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AI & TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS



MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION

THE IMPACT OF AI & TECHNOLOGY ON WORKFORCE READINESS

LANE FREEMAN

DIRECTOR OF ONLINE LEARNING, NC COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM



Dr. Lane Freeman is a distinguished leader in educational technology, currently serving as the Director of Online Learning for the North Carolina Community College System. His career began as a Career and Technical Education (CTE) teacher at Tarboro High School in rural Eastern NC, where he earned National Board Certification and was recognized for his innovative teaching methodologies.

Transitioning into higher education, Dr. Freeman brought his transformative energy to Nash Community College as the Department Chair of Nash Online, significantly expanding online educational offerings. In his current role, he has led nearly 20 distinct AI-related events in 2024, training almost 1,000 faculty and staff across various educational settings to harness AI to enhance teaching outcomes and administrative efficiency.

Dr. Freeman has also served as a panelist for an "Inside Higher Education" national webinar on advocating for AI in higher education and presented on AI's potential at the Unlocking Learner Potential Conference in Odessa, Texas. Dr. Freeman's pioneering work includes developing partnerships with educational associations to refine course design using AI technologies. Dr. Freeman has spearheaded AI integration across North Carolina's community colleges, focusing on empowering educators with advanced tools for the digital age.





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THE IMPACT OF AI & TECHNOLOGY ON WORKFORCE READINESS

RICK SHEW

ASSOCIATE DEAN BUSINESS & CAREER SERVICES,
CALDWELL COMMUNITY COLLEGE & TECHNICAL
INSTITUTE



Rick Shew has been employed with Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute for 14 years. He holds a Master of Science degree in Strategic Leadership from Mountain State University.

Rick currently serves as the Associate Dean of Business and Career Services. In this position, he provides vision and leadership for areas of apprenticeships, work-based learning, career services, short-term training programs in advanced manufacturing, and the Small Business Center. He promotes and implements comprehensive training, professional development and continuing education that is customized to meet the needs of business and industry partners within Caldwell and Watauga counties. Rick also serves as Mayor Pro-Team for the Town of Hudson. His prior professional history includes serving 20 years as President/CEO of RJS Enterprise Inc.





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THE IMPACT OF AI & TECHNOLOGY ON WORKFORCE READINESS

LUCAS UNDERWOOD

OWNER, L&N PERFORMANCE AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR

Lucas Underwood is the president of L&N Performance Auto Repair in Blowing Rock, NC.

Lucas started his career in the family business, a tourist attraction, learning a unique and powerful set of customer service and communication skills from his parents.



In 2007 Lucas founded the auto repair shop, and by 2016 had found that business ownership wasn't all sunshine and roses.

Attending ASTE for the first time in 2018, Lucas attended business management two training classes that have forever changed his trajectory. Since then, the business has grown from a 3 bay facility into a 10 bay facility with year after year of record-breaking growth.

Lucas serves on the board of directors for the Automotive Service and Tire Alliance in North Carolina, as well as serving as the vice president of The Alliance Of Automotive Service Professionals and The Auto Shop Owners Group.

For the past four years, Lucas and his friend David Roman have been the creators of a podcast called Changing the Industry. The podcast focuses on real-life, raw discussions about the daily life in the automotive industry. Unfiltered and unpolished, they found the show resonated with industry professionals in a way few shows have. The show has grown into the top 5% of podcasts world wide and has enjoyed over 200,000 downloads.





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MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION

IS IT TIME FOR A CTO?

GARY DAEMER PRESIDENT, INFUSION POINTS

Gary G Daemer, a seasoned cyber security professional with over 40 years of experience. He founded InfusionPoints 17 years ago to improve his clients cyber security posture. He has led multiple security consulting teams at Booz | Allen | Hamilton and American Management Systems work in the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense.



He also worked in industry as a Program Manager, Security Architect, and Enterprise Security Integration Engineer with ATT and Lowe’s, where he honed his cyber security leadership, management, and operations skills. He led many enterprise security efforts for State and Federal Agencies, telecommunications, aerospace, manufacturing, retail, banking, and insurance industries. His teams have implemented multiple cyber security solutions and security operation centers.

He has a Bachelor’s of Science in Electrical Engineering from UNC Charlotte and MS in Systems Engineering from Virginia Tech and holds several Industry Certifications as well.





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IS IT TIME FOR A CTO?

TANNER GREER

SR. VICE PRESIDENT/CHIEF TECHNICAL OFFICER,
BLUE RIDGE ENERGY



Blue Ridge Energy, 2009 – Present

Chief Technology Officer, 2021 – Present

Oversees technology for the cooperative and its subsidiaries, including systems, support, cybersecurity, application development and overall technology strategy.

Management Internship Program (Select), University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Business, 2018

Board Member, Caldwell County Wig Bank, 2020-Present

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Appalachian State University, 2008





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MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION

TECHNOLOGY WINS IN NORTHWEST NORTH CAROLINA

CAROLINE CATOE PRESIDENT, ECRS

Caroline Catoe is president of ECRS, a US-based, Certified Evergreen™ transaction and retail solutions provider, with a successful track record that stretches over 30 years. The company was founded by her father, Peter Catoe, in 1989, and she has been working in the organization since high school. She holds a B.S. in Business Administration from UNC Wilmington and was part of the Honors College.



