Media

- Guilford Fitts is the President of [Pivot Point Media](https://www.pivotpointmedia.com/), a marketing and creative services firm, and leads the company's client development and project



management efforts. Founded in 2010, the award-winning Pivot Point Media specializes in health, education and social empowerment campaigns as a certified vendor with Duke University Hospital System, Johns Hopkins University, The Maya Angelou Center, North Carolina A&T University, Durham County and several nonprofits. Now primarily serving as “the bridge between clients and the creatives”, Gil Fitts has been the project manager and executive producer of compelling television and radio commercials, short and long form documentaries and online video campaigns. Gil is a proud resident and advocate of the Bull City, a graduate of Cornell University, where he received his bachelor’s degree in Communication Arts and blessed as husband to his high school sweetheart.

★ Tobias Rose, Principal & Founder, Kompleks Creative



- Principal and creative director of [Kompleks Creative](#), Tobias Rose, leads his creative agency in Durham beyond conventional boundaries. This creative and innovative "mastermind," started his business from his dorm room at North Carolina Central University, and now works with hundreds of clients nationwide.

Professional Track: Preparing Your Organization for Critical Mentoring

Discussions of culturally-relevant mentoring and honoring youth voice and identity has come to the forefront of discussions in the mentoring community recently. But is your program just checking a box or is it truly adding value in this area? To what extent is your organization prepared to implement critical perspectives into program operations?

In this workshop, participants will go beyond discussions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and instead focus on Critical Mentoring—practical methods mentoring programs can implement that invite youth, families, and community members into program operations that demonstrate and foster accountability to the communities being served.

Goal

1. Participants will learn methods to implement Critical-Mentoring into their organizations

Speaker

★ **Barbara Jessie-Black, President & CEO of CommunityWorx; Board Chair at Youth Mentoring Collaborative**

- Barbara Jessie-Black received her BBA from Augusta University in Augusta, GA. During her 15 year career as a retail manager with a national retail chain, Barbara



received her MBA from Meredith College, in Raleigh, NC and became co-founder of a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to search for innovative ways to achieve socio-economic equalities in communities through holistic and entrepreneurship based education. Currently, Barbara is the President/CEO of CommunityWorx (formerly the PTA Thrift Shop, Inc.) whose mission is to enrich lives by building collaborative partnerships and transforming charitable donations into educational and community investments. She is active in both the communities in which she lives and works by serving on several boards and volunteering her time to causes close to her heart, which include workforce and economic development; access to health care; issues of equity, diversity and inclusion, as well as other issues in the social justice space. She is fluent in German, a yoga enthusiast, and includes in her spiritual practice daily meditation and annual silent retreats.

Professional Track: Joy as a Radical Framework for Helping Professionals

People in helping professions are notorious for neglecting themselves in pursuit of “the work”. The work becomes the source of all their stress, and the effects are even worse if the workplace itself is stressful.

But what happens when we center joy in the work we do? How can helping professionals use the power of mindsets to positively impact their mission work? How can employers build a culture of Joy? Join us for a conversation about intentionally holding space for joy.

Goals

1. Explore the impact of stress on work performance, workplace culture, and outcomes for people served by helping professionals.
2. Learn strategies that are proven to foster joy in every facet of life

Speaker

★ Kanalyn Jackson, Vice President of Training and Organization Development

- Kanalyn Jackson (she/her/hers) is a Durham native with a background in higher education. She has extensive experience with leadership development, training and facilitation, and community engagement. Kanalyn has also worked in the non-profit sector providing leadership opportunities and resources to residents in rural North Carolina. It was through that experience that she learned the value of being civically engaged in the community, and it is something that has become important in her career and personal life. Kanalyn holds a B.A in English Literature and Masters of Education from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. She



enjoys interior decorating, spending time with friends and family, and the occasional candle making.

Youth Track: Youth-Accessible Entrepreneurship: Skills, Stories, and Strategies

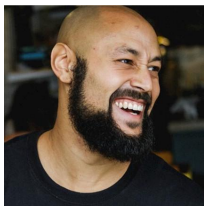
Entrepreneurship sounds like peaches and gravy but can be hard when you get down to the brass tacks. How exactly do you start a business, anyways? Learn from Durham locals who exemplify black success and business ownership about the ups and downs of starting an entrepreneurial venture. We will explore the basic foundations of entrepreneurship and engage in an activity to show you that, in the end, business ownership isn't that scary.

