



LEAD YOUR CITY

Agenda • Speakers Bios • Sponsors

synerG's annual Lead Your City summit is designed to advance careers and expand young professional networks in Greensboro.

Learn more!

synerg.org/lyc

**Agenda****Speakers****Sponsors**

Agenda At-A-Glance

8:30 am	Check In - Breakfast + Headshots				Lobby
9:15 am	Welcome Remarks + Mindful Movement				Auditorium
9:30 am	Whole Group Workshop: Authenticity & Values in Professional Life				Auditorium
10:40 am	Snack Break + Headshots				Lobby
11:00 am	Keynote Address: Cyril Jefferson				Auditorium
12:00 pm	Lunch				Pre Function Rooms + Oak Ridge C/D
1:00 pm	Breakout Sessions Block 1:	The Next Big Thing	Speaking So People Listen	How Effective Leaders Manage Stress	Breakout Rooms
2:00 pm	Steal This Idea				Auditorium
3:00 pm	Breakout Sessions Block 2:	Belonging as a Practice	Designing a Career in a World That Keeps Changing	Networking Strategies for Early Career Professionals	Breakout Rooms
4:00 pm	Networking Reception				Lobby
5:00 pm	Lead Your City Concludes				
6:00 pm	Lead Your City After Party hosted by the Greensboro Jaycees				One Thirteen Brewhouse – Downtown Greensboro



Detailed Agenda

8:30am - 9:15am

CHECK-IN AND BREAKFAST

Location: Main Lobby

Arrive at the Conference Center at GTCC and check in at the welcome table in the main lobby. Use this time to enjoy breakfast, have your headshot taken, and visit the swag table.

9:15am - 9:30am

WELCOME

Location: Auditorium

Remarks from synerG: Kathryn Lutterloh, synerG Council Co-Chair

Remarks and Sponsor Spotlight: Dr. Tony Clarke, President, GTCC

Mindful Movement: Kaitlyn Chaplin, Brown & Brown Insurance + Yoga Instructor

9:30am - 10:40am

WHOLE GROUP WORKSHOP

Real Work: Authenticity and Values in Professional Life

Dr. Alexis Franzese, Authentic AF

Location: Auditorium

In this workshop, participants will rethink what it really means to show up authentically at work. In a culture that often equates authenticity with "no filter," this session reframes authenticity as a reflective, values-driven practice that supports professionalism, collaboration, and adaptability. Participants will learn what authenticity means (and doesn't mean), explore their personal values, and examine how these align with their organization's stated values. Participants will explore how authentic presence supports trust, resilience, and collaboration and also learn about some of the complexities related to authenticity and work life. Through guided journaling, paired reflection, and large-group synthesis, participants will walk away with a clearer understanding of how to show up more genuinely and effectively in their professional lives.





Agenda



Speakers



Sponsors

10:40am - 11:00am

HEADSHOTS + SNACK BREAK

Location: Main Lobby

11:00am - 12:00pm

SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

Greensboro Jaycees

Derek Mobley and Jordan Pearson

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Location: Auditorium

Cyril Jefferson, High Point Mayor and Founder of Change Often

Interviewed by Cecelia Thompson, Action Greensboro

As a social innovator, founder of Change Often, and the youngest mayor in High Point's history, Cyril Jefferson brings a powerful message on leadership, purpose, and the role young professionals play in shaping their communities. He'll share his journey to public service and challenge young professionals to lead with intention, step into their power, and shape the future of their communities—whether that's in the boardroom, at the ballot box, or right here in our community.

Following his presentation, Cyril will be joined by Cecelia Thompson, Executive Director of Action Greensboro, for a Q&A conversation.

Time permitting, Cyril will answer questions from the audience.





12:00pm - 12:50pm

LUNCH BREAK

Location: Pre Function Room + Oak Ridge C/D

Enjoy a buffet lunch. Use this longer break to have your headshot taken, connect with fellow attendees, or check in with work and answer emails.

