







2025 ODU CAREER SUMMIT

Bridging the Skills Gap



Center for Career and Leadership Development

The ODU Career Summit brings together our valued employers and ODU faculty and staff to align higher education and workforce efforts in preparing students for life after graduation through meaningful experiences on campus and beyond.

About the Keynote Speaker

Whitney Lester



Vice President of Talent Development Hampton Roads Workforce Council

Whitney Lester is the Vice President of Talent Development for the Hampton Roads Workforce Council, where he is addressing the local labor shortage and leading the efforts to align education and training with business needs while developing, attracting, and retaining talent within the Hampton Roads region. Prior to joining the Workforce Council in 2019, Whitney enjoyed 8 years at VersAbility Resources as their Director of Business Development, finding and creating jobs for people with disabilities of all kinds.

He also spent 13 years with the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the nation's capital. Whitney earned both his Bachelor's Degree and his M.B.A. from the College of William & Mary. He lives in Norfolk with his wife Elaine and their combined four children.

Agenda

9:00am-9:30am Networking, Coffee, & Check-In

North & Central Café

9:30am-9:45am Welcome

North & Central Café

• Dr. Jenn Grimm, Executive Director, Center for Career and Leadership Development

9:45am-10:00am Opening Remarks

North & Central Café

• Dr. Brandi Hephner LaBanc, Vice President for the Division of Student Enrollment, Engagement and Services

10:00am-10:25am Keynote Speaker

North & Central Café

• Whitney Lester, Vice President of Talent Development, Hampton Roads Workforce Council

10:30am-11:30am Employer Panel: Bridging the Skills Gap for New Talent *North & Central Café*

Moderator: Dr. Victoria Martin, Assistant Vice President for Retention and Transitions Panelists:

- Melinda Cassidy, Talent Acquisition Business Partner, City of Virginia Beach
- Kendall Goodin, Talent Acquisition Manager, Colonna's Shipyard
- Nicole Morgan, Talent Development Specialist; Wall, Einhorn & Chernitzer
- Verlaine Quinniey, College Recruiting Manager, Dollar Tree Stores, Inc. & Family Dollar Stores, Inc.

11:45am-1:00pm Lunch and Career Champions Awards Presentation

North & Central Café

- Jenna Rowlands, Associate Director for Administration and Strategic Initiatives, Center for Career and Leadership Development
- Ayngaran Krishnamurthy, Graduate Assistant for Strategic Initiatives, Center for Career and Leadership Development

1:10pm-2:00pm | Concurrent Sessions 1



Soft Skills Developed Through the Food Service Industry

Location: Executive Dining Room
Target Audience: Faculty/Staff

- Courtney Greskowiak, District Marketing Manager, Monarch Dining Services
- LaDonna McKeel, Human Resources Manager, Monarch Dining Services

The food service industry is a dynamic and fast-paced environment that offers a unique platform for developing essential soft skills. These skills are not only crucial for success within the industry but are also transferable to various professional settings. This session will explore how working in food service fosters the development of these vital life skills.



Tap into Top Talent: The Hampton Roads Workforce Council

Location Hampton - Newport News Room Target Audience: Employers

- Deborah "Dede" Bailey, Director of Business Services, Hampton Roads Workforce Council
- Tavaris Powell, Healthcare Partner Engagement Manager, Hampton Roads Workforce Council
- Joshua Sheffield, Emerging Workforce Internship Coordinator, Hampton Roads Workforce Council

Are you a Hampton Roads business excited about opportunities to find and retain qualified employees? Do you want to invest in the next generation of talent while strengthening your team? This workshop, presented by the Hampton Roads Workforce Council (HRWC), will explore how to engage young talent and build a pipeline of skilled workers through on-the-job training, apprenticeships, internships, and other valuable business services.



Beyond Strome: A Core Skills Toolkit

Location: River Rooms

Target Audience: Employers & Faculty/Staff

- Rebecca Kilduff, Lecturer, Department of Marketing, Strome College of Business
- Paige O'Shaughnessy, Senior Lecturer, School of Accountancy, Strome College of Business
- Sara Russell Riggs, Senior Lecturer, Department of Finance, School of Supply Chain, Logistics, and Maritime Operations

Strome College of Business students should be ready for life beyond the classroom. They need a toolkit that hones business communication, leadership, and etiquette skills. Our initiative prepares students to participate in the university's experiential learning initiative and beyond. As we are facing changing business environments with a focus on more electronic communication and distant work operations, it is still vital our students are ready for the workforce and have the skills to work and communicate with others.



