



COMMUNITY COLLEGES OF
APPALACHIA

33rd Annual Conference

*Pathways to Possibility: Creating Clear Routes
to Careers, Credentials, and Community
Impact*

June 7 – 9, 2026
Asheville NC

SUNDAY, JUNE 7				
Day	Time	Title	Presenter	Location
Sunday	2:00pm – 3:45pm	CCA Board Meeting	CCA Board Members / CCA Staff	Blue Ridge 4
Sunday	2:00pm – 4:00pm	Registration		Corridor Outside Blue Ridge
Sunday	4:00-6:30pm	<p>Welcome and Keynote Address Reading the Labor Market: Data-Backed Trends Shaping Jobs, Skills, and Student Success</p> <p>Conference Reception Sponsored By PREMIER Sponsor: Franklin University</p>	<p>Dr. Galen DeHay, CCA Board Chair</p> <p>Laura Ullrich, Director of Economic Research at Indeed, will present a data-driven analysis of national and regional labor market conditions shaping hiring outcomes. The presentation also examines how AI is influencing work today and the implications for jobs, skills, and productivity in the years ahead. Special attention will be paid to how these data will impact higher education institutions and the students they serve.</p> <p>Samantha Shear, Executive Director, Community College Alliance at Franklin University</p>	Blue Ridge 1,2,3
Sunday	6:30pm	Dinner on Your Own		



Dr. Laura Ullrich, Keynote Speaker

Laura Ullrich is Director of Economic Research in North America at the Indeed Hiring Lab. Prior to joining Indeed, Laura served as a Senior Regional Economist and Senior Manager at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, primarily focused on research related to higher education and workforce dynamics. For over a decade, Laura was an economics professor and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs at Winthrop University. Her research interests include higher education, community college policy, labor participation, and the economic impact of local development. She holds a bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Georgia and a master's and doctorate in Economics from the University of Tennessee.



Community Colleges of Appalachia 33rd Annual Conference Schedule

MONDAY, JUNE 8				
Day	Time	Title	Presenter	Location
Monday	7:30am – 9:30am	Registration		Blue Ridge Corridor
Monday	7:30am – 8:20 am	Breakfast Buffet		Dining Area Embassy Suites
Monday	8:30am - 8:45am	Phi Theta Kappa and CCA Updates	Dr. Lynn Tincher-Ladner, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society Dr. Kevin Boys, CCA Exec. Director	Blue Ridge 1,2,3
Monday	8:50am– 9:25am	General Session: Designing Clear, Employer-Aligned Routes to Impactful Careers: Reimagining Workforce Development Through Employer Aligned and Learner Centered Design Models	Debra Roach, Vice President for Workforce Development Community College of Allegheny County	Blue Ridge 1, 2, 3
Monday	9:35am – 10:10am	General Session: Workforce LaunchPad in Action: Creating Bilingual IET Pathways to High-Demand Careers	Kenna Sommer, Director of Transitional Studies Erica Witsell, Coordinator of Educational Navigation Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College	Blue Ridge 1,2,3
Monday	10:20am – 10:55am	Concurrent Session: Pellissippi Pathways: A Career Immersion Guided Pathways Model	Angela Hughes, AVP of Academic Affairs Rebecca McDonough, Dir of Career Dev Oakley Atterson, Dir of Inst Effectiveness, Assessment and Planning Pellissippi State Community College	Blue Ridge 1,2,3
Monday	10:20am – 10:55am	Concurrent Session: Career-Ready by Design: Credentials Driving Appalachia’s Workforce	Dr. Joni M. Gray, Dir of Career and Corporate Training Dr. Kari Coffindaffer, Dean School of Business, Aviation and Technology Pierpont Community and Technical College	French Broad
Monday	10:20am – 10:55am	Concurrent Session: Building Trust to Build Persistence: Success Coaching in Appalachian Community Colleges	Kaitlin Newhouse, Sr. Associate Dir. of Research and Evaluation, NC State University Savannah Parton, Adult Student Success Coach, Isothermal Community College Kiersten Proctor, RPED Success Coach, Western Piedmont Com Col	Blue Ridge 4