Like many second-generation family business operators, Caroline has worked in many capacities at ECRS over her 15+ year tenure. Prior to her current role, Caroline held positions in Technical Support, Project Management, Marketing, Customer Care, and Training. As President, Caroline is fully committed to carrying out a steadfast commitment to the company and to serving the independent retail industry with world class technology.





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TECHNOLOGY WINS IN NORTHWEST NORTH CAROLINA

GREG COPEN DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, CATAWBA VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEM



Greg Copen has extensive work experience in the healthcare industry, specifically in information technology and systems. Greg began their career as the Director of Information Technology Services at Johnston Memorial Hospital in 2005. Greg then moved on to Carolinas HealthCare System, where they started as an IT Project Manager in August 2011 and later became the Chief Information Officer in December 2011, holding this role until August 2014.

In 2014, Greg joined Duke LifePoint as the Director of Information Technology, a position they held until February 2017. Currently, Greg is the Director of Information Systems at Catawba Valley Medical Center, a role they have had since March 2017.

From 2019 to 2020, Greg Copen pursued a Master of Science degree in Information Technology Management from Western Governors University.





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AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION

ETHICAL CONCERNS OF AI

KELLI BURGIN

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF CYBERSECURITY,
MONTREAT COLLEGE



Kelli Burgin began teaching in the Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity program at Montreat College in January of 2016. Since 2020, Professor Burgin and a team of colleagues from Montreat College and other Center of Academic Excellence (CAE)-designated colleges and universities have been working on materials related to professional skills and ethical reasoning development for cybersecurity students as part of the Careers Preparation National Center (CPNC).





AI & TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS



AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION

ETHICAL CONCERNS OF AI

MEGHAN WILLS

ASSISTANT GENERAL COUNSEL, APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY



Meghan started as Assistant General Counsel for Appalachian State University in August of 2021. Her primary areas of practice for the University are Public Records Requests, Policy, and advising the University's Academy at Middle Fork.

She came from the Watauga County District Attorney's Office where she served as Assistant District Attorney. Prior to the District Attorney's Office, Meghan worked in private practice. She has worked on a variety of matters including litigation, personal injury, and contract disputes. Meghan received her Bachelor of Arts from Bridgewater College in 2013, and her Juris Doctor from the Elon University School of Law in 2015. She is very active in the Watauga County Bar Association, serving as Treasurer, and enjoys family adventures with her husband and two children.





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AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION

TODAY'S TOOLS FOR TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

MIKE GADDY
SALES MANAGER, TECHNOLOGY DIVISION,
WJ OFFICE



App State grad, 1996.

Left the High Country after college for 20 years, returning in 2016. I spent 15 of those years working in corporate sales roles, with Sysco Foodservice, Kellogg Foods, Verizon Wireless, and ADT Business Security Solutions.

I came back to Boone to use what I had learned in the corporate sales world to work with WJ Office. I was very impressed with how WJ Office had survived and thrived over the years, and believed I could help take that growth to the next level.





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TODAY'S TOOLS FOR TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

DIANNA HUDSON NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANT, AUTOMATED SYSTEMS DESIGNS, INC

Dianna brings a vibrant blend of optimism, eagerness, and a genuine passion for assisting others to every project she undertakes. Her commitment to delivering high-quality results with meticulous attention to detail is unwavering, coupled with a strong aptitude for navigating the intricacies of low voltage technology. With her expertise and dedication, she consistently ensures that every endeavor she's involved in achieves excellence.





AI & TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS



AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION

IMPROVING BUSINESS & EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES WITH AI

CHRIS BECKWITH-TAYLOR FOUNDER/CHIEF STRATEGIST, GREENSTICK

Chris Beckwith-Taylor is a marketing innovator, having made a significant impact in various industry types. Currently, he leads all strategic initiatives across the growing business portfolio of GREENstick.



With a career spanning over two decades, Chris has held several key positions in the marketing domain. Before launching GREENstick, he served as the Vice President of Marketing at The Franklin Johnston Group, where he was responsible for the strategic marketing of and leasing efforts across the organization's 20,000-plus conventional, senior, and affordable assets.

In his previous role as the National Marketing Director for Fore Property Company, Chris managed lease-up efforts for new apartment developments in Denver, Las Vegas, Pittsburgh, Orlando, and Portland. Before joining Fore Property Company, he managed advertising for over 1,000 multifamily communities at CoStar, a commercial real estate information, and marketing provider based in Washington, D.C.

Chris's marketing journey began in 2006 as a leasing consultant in Chicago for Village Green, a management company based in Farmington Hills, Michigan.

Chris has gained a reputation as a thought leader in the marketing space and his insights strategies and new team members have helped over 1,000 organizations across the USA achieve their business goals.





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AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION

IMPROVING BUSINESS & EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES WITH AI

CAITLIN PITKIN COMMUNITY MANAGER, GREENSTICK

Caitlin Pitkin is the passionate and dedicated Community Manager at GREENstick Marketing, boasting 17 years of rich experience in Northwest North Carolina.

Her professional journey began in the nonprofit sector, where she developed a deep commitment to regional improvement and community betterment.



Today, Caitlin is a champion for small businesses, focusing on enhancing their digital presence and helping them thrive in a competitive marketplace. She is particularly enthusiastic about empowering small business owners and their teams to harness the power of digital marketing and AI for success. Caitlin's unwavering dedication is driven by her belief in the transformative potential of digital strategies to fuel small business growth and innovation.

