



## Leadership North Carolina Class 30

Duke Energy Economic Development Session

March 7 – 9, 2023

### Speaker Directory

#### **Mr. James Morton**

President

Cape Fear Community College

411 North Front Street

Wilmington, NC 28401

(910) 362-7555

[jpmorton634@mail.cfcc.edu](mailto:jpmorton634@mail.cfcc.edu)

Jim Morton is President of Cape Fear Community College (CFCC), the 5th largest community college in North Carolina. Before becoming president in 2018, he served as the college's Executive Vice President and Vice President for Business and Financial Services.

Morton is active in New Hanover and Pender Counties and has been recognized for his leadership by several community organizations. He served as president of the Airlie Gardens Foundation Board and the Cape Fear Rotary. In addition, he served on the Board of Directors for the Boy Scouts of America, Honor Flight, North Carolina's Southeast Regional Economic Development Partnership, and as a United Way Campaign Coordinator.

During Mr. Morton's tenure, Cape Fear Community College has experienced consistent growth. Morton is committed to partnerships with area businesses and industries, positioning CFCC as a major contributor to the economic development of southeastern North Carolina while also strengthening the College's academic partnerships with K-12 and postsecondary transfer institutions.

Morton believes in the transformative power of education. He strives to ensure students from all walks of life can benefit from the education and training they receive at Cape Fear Community College.

**Ms. Susan Fleetwood**

**Alumna LNC Class 24**

Executive Director of Economic Development  
North Carolina Department of Commerce  
4301 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699  
(919) 814-4605  
[sfleetwood@commerce.nc.gov](mailto:sfleetwood@commerce.nc.gov)

Susan Fleetwood serves as Executive Director of Economic Development in the Office of the Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Commerce. In this role, she provides strategic leadership on complex economic development projects and policy issues; leads the Department's efforts in maintaining strong operational relationships with the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina; helps to develop competitive proposals for the Department's active economic development projects; and serves as liaison to the Governor's Office to prepare for his engagement with prospective and existing companies.

With more than 20 years of experience in economic development, she has served in various, increasingly responsible capacities. Prior to her current role she was the Director of Business & Industry Development and provided leadership for 25 economic development professionals working to recruit new domestic and international companies to the state and helping existing companies grow and expand.

Ms. Fleetwood is a graduate of Wake Forest University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Politics, and NC State University with a Master's degree in Public Administration. She is a graduate of Leadership North Carolina Class 24. She is also a graduate of the Economic Development Institute and a member of the North Carolina Economic Developers Association.

**Mr. Jason B. Semple**

Director of Business Development  
Brunswick Business & Industry Development  
1175 Turlington Avenue, Suite 202  
Leland, NC 28451  
(910) 408-1603  
[jason.semple@brunswickbid.com](mailto:jason.semple@brunswickbid.com)

Jason Semple is a North Carolina economic development veteran, having served in various local, regional, and state roles since 2005. Most recently, he served as President & CEO of the Martin County Economic Development Corporation from 2015 until 2022, when he joined Brunswick Business & Industry Development as Director of Business Development. Collectively, his efforts have resulted in more than 4,000 jobs created or retained and \$650 million in new tax base. Jason also has private sector experience in supply chain logistics and sales and marketing. A graduate of Emory University, Jason has been involved with a diverse array of organizations and boards, including the Small Business Technology & Development Center Advisory Board, NC Partnership for Children, and Rotary International.

**Mrs. Uconda Dunn**

Vice President of Business Development  
Greenville Eastern North Carolina Alliance  
209 East 5th Street  
Greenville, NC 27858  
(252) 751-3416  
[dunn@encalliance.com](mailto:dunn@encalliance.com)

Uconda R. Dunn joined the Greenville ENC Alliance in July of 2020 as Vice President of Business Development. She works to market Greenville and Pitt County to domestic and international companies interested in establishing or growing operations.

A native of North Carolina, Uconda comes to Greenville by way of the Central Virginia Partnership where she was the Director of Economic Development. In the Central Virginia Region, Uconda worked to market eight counties and the City of Charlottesville for regional growth. While serving in this capacity, Uconda was appointed by the Virginia General Assembly to serve as a member of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership's Business Development and Marketing Committee. She was also the Virginia State Director on the Southern Economic Development Council Board of Directors.

With over 15 years of professional economic development experience at the state and regional levels, Uconda brings a background of working with existing industries, lead generation opportunities, and valued work with site selection consultants. As an Existing Industry Specialist under the North Carolina Department of Commerce and Business Services Manager with the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, Uconda primarily served the Charlotte region and western part of the state.

Currently, Uconda serves as the North Carolina Alternate Director on the Southern Economic Development Council Board of Directors, a member of the Greenville Pitt County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and the Greenville Titans Football League Board of Directors.

