



NEWS FROM
ULSTER COUNTY
County Executive Jen Metzger

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Contact: Amberly Jane Campbell, Assistant Deputy County Executive
(845) 340-3800 x8958 / acam@ulstercountyny.gov

Ulster County Announces Economic Futures Summit on Oct. 27 to Strengthen Education-to-Career Pathways and Support Long-Term Economic Growth

KINGSTON, NY - Ulster County will host the Economic Futures Summit on Tuesday, October 27, a full-day event bringing together educators, students, workforce organizations, employers, government leaders, labor, and community partners to shape a shared vision for the County's economic future. Held at SUNY New Paltz, the Summit is designed to strengthen communication and partnerships between education and the industries driving growth in Ulster County, with a focus on creating clear, accessible pathways to living-wage careers.

Educational partners include SUNY New Paltz, SUNY Ulster, and Ulster BOCES.

The Summit centers on a core question: How can Ulster County create stronger pathways from education to meaningful local careers while supporting long-term economic resilience?

To this end, the Summit will focus on five priority industry clusters identified through workforce demand, existing partnerships, and County economic priorities:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Value-Added Agriculture & Food Production
- Health Care
- Green Building, Infrastructure, Energy & Skilled Trade
- Film & Media

These clusters will anchor breakout discussions where employers, educators, and workforce leaders will identify opportunities, trends, challenges, and recommendations for strengthening career pathways and supporting long-term sector development.

A major goal of the Summit is to strengthen relationships across industry, education, and government. Many organizations share common goals but lack structured opportunities to collaborate. The Summit aims to bridge these gaps by fostering new partnerships, improving communication, and building a shared sense of purpose around talent development and economic opportunity.

“The Ulster County Economic Futures Summit is about building a more connected ecosystem of educators and employers, and creating pathways to good careers that meet current and emerging needs in key economic sectors,” **said Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger.** “We have tremendous assets across our educational institutions and industries, and this is our moment to align them to support innovation, resilience, and shared prosperity. I want to thank SUNY Ulster, SUNY New Paltz and Ulster BOCES, the Ulster County Workforce Development Board, and all the students and industry stakeholders who will be part of this work. I’m looking forward to a dynamic and productive day, and the ongoing partnerships this summit seeks to foster.”

"We are pleased to host this Summit that is consistent with the University's role of being a value-added resource to the region," **said SUNY New Paltz President Darrell P. Wheeler.** "The broad sectors that will gather for this opportunity share the goal of future economic viability and growth locally. Let's use this moment for thoughtful planning conversation and further collaboration coupled with dynamic action. We thank County Executive Metzger, education, business and other organizations for their commitment to this work."

"Economic growth happens when institutions work together with purpose," **said SUNY Ulster President, Alison Buckley, Ed.D.** "The Ulster County Economic Summit highlights the value of collaboration in preparing today's workforce and shaping tomorrow's opportunities. SUNY Ulster is proud to partner with business, government, and community organizations to ensure education remains a catalyst for innovation, workforce development, and long-term prosperity throughout Ulster County."

“We don’t need to recreate the wheel,” **said Dr. Jonah Schenker, Ulster BOCES District Superintendent & CEO.** “We need to intentionally connect the incredible work, expertise, and partnerships already underway across our community into a more coherent system. I’m excited that the County Executive and Ulster County, through the Future Forward initiative, are helping to build that architecture alongside Ulster BOCES and our educational, SUNY, industry, and community partners, while recognizing and celebrating the extraordinary work

already happening across our region. This Summit will be an amazing space to share, learn, and accelerate all of this work together.”

The day will begin with opening remarks from County Executive Jen Metzger. Educational partners will participate in an opening panel highlighting successful industry partnerships and innovative approaches to preparing students for local careers.

A defining feature of the Summit is the intentional inclusion of students as active contributors. Students will serve as storytellers, interviewers, photographers, videographers, and content creators, documenting the day and offering real-time insight into how young people experience career exploration and transitions into the workforce.

The Summit will also look ahead to the forces shaping Ulster County’s next decade — including technological change, demographic shifts, climate adaptation, evolving healthcare needs, and new opportunities in manufacturing, media, and innovation. Participants will consider how to prepare students not only for today’s jobs, but for careers that will evolve significantly over time.

By the end of the day, participants will work toward a shared understanding of Ulster County’s economic future, identify opportunities within each industry cluster, elevate student perspectives, and generate actionable ideas for collaboration, investment, and long-term economic resilience.

The Summit is being organized by a committee of County employees and board appointees:

- **Leslie Wellington**, Interim Director of Economic Development
- **Amanda LaValle**, Deputy County Executive
- **Sharon Williams**, Director of the Office of Employment and Training
- **Megan Sperry**, Chair of the Economic Development, Planning, Education, Employment, Arts and Agriculture Committee of the County Legislature; UCEDA board member
- **Diane Eynon**, SUNY Ulster Board of Trustees
- **Chair Sean Brix and member Nejla Liias**, Ulster County Workforce Development Board
- **Mike Ham**, Ulster County Industrial Development Agency (IDA)

The organizing committee is interviewing local educators, industry leaders, employers, business groups and workers to identify alignment opportunities. This stakeholder

engagement will inform the Summit's programming to spur deeper partnerships between education and industry.

For more information or to sign up for the Summit email list, please visit ulstercountyny.gov/econ-dev/econ-futures

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