

Future of Work Conference

Tuesday, Oct. 6 | 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

AGENDA

8 – 8:25 a.m.

Networking Breakfast and Welcome

Shana Marbury-White, J.D., Executive Vice President, Workforce Innovation

8:30 – 9:15 a.m.

Executive Roundtable: A Conversation on Opportunity and Employment

Moderator

Sharon Sobol Jordan, President & CEO, United Way of Greater Cleveland

Featured Speakers

- Christine Alexander-Rager, M.D., President & CEO, The MetroHealth System
- Hannah Delis, Chief Human Resources Officer, Swagelok
- Sriram Mangudi, Morningside Group | Principal, Human Capital Solutions
- Neal Restivo, CEO, Oatey Company

9:20 – 10:05 a.m.

Fireside Chat: Education, Industry, and the Future of Work

Featured Speakers

- Michael A. Baston, J.D., Ed.D., President, Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®)
- Paul Fain, Journalist and Co-Founder, Work Shift
- Lisa McIntyre-Hite, Ph.D., EVP and COO, Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN)
- Yustina Saleh, Ph.D., Vice President, Innovation, The Burning Glass Institute

10:10 – 10:50 a.m.

Morning Keynote: Starting in the Middle: Preparing Students to Launch in the Age of AI

Yustina Saleh, Ph.D., Vice President, Innovation, The Burning Glass Institute

11 – 11:50 a.m.

Breakout Sessions:

- AI in Higher Education and the Workforce
- Bridging the World of Work and the Classroom: Faculty Externships
- Work Won't Work Without Them: Addressing the Hidden Drivers of Employment

12:10 – 12:50 p.m.

Lunch Panel: The Practical Value of Competency-Based Education and Hiring

Moderator

Lisa McIntyre-Hite, Ph.D., EVP and COO, Competency Based-Education Network

Featured Speakers

- Michael Kenney, Ph.D., Dean of Health Professions, Tri-C
- Andrew Martin, MBA, Director, Tooling Operations and Automation, Howmet Aerospace
- Lisa McIntyre-Hite, Ph.D., EVP and COO, Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN)
- Ray Nejadfard, MBA, LSSBB, Dean of Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, Tri-C

12:50 p.m.

Closing Remarks

Jessica V. Colombi, Executive Director, Career Marketplace and the Center for the Future of Work



Center for the
Future of Work

Future of Work Conference

– BREAKOUT SESSIONS –

Track A: Redefining Smart: AI in Higher Education and the Workforce

Artificial intelligence is transforming every industry and changing the skills employers need. Join AI experts and Tri-C faculty for a discussion on how higher education can prepare students for an AI-enabled workforce and meet evolving labor market demands.

Facilitator

Tristan Douglas, Program Specialist, Center for the Future of Work

Panelists

- Vicky Bonillas, Assistant Professor of English, Tri-C
- Alfred Cowger, Attorney and Lecturer, AI Law
- Rocco Cuffari, AI Transformation Architect
- Craig T. Platt, President, BDPA Cleveland

Track B: Bridging the World of Work and the Classroom: Faculty Externships

Discover how Tri-C's Faculty Externship program connects faculty with employers to align academic programs with workforce needs. Faculty and employer partners will share insights, best practices and the program's impact on students, curricula and industry.

Facilitator

Jessica V. Colombi, Executive Director, Career Marketplace and the Center for the Future of Work

Panelists

- Kolleen Barnes, Associate Professor of Captioning and Court Reporting, Tri-C
- Khaz Finley, Assistant Vice President of External Engagement, Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland
- Michael Flatt, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Sociology, Tri-C
- Greg Kennedy, Director of Human Resources and Personnel, Cleveland Municipal Court
- Margie MacDonald, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Biology, Tri-C
- Rachel Stehle, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Sociology, Tri-C

Track C: Work Won't Work Without Them: Addressing Hidden Drivers of Employment

Employment outcomes are shaped by more than technical skills. Learn how child care, transportation, housing and other social factors affect workforce participation and explore collaborative strategies that help remove barriers to employment.