A graduate of Tarboro High School, Dunn holds a Master's Degree in Organizational Change and Leadership from Pfeiffer University and B.A. degree in Communications Studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is a graduate of the Oklahoma University Economic Development Institute.

Uconda and her husband, Mark, have two handsome boys: Landon and Nolan. They enjoy Carolina football and spending time on beautiful lakes and beaches.

**Ms. Natalie English**

President and CEO  
Wilmington Chamber of Commerce  
1 Estell Lee Place  
Wilmington, NC 28401  
(910) 762-2611 , Ext. 204  
[english@wilmingtonchamber.org](mailto:english@wilmingtonchamber.org)  
@NatalieHEnglish

Natalie English currently serves as president & CEO of the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce. She has served for over 25 years in a chamber of a commerce leadership role and over 35 years advocating on behalf of business. Natalie believes it's her calling to work with business, government, and elected leaders to make her community attractive for business growth and investment.

Natalie has over 35 years of experience monitoring legislative and regulatory issues locally, statewide, and at the federal level. She has a strong track record of success and has been responsible for building community support for many investments in infrastructure that have been key to economic development in the communities in which she has worked. She has leadership experience and a background in affecting policies that impact the cost and ease of doing business, quality of life, and workforce. Natalie has a knack for leading teams to create innovative ways to educate and inform chamber members as well as give them a way to connect with each other and the resources they need in order to grow. The creativity and innovation Natalie employs to drive revenue have led to an impressive increase in cash on hand for the Wilmington Chamber.

Natalie received her B.A. in Communications from North Carolina State University and achieved her designation as a Certified Chamber Executive in 2012, one of only several hundred. In 2010, the National Association of Women Business Owners – Charlotte Chapter awarded Natalie with their Community Service Award. In 2008, Natalie was awarded the prestigious Marshall Memorial Fellowship and completed a 25-day trip to Europe to learn about and advance trans-Atlantic relations. She was named as a 2008 Women in Business Achievement Award Winner by the Charlotte Business Journal. In 2009 and 2013, the Mecklenburg Times named Natalie one of the 50 Most Influential Women in Charlotte. In 2017, Natalie was nominated as a Woman to Watch by Wilma Magazine. In 2019 and 2020, Natalie made the WilmingtonBiz 100 list as an influencer in the community and in 2021 and 2022 as a Power Player on that same list. Natalie was recognized in 2021 and 2022 by Business North Carolina as an economic development leader on their Power 100 list.

Natalie has also been an active volunteer and board member for numerous nonprofit organizations in Charlotte and at the state level. She has also been an active leader in her church. She served as President of the Charlotte Rotary Club and led the members in celebrations related to the club's Centennial in 2016. In Wilmington, she continues that involvement as a member of the board of United Way of the Cape Fear, the Ports, Waterways & Beaches Commission, and the Tourism Development Authority. Natalie served as a co-chair of the Mayor's Ad-Hoc Clean Energy Policy Task Force and as a member of the City of Wilmington's Naming Committee. She serves on various committees and working groups at St. Andrews Covenant Presbyterian.

In her spare time, Natalie enjoys spending time with her son Rick, a freshman at UNC Charlotte, and traveling, playing golf, reading, and writing.

### **The Honorable Machel Baker Sanders**

Secretary

North Carolina Department of Commerce

4301 Mail Service Center

Raleigh, NC 27699

(919) 814-4600

[info@nccommerce.com](mailto:info@nccommerce.com)

In February 2021, Governor Cooper appointed Secretary Machel Baker Sanders to lead the North Carolina Department of Commerce, enlisting her experience as former Administration Secretary, her strong background as a business leader, and her extensive knowledge of what it takes to build a globally competitive workforce. Secretary Sanders's vision for North Carolina's post-pandemic economic restoration is to work with partners to attract better paying jobs, support small businesses, and stimulate our state's innovation and entrepreneurial economy. Her bold and purposeful leadership aims to ensure North Carolina's diverse state is an inclusive one that works for all people.

Sanders brings 30 years of strong management and leadership experience to Commerce as a seasoned pharmaceutical and biotechnology executive, previously serving as vice president of manufacturing and general manager of Biogen's largest manufacturing facility in Research Triangle Park. She's also held leadership positions overseeing manufacturing, global quality assurance, and quality control functions at Biogen, Purdue Pharmaceuticals, and Diosynth-Akzo Nobel.

A graduate of North Carolina State University, Sanders holds a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry and a Master of Health Administration from Pfeiffer University. As a native North Carolinian and mother of twin daughters, she is passionate about improving the status of women in our state. Some of her work includes creating a Women's Innovation Network at Biogen and the Lady Cardinals STEM Program for High School students while at North Carolina Department of Administration. After all, as Sanders puts it, "Improving the status of women in North Carolina is not just a women's issue — it is a family, poverty, and economic issue."