1:00pm - 1:50pm

BREAKOUT SESSIONS BLOCK 1 - CHOOSE ONE SESSION

1

How Effective Leaders Manage Stress

Dr. Mike Beitler, UNCG Bryan School of Business and Economics

Location: Oak Ridge A/B

This breakout session will offer “tools” on how to management your stress. Learn simple practices to be more productive while enjoying yourself and your work. Dr. B (Mike) is a former executive, an executive coach, business-school professor, Taoist, and competitive bodybuilder. He has learned a variety of practices to enjoy his hectic life!

2

Speaking So People Will Listen

Celina McCrea, Goodwill Industries of Central North Carolina

Location: Classroom 130/131

Have you ever left a meeting unsure what it was about or presented on a topic and realized nothing stuck? This interactive workshop explores why messages often miss the mark—and how to speak so people actually listen. Learn to grab attention, build trust through authenticity, and communicate with clarity and impact. Whether you're leading, presenting, or persuading, you'll leave with practical tools to make your message land and last.



3

The Next Big Thing

Joey Cheek, Greensboro Chamber of Commerce

Location: Business Resource Room

Huge goals are sometimes easier to accomplish than small ones. This interactive session will serve as a crash course in the entrepreneurial path for young professionals—whether you're balancing a side hustle alongside full-time work or diving headfirst into your own venture. We'll explore strategies for setting bold goals, staying focused, and turning big ideas into reality. Walk away with practical insights and inspiration to pursue your "next big thing" with confidence and clarity.





Agenda



Speakers



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2:00pm - 2:50pm

STEAL THIS IDEA

Location: Auditorium

Lead, Network, Serve: YP Civitan Story

Stephanie Renn, Scarlett Ruppert, and Paislee Winkler

The Win-Win of Helping Others

Edwin Hong

Career Closet Pop-Up Shop

Bianca Smith

The Pause and Recharge Series

Imari Attaway





3:00pm - 3:50pm

BREAKOUT SESSIONS BLOCK 2 - CHOOSE ONE SESSION

1

Networking Strategies for Early Career Professionals

Dr. Madelynn Stackhouse, UNCG Bryan School of Business and Economics

Location: Oak Ridge A/B

In this breakout session, we'll explore simple and effective ways to build meaningful professional connections—both inside and outside your organization. From engaging with colleagues across different teams to making the most of industry events and social platforms, you'll learn practical strategies suited to today's evolving workplace. We'll also cover conversation tips, how to join group discussions, and share ideas for making a strong impression when meeting new people. Whether you're just starting out or looking to expand your network, this session offers guidance to help you connect with confidence.

2

Designing a Career in a World That Keeps Changing

Lasse Palomaki, The Strategic Student

Location: Classroom 130/131

Your career isn't just something you find — it's something you build. In this interactive session, we'll walk through a practical framework to help you map out where you're headed, identify your next one or two steps, and build a pathway that supports long-term growth. You'll learn how to reverse-engineer the skills, experiences, and relationships that fuel advancement — and how to stay agile in a world shaped by change. We'll also explore the often-overlooked drivers of career momentum, like mentorship, social capital, and internal credibility, so you can take control of your path with clarity and confidence.



3

Belonging as a Practice: Navigating the Difficult, Centering the Human

Maria Hicks-Few, City of Greensboro

Location: Business Resource Room

This presentation explores how organizations and individuals can intentionally cultivate environments where every person feels valued and connected. While the work of belonging and inclusion can be complex and, at times, uncomfortable, centering the human experience allows us to move forward with empathy, courage, and purpose. Participants will gain insights and strategies for fostering authentic belonging, addressing challenges with honesty, and building practices that honor both individual worth and collective growth.

4:00pm - 5:00pm

NETWORKING RECEPTION

Location: Main Lobby

Enjoy hors d'oeuvres, beer, wine, and NA beverages. Use this networking hour to connect with fellow attendees as we close out the summit. All summit activities at The Conference Center at GTCC will conclude at 5:00pm.

4:30pm - 5:30pm*

HONDA AIRCRAFT COMPANY TOUR

Location: Honda Aircraft Company

Tour attendees should make their way to Honda Aircraft Company immediately following the last breakout session. *This tour is for pre-registered attendees only.