Goals

1. Participants learn the ups and downs of starting an entrepreneurial venture
2. Participants engage in a fun interactive activity related to entrepreneurship

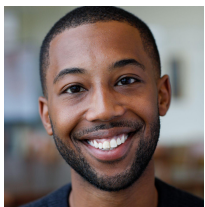
Speakers

★ Justin Minott, Community Builder, Provident1898



- Justin Minott is an international impact-amplifier, author, speaker, investor, entrepreneur, and business coach who is passionate about helping impactors launch and scale their ventures. Justin is the CEO of [Minott Enterprises](#), the owner of Diaspora House, and the Community Builder at Provident1898. Justin is originally from Canada, though for many years has considered, Durham, NC home for his partner and two daughters.

★ Derek Rhodes, Founder & Executive Director, Durham Success Summit



- Derek Rhodes' professional career has been spent at the intersection of business and community, and his achievements in both are equally significant. As a Black male leader in the corporate world, Derek has an intimate and very much "lived" understanding of the realities of corporate progression as a person of color, and is passionate about inspiring future black leaders to achieve their career aspirations. Before founding the [Durham Success Summit](#), a community organization facilitating education, networking, and workplace opportunities for talented Black men in his hometown, Derek accrued invaluable skills and experience in high-level leadership positions at some of the most recognizable companies in the world including the White House, Google, Microsoft, the Miami Heat, and The Obama Foundation. Derek proudly offers his extensive corporate leadership experience to a number of community organizations including the Duke University Sanford School of Public Policy Board of Visitors, Greater Durham Black Chamber of Commerce Board, and the City of Durham's Racial Equity Commission. Derek

graduated from Duke University with a degree in Public Policy Studies and is also the author of three children's books.

Youth Track: How to Build Relationships to Achieve Your Dreams

What exactly does mentoring mean? Having a go-to person seems like a good idea, but how do you find the right one? This session will explore the best ways to seek out mentoring relationships. Participants will learn how to be better mentees and leverage their mentoring relationship to succeed in their daily life.

Goal

1. Participants learn the skills to seek out mentoring relationships

Speaker

★ Ron Green, President & CEO, Boys & Girls Club of the Tar River Region

- Ron Green began his 20 year career with the Boys & Girls Clubs of North MS. Ron serves on several local, regional, and national boards. Locally he is the Past President of the Rotary Club of Rocky Mount and a Paul Harris Fellow. Nationally he serves as the Dean of the Society of African American Professionals. Ron also serves on the President of Boys & Girls Clubs of America's National Advisory Council and the Board of Directors for the Professional Association of Boys & Girls Clubs workers. He has a certificate of completion for Performance Measurement for Effective Management of Nonprofit Organizations from the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Executive Education at Harvard University. Ron is also a Six Sigma Green Belt. He is a proud member of the Kappa Alpha Psi, Fraternity Inc. Ron attended Stamford University in Birmingham, where he played baseball and football and served in the school Senate. After college he started his five-year professional baseball career in the Chicago Cubs organization. He later graduated from Bethel University in McKenzie, TN. Ron is currently the Chief Executive Officer for the [Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tar River Region](#). He is a National Training Associate for Boys & Girls Clubs of America and a certified Games Master. He lives in Rocky Mount, NC with his wife Robbie. Together they have two children, Channing and London, both students at N.C. A&T.



Youth Track: So, You Want to Work in the Music Industry?

Becoming a musician is the dream of many. But what if you love music and don't want to be a musician or performer? In this session, we will explore the logistical details of the types of careers that are available within and adjacent to the music industry. Participants will hear from a panel of

professionals working in a wide array of music-oriented roles and participate in round-table discussions.

Goal

1. Participants will learn about the process of pursuing a career in music and see real-life examples (roundtable discussions)

Speakers

★ Lord Fess, Musician



- [Lord Fess](#), a Durham, NC artist and producer combines intricate detail in lyricism with a sharp delivery and niche cadences over a buffet of smooth, 808-heavy sonic backdrops. Fess attended Durham School of the Arts but dropped out and chose to pursue a street education instead. Fess' music is full of self-reflection, social commentary, anger and confidence and his live show is energetic, captivating and emotional, yet participatory. Fess has opened for multiple national acts on tour across all genres, and recently had a "Rising Rap" mention in the legendary Rolling Stone Magazine.