Sanders is also a strong supporter of diversity, equity and inclusion, believing that "you can't be what you can't see." She previously served as the Chair of the North Carolina Commission on Inclusion, North Carolina Complete Count Commission, and the Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental, and Health Equity Task Force. Additionally, she serves on the Interagency Council for Coordinating Homeless Programs (ICCHP), the Commission of Indian Affairs, and the North Carolina State University Board of Visitors.

As North Carolina's Commerce Secretary, Sanders serves on many boards and commissions, including the Rural Infrastructure Authority, the board of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, the NCWorks Commission, the state's Travel & Tourism Board, and the Carolinas Pandemic Preparedness Task Force. Sanders also serves on the boards of two public life science companies. At Radius Health based in Cambridge, MA, she sits on the Board of Directors and is a member of the

Nominating Committee. At Novant, Inc., based in Research Triangle Park, she is a member of the Compensation Committee.

Secretary Sanders's experience and passion to improve the lives of North Carolinians uniquely positions her to lead North Carolina's portfolio of work in economic, community, and workforce development.

### **Mr. Christopher Gergen**

**Alumnus LNC Class 24**

Founding Partner  
Forward Impact and Raleigh Founded  
611 Watts Street  
Durham, NC 27701  
[cgergen88@gmail.com](mailto:cgergen88@gmail.com)  
@cgergen

Christopher Gergen is founding partner of [Forward Impact](#), a for-benefit advisory firm and investment fund that works with philanthropists, policymakers, corporations, and investors committed to scaling systemic solutions addressing persistent economic inequities. Christopher is also a founding partner of [Raleigh Founded](#) and Founded Communities, a co-working community housing over 400 companies across 150,000 sq. feet in North Carolina; co-author of the nationally acclaimed book [Life Entrepreneurs: Ordinary People Creating Extraordinary Lives](#); and a 2013 [Henry Crown Fellow](#) at the Aspen Institute, where he was named a [Braddock Scholar](#). Additionally, he is co-host of the podcast [Moving the Needle](#), which features conversations with social innovators driving breakthrough investments and actions that increase opportunities for generational wealth creation. Most recently, Christopher was founding CEO of [Forward Cities](#) – a national non-profit that helps cities and regions strengthen their equitable entrepreneurial ecosystems. Since launching in 2014, Forward Cities has worked with over 30 cities, launched regional collaboratives in North Carolina and Ohio, and developed a national cross-city learning collaborative. Christopher co-founded [SMARTHINKING](#), an online tutoring company that grew to serve 1,000 universities before it was acquired by Pearson Education in 2011. He was also the founder of Café Nunoa – a bar/restaurant/ live music venue in Santiago, Chile, that he started when he was 24. Christopher graduated with honors from Duke University and has his MPP from George Washington University and his MBA from Georgetown. He currently serves on the Governor's [NC Works Commission](#) and lives with his wife and two children in Durham, NC.

### **Mr. Tom Looney**

Member, NC Coastal Federation Board of Directors  
Member, NC State Board of Community Colleges  
204 Midenhall Way  
Cary, NC 27513  
(919) 423-1059  
[tflooney52@gmail.com](mailto:tflooney52@gmail.com)

Tom grew up on Long Island with a great appreciation and passion for the coast. He spent his 40+ year IT career at IBM and Lenovo, holding various cross-functional executive and leadership positions. He is currently working with Merlyn Mind, an education-focused AI startup in NYC.

He serves on the Boards of the NC Coastal Federation and the NC State Board of Community Colleges. He served on the NC Economic Development Board that created the EDPNC and went on to serve on the EDPNC Board, as well as its Executive Committee. In addition, he has chaired the Boards of Wake Tech Community College and the NC School of Science and Mathematics.

Since 2015, Tom has been focused on delivering on the commitment to create 1000 jobs and \$100M per year in economic activity by 2030 in our coastal communities through a burgeoning oyster aquaculture industry. He and his wife, Lucy, reside in Cary and Wrightsville Beach.

**Mr. Austin Rouse**

Senior Business Recruitment Manager - Automotive Industry  
Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC)  
150 Fayetteville Street, Suite 1200  
Raleigh, NC 27601  
(919) 447-7793  
[austin.rouse@edpnc.com](mailto:austin.rouse@edpnc.com)  
@AustinRouse

Austin Rouse joined EDPNC in 2015 working as a research analyst, transitioning to working as a Business Recruitment Manager since 2018, and has been a senior member of the team focusing on automotive projects since 2021. In his role, Austin serves as a leader in attracting businesses to North Carolina and managing statewide business recruitment projects. Throughout his time at EDPNC, Austin has worked directly with more than 50 economic development projects that have led to more than 16,000 announced jobs and more than \$7 billion in capital investment. Prior to joining EDPNC, Austin worked in research roles within economic development in Charlotte, Raleigh, and eastern North Carolina. Austin is a native of Kinston and is a double Tar Heel having earned his bachelor's degree in Public Policy and Political Science and Master of Public Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**Mr. Brook Taylor**

Vice President - Government Affairs and Strategic Partnerships  
VinFast Manufacturing USA  
1686 VinFast Drive  
Moncure, NC 27559  
(916) 769-6487  
[Brook.Taylor@vinfastauto.com](mailto:Brook.Taylor@vinfastauto.com)

An industry veteran with over fifteen years of experience representing some of the world's top automotive brands, technology companies, fast moving start-ups, and elected officials. Taylor is the Vice President at VinFast – a global automaker with an aggressive strategy to bring electric vehicles to the US market in 2022. Taylor is responsible for navigating the global business and political landscape on behalf of VinFast, leading a team of government affairs professionals that covers federal, state, and local affairs as well as a portfolio of business development and strategic partnerships.