Facilitator

Eric Gordon, CEO, Positive Education Program

Panelists

- Wendy Batch-Wilson, DNP, RN, Dean of Nursing, Tri-C
- Maryam Kiefer, Senior Director of Public Policy, United Way of Greater Cleveland
- Lauren Rudman, SHRM-SCP, SPHR, Senior Director, Human Resources and Training, GNCO Inc.
- Jack H. Schron Jr., President, Jergens Inc.

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ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Welcome



Shana Marbury White

Executive Vice President, Workforce Innovation, Tri-C

Shana Marbury White joined Tri-C in 2022 as the executive vice president of what is now the College's Workforce Innovation division. This training arm of the College prepares the workforce of tomorrow for jobs in fields such as manufacturing, information technology, healthcare and public safety.

In Marbury White's previous role as the general counsel and the senior vice president of talent at the Greater Cleveland Partnership (GCP), she helped build education and workforce development solutions for youth and adults and created a skilled talent pipeline for regional employers. She is a member of the Governor's Executive Workforce Board and serves on the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board.

Executive Roundtable



Dr. Christine Alexander-Rager

President and CEO, The MetroHealth System

A family medicine physician with The MetroHealth System for nearly three decades, Dr. Alexander-Rager became its top executive in October 2024.

Prior to that, she served as MetroHealth's interim chief physician and clinical executive, leading the health system's entire clinical enterprise. She took on that role after 14 years as chair of Family Medicine.

Besides caring for patients — her first professional love — Dr. Alexander-Rager founded MetroHealth's nationally recognized School Health Program, which partners with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and other school systems to bring in-school clinics, mobile units and other services to students and their families. She also sparked the creation of MetroHealth's medical outreach to the homeless. And she served as president of MetroHealth's medical staff from February 2022 to February 2024.

A native of Youngstown, she earned her medical degree at The Ohio State University College of Medicine & Public Health. She completed her residency in family medicine at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia as well as fellowships in family medicine and obstetrics and academic medicine at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's St. Margaret and Mercy hospitals, respectively.



Hannah Delis

Chief Human Resources Officer, Swagelok

Hannah Delis has served as Swagelok's chief human resources officer since 2022. In this role, she leads the organization's global human resources and communications functions. Her team oversees talent and communications, global human resources operations and compensation and benefits.

She joined the organization as a human resources business partner in 2012 and worked across all HR disciplines before being named vice president of global human resources in 2021. Her leadership in workforce development, organizational and talent management and global HR business partnerships has helped establish the company as an employer of choice in Northeast Ohio and beyond.

Delis began her career as a licensed independent social worker, serving as a children and family therapist and case manager for several community organizations. She has continued to support the community throughout her career and currently serves on the boards of the Children's Museum of Cleveland and the Cuyahoga Community College Foundation. In addition, she is chair of the board of trustees for the Swagelok Foundation.

Delis is a proud graduate of The Ohio State University, holding a degree in criminology. She earned a master's degree in social administration from Case Western Reserve University.

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ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Executive Roundtable



Sriram Mangudi

Principal, Human Capital Solutions, consultMSG

Sriram Mangudi is a global human resources leader with over 25 years of experience leading people and organizational transformations across North America, Europe and Asia. He has held senior leadership roles, including CHRO and head of HR for global manufacturing and shared services in Fortune 1000 companies. His career spans industrial engineering, motion technologies and pharmaceutical manufacturing. Across these industries, he has consistently built commercially strong, technically agile and people-first organizations.

Mangudi's expertise lies in HR M&A due diligence and post-merger integration, manufacturing workforce strategy and organizational design. He has successfully led large-scale HR transformations in talent pipeline development, leadership succession planning and HR technology implementation, including an SAP SuccessFactors enterprise deployment. With deep experience in compensation design, employee relations and workforce programs, he is recognized for integrating business excellence with human capital strategies.

Mangudi holds the SHRM-SCP credential and has a master's degree in human resources from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. He is also an adjunct faculty member at Walsh University, where he teaches Human Resource Management; an advisory committee member for the Career Apprenticeship and Mentorship Program (C.A.M.P.) in Canton; and a board member of Global Ties in Akron.