★ Shana Tucker, Executive Director, Kidznotes



- Shana Tucker is a renowned cellist, singer-songwriter, and teaching artist who embodies the nonprofit's mission to change lives and communities through the power of music. Tucker is a proven leader and advocate whose work with A+ Schools of North Carolina, Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts, United Arts Council of Raleigh and Wake County, and Durham Arts Council has prepared her to offer keen insight into the organization's core program. Tucker is a remarkable talent who has crisscrossed the globe performing her trademarked ChamberSoul. In between a breakout album and lengthy tenure as resident cellist and vocalist for Cirque du Soleil's KÀ in Las Vegas, Tucker has advocated for future generations of music makers through outreach and engagement efforts with students of all ages. Despite not having seen a cellist who looked like her until she reached her twenties, Tucker benefitted from an era when public school music programs were heavily funded, readily available, and robust—and never looked back. Tucker's eagerness to advance [Kidznotes'](#) philosophy of collaboration, inspiration, and change is evidenced by her quick smiles when discussing the opportunity. "As parents," she says, "we see the impact music has on a child's life, and how that transformative power spills out into the community." She continues, "I've witnessed it in all phases of my life in a cycle: as a shy orchestra kid, touring musician, teaching artist, and now, as Executive Director of an organization that centers the power of music to enact change." At Kidznotes, she is inspired by the opportunity to provide music education to students who need it most. Noting that,

“Our work is holding space for future generations to create art in perpetuity, no matter who or what you decide to become professionally. You don’t have to be a musician for a living to be a musician for life.”

★ Josh Rowsey aka “Rowdy”, Hip Hop and Education Ph.D. Candidate, UNC Greensboro



- Joshua “Rowdy” Rowsey is an underground North Carolina recording artist, actor/improviser, and writer who has been featured on NPR, DJ Booth, and Indy Week. Joshua is a founding member of the national hip hop collective “No9to5 Music”. He initiated the UNC-Chapel Hill cypher, which was nominated for an Indy Week award for best place to listen to Hip Hop in the Triangle. Durham-based rapper and hip-hop artist Rowdy, known to his friends and family as Kevin Joshua “Josh” Rowsey Jr. is using his music to introduce a bridge for the gaps in a North Carolina still somewhat divided by rampant race and income politics.

★ Bill Murphy, Digital Sales Manager, Urban One, Inc.



- Over the course of a robust career that has included Executive-level training and Professional Certification in a diverse array of marketing disciplines, Bill Murhpy has acquired the expertise necessary to help his clients successfully navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of today’s marketing challenges. Bill’s career has included extensive time with radio, over a decade of talent-buying, and event planning and promotion.

★ Zaid Steele, Student, Shaw University



- Zaid Steele, aka ZPEEZE, is a student at Shaw University and "Ms. CEO" of Who Can Rap On That Beat. They started their business in October 2020, inspired by their grade-school experiences playing various instruments and writing songs. At Shaw University, Zaid is an Ambassador Intern at the Center of Racial Justice. Zaid operates Who Can Rap On That Beat to meet artists, for the culture, and to bring people together with music.

Afternoon Sessions (1:45pm - 3:00pm)

Professional Track: How to Engage: Advocacy and Elected Officials

When trust in our government is low, how can we lean into local politics to make more of a difference in our communities? How can grassroots, small, and local organizations advance their missions through policy? Learn how local organizations and activists can engage politicians at the local and state level to affect support for their work and how we have achieved this historically.

Goals

1. Participants will learn about ways that elected officials across the aisle have supported initiatives related to youth development/mentoring
2. Participants will learn how mentoring programs can engage elected officials at the local and state levels to support their work

Speakers

★ Jamal Stroud, Founder, Big Homie Lil Homie Mentoring



- Jamal Stroud, founder of **Big Homie Lil Homie Mentoring**, a mentoring program for young boys growing up without father figures. On a national level, Jamal works as the Mentor and Outreach Manager for [Camp HOPE America](#), where he provides technical assistance to 40 different programs throughout the United States. Jamal has been recognized locally and nationally for the lasting impact on more than 10,000 youth, offering support and positive male role models for young people in South Carolina. Jamal's personal experience growing up in the foster care system and living in six different homes by the time he was six years old led him to the front lines of improving and advocating for youth. Jamal has been a guest on The Ellen Show and has received numerous awards, including winning the prestigious [Jefferson Award](#) and the Public Elevation from MENTOR.