Since Taylor joined VinFast in November 2020 as the 7th employee, VinFast has built a US headquarters in Los Angeles, thanks to the largest tax credit ever awarded to a car company by the State of California and currently plans to hire over 1,000 people in the state. VinFast has also announced plans to bring four all-electric SUVs to the US, list a US IPO on the Nasdaq, and build a \$4 billion US manufacturing facility in North Carolina by the end of 2024, thanks a \$1.2 billion incentive package – the largest in state history.

Before joining VinFast, Taylor led product development and city engagement for Daimler Urban Mobility Solutions where he was responsible for collaborating with US cities to deploy new mobility platforms including mobility data products, intelligent transportation infrastructure, connected and automated vehicles, and more. From 2017-2019, he was responsible for Regulatory Affairs at Mercedes-Benz R&D, preparing the market for electrification including advocating for more zero emission vehicle infrastructure, increasing the availability of incentives, investing in smart cities, and advocating for sensible autonomous vehicle technology.

Prior to joining Daimler, he was an appointee to California Governor Jerry Brown from 2011-2017, serving as Deputy Director at the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz). He was part of Governor Brown's International Team, helping organize trade missions to foreign countries and hosting foreign dignitaries. He also served under Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger from 2006-2010 as a Senior Policy Analyst.

He is an industry expert on transportation policy; federal, state, and local government; the deployment of electric vehicles; automotive regulations; emissions regulations; economic development; crisis communications; and more. He graduated from the University of Oregon. Taylor lives in Raleigh, NC, with his wife Katie, a brilliant corporate attorney, and their three amazing kids – Dominic, Madeleine and Kennedy.

**Mr. Danya Perry**

Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Wake County

300 South Salisbury Street

Raleigh, NC 27601

(919) 856-5551

[danya.perry@wakegov.com](mailto:danya.perry@wakegov.com)

@DanyaPerry

Danya Perry serves as the Director of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion with Wake County. In this role, Perry leads Wake County's efforts to advance diversity, build equity, and accelerate inclusion. From creating a clear vision and providing strategic direction, Perry seeks to promote belonging and support working environments where all have an opportunity to succeed.

Prior to joining Wake County, Perry held two critical leadership positions for the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce. He served as Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity, where he led the Triangle



DEI Alliance, and as Director of Equitable Economic Development. In these roles, he supported efforts to build inclusive prosperity and support our historically underrepresented businesses and residents.

Prior to joining the Raleigh Chamber, Perry worked for Communities in Schools of North Carolina for 12 years, most recently serving as Vice President of Youth Development. Perry is native to North Carolina, hailing from New Bern before earning a BA in Political Science and an MA in Public Administration from North Carolina State University. He is also a passionate social justice activist, youth advocate, and capitalizes on any opportunity to volunteer and facilitate positive change in the community. Perry loves music, laughs, and seeks every opportunity to work across difference. He lives by the acronym coined by a former mentee – P.E.A.C.E. (**Proper Education Always Causes Elevation**).

**Mr. Scott Millar**

President

Catawba County Economic Development Corporation

Post Office Box 3388

Hickory, NC 28603

(828) 267-1564

[smillar@catawbacountync.gov](mailto:smillar@catawbacountync.gov)

Scott Millar joined the Catawba County EDC as Vice President of Economic Development in 1993 and was named President in 1997.

He has led Catawba County to many significant announcements including data centers for Apple (\$5 billion investment to date), Microsoft (\$1 billion investment), and Bed, Bath, and Beyond as a result of developing the “NC Data Center Corridor.” Millar notably developed Trivium Corporate Center, a 378-acre Class A Business Park, in partnership with the City of Hickory and Catawba County, resulting in announcements totaling \$369 million and 772 jobs since 2018. His coordination of public/private efforts to create spec buildings in Catawba County has resulted in investment of \$231 million and the creation of 1,341 jobs to date. Total investment and jobs during his 25-year tenure as President are nearly \$9 billion investment and over 15,000 jobs.

Millar is a member of the North Carolina Economic Development Association (NCEDA) and received the association’s inaugural Lifetime Service Award in 2022. He served on the NCEDA Board of Directors from 2000-2007, holding the office of President in 2005-2006. He was named NCEDA’s Economic Developer of the Year in 2010.