Neal Restivo

CEO, Oatey Company

Neal R. Restivo is the CEO of Oatey Company, a 110-year-old manufacturer and distributor of plumbing products. Oatey employs 1,800 associates worldwide and offers more than 15,000 products across its market-leading brands, serving the plumbing and home improvement industries.

Before becoming CEO in 2017, Restivo served as Oatey's chief financial officer. Before joining Oatey, he was a partner at Tatum LLC, an executive services firm that provides financial leadership resources to organizations navigating periods of transition. He has also served as chief financial officer for several public and private companies. Restivo began his professional career in public accounting with Arthur Andersen & Co. in Cleveland.

In addition to his role at Oatey, Restivo remains actively engaged in corporate and community leadership. He currently serves as chairperson of the board of directors for Sea-Land Chemical Company and is a member of the boards of the Greater Cleveland Partnership, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, Playhouse Square Foundation, Cleveland Clinic Foundation and United Way of Greater Cleveland. Restivo also serves on the steering committee for VeloSano and is a member of the Leadership Cleveland Class of 2017.

Restivo earned a Bachelor of Science from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) in the state of Ohio.

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ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Executive Roundtable



Sharon Sobol Jordan

President and CEO, United Way of Greater Cleveland

Sharon Sobol Jordan is president and CEO of United Way of Greater Cleveland. United Way of Greater Cleveland is the bridge from crisis to possibility for hardworking Greater Clevelanders, providing support when it is needed most and partnering on solutions that help people move forward. Sobol Jordan is leading the modernization of one of the region's most trusted and essential social impact institutions, using technology, real-time data and partnerships to expand opportunity for upward economic mobility across the region.

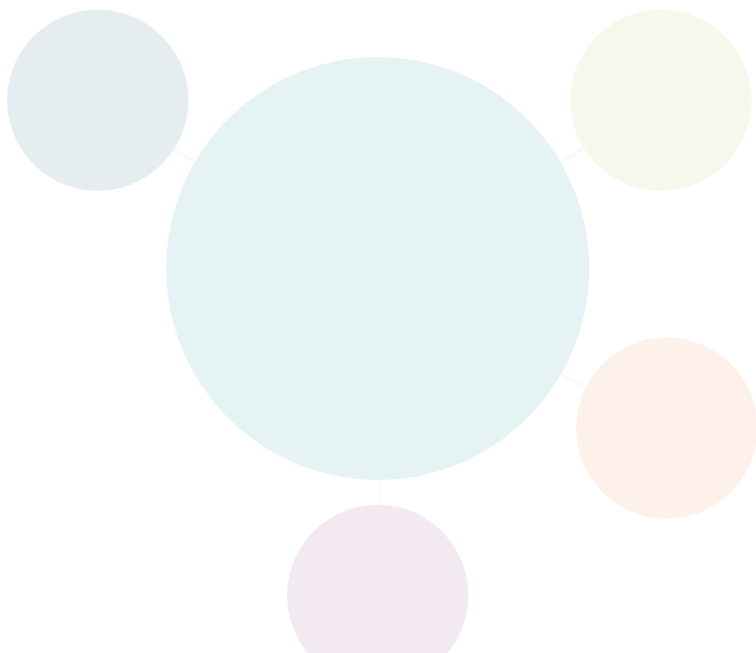
Her work spans the public, private, nonprofit and technology sectors, where she has led efforts to modernize systems, strengthen organizations and get results for the people and communities they serve.

Before joining United Way, Sobol Jordan led a series of innovation-focused organizations, serving as interim CEO of DigitalC, founder and CEO of OpenSpace Solutions and president of Unify Labs. In those roles, she leveraged data, technology and new approaches to solve complex community challenges.

Sobol Jordan previously served as chief of staff for Cuyahoga County, where she led major strategic initiatives to expand economic opportunity and growth, including workforce systems transformation, early childhood education expansion and the creation of the county's first Innovation Office. Before that, she joined The Centers for Families and Children, ultimately serving as president and CEO. Under her leadership, the organization tripled in size and reach, serving more than 25,000 people annually.