★ Camille Berry, Mentor, Blue Ribbon Mentor Advocate; Member, Chapel Hill Town Council



- [Camille Berry](#) works as a consultant to both for-profit and nonprofit leaders. She shares with her clients her decades of experience in cultivating relationships that are built upon collaboration, curiosity, and integrity. For nearly seven years, Camille worked with Community Home Trust to secure resources for its work in increasing and maintaining affordable housing. That work was deeply meaningful to Camille as she and her children had faced housing insecurity for several years prior to her joining the nonprofit organization. Previously, Camille served as executive director with Durham Central Park, Inc. where she led a band of volunteers in redeveloping an urban wasteland into green space used for community gathering space — a

result of a public-private partnership. Her vision to create a weekly marketplace destination by closing the street and making it a pedestrian mall on Saturday mornings was a success and continues to grow in attracting locals and visitors. Camille is mother to three adult children (Jasmine, Allegra, and Anthony), an active alumna of Wellesley College, and past president of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Sunrise Rotary Club. A North Carolina native, she returned with her family to her home state and settled in southern Orange County in 2005. All three of her children attended and graduated from Carolina Friends School, a school that was founded to be different by design — purposefully integrated, student-oriented, and radically equal. Continuing the legacy of her ancestors, Camille serves in a variety of ways that foster a sense of belonging through opportunities and fellowship. True to her family's ethos and the mottos of her alma mater and Rotary, Camille has found great purpose in service to her community. That continues with her election to the [Chapel Hill Town Council](#).

★ Jovonia Lewis, Executive Director, EPiC - Empowered Parents in Community; Member, Durham Public Schools Board of Education



- Jovonia Lewis is a nationally certified and licensed clinical mental health counselor (LCMHC). With an undergraduate degree in psychology and human development and family studies from UNC-Greensboro and Master of Science degree in counseling education with a specialization in family therapy from Georgia State University, Jovonia has always been centered around education and a growth mindset to heal, empower and liberate others. Through [EPiC](#), she continues to offer educational opportunities for students and parents, and hosts racial equity conversations and forums for increasing accountability around policy and practice. In addition to the non-profit service, Jovonia has served on the Board of Durham Council PTA, her sons' school's PTA, Durham Public Schools Foundation, Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People's Education Committee and the City of Durham's Race Equity Task Force. She also served on the Equity and Whole Child Advisory Committee for DPS. In 2020, Jovonia campaigned for a seat on the board of education in Durham. She was elected and sworn in as a School Board member with Durham Public School's Board of Education in July 2020.

Professional Track: Collective Impact in Action

More than a buzzword, "collective impact" has evolved into a fully formed framework for creating systems-level change. Join us for a conversation with intentional communities in North and South Carolina that provide a model for creating sustainable change. We'll walk through the five key elements of collective impact (as defined by the Collective Impact Forum), provide key insights into the challenges and rewards of the work, and explore the defining characteristic that

makes collective impact actually succeed. Hint: Equity.

Goals

1. Participants will learn the five key elements of collective impact and how to implement these tools in their organizations

Speakers

★ Nick Allen, Chief Programs Officer, United Way of the Greater Triangle



- Nick Allen works to expose communities to experiences, learning opportunities and skills that empower youth, teens and adults to positively impact the quality life in their homes, neighborhoods and cities. Nick began his journey with [United Way of the Greater Triangle](#) as the Community Impact Director, and was later promoted to Chief Program Officer. Previously, Nick served as the City of Durham's Community Engagement Coordinator.