Millar is a current member of the Charlotte Regional Business Alliance’s Executive Committee and served as Chair of the Alliance’s Economic Developer’s Advisory Council in 2021. In 2021, he was recognized in Business North Carolina magazine’s Power List and was named a Trustee to the NC School of Science and Mathematics.

**Mr. Greg Singleton**

Dean, Workforce and Continuing Education Programs  
Central Carolina Community College  
5825 Clyde Rhyne Drive  
Sanford, NC 27330  
(919) 718-7395  
[gsingleton@cccc.edu](mailto:gsingleton@cccc.edu)

Greg Singleton is a native of New York, NY. As a youth, his family relocated to Aulander, NC. Greg holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Fayetteville State University and a Project Management Professional Certification from IT University. Greg completed his paralegal studies in Corporate Law and Civil Litigation at the Professional Career Development Institute in Atlanta, GA. Greg was commissioned as a US Regular Army 2nd Lieutenant. Following his service, Greg worked in corporate America for over 21 years in telecommunications. His telecommunications areas of expertise are in technical support, operations, and project management.

Upon relocating to Craven County in November 2015, Greg Singleton became the Chairman of the Craven Pamlico Re-Entry Council (CPRC). Greg has served on the NC Statewide Reentry Council Collaborative Legislative Implementation Team and the Craven County Local Transportation Advisory Board. In February 2017, Greg became the Director of Community Workforce Readiness at Craven Community College. In March 2021, Greg's responsibilities increased when he was appointed as Director of Reentry Operations for the Craven Pamlico Reentry Council. In May 2022, he became the Dean of Programs, Workforce and Continuing Education at Central Carolina Community College. The work of Reentry Councils and Reentry operations has never been viewed as Greg's job, but his lifestyle.

Greg has received a number of awards and recognitions, including: 2017 NAACP "Community Service" award, 2017 Craven Pamlico Re-Entry Council "Extraordinary Vision & Leadership" award, 2018 Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board "Outstanding Partnership" award, 2019 Helping Others Foundation "Community Involvement & Humanitarian" award, 2022 Craven Community College "Staff Person of the Year," 2022 North Carolina Community College "State Staff Person of the Year," 2022 City of New Bern "Grand Marshal" for the Black History Parade, 2022 Craven Community College Foundation "Community Fabric Award" winner for "Leadership in Education," and 2022 Refreshing Award for "Exemplary Community Service."

## Class 30 Duke Energy Economic Development Session Planning Committee

The following members of LNC Class 29 make up the planning committee for the Class 30 ECD session.

**Mr. Kevin Baxter** *Burke*

*Vice Chancellor & Chief Campus Officer*

North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics - Morganton

[kevin.baxter@ncssm.edu](mailto:kevin.baxter@ncssm.edu)

Kevin Baxter joined the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM) in January 2017 and serves as the Vice Chancellor and Chief Campus Officer for NCSSM-Morganton. His career has largely centered on Honors education - first at the University of Maryland and then at East Carolina University, where he designed, built, and grew special programs and communities for talented young scholars. This work led to his current role at NCSSM where, since 2017, he has led the development and opening of the 18th campus of the UNC System at NCSSM-Morganton.

Beyond this work, Kevin is deeply engaged in Burke County and throughout Western North Carolina. His current service roles include serving as Chairman of the Board of C2Life Foundation, as a board member with the WNC Bridge Foundation and the YMCA of Catawba Valley, and on the steering team for the Industrial Commons Innovation Campus and the Work in Burke initiative.

Outside his professional and civic roles, Kevin spends most of his time with his wife (Erica), kids (Lincoln and Cora), dog (Aly), and anyone who cares to wander the fairways of North Carolina while observing errant golf shots and some plucky comic relief.

**Mr. Jon Biggs** *Durham*

*Vice President of Risk Management and Education*

Investors Title Insurance Company

[jon@jonbiggs.com](mailto:jon@jonbiggs.com)

Jon Biggs, as the Vice President of Risk Management and Education, oversees risk management functions related to Investors Title's approved provider system. In this role, he oversees the approval process, develops educational seminars and communications-based initiatives involving approved providers and agents, and manages provider data and analysis related to the company's risk management efforts. Prior to joining Investors Title in 2012, he was partner at a firm in Durham, NC, where he practiced residential and commercial real estate law for more than 20 years. Mr. Biggs holds a bachelor's degree from Duke University and a Juris Doctor from Wake Forest University School of Law.

**Mrs. Beckie Brooks** *Wake*

*Vice President, Strategy, Planning, Performance – Marketing and Corporate Social Responsibility*

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina

[beckie.brooks@bcbsnc.com](mailto:beckie.brooks@bcbsnc.com)

Beckie currently leads a Strategy, Planning and Performance team for Blue Cross NC's Marketing and Corporate Social Responsibility division, aimed at improving the health and well-being of all North Carolinians.