6:00pm - 10:00pm

AFTER PARTY

Location: One Thirteen Brewhouse + Rooftop Bar

Join the Greensboro Jaycees for the official Lead Your City After Party! Enjoy rooftop views, a live DJ, drink specials, and appetizers. The first 50 Lead Your City conference attendees (with badge) get a free drink ticket.





Agenda



Speakers



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Keynote Speaker



CYRIL JEFFERSON

Cyril Jefferson is a husband, father, and award-winning social innovator whose life has been dedicated to impacting others, creating opportunities, and mobilizing resources for social change. As Founder & Principal at Change Often - Social Innovation Firm, Cyril leads the company's Innovation BrainTrust in solving social and economic challenges through collaborative solutions and comprehensive capacity building services. Working in spaces where the bottom line prioritizes "lives saved over dollars made," the Change Often team helps bring to life the ideas that impact our world for the good and has partnered to invest more than \$22M in impact initiatives for small business support, poverty alleviation, and education. Though he has received numerous honors—including a National Distinguished Service Award and being named to a Hunt State Policy Fellowship—the greatest to date came when voters in the 2023 High Point City Elections made him the youngest person to ever be elected Mayor of High Point, North Carolina. Mayor Jefferson is a graduate of North Carolina A&T State University. Living the words of Winston Churchill, he and his wife, Raven, teach their two sons that "To improve is to change. To perfect is to change often."





ALEXIS FRANZESE

Alexis Franzese is the Department Chair and an Associate Professor for the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Elon University. She also maintains a small private therapy practice and does wellness workshops and coaching, with a focus on happiness and authenticity (www.authenticAF.me). With academic training in the fields of sociology and psychology, her teaching and research interests are at the intersection of these fields and her main area of inquiry is on issues of self, identity, and well-being. She is especially passionate about her study of authenticity- being one's true self and is currently conducting research on authenticity and identity within travel and tourism, with Disney as a strategic domain of focus. In addition to publications within edited volumes and other peer-reviewed collections, her research has been published in journals that span the breadth of her scholarly interests and include International Journal of Scholarship on Teaching and Learning, Personality and Individual Differences, Sociology Compass, Aging and Mental Health, and others. She is a graduate of Union College (B.A.) and Duke University where she completed two separate doctoral degrees, in sociology and in psychology (clinical). She loves teaching others about the science of happiness and tries to incorporate her knowledge into her own full life and adventures with her four children, two dogs, and a very curious cat.



CECELIA THOMPSON

Cecelia Thompson serves as Executive Director of Action Greensboro. Action Greensboro, together with the Chamber of Commerce, serves as the city's primary economic and community development agency. Formed in 2001, Action Greensboro is a collaborative effort of eight local charitable foundations working to leverage local philanthropic impact. In collaboration with business, higher education, and municipal government, Action Greensboro works to strengthen Greensboro's economy and ensure the continuation of its excellent quality of life. In her role, Thompson leads a variety of efforts from talent and workforce development, K-20 education, urban livability, advocacy campaigns and city marketing efforts. In addition to her role at Action Greensboro, Thompson serves on the boards of the Guilford Education Alliance, the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation, and is a gubernatorial appointee to the North Carolina Humanities Council. Originally from Gainesville, Florida, Thompson holds a B.A. in Political Science, Public Administration and Sociology from Elon University.



CELINA MCCREA

Celina is a seasoned community engagement professional with a strong track record in building strategic partnerships that connect job seekers to meaningful careers. With extensive experience as a case manager and a Bachelor's degree in Public Relations from SUNY Fredonia, Celina leverages her communication skills to drive impactful change in workforce development. In 2023, she was awarded the Rookie of the Year at Goodwill Industries of Central North Carolina, where she currently works as the Community & Business Engagement Manager. Celina is also a proud graduate of the Leadership High Point Class of 2024. Outside of work, she volunteers with foster families, supporting the children in their care.