★ Yvette Holmes, CEO, Southeast Raleigh Promise



- In her role, Yvette is responsible for leading a highly-effective and dedicate team of professionals and overseeing the fiscal and operational management of the organization. [As CEO of a quarterback organization](#), Yvette's work involves shaping and leading strategies, attracting and leveraging investment, building relationships with residents and the community, and cultivating cross-sector partnerships to improve the quality of life and create opportunities for Southeast Raleigh residents, small businesses and non-profits. As a thoughtful leader, Yvette comes to SERP with over 30 years of experience as a nonprofit administrator, fund raiser, and public and civic engagement specialist. As a resident of Southeast Raleigh for over 20 years, Yvette has been instrumental in providing leadership and technical support in the start-up and growth of small non-profits and community-based coalitions focused on improving neighborhoods and addressing the needs of residents. Yvette cares deeply about issues and inequities impacting residents of Southeast Raleigh and views SERP as the conduit through which impactful solutions can be identified and implemented. Yvette attended Morgan State University, where she majored in Computer Science. She later completed her undergraduate studies at William Peace University, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. She returned to her HBCU roots and is now enrolled in the Executive Master of Public Administration Graduate Program at North Carolina Central University. Yvette is married and has three sons and three granddaughters. She enjoys spending time with family, creative writing, and trips to the beach. She believes in hopeful possibilities and in the promise that we hold as individuals and as a community.

★ LeQuandra Ballen, Advocate Program Director, Durham Children's Initiative



- LeQuandra Ballen is currently the Advocate Program Director for [Durham Children's Initiative](#). She provides direct support and supervision to family advocates while supporting and promoting DCI's board and executive strategic vision for the current and future state of the organization as part of the county-wide ecosystem that supports academic, socioemotional, and workforce growth and achievement. LeQuandra comes to DCI with a diverse 23-year career in Social Work and Education. Her mission is to develop leaders, programs, and initiatives that promote and enhance the social, emotional, and educational betterment of youth, families, and communities. She has served in multiple capacities and across multiple systems as a leader of various non-profits in multiple capacities with a focus on gang outreach, juvenile justice, mental health, youth programming, child sexual abuse prevention, advocacy, and racial equity.

Youth Track: Free Period

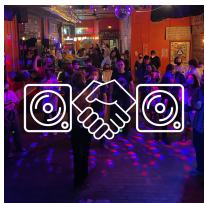
No youth speaker at this time; participants can roam, relax, and try the activities that we will have at various tables around the Friday center.

Goal

1. Youth participants have a chance to engage in activities

Presenters

★ Treee City and Bardo Bloom, Artists and Producers, Blends with Friends



- Blends With Friends is a collective that creates opportunities for people of all ages to learn to DJ and produce music by providing free access to tools and resources. Every first and third Wednesday at The Pinhook in Durham, Blends With Friends hosts a free open decks night where anyone can sign up to play a short set on CDJs, turntables, or their own equipment. Blends With Friends also runs a synthesizer petting zoo at events and operates a free music equipment lending library to give people hands-on experience with music-making tools. At the Carolinas Youth Mentoring Symposium, we'll be running an open decks DJ booth where participants will learn the basics of how to DJ in Traktor and play a short set. Symposium participants include members of Blends with Friends [Patrick Phelps-McKeown aka Treee City](#) and [Peter Daaleman aka Bardo Bloom](#).

Closing Plenary

Healing-Centered Mentoring: An Urgent Conversation

According to new data from the CDC, more than a third of students reported they experienced poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the highest levels coming from BIPOC students. While mentoring programs have historically been relied on to provide young people with academic and mental health support, mentors generally do not receive formal training or targeted skills practice to promote psychological and behavioral healing. Further, educational institutions across the country are overwhelmed with students struggling with mental health challenges and are ill-equipped to support student well-being at the levels required. This trend will continue or get worse unless substantial changes are made in how mental health services are provided.

How can mentoring be used as a strategy to reduce mental health stigma and support a wide range of meaningful outcomes for young people? What is required for mentoring to reduce the burden on existing systems of care, and reduce barriers to mental health services, particularly for BIPOC young people?

Join us for a conversation about Healing-Centered Mentoring, a framework that will build the capacity of mentors and mentoring programs to support clinical services while developing a relationship ecosystem that promotes the healing and well-being of individuals, families, and communities-at-large.

Goals

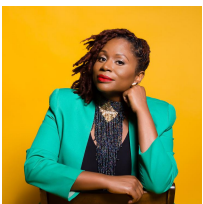
In this conversation, participants will

- Learn the connections between mental health and well-being to academic achievement and life outcomes
- Be introduced to elements of the Healing-Centered Mentoring framework
- See examples of how to increase the number of youth receiving evidence-based mental health services through technology

Speakers

Moderator

★ Margaret Brunson, Ph.D., MPA, CEO, Illumined Leadership Solutions



- Margaret Brunson is a transformative leader, luminary, entrepreneur, thought partner, and media personality. Margaret considers brunch a verb, well-being a priority, dance floors sacred, and music & passport stamps two of life's greatest treasures. After almost 20 years of leadership in the public and private sectors, she transitioned into full-time entrepreneurship and founded Illumined Leadership

Solutions, to guide people to authentic + transformative leadership through coaching, consulting, facilitation, and professional speaking. Throughout her life journey, Margaret has learned the spiritual discipline of letting go & regularly yields to the power of Love to cultivate authenticity, liberation, and joy. Margaret calls it, TheLoveLife™.