Earlier in her career, Sobol Jordan served as director of law and special counsel to the mayor of the City of Cleveland, where she played a key role in addressing some of the city's legal, economic development and public policy challenges. Prior to that, she served as a partner with the Cleveland law firm now known as Schneider Smeltz Spieth Bell.

Sobol Jordan serves on several nonprofit and civic boards and is a leader-in-residence at Cleveland State University College of Law. She has received numerous honors for her leadership and community impact. She holds a J.D. and MBA from The Ohio State University and a B.S. in Public Administration and Management from Indiana University.



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ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Fireside Chat

**Michael A. Baston, J.D., Ed.D.**

President, Cuyahoga Community College

Michael A. Baston, J.D., Ed.D., became the fifth president of Tri-C on July 1, 2022. An experienced instructor and administrator, Baston has championed many initiatives and served on numerous boards and organizations in a decades-long career in higher education.

As a national Guided Pathways and Equity Transfer Initiative coach for the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), Baston is noted for his work with two- and four-year college leadership teams across the nation, helping them integrate student success initiatives to advance college completion and successful entry into the labor market.

Among many other professional honors and activities, Baston is the chair of the Black Male CEO Educators Network and a member of the AACC board of directors.

An attorney prior to entering higher education, Baston holds a B.A. from Iona College, a J.D. from Brooklyn Law School and an Ed.D. from St. John Fisher College.

Before moving to Cleveland, Baston and his wife, Tasha, lived in Suffern, New York, where he served as the president of Rockland Community College from 2017 to 2022.

**Paul Fain**

Journalist and Co-Founder, Work Shift

Paul Fain, a veteran higher education reporter, is one of the nation's top journalists focused on the connection between education and work. Fain is co-founder of *Work Shift*, editor of the newsletter *The Job* and host of *The Cusp* podcast. Previously, Fain was a senior reporter and news editor at *Inside Higher Ed*, where he oversaw coverage of low-income and first-generation students, college completion, community colleges, federal policy and emerging models of higher education. Earlier in his career, Fain was a senior reporter at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

**Lisa McIntyre-Hite, Ph.D.**

EVP and COO, Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN)

Lisa McIntyre-Hite, Ph.D., is the executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN). She has over 21 years of experience spanning leadership roles across K-12, higher education, educational technology, product development, workforce education and strategy consulting. She is an expert in designing and launching competency-based solutions across K-12, higher education, non-traditional learning providers and workforce to meet learners' needs while addressing the most pressing talent shortages. Prior to joining C-BEN, McIntyre-Hite was vice president of Learning Innovation at Guild, senior advisor at Entangled Solutions and vice president of Partner Strategy and Innovation at Pathstream.

**Yustina Saleh, Ph.D.**

Vice President, Innovation, The Burning Glass Institute

Yustina Saleh, Ph.D., is vice president of innovation at the Burning Glass Institute, where she leads the design and development of cutting-edge solutions to enhance visibility and practicality of real-time labor market data. With over 20 years of experience connecting people with careers, she is a pioneer in skills-based hiring and workforce innovation. Saleh formerly served as executive vice president of Research and Analytics at Emsi; director of the Analytics Center of Excellence at Rutgers; director of Real-Time Labor Analytics at Burning Glass Technologies; and director of Labor Market and Demographic Research for the state of New Jersey.

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ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Breakout Sessions

Track A: Redefining Smart: AI in Higher Education and the Workforce



Vicky Bonillas

Assistant Professor of English, Tri-C

Vicky Bonillas is passionate about inspiring students to understand new material and concepts, then challenge what they have learned with their own ideas. Before teaching, she worked in nursing and the corporate world. She returned to college seeking meaningful conversations about literature. After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in English from Baldwin-Wallace College, she went on to earn a Master of Arts in English from National University. She began teaching at Tri-C and several other Ohio colleges in 2010 as an adjunct professor.