Prior to this role, Beckie led an enterprise research and development team as Blue Cross NC's Director, Drivers of Health Strategy. She was responsible for the development and implementation of programs to support Blue Cross NC members' non-medical drivers of health needs, with a focus on food security, healthy housing, transportation, and social isolation, to improve health for NC customers and communities. In previous roles, Beckie has led Customer Experience work at Blue Cross NC and Fidelity Investments.

Beckie moved to the great state of North Carolina in 2007 with her husband and two children. She currently lives with her family in Cary and enjoys as much time as she can in the Down East community of Harkers Island. She enjoys spending time with family and friends, travel, learning, meeting new people, and experiencing new adventures.

**Mr. Brian Denisar Alamance**

*CEO & President*

Bobbitt

[bdenisar@bobbitt.com](mailto:bdenisar@bobbitt.com)

Brian is passionate about building relationships, creating memorable moments, and making an impact in his community. Brian has spent his 18-year professional career in commercial construction and real estate along the east coast. After graduating college from Mount St. Mary College in Newburgh, NY, where he led his college baseball team to the NCAA Regional Championships as a Conference Player of the Year, Brian began his construction career in the Washington, DC, and the Northern Virginia market. After eight years, he was relocated and led a construction team in South Florida for four years before moving his family to North Carolina, where he is the current CEO and President for Bobbitt Construction, an ESOP based in Raleigh, NC.

Brian is currently the market leader for the CoreNet Triad Chapter, a member of Vistage, and a past executive board member for the Alamance Chamber of Commerce. He has completed Leadership Alamance (NC), Leadership Miami, Leadership Fort Lauderdale, and Leadership North Carolina.

Brian and his wife Emily have three children: Braden (6), Madisyn (4), and Cameron (1). They live in Burlington. Emily works in High Point with Davis Furniture Industries. Brian and Emily both coach their children in baseball and soccer. They enjoy spending time with their community friends, being active within their church (Summit Church), and making memories as a family at Bald Head Island.

**Mrs. Tinu Akintola Diver Wake**

*Vice President of Resource Development and Partnerships*

DHIC, Inc.

[tinudiver@gmail.com](mailto:tinudiver@gmail.com)

Grounded in the spirit of Charles Hamilton Houston’s adage that a lawyer is either a social engineer or a social parasite, Atinuke “Tinu” Akintola Diver grounds her creative, legal, and community practices in ways that seek to build and regenerate, rather than to purely extract and exploit. A first-generation American and the daughter of Nigerian immigrants, Tinu was born in Boston, MA; raised in Prince George’s County, MD; and currently resides in Raleigh, NC. She is a graduate of the Creative Writing Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and earned her Juris Doctor from the University of North Carolina School of Law, a Certificate in Nonprofit Leadership from the University of North Carolina School of Social Work, a Certificate in Documentary Arts from the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University, and a Certificate in Embodied Social Justice from The Embody Lab.

Tinu serves as Vice President of Resource Development and Partnerships at DHIC, Inc., and is the current President of the Research Triangle Area Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel. Her published writing includes her essays “Running Into Glass Doors” from *Talking Taboo: American Christian Women Get Frank about Faith* and “A Park Is a Message” from Volume I of the *Black Oak Society Zine*. She is co-director of the short documentary film “Quilt Journeys,” co-producer of the short audio documentary, “Masterpiece,” director/producer of the short documentary “98,” and is currently working on her first feature-length documentary film: “This Belongs to Us.”

**Mr. Timothy Downs** *Durham*

*Regional Director, North Carolina Economic Development*

Thomas & Hutton Engineering Co.

[downs.t@tandh.com](mailto:downs.t@tandh.com)

As Regional Director for North Carolina Economic Development, Timothy Downs spearheads Thomas & Hutton’s economic development activities in North Carolina. Partnering with local and state-level economic development agencies, Timothy helps clients develop a vision for attracting industries to their communities through multi-faceted engineering services. He has nearly 20 years of professional public experience with a range of expertise in the economic development field including business attraction, retention, and expansion programs.

Timothy’s previous roles include Senior Vice President of Economic Development for the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce; Director of Economic Development for Craven County, NC; Executive Director for the Craven 100 Alliance; and Deputy Director of the Office of Economic Development for Dayton, OH.

A licensed attorney in Ohio and North Carolina, Timothy earned his law degree from Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Lansing, MI, and Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology from North Carolina State University. Timothy is a certified Economic Development Finance Professional through the National Development Council. Timothy is a member of the North Carolina Economic Developers Association, as well as NAIOP and ULI.

Timothy is actively involved in several community efforts and particularly passionate about education and second chances. He is a founding member and former Chair of the Craven Pamlico Re-entry Council; actively working with NCDPS on the establishment of a new Re-entry Council in central NC; and a leader

in Troop NC-1533 of Trail Life. Timothy and his wife, Emily, have two teenage daughters and a young son. He enjoys time with his family, fishing, hiking, and gardening.