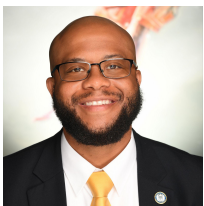
Panelists

★ Marcus Howard, Ph.D., Founder & CEO, ROSA



- Marcus Howard has over a decade of experience in education as a teacher, researcher, and innovation leader dedicated to ensuring students furthest away from opportunity have an equitable chance to succeed. Marcus's passion to support high-need youth stems from his early childhood experiences with emotional challenges that impacted his ability to learn in the classroom. He grew up in St. Louis, MO and experienced depression which was triggered by high-stress environments. Marcus has since dedicated his life to a career in education to ensure that the highest-need students receive the support they need to be successful. Marcus started his career in education as a middle school STEM teacher and department chair. After leaving the classroom, Marcus pursued his Ph.D. at North Carolina State University in Educational Leadership, Policy, and Human Development. His research focused on exploring the relationship between stress and executive functioning skills in adolescent students. In his most recent role, Marcus served as a regional Chief Innovation Program Officer for Teach For America where he led the vision for reimagining traditional educational pathways for students furthest away from opportunity. Marcus currently leads [ROSA](#), a mission-driven edtech startup that offers K-12 schools an innovative way to screen, monitor, and respond to the highest-need students.

★ Jasmin Spain, MA, Assistant Vice President of Student Support, Pitt Community College; Consultant, Youth Mentoring Collaborative



- Jasmin Spain (he/him/his) holds a Bachelor's degree from North Carolina Wesleyan College in Exercise Science and a Master's degree from North Carolina State University in Counselor Education with a concentration in Student Personnel in Higher Education. Jasmin has two decades of higher education experience, currently serving as the Assistant Vice President of Student Support at Pitt Community College. Jasmin also serves on the advisory boards for the North Carolina Community College System's Minority Male Success Initiative, Student Conduct & Title IX and First Generation. Jasmin has an Equity Coach certification as well. Jasmin is also the Founder & Chief Visionary Officer (CVO) of The M.A.I.N. Initiative LLC, which stands for Males Addressing Issues & Needs as well as the Founder & President of U Good Bro, Incorporated. Essentially, the purpose of both entities is to assist in the holistic cultivation of the male population, with a special

emphasis on Black men and boys with their psycho, social and emotional health at the forefront. Jasmin is an active member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and is also a Campaign for Black Male Achievement American Express Leadership Fellow.

★ Micah Griffin, Ph.D., Assistant Vice Chancellor of Health and Wellness, North Carolina Central University



- Dr. Micah Griffin is a healthcare strategist who currently serves as Vice President of Health Equity at Ketchum, a global communications consultancy where he provides strategic counsel for pharmaceutical, government and health service organizations. Dr. Griffin is also the Founder of Heal Our People Incorporated, a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization that supports the social and well-being needs of African-American men through innovative programs focused on mentoring college students, fatherhood training, and barbershop health promotion. Dr. Griffin has held progressive leadership positions at Alabama A&M University, City University of New York, The Pennsylvania State University, and most recently North Carolina Central University where he served as Assistant Vice President of Health & Well-being. His work has supported strategic health equity initiatives that have improved patient health outcomes and reduced the burden of chronic disease for underserved communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Griffin supported The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Foundation by providing program management around vaccine equity. His work directly improved vaccine adherence and acceptance in historically marginalized communities across North Carolina. Dr. Griffin has provided consultation and advisement for higher education, non-profit, and health service organizations. Dr. Griffin holds a bachelor's degree in Biology from Livingstone College and a master's in Exercise Science from Life University. In addition, he holds a master's degree in healthcare administration (MHA), and a Ph.D. in Health Services with a focus in Community Health from Walden University.