In 2015, Bonillas joined Teach for America and transitioned to teaching high school English and dual enrollment courses. This experience inspired her to continue teaching high school in several Title I schools across the country, including PSJA Southwest Early College High School in Pharr, Texas; Churchland High School in Portsmouth, Virginia; Capital High School in Santa Fe, New Mexico; and Northeast Ohio College Preparatory School in Cleveland.

She also served as an adjunct professor at South Texas College; Tidewater Community College in Virginia; and Norfolk State University in Virginia. In addition, she worked in an administrative capacity at Saint Martin's University in Washington.

Bonillas earned her Montessori preschool certification and taught 3- and 4-year-olds in Olympia, Washington. She is now an assistant professor of English at Tri-C's Westshore Campus.



Alfred Cowger

Attorney and Lecturer, AI Law

Alfred Cowger, a practicing attorney in Cleveland, graduated from Cornell University and Case Western Reserve University School of Law, with honors. He has served as a full-time or fractional general counsel since 1999, representing high-tech start-up companies, companies coming out of bankruptcy reorganization and small international consumer companies. He has also provided significant pro bono counsel to nonprofit entities and individuals on civil rights and constitutional law.

Cowger has lectured at law schools and professional organizations throughout the United States on AI's impact on American jurisprudence, businesses and the public. He has also written extensively on this topic, including authoring a book entitled *The Threats of Algorithms and AI to Civil Rights, Legal Remedies, and American Jurisprudence: One Nation Under Algorithms* (Lexington Books, 2020). Cowger is also a lecturer for the National Constitution Center, the National Judicial College and the Siegal Lifelong Learning Center of Case Western Reserve University.



Rocco Cuffari

Principal AI Architect

Rocco Cuffari is a Principal AI Architect with more than 25 years in IT, focused on secure enterprise architecture and the practical adoption of generative AI. He helps organizations put AI to work responsibly, covering security, governance, and the real questions leaders face before AI becomes routine. He is also an AI educator, running live workshops through Humindful that help professionals, students, and community members build genuine AI fluency. He holds multiple Microsoft and AI certifications and lives in Cuyahoga County, where he stays close to local education and technology.

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Breakout Sessions

Track A: Redefining Smart: AI in Higher Education and the Workforce



Tristan Douglas

Program Specialist, Center for the Future of Work, Tri-C

Tristan Douglas is a Program Specialist with Cuyahoga Community College's Center for the Future of Work, where he authored the Center's foundational 50-page strategic plan and leads planning for its regional future-of-work conference. His work centers on translating research and institutional priorities into strategy that helps the Center anticipate — and respond to — the workforce's evolving skill demands, including the impact of emerging technologies like AI.

Before coming to Tri-C, Tristan supported the Legal and Economic Development Departments in the City of Garfield Heights, where he drafted council legislation and served as the city's Records Commission Secretary. He is also a former journalist, having covered city council meetings for The Neighborhood News. Tristan began his college education at Cuyahoga Community College before transferring to Case Western Reserve University through the Cleveland Humanities Collaborative, where he earned a B.A. in International Studies. He is a member of the Cleveland Council on World Affairs' Young Professional Advisory Committee, and in his free time enjoys playing chess, soccer, and hiking in local parks.



Craig T. Platt

President, BDPA Cleveland

Craig T. Platt is a transformation executive, AI coach and president of BDPA Cleveland, where he advances its mission of Empowerment Through Inclusive Innovation. He is the chief architect of AI Spark Lab, an applied AI learning and implementation program developed by BDPA Cleveland in collaboration with Corporate College®, a division of Tri-C. He also created the Humans-In-The-Lead™ approach, which helps people use AI thoughtfully while preserving human judgment, accountability and leadership.

Platt worked for 35 years at General Electric, serving as CIO for GE Lighting & Industrial and vice president of technical product management at GE Current. He later served as managing director of the IT Sector Partnership at the Greater Cleveland Partnership, connecting employers, educators, workforce organizations and technology professionals.

Through BDPA Cleveland and Platteau PMO Services, Platt helps individuals and organizations turn AI education into practical workplace capabilities and measurable outcomes. A University of Cincinnati graduate and certified Six Sigma Black Belt, he is committed to preparing people and businesses to lead as AI reshapes education and the future of work.