**Ms. Kate Gallagher Wake**

*Assistant General Counsel and Director of Land*

Martin Marietta Materials, Inc.

[kate.glaze@martinmarietta.com](mailto:kate.glaze@martinmarietta.com)

Kate lives in Raleigh and works at Martin Marietta Materials, Inc. as an Assistant General Counsel and its Director of Land. Kate is passionate about the company and enjoys working through complex legal issues while also managing the company's land holdings, improving land-related processes, and realizing value from the company's property assets. Kate moved from Texas to Raleigh to join Martin Marietta in 2017 and feels fortunate to be part of a company that values safety and excellence while working with smart, compassionate colleagues. Kate has two kids (ages 12 and 13), two cats, and two parents with her in Raleigh.

**Dr. Shakira Henderson Pitt**

Assistant Vice Chancellor of Clinical Research, UNC-CH

Clinical Research Integration Officer, UNC School of Medicine

System Vice President Research Officer, UNC Health

[drshakiralihenderson@gmail.com](mailto:drshakiralihenderson@gmail.com)

Dr. Shakira Henderson wears several professional hats, including hospital-based nurse researcher, health educator, and certified neonatal nurse. Currently, she serves as the System Vice President, Research Officer for UNC Health, the Assistant Vice Chancellor Clinical Research for UNC Chapel Hill campus, and the Clinical Research Integration Officer for the UNC School of Medicine. She previously served as the founder and Senior Administrator of the Vidant Health Center for Research and Grants. She is a life-long learner and holds dual doctoral degrees, PhD and DNP, and master's degrees in public health, anatomical sciences, and advanced nursing practice with a sub-specialization in nursing education.

Dr. Henderson serves as an elected member and neonatal expert on the national board for the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses and has recently been elected as the 2022-2023 President. This year she was elected to the North Carolina Board of Nursing. She also serves as Co-Chair of the North Carolina Nurses Association Nurses on Board Council. She previously served on an international board for lactation and was a fellow, mentor, and faculty advisor in Sigma's Maternal Child Health Nurse Leadership Academy. She is a faculty advisor for the new Sigma Nurse Leadership Academy for Practice. Her expertise is in the innovative application of research and nursing practice to increase the generation of research from the bedside and expedite the translation of evidence into practice. She is passionate about equitable breastfeeding and lactation opportunities for the residents of North Carolina.

Dr. Henderson is interested in global health as she is originally from the tiny Caribbean Island of Dominica. Thus, one of her hobbies is traveling. And in her spare time, she enjoys sound sleep!

**Mr. PJ Klein** *New Hanover*  
*Business Continuity Program Manager*  
Corning  
[kleinpj@corning.com](mailto:kleinpj@corning.com)

PJ is a registered Professional Engineer, a Certified Energy Manager, and Certified Business Continuity Professional. He has worked in the manufacturing business for eight years, all with Corning. Prior to joining Corning, PJ worked for United Engineers & Constructors, formerly URS and AECOM, in electrical design for the nuclear power industry for six years. PJ graduated from University of New Orleans with a BS in Electrical Engineering.

PJ is currently the Business Continuity Program Manager for Corning's Optical Fiber and Cable business as well as the Assistant Division Energy Manager. He is responsible for Corning's business continuity initiatives inclusive of managing and evaluating risk to global operations. Previously, PJ was a Facilities Electrical Engineer, also in Corning's Optical Fiber and Cable business. His previous responsibilities included oversight of the power distribution system for ten facilities worldwide, including executing electrical and multi-discipline projects.

PJ was appointed in 2022 to the City of Wilmington's Clean Energy Advisory Committee. He married Denise in October 2015 and they have two daughters, Keegan (5) and Palmer (3).

**Dr. Erin Lynch Forsyth**  
*President*  
Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) Network  
[elynch@qem.org](mailto:elynch@qem.org)

Dr. Erin Lynch, CRA, is the President of Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) Network. Dr. Lynch's research area is strategic planning and program development. She has training from James Madison University in English/Secondary Education (BA), Vanderbilt University in Special Education, Tennessee State University in Advanced Curriculum & Instruction (EdD), and Northcentral University in Industrial Organizational Psychology (PhD, ABD). She is formerly the Associate Provost of Scholarship, Research, and Innovation and Dean of Graduate School at Winston-Salem State University, a North Carolina HBCU; Research Director of the Center of Excellence of Learning Sciences (COELS) at Tennessee State University, and faculty member in the College of Education at Austin Peay State University.

Dr. Lynch has been an invited presenter and trainer in the area of program development for retention of underrepresented minority faculty in the academic setting, as well as trainer for strategic planning application in the non-profit setting. As a researcher she has been funded in intervention development for target populations, specifically underrepresented minority groups and adult learners, and her research in funding equity and R&D productivity seeks to support minority serving institutions. She has produced over \$861 million in federal and foundational grant proposals and is published in the topics of leadership, equity, innovation management, and instructional design.