In the Name of Student Success: Recognizing the Power of Connections in Action

Location: Senate Chambers

Target Audience: Employers & Faculty/Staff

- Donna Chittum, Talent Acquisition Specialist, Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board
- Emily Harmon, Academic Counselor, TRiO Student Support Services

During the inaugural 2023 ODU Career Summit, employer, Donna Chittum and ODU AP Faculty, Emily Harmon, connected and formed a lasting partnership which has directly benefited students at ODU. In this session, participants will discover actionable strategies to leverage and maintain meaningful connections formed at this ODU Career Summit. By sharing real-world applications, this session will equip attendees with practical tools to actively implement your desired career initiatives for students and foster long-term employer engagement.

2:10pm-3:00pm | Concurrent Sessions 2



What Student Employee Supervisors Need to Know

Location: River Rooms

Target Audience: Faculty/Staff

- Myles Nixon, Assistant Director for Student Employment, Center for Career and Leadership Development
- Anna Ryan Robertson, Project Manager for FWS Internship Program, Center for Career and Leadership Development
- Kristin Stephens, Assistant Director for Experiential Learning, Center for Career and Leadership Development

With employers increasingly reporting that recent college graduates are not fully prepared for the workforce, it is important that we work together to bridge the gap. This session will provide valuable insights on how we can better equip our students with the professional skills and workplace competencies needed for success, leveraging the NACE career readiness competencies and best practices in supervision and mentorship. You will leave with practical tools and strategies to enhance both student and staff development, ensuring we are prepared to equip student workers with the proper tools to excel in their careers before and after graduation.



Bridging the Skills Communication Gap: The ODU LeaDERS Distinction

Location: Executive Dining Room Target Audience: Employers

- Josie Momberger, Assistant Director of High Impact Learning Initiatives,
 Academic Success Initiatives
- Dr. Lanah Stafford, Director of High Impact Learning Initiatives, Academic Success Initiatives

Leaders is an ODU distinction awarded to students who successfully complete multiple high-impact learning experiences during their undergraduate tenure. Leaders graduates complete at least twice as many high-impact learning experiences as the national standard, including a comprehensive showcase of their skills and experiences via ePortfolio. This session will introduce employers to the Leaders program and collect feedback on its relevance for their hiring practices, including reviewing and providing input on an example ePortfolio.



A Collaborative Multi-Pronged Approach to Equipping Students and Working Adults for Career Success

Location: Hampton - Newport News Room Target Audience: Employers & Faculty/Staff

- Dean Claud, Director of Employer Partnerships, ODUGlobal
- Robert Doherty, Director of Continuing Education, ODUGlobal
- Dr. Renee Felts, Associate Vice President of Continuing Education, ODUGlobal
- Kimberly Williams, Manager of Employer Partnerships, ODUGlobal

Discover how ODUGlobal Continuing Education and Employer Partnerships bridge the skills gap with innovative, industry-aligned programs. This session highlights ODU's comprehensive approach to equipping students and employees with essential competencies for career success at every stage. Learn how employers can collaborate with ODU to boost participation in education benefits, enhance workforce skills, and reduce turnover. Explore strategies that support lifelong learning and provide clear pathways to professional advancement in today's rapidly evolving job market.



The Humanities Advantage: Making Crucial Skills Visible Through Work-Based Learning

Location: Student Senate Chambers

Target Audience: Employers & Faculty/Staff

- Alison Lietzenmayer, Master Lecturer, Department of Communication & Theatre Arts, ODU College of Arts & Letters; Director of Faculty Development, Monarch Humanities Internship Academy
- Dr. Megan Mize, Director for ePortfolios and Digital Initiatives, ODU Academic Success Center

This session makes visible how Humanities education develops critical career competencies—like communication, critical thinking, and cultural competency—and explores how work-based learning (WBL) and reflective ePortfolios help students articulate and apply these skills in professional settings. Using student testimonials and research, the session demonstrates how WBL bridges the gap between classroom learning and workforce readiness, preparing students for meaningful careers that require innovation, adaptability, and collaboration.

3:00pm-3:30pm Closing the Gap: Action Steps Moving Forward

North & Central Café

• Dr. Jenn Grimm, Executive Director, Center for Career and Leadership Development