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Day	Time	Title	Presenter	Location
Monday	11:05am – 11:40am	Concurrent Session: Aligning Credential Attainment through Blended Classes	James Dye, Dean of Business, Engineering, and Industrial Technology Adrianna Culbertson, Coordinator of Workforce Programs Crystal Dye, Assoc. Professor Southwest Virginia Comm College	Blue Ridge 1,2,3
Monday	11:05am – 11:40am	Concurrent Session: Spreadsheets to Strategy: Tracking Community & Workforce Partnerships at Scale	Marty Lessman, Founder, Workforce Connect Cindy Davies, VP Academic and Workforce Dev. Western Piedmont Comm College Kurt Knopp, WVU Parkersburg	Blue Ridge 4
Monday	11:05am – 11:40am	Concurrent Session: This Is Our Moment: Workforce Education at the Turning Point	Derek Bryant, Asst. Professor of Mathematics, Mountain Empire Comm College	French Broad
Monday	11:50am – 12:25pm	Concurrent Session: Accelerating the Path: How Compressed Scheduling Drives Success in Appalachia	Holley Nichols, PhD., Sr. Assoc. Dir for Research, Belk Center for Comm. College Leadership and Research Dr. Greg Thomas, VP of Academic and Student Affairs, Isothermal Community College	Blue Ridge 1,2,3
Monday	11:50am – 12:25pm	Concurrent Session: From Plant Floor to Degree Pathway: A Credit-Based Incumbent Worker Model with Chemours	Torie Jackson, President, WVU Parkersburg Michele Wilson, Dean of Workforce Technical, and Computer Information Sciences, WVU Parkersburg	French Broad
Monday	11:50am – 12:25pm	Concurrent Session: Pathways for Aspiring Educators: From Associate Degree to Teacher Licensure	Samantha Shear, Exec. Dir. Of Community College Alliance, Franklin University Danielle Wall, Program Chair of Education Studies, Franklin Univ.	Blue Ridge 4
Monday	12:30pm – 1:35pm	LUNCHEON Sponsored By GOLD Sponsor: WGU	WGU Presenter: Krista Spencer, Lead Strategic Partnerships Manager	Blue Ridge 1,2,3



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Day	Time	Title	Presenter	Location
Monday	1:50pm – 2:25pm	Concurrent Session: The Community Career Center: A Flexible Blueprint for Appalachian Career Services Innovation	Dr. Matthew McGraw, Assoc Vice President, Mountain Gateway Comm. College	French Broad
Monday	1:50pm – 2:25pm	Concurrent Session: Strategies for Youth Engagement	Katie Carr, Pathways Coordinator Kerri Porter, Grant Director Alfred State College	Blue Ridge 4
Monday	2:35pm – 3:10pm	Concurrent Session: Customized Training, Economic Development for the Community and New Revenue for the College.	Trenton Hightower, Dir. Of Membership and Workforce Dev., NACCE	Blue Ridge 4
Monday	2:35pm – 3:10pm	Concurrent Session: Fulbright Scholars and Community Colleges of Appalachia.	Dr. Matthew McGraw, Chief Workforce Officer, Mountain Gateway Comm College	French Broad
Monday	3:20pm – 3:55pm	Concurrent Session: Expanding Apprenticeship Training: From Entry-Level Skills to High Value Associates	Bryan Manuel, Dean of Integrated Workforce Solutions, Tri-County Technical College	French Broad
Monday	3:20pm – 3:55pm	Concurrent Session: From Promise to Persistence: Building a Layered Student Support Funding Model	Dr. John Rainone, President, Mountain Gateway Community College Dr. Anthony Wise, President, Pellissippi State Comm. College	Blue Ridge 4
Monday	4:00pm – 5:30pm	Reception and Networking	Sponsored By: EdAmerica	Blue Ridge 1,2,3
Monday	5:30pm	Dinner/Explore Asheville on Your Own		

CCA wishes to thank Explore Asheville and the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority for their support of our 2026 annual conference!





Community Colleges of Appalachia 33rd Annual Conference Schedule

TUESDAY, JUNE 9				
Day	Time	Title	Presenter	Location
Tuesday	7:30am – 8:30am	Breakfast Buffet		Dining Area Embassy Suites
Tuesday	8:30am – 9:10am	General Session: Titan Pathways to Success	Dr. Katie Thomas, Provost, Community College of Beaver County Kristi Farrow, Asst. Professor of Cybersecurity, Community College of Beaver County	Blue Ridge 1,2,3
Tuesday	9:20am – 9:55am	Concurrent Session: Expanding Nursing Pathways Through Philanthropy, Partnership, and Program Innovation: How TCTC Is Building Clear Routes to Careers and Community Impact	Dr. Mandy Elmore, VP of Academic and Workforce Development, Tri-County Technical College Courtney White, Executive Director of Tri-County Technical College Foundation	French Broad
Tuesday	9:20am – 9:55am	Concurrent Session: Bridging Potential to Purpose: Designing Clear Pathways for Lifelong Impact	Michelle Robinson, Sr. Director, National Cybersecurity Centers (NCyTE and CCNC), Whatcom Community College Dr. Deanne Cranford-Wesley, Director/ Cybersecurity/Clinical Professor, North Carolina Central University	Blue Ridge 4



MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW FOR OUR 2026 FALL CONFERENCE!

