

# 2023 INNOVATE SPEAKERS

Question. Design. Thrive.



## Brian Tarallo

Managing Director, Lizard Brain

Brian Tarallo is the Managing Director of Lizard Brain. He is a certified professional facilitator and the author of the #1 Amazon bestseller, *Surviving the Horror of Online Meetings*. Brian loves to geek out about visual methods that help teams be their best selves.



## Melissa Carrier

Director, Office of Social Innovation, UNC-Chapel Hill

Melissa Carrier is a professor of the practice in the Department of Public Policy and the Director of the Office of Social Innovation at UNC-Chapel Hill. She is the founder and former executive director of the Center for Social Value Creation at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business. Melissa joined the Smith School in 2006 after a decade of leading organizational growth for technology companies. Before launching the Center for Social Value Creation in 2009, she led venture investment programs at the Dingman Center for Entrepreneurship. In 2022, Melissa co-founded Radiate Works, a boutique firm to help organizations align mission, culture, and innovation practice to reach their impact goals. Melissa currently lives with her husband, three boys and a flat-coated retriever in Raleigh, NC.



## Sanji Datar

Design Thinking Fellow, Innovate Carolina, UNC-Chapel Hill

As a Design Thinking Fellow at Innovate Carolina, Sanji Datar coordinates project activities across teams, facilitates design thinking training, and helps produce design thinking deliverables. Sanji is pursuing a Master's in Educational Innovation, Technology, and Entrepreneurship (MEITE) to find ways to integrate her experience in technology with her interest in education. She is interested in applying the design thinking framework to improve educational outcomes for all, through the lens of equity, literacy, and community. Outside of graduate school, Sanji loves to explore history and nature through travel and finds relaxation with yoga and cooking.



## Inez Ribustello

**Owner, Tarboro Brewing Company & On The Square**



After losing her job and her work family on 9/11, Inez Ribustello chose to eventually move back to her hometown of Tarboro, NC with her husband Stephen. Together they opened their own restaurant, wine bar, and retail store called On the Square. Her next big venture was Tarboro Brewing Company, a microbrewery that began operating in 2016. Almost a year later, she and her husband opened a satellite taproom in a neighboring town. In September of 2021, Inez self-published her memoir *Life After Windows*, a book she wrote chronicling her journey from North Carolina to Manhattan. Stephen and Inez have two children that they absolutely adore.

## Dan Barkin

**Contributing Writer, Business North Carolina Magazine**



Dan Barkin is a Contributing Writer for Business North Carolina (NC) magazine, where he has focused on economic and workforce development and the military's role in North Carolina's innovation economy. Also, since retiring from the News & Observer, he has edited projects for the McClatchy chain's Southeast news operations and the Houston Chronicle. Dan and his wife, Katherine, a Sampson County native, have lived in Johnston County for nearly 27 years, where they raised two children.

## Marqueta Welton

**Chief of Staff, NC Department of Commerce**



Marqueta Welton serves as Chief of Staff for the North Carolina Department of Commerce where she guides policy development and provides strategic leadership for economic development, and science and technology innovation. She also oversees key agency operations. Before joining the Department of Commerce, Marqueta served as Deputy Secretary for the North Carolina Department of Administration. There she oversaw the state's central procurement division and other internal support operations for state agencies.

## Keiyonna Dubashi

**Founder & Executive Director, Profound Ladies**



Keiyonna Dubashi is the Founder & Executive Director of Profound Ladies, an organization dedicated to the recruitment and retention of BIPOC Educators. Keiyonna Dubashi, served as a National Board Certified Teacher for 10 years before joining the non-profit space. A part of her work included direct coaching for teachers needing classroom management and leading professional development for school districts around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Keiyonna is a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated and she resides in Raleigh, NC with her family.



## Eric Haddock

**State Reentry Coordinator, NC Department of Commerce**

Eric Haddock has 17 years of experience as a Workforce Solutions professional, responsible for designing workforce development strategies and providing guidance and funding for both workforce development boards, and NCWorks Career Centers. Eric's current endeavors include state-level support for employers, workforce development boards, and economic and workforce development partners.



## Michael Westray

**Regional Reentry Specialist, NC Department of Commerce**

Michael Westray is a retired US Air Force veteran with 20 years of active-duty service. He has been with the North Carolina Department of Commerce for over 16 years and has 10 years' experience as a Reentry Specialist with the North Carolina Department of Commerce's Reentry Initiative. Michael is also the state's Federal Bonding Coordinator.



## Beth Butler Fadel

**Executive Director, Disability:IN North Carolina**

Beth Butler Fadel has over 24 years of experience providing subject matter expertise to Fortune 50 companies in ADA Accommodations process and disability inclusion strategies. As a Disability Inclusion Consultant and Executive Director of Disability:IN North Carolina, Beth brings extensive experience in the private sector, including specialized expertise in balancing risk mitigation while promoting full accessibility to support the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce, marketplace and supply chain.



## Rupen Fofaria

**Reporter, EducationNC (EdNC)**

Rupen Fofaria is a Reporter at EducationNC (EdNC). Rupen grew up in Garner, North Carolina and attended Wake County Public Schools before receiving his bachelor's in Journalism from the University of Maryland and Juris Doctorate with Honors from Chicago-Kent College of Law. At EdNC, Rupen's passion is storytelling and shining light on untold and under-reported issues. He writes often about equity, learning differences, and literacy. Rupen also serves as a creative partner on The Hummingbird Stories, a podcast about radical innovation in education.



## Erin Swanson

Assistant Superintendent for Innovation & Strategic Planning, Edgecombe County Public Schools

Erin Swanson is the Assistant Superintendent for Innovation and Strategic Planning at Edgecombe County Public Schools (ECPS) in Tarboro, NC. She supports school and district leaders in their efforts to reimagine school so that all scholars are prepared to design their own futures, navigate change, and make a difference in the world. Prior to assuming this role, Erin served as the ECPS Director of Innovation and the founding principal of Martin Millennium Academy, Edgecombe County's first K-8 global school with a leadership focus. A fun fact about Erin, her first teaching job was as an English teacher at Warren County High School.



## Donnell Cannon

Executive Director, Maureen Joy Charter School & Co-Founder, North Phillips School of Innovation

Donnell Cannon serves as the Executive Director of Maureen Joy Charter School in east Durham, North Carolina. He is the former principal of North Edgecombe High School, and the co-founder of the North-Phillips School of Innovation. The North-Phillips School of Innovation was created to provide students with a liberating education that allows them to develop and pursue their passions, realize their life's purpose, remain resilient in the face of challenges, and lead social and economic change in their families and communities, creating a ripple for generations to come.



## Brett Brenton

Regional Impact Manager, myFutureNC

Brett Brenton serves as a Regional Impact Manager at myFutureNC, serving the North Central region of the state. Brett started his career as a high school social studies teacher near Baltimore, MD, where he taught ten classes over seven years there, including AP US History and AP Government. After relocating to North Carolina in 2007, he spent six years with Wake County Schools, four as a middle school teacher and administrator, and two as an assistant principal at an elementary school. Brett calls Wake Forest home where he lives with his wife, Alison, and two daughters, Olivia and Sienna.