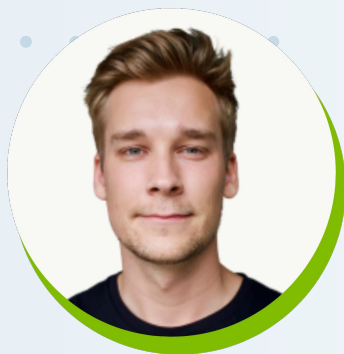
JOEY CHEEK

Joey Cheek is the EVP of Entrepreneurship for the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, tasked with growing the startup community and helping to launch venture scalable businesses. Previously, Cheek spent 10 years on the US National Speedskating Team where he competed in two Olympic Games winning gold, silver, and bronze medals. He attended Princeton University before diving into the startup and tech world. He launched a livestreaming platform for sports before leading a team of engineers building next-gen news and content apps for Fortune 100 companies. Before taking his role at the Chamber, Cheek worked in venture capital as the CEO and co-founder of SmartSolar.org. He is a member of the US Speedskating Hall of Fame, the Guilford County Sports Hall of Fame, the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame, and the World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame. He won the inaugural Heisman Humanitarian Award for his work advocating for civilians from Darfur, Sudan.



KAITLYN CHAPLIN

Kaitlyn Chaplin works in Human Resources at Brown & Brown Insurance, where she has been part of the team for the past three years. She is passionate about mental health and recently earned her 200-hour yoga teacher training certification after a decade of practicing yoga. Outside of work, Kaitlyn enjoys reading, playing tennis and pickleball, practicing yoga, and spending time with her dog. Her goal is to integrate yoga and mindfulness practices into the corporate world to support mental health initiatives and make yoga more accessible within the community.



LASSE PALOMAKI

Lasse Palomaki is a career strategist, speaker, and founder of The Strategic Student LLC. He specializes in helping early-career professionals build clarity, confidence, and momentum in their careers. With a background in higher education career services, the military, and the nonprofit sector, Lasse has delivered engaging, skill-building workshops to over 4,000 individuals at 35+ institutions, including Cornell, UCLA, and the University of Texas at Dallas. His sessions blend career mapping, practical planning, and strategic decision-making to help participants take control of their next steps. He is certified in Instructional Design by the Association for Talent Development (ATD) and in Design Thinking by IDEO.



MADELYNN STACKHOUSE

Dr. Madelynn Stackhouse is Associate Professor of Management and Human Resource Program Director at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, as well as a corporate consultant and organizational psychologist with over 20 years of experience. Her award-winning research examines ethical violations, leadership missteps, and trust breaches in organizational settings, with a particular focus on how transgressions—such as abusive supervision, workplace deviance, and organizational betrayal—affect culture and employee well-being. She has developed influential models for understanding apology, reconciliation, and moral decision-making, and her work has been recognized for its impact on advancing leadership and ethics scholarship. Separately, in her consulting practice, Dr. Stackhouse partners with organizations to develop strategic leadership capabilities, improve relational effectiveness across generations, and integrate Gen Z talent into high-performing teams. Known for translating rigorous research into actionable strategies, she equips leaders to foster resilient, ethical, and engaged workplaces.



MARIA HICKS-FEW

Maria started her career with the City in 1994 as a specialist in the Human Resources Department. After a 14-year stint in private industry, she rejoined the City in 2014 as its first Inclusion and Engagement Officer.

Maria came to the Human Rights Department as deputy director in 2024. She typically performs complex administrative and managerial tasks, including planning, organizing, staffing, and directing departmental operations. Maria earned a bachelor's degree in political science from NC A&T State University and holds a master's degree from UNC Greensboro in public affairs.



MIKE BIETLER

Dr. Mike Beitler (pronounced Bite-ler) is a consultant, executive coach, and a long-time member of the UNCG Bryan School of Business faculty. Dr. B teaches the "Leadership" course and the "Capstone Consulting Projects" course in the Bryan MBA program.

Mike works as an executive coach for many leaders in the Triad. His clients, as you can imagine, need "tools" for managing their own stress and the high-stress levels of their followers. He uses a variety of "ancient-eastern practices" to manage "modern-western stress."



Agenda



Speakers



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