2026 FALL CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 28 – 30, 2026

KNOXVILLE, TN

HOSTED BY: PELLISSIPPI COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Community Colleges of Appalachia 33rd Annual Conference Schedule

Day	Time	Title	Presenter	Location
Tuesday	10:05am – 10:40am	Concurrent Session: From Policy to Pathways: Leveraging North Carolina’s New Qualified Professional Legislation to Build Behavioral Health Workforce	Porscha Orndorf, Chair, Social and Human Services, Asheville- Buncombe Technical Community College Betsey Zook, Workforce Analyst, Center on the Workforce,	French Broad
Tuesday	10:05am – 10:40am	Concurrent Session: Implementing Cybersecurity Competitions for Student Engagement, Recruitment and Retention	Evan Enke, Chair and Professor, Alfred State College	Blue Ridge 4
Tuesday	10:40am – 11:00am	Hotel Checkout		
Monday	11:00am – 12:00pm	Awards Luncheon	Sponsored By: BibliU	Blue Ridge 1,2,3
Monday	12:00pm	Conference Adjourns		



PLAN TO JOIN US NEXT YEAR
2027 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
 JUNE 6 – 8, 2027
 ASHEVILLE, NC



Community Colleges of Appalachia 33rd Annual Conference Schedule

PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

SUNDAY, JUNE 7

4:00 PM – 6:30 PM

OPENING WELCOME, KEYNOTE AND RECEPTION

Welcome

Dr. Galen DeHay, CCA Board Chair

Reading the Labor Market: Data-Backed Trends Shaping Jobs, Skills, and Student Success

Speakers: Laura Ullrich (Indeed); Dr. Galen DeHay (CCA); Samantha Shear (Franklin University)

Abstract: Laura Ullrich presents a data-driven analysis of labor market conditions and hiring trends, including the impact of AI on jobs, skills, and productivity, with implications for higher education and student success.

Reception Sponsored by Franklin University

Samantha Shear,

MONDAY, JUNE 8

General Sessions

Designing Clear, Employer-Aligned Routes to Impactful Careers

Monday, June 8 | 8:50 AM – 9:25 AM

Speakers: Debra Roach (Community College of Allegheny County)

Abstract: Explores redesign of workforce programs to create accelerated career pathways through employer co-design and learner-centered approaches.

Workforce LaunchPad in Action

Monday, June 8 | 9:35 AM – 10:10 AM

Speakers: Kenna Sommer (A-B Tech); Eric Witsell (A-B Tech)

Abstract: Highlights integration of adult education and workforce pathways using bilingual IET models and industry credentials.



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Concurrent Sessions

Monday, June 8 | 10:20 AM – 10:55 AM

Pellissippi Pathways

Speakers: Angela Hughes; Rebecca McDonough; Oakley Atterson (Pellissippi State Community College)

Abstract: Describes a career immersion model with project-based learning, embedded credentials, and work-based experiences.

Career-Ready by Design

Speakers: Joni M. Gray; Kari Coffindaffer (Pierpont Community and Technical College)

Abstract: Focuses on embedding stackable credentials aligned with workforce needs.

Building Trust to Build Persistence

Speakers: Kaitlin Newhouse (NC State University); Savannah Parton (Isothermal CC); Kiersten Proctor (Western Piedmont CC)

Abstract: Explores coaching models that improve engagement and persistence.

Concurrent Sessions

Monday, June 8 | 11:05 AM – 11:40 AM

Aligning Credential Attainment through Blended Classes

Speakers: James Dye; Adrianna Culbertson; Crystal Dye (Southwest Virginia CC)

Abstract: Describes blended courses aligning non-credit and credit learners.

Spreadsheets to Strategy

Speakers: Marty Lessman (Workforce Connect); Cindy Davies (Western Piedmont CC); Patricia Weaver (Pellissippi State CC); Jennifer Brown (Forsyth Tech CC); Kurt Knopp (WVU Parkersburg)

Abstract: Discusses scaling workforce partnerships through structured processes.

This Is Our Moment

Speakers: Derek Bryant (Mountain Empire CC)

Abstract: Reframes workforce education as central to institutional mission.