Her service to the academy has included serving as a reviewer for *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice* (Sage), *Gender, Place, and Culture* (Routledge), *Journal of Research on*

*Christian Education* (Routledge), and Senior Editor for *DiKan: The Journal for HBCU Leadership*. She currently serves on the Carnegie Classification Technical Review Panel for the development of Social and Economic Mobility classification, Board of the Southern Center for Broadening Participation in STEM, and Complete College America Digital Learning Infrastructure Advisory Board. Outside of the workplace, Dr. Lynch served as Chair of the Board for Begin Anew, a faith-based educational non-profit in Nashville Tennessee; Vice President of the Urban League of Middle Tennessee Young Professionals; as a board member to the Mental Health Initiative of Nashville Tennessee, National Director of Grant Writing for Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, the Secretary to the Executive Board of Zeta Phi Beta State of Tennessee, and a twice-elected chapter President. She has two young adults who will be starting college in Fall 2023.

**Ms. Dionne McLean Wake**

*Project Manager, Supplier Diversity Equity & Inclusion*  
RTI International  
[dmclean@rti.org](mailto:dmclean@rti.org)

Dionne McLean is a certified supplier diversity professional and project manager at RTI International, where she operates as a liaison to various business units for developing strategic engagement processes and a pipeline of potential partnerships in support of RTI's research and procurement efforts. She creates and oversees cross-functional teams of business unit leaders to help structure and support diversity partnership initiatives. Additionally, her efforts help develop community partnerships with small, disadvantaged minority-owned businesses.

Dionne's civic duties were birthed out of her desire to see people actualize their dreams. Her family has always sponsored families for the holidays and during times of hardship. As a former educator, high school basketball coach and community advocate, serving is part of her calling card. She is a sought-after mentor and speaker, a champion for disadvantaged populations and the elderly, and provides resources and support for the sick and immobile.

In addition to her work, Ms. McLean is affiliated with several professional and service-oriented organizations. She is a member of the Triangle Supplier Diversity Practitioners Alliance, RTP DEI Collective, and Diverse Business Engagement Chair of RTI's Equity Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Leadership Council. She proudly acknowledges she has been fortunate to work in arenas aligned with her personal mission and ambitions.

**Ms. Denika Seymour Johnston**

*Financial Professional*  
MassMutual North Carolina  
[denikaseymour@financialguide.com](mailto:denikaseymour@financialguide.com)

Denika Seymour previously spent over two decades filling senior executive roles within the business and corporate sector. While being very successful, she found herself aspiring to achieve a greater purpose for herself, family, and community.



As current CEO of the DEI-focused business development and consulting firm DiGi Discoveries, she oversees DEI initiatives to increase funding, corporate, state, and federal agency diversity spend partnerships as well as provide vital education and resources needed to help diverse individuals and small businesses succeed and grow. She led DiGi Discoveries-The Inclusivity Group in partnering with top fortune 100 company MassMutual in 2019 to help bring financial DEI initiatives to individuals, families, and small businesses across America. Denika is also the founder and president of Kingdom Wealth Forum, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization to empower the economic advancement of marginalized individuals, communities, and diverse businesses through access to financial education and entrepreneurial mentorship programs.

Originally from The Turks and Caicos Islands, Denika grew up in Florida then relocated to Raleigh, NC, in 2012. Since then, she's called North Carolina her home raising her amazing family, twin daughters Leilah and London, son Hunter, and their pet cat Sal. When she's not working, their family enjoys trips to the beach, listening to live music, and hiking on North Carolina's beautiful trails.

**Dr. Ryan Urquhart** *Durham*  
*Principal Interaction Architect*  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina  
[rurquhart08@gmail.com](mailto:rurquhart08@gmail.com)

Dr. Ryan Urquhart's passion is very simple - helping others and tackling tough issues by thinking outside of the box. He has a keen interest in people, processes, and technology, but his devotion and, ultimately, what led him to Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC), is his love for helping people. Currently, his position at BCBSNC as the Principal Interaction Architect affords him such opportunities by working to improve the overall health insurance experience of their members. Prior to joining BCBSNC, he was a Software Engineer at International Business Machines (IBM), located in Research Triangle Park, NC.

Additionally, he serves as an Adjunct Professor at UNC-Chapel Hill in the School of Information and Library Science and serves as the Vice-Chair of the External Advisory Board in the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering at North Carolina A&T State University. He actively serves as a mentor to employees inside BCBSNC, as well as to young professionals entering corporate America.

Dr. Urquhart believes that social care is a key component of healthcare and education, particularly for underserved communities, and he feels extremely fortunate to be an active participant in both. When not at work, you can find him spending time with his wife and daughter, traveling, or binge-watching Netflix.