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ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Breakout Sessions

Track B: Bridging the World of Work and the Classroom: Faculty Externships



Kolleen Barnes

Associate Professor of Captioning and Court Reporting, Tri-C

Kolleen Barnes is an associate professor in the Captioning and Court Reporting program at Tri-C. Barnes received her Bachelor of Science in Human Development from Empire State College, an Associate of Applied Business in Court Reporting from the Academy of Court Reporting and a Master of Education from Grand Canyon University. Barnes was self-employed as a freelance court reporter for over a decade before joining the full-time faculty at Tri-C.

Her many awards include Educator of the Year for the National Court Reporters Association, Outstanding Associate Member of the Year for the Ohio Court Reporters Association, Online Course of the Year from the Instructional Technology Council and the Sloan Consortium Effective Practice Award for the design and implementation of educational activities to help students retain their skills during semester breaks. Barnes particularly enjoys using instructional technology and online learning to help students nationwide pursue a court reporting education.



Jessica V. Colombi

Executive Director, Career Marketplace and the Center for the Future of Work

Jessica Colombi, the executive director of the Career Marketplace and the Center for the Future of Work at Tri-C, has over 15 years of experience driving systems change in complex institutions. At Tri-C, she spearheaded the implementation of a Center for the Future of Work, focusing on research and policies that enhance education for social impact. Previously, Colombi played a pivotal role in developing Cleveland's historic Community Benefits Ordinance and drafted proposals for the administration of federal Covid relief funds. She holds a master's degree in psychology with a certification in Diversity Management from Cleveland State University and brings her expertise in facilitation, relationship-building and strategy to every project.



Khaz Finley

Assistant Vice President of External Engagement, Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland

Khaz Finley is assistant vice president of external engagement at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. He oversees the strategic management of external relationships in collaboration with the executive office and the Community Development function. Additionally, his team conducts outreach aligned with research-driven programs and content, engaging with various institutional leaders at the national, state and local levels. Finley holds a Bachelor of Science in Educational Studies and a Master of Science in Industrial Organizational Psychology, both from Grand Canyon University.

Additionally, he serves as a member of the Advanced Robotics for Manufacturing (ARM) Institute's Education & Workforce Advisory Committee and Team NEO's Talent Development Council and as a board trustee for the Greater Cleveland Career Consortium. He is also an Associate Certified Coach (ACC) and a Board-Certified Executive Coach (BCC). He holds a Leadership and Management certificate from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, is a certified Emotional Quotient Inventory 2.0 Practitioner, a certified Emotional & Social Competency Inventory (ESCI) practitioner through Korn Ferry, a Prosci Change Management Practitioner, a Registered Scrum@Scale Practitioner and a Lean Six Sigma yellow belt. He also holds additional certificates with an emphasis on psychological leadership.

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Breakout Sessions

Track B: Bridging the World of Work and the Classroom: Faculty Externships



Michael Flatt, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Sociology, Tri-C

Michael Flatt, Ph.D., is an associate professor of sociology at Tri-C's Western Campus. He holds a Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University, where his research focused on medical sociology and bioethics. Flatt teaches a wide array of sociology classes, with specializations in gender, deviance and thanatology. He served as a steering committee member for the Institute for Economic Mobility as well as the Center for the Future of Work. He also serves as the faculty advisor for Tri-C's Lambda Gender-Sexuality Alliance and chapter representative for the American Association of University Professors.



Greg Kennedy

Director of Human Resources and Personnel, Cleveland Municipal Court

Greg Kennedy is the director of Human Resources and Personnel for the Cleveland Municipal Court and has more than 30 years of experience in human resources and organizational leadership. He holds a master's degree in human resources and is a certified coach through the NeuroLeadership Institute. His work focuses on leadership development, employee relations, psychological safety and building organizational cultures grounded in trust, accountability and respect. Kennedy brings a practical, evidence-based perspective to helping leaders and organizations address complex workplace challenges.