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Concurrent Sessions

Monday, June 8 | 11:50 AM – 12:25 PM

Accelerating the Path

Speakers: Katie Carr (Belk Center); Greg Thomas (Isothermal CC)

Abstract: Explores compressed scheduling models that improve completion.

From Plant Floor to Degree Pathway

Speakers: Torie Jackson; Michele Wilson (WVU Parkersburg)

Abstract: Highlights employer-paid degree pathways to upskill workers.

Pathways for Aspiring Educators

Speakers: Samantha Shear; Danielle Wall (Franklin University)

Abstract: Presents a partnership model expanding educator pathways.

Concurrent Sessions

Monday, June 8 | 1:50 PM -2:25 PM

Strategies for Youth Engagement

Speakers: Katie Carr; Kerri Potter (Alfred State)

Abstract: Workshop on engaging youth to strengthen partnerships.

Community Career Center

Speakers: Matthew McGraw (Mountain Gateway CC)

Abstract: Shares a model improving student engagement and outcomes.

Concurrent Sessions

Monday, June 8 | 2:35 PM – 3:10 PM

Customized Training and Economic Development

Speakers: Trenton Hightower (NACCE)

Abstract: Focuses on employer training programs and revenue generation.



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Fulbright Scholars and Community Colleges

Speakers: Matthew McGraw (Mountain Gateway CC)

Abstract: Examines leveraging Fulbright programs for global engagement.

Concurrent Sessions

Monday, June 8 | 3:20 PM – 3:55 PM

Expanding Apprenticeship Training

Speakers: Bryan Manuel (Tri-County Technical College)

Abstract: Shows how apprenticeship programs evolve into workforce pipelines.

From Promise to Persistence

Speakers: John Rainone (Mountain Gateway CC); Anthony Wise (Pellissippi State CC)

Abstract: Explores financial support models to improve retention.

TUESDAY, JUNE 9

General Session – 8:30 AM – 9:10 AM

Titan Pathways to Success (Cybersecurity Session)

Speakers: Katie Thomas; Kristi Farrow (Community College of Beaver County)

Abstract: Highlights a cybersecurity pathway aligned with career experiences.

Concurrent Sessions

Tuesday, June 9 | 9:20 AM – 9:55 AM

Expanding Nursing Pathways

Speakers: Mandy Elmore; Courtney White (Tri-County Technical College)

Abstract: Explores strategies for expanding nursing education capacity.

Bridging Potential to Purpose (Cybersecurity Session)

Speakers: Michelle Robinson (Whatcom CC); Deanne Cranford-Wesley (NCCU)

Abstract: Presents cybersecurity pathway models aligned with workforce needs.

Concurrent Sessions

Tuesday, June 9 | 10:05 AM – 10:40 AM

From Policy to Pathways

Speakers: Porscha Orndorf (A-B Tech); Betsey Zook (Center on the Workforce)

Abstract: Shows how policy enables behavioral health pathways.

Implementing Cybersecurity Competitions (Cybersecurity Session)

Speakers: Evan Enke (Alfred State College)

Abstract: Explores competitions to boost engagement and retention.

CCA CONGRATULATES OUR 2026 AWARD RECIPIENTS

Mark Ivester Innovation Award

Mountain Empire Community College

Project Amelioration / AM-EX (Appalachian Multiple-Expansion Ecosystem)

Instructional Program Award

Southern State Community College

Ohio Code Scholar Program

Workforce Development Award

Western Piedmont Community College

Basic Law Enforcement Training Program

Entrepreneurship Award

Hocking College

Hocking College Foundation's Innovative Gaming Enterprise

Award Recipients will be honored on Tuesday during our Annual Awards Breakfast
sponsored by:





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THANK YOU TO 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPONSORS:

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Community Colleges of Appalachia 33rd Annual Conference Schedule

Community Colleges of Appalachia Board of Directors



Dr. Galen DeHay
Tri-County Technical College
Board Chair
(2024-2026)



Dr. Kris Westover
Mountain Empire
Community College
Board Chair- Elect
(2024-2026)



Dr. Kevin Boys
Executive Director
Ret. Southern State Community College
(OH)



Dr. Brian Swords
Assistant Executive Director
Ret. Tri-County Technical
College (SC)

Alabama

Dr. David Campbell
Northeast Alabama
Community College

Georgia

Dr. Andrea Daniel
Athens Technical College

Kentucky

Dr. Jennifer Lindon
Hazard Community and
Technical College

Maryland

Dr. James Klauber
Hagerstown Community
College

Mississippi

Dr. Jay Allen
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