Margie MacDonald, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biology, Tri-C

Margie MacDonald, Ph.D., earned a Master of Science from the University of Florida and a Ph.D. from Clemson University, both in the field of entomology (the study of insects). Her research focused on various aspects of bed bugs, including using canines to detect them. During that time, she helped invent a strategy for eliminating bed bugs that has been patented and published a book chapter on canine scent detection of insects and 11 scientific manuscripts. She has been a full-time assistant professor for over a decade at Tri-C, where she knew she wanted a permanent position from the day she stepped through the door the first time.

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Breakout Sessions

Track C: Work Won't Work Without Them: Addressing Hidden Drivers of Employment



Wendy Batch-Wilson, DNP, RN

Dean of Nursing, Tri-C

Wendy Batch-Wilson, DNP, has three decades of experience in nursing and higher education. She began working in healthcare in 1993, with her nursing career beginning in 1997. Since joining Tri-C in 2002, Batch-Wilson has worked with nursing and health careers students, serving in numerous roles throughout her tenure at the College. She is currently the dean of Nursing in the School of Nursing and Health Professions, where she works to maintain the College's standing as a premier educator of nurses for the Northeast Ohio healthcare industry. She brings a wealth of knowledge to her role and is recognized for her healthcare expertise at the local, state and national levels.

Batch-Wilson completed her Doctor of Nursing Practice at Walden University, where she also earned a Master of Science in Nursing specializing in nursing education. She received her undergraduate degree, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, from Cleveland State University. She is an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. and has held leadership roles in her local chapter. Batch-Wilson is a past president of the Gilmour Academy Women's Club and serves as a Parent Ambassador at the school. She also serves on the boards of FORWARD Girls Leadership Academy and Heights Youth Theatre.



Eric Gordon

CEO, Positive Education Program

Eric Gordon was appointed CEO at Positive Education Program (PEP) on July 1, 2025. As CEO of PEP, Gordon leads the organization in providing services for children challenged by complex developmental trauma, mental health issues and autism, as well as their families and the professionals who support them.

Prior to joining PEP, Gordon served as the senior vice president of student development and education pipeline at Tri-C from 2023 to 2025, acting as a thought partner to the College president and trusted advisor to the President's Cabinet. He was responsible for developing and implementing strategies that ensure a seamless transition for students as they move through different stages of education, from early childhood to post-secondary education and beyond. A key focus of Gordon's work was identifying and addressing gaps in student development and support systems.

Before joining Tri-C, Gordon served as the CEO of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) for 12 years. In that role, he was responsible for the leadership and daily management of Cleveland's 35,600-student school district. During his tenure, CMSD saw dramatic improvement in academic performance, including a 29% gain in graduation rates to a record 80.9%.

Among his many awards, Gordon received the Green-Garner Award of the Council of the Great City Schools in 2016, distinguishing him as the Urban Educator of the Year, the highest national honor for an urban school superintendent. In addition to being named one of *Cleveland Magazine's* "Most Interesting People" early in his tenure as superintendent, Gordon has received a number of additional honors for his active engagement in the Cleveland community and his professional field, including the Diversity Center of Cleveland's Humanitarian Award, *Inside Business Magazine's* Power 100 Award and *Smart Business Magazine's* Top 50 Award, which honors the most successful executives in Northeast Ohio, the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation's Outstanding Ohio Superintendent Performance Award, and most recently the Mary Utne O'Brien Social Emotional Learning Leader Lifetime Achievement Award from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

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Breakout Sessions

Track C: Work Won't Work Without Them: Addressing Hidden Drivers of Employment

**Maryam Kiefer**

Senior Director of Public Policy, United Way of Greater Cleveland

Maryam Kiefer is the senior director of public policy at United Way of Greater Cleveland. She has over 10 years of experience working in public policy, including legislative, budgetary and regulatory advocacy at the local, state, federal and international levels. Kiefer has advocated for health and human service programs and funding, including Medicaid, SNAP, TANF and mental health and substance use programs. She has also managed and evaluated community-based social service programs.

Kiefer earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Fordham University and a Master of Social Work from Hunter College, City University of New York.

**Lauren Rudman, SHRM-SCP, SPHR**

Senior Director of Human Resources, Training and Safety, GNCO, Inc.

Lauren Rudman, SHRM-SCP, SPHR, is a strategic human resources executive with more than 20 years of experience helping organizations grow through strong leadership, talent strategies, and people-focused cultures. As Senior Director of Human Resources, Training, and Safety at GNCO, Inc., she leads human capital initiatives supporting more than 850 employees across 11 states, overseeing all human capital and safety initiatives.

Throughout her career, Lauren has led HR efforts for acquisitions, organizational transformations, workforce planning initiatives, and talent management programs that have improved retention, accelerated hiring success, and strengthened leadership pipelines. She is passionate about mentoring leaders, developing high-performing teams, and creating workplaces where employees can thrive.

Beyond her corporate role, Lauren is a recognized leader in the HR profession. She has served as President of Cleveland SHRM, brought the #DisruptHR movement to Cleveland, and has chaired and served on numerous nonprofit and professional boards. Lauren currently serves as President of the Human Resources Leadership Group of Northeast Ohio and is a Board Member with the Cleveland Animal Protective League.

**Jack H. Schron Jr.**

President, Jergens Inc.

Jack H. Schron Jr. of Chagrin Falls is president of Jergens Inc., a manufacturer of precision parts for the defense, aerospace and electronics industries. He is also co-founder of Tooling University LLC, the world's largest online learning platform for manufacturing. He holds a bachelor's degree from Florida Southern College and a juris doctor from Ohio Northern University. He retired from the U.S. Army at the rank of lieutenant colonel after 28 years of service. Schron was elected to Cuyahoga County Council's District 6 seat in 2010 and served through 2024. He also spent 12 years on the Chagrin Falls Board of Education. He has been inducted into the Cleveland Business Hall of Fame, received the Harvard Business School Club of Northeastern Ohio Leadership Award and led Jergens as it earned multiple NorthCoast 99 Awards.

Breakout Sessions

Lunch Panel: The Practical Value of Competency-Based Education and Hiring



Andrew Martin

Director, Tooling Operations and Automation, Howmet Aerospace

Andrew Martin is director of tooling operations and automation at Howmet Aerospace. He has 16 years of experience in engineering and operations leadership in the aerospace and commercial transportation industries, with a focus on manufacturing, tooling and automation.

He holds a degree in industrial and systems engineering from The Ohio State University and an MBA from The Ohio State University Fisher College of Business.



Michael Kenney, Ph.D.

Dean of Health Professions, Tri-C

Michael Kenney, Ph.D., is dean of Health Professions at Tri-C, where he leads a division of nearly 30 health professions programs. He brings more than 30 years of science teaching experience to his current focus on curriculum innovation, program strategy and workforce alignment in healthcare education.



Ray Nejadfard

Dean of Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, Tri-C

Ray Nejadfard is an advanced manufacturing executive and academic leader with more than 30 years of experience across aerospace composites, nondestructive testing, industrial software and IT and semiconductor workforce development. He currently serves as dean of Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering at Tri-C, where he leads regional initiatives in Industry 4.0, smart automation and high-tech talent pipelines.

Nejadfard's background includes engineering leadership in carbon fiber composite tooling, implementing advanced NDT and quality systems as a Six Sigma Black Belt, driving digital transformation through CNC macro programming and multi-site ERP integration, and shaping semiconductor and microelectronics education — including launching the first Bachelor of Applied Science in Integrated Digital Manufacturing Engineering Technology (IDMET).

Future of Work Conference

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The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center
Team NEO
Tri-C Foundation
Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.)
United Way of Greater Cleveland

THANK YOU TO THE VOLUNTEERS WHO HELPED MAKE THIS EVENT POSSIBLE:

Gary Arnosk
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Nanci Coleman
Alfred Cowger
Rocco Cuffari
Courtney Clark
Angela Finding
Natalie Harrington
Cici Kaltz

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Bob Searson
Maria Selos
Caroline Walker
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