YORK PREP

HIGH SCHOOL CONFERENCE

MARCH 5, 2026



FUTURES IN FOCUS

2026 SESSION INFORMATION

STEEL+PROPRE

C.H. & ANNA E. LUTZ FOUNDATION

comporium

PLATO'S CLOSET Rock Hill, SC

dew REGIONAL WORKFORCE ADVANTAGE SOUTH CAROLINA

FOUNDERS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

A Whole New World: College Challenges and Opportunities
Presented by: Julieanne Schrader, Director of Residence Life, Winthrop University
Get an insider's look at college life from someone who sees it all - from move-in day excitement to the real challenges students face adjusting to independence. In this session, the Director of Residence Life and members of her staff share what every student should know before stepping onto campus: balancing freedom with responsibility, managing time and roommates, finding support systems, and making smart choices both inside and outside the classroom. Learn how to thrive - not just survive - in your first year of college.

Saving Lives Together: Behind the Scenes of Emergency Response
Presented by: Atrium Health
Ever wonder how emergencies are handled from start to finish? Join a panel of 911 dispatchers, EMTs, paramedics, and respiratory therapists for an inside look at how these life-saving professionals work together. From the first call to critical care on the scene and in the hospital, discover how teamwork, quick thinking, and clear communication save lives every day. In this interactive session, panelists will share the education, training, and certifications required for their careers, giving students a clear picture of the paths needed to enter these high-impact professions. Attendees will then have the opportunity to interact with the professionals one on one and have hands-on contact with the equipment they use to save lives everyday.

Leadership and the Cost of a Perfect Society: Lessons from Omelas
Presented By: John Gettys, Mayor of Rock Hill
Every thriving community has a story of success—and a story no one talks about. In this powerful leadership session led by the Mayor, students will explore Ursula K. Le Guin's The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas and confront a difficult truth: sometimes leadership means choosing between what looks good and what is good. Through discussion, debate, and a real-world civic challenge scenario, students will examine who benefits from community decisions, who gets left behind, and what brave leadership looks like when it's no longer convenient. Are you the kind of leader who stays silent… or the one who dares to step forward?

Purpose + Paycheck: Finding a Career You Love - and Can Live With
Presented by: Craig Craze
Choosing a career isn't just about following your passion - it's about creating a future that is both meaningful and financially sustainable. In this session, students will explore how their strengths, interests, and values can guide them toward fulfilling career paths while also understanding the importance of financial return on investment (ROI). Through interactive activities and practical examples, participants will learn how to evaluate career options, compare educational pathways, and identify cost-saving strategies such as dual enrollment and certificate programs. Students will leave with a clearer sense of direction and actionable tools to plan a career they will enjoy - and can confidently build a life around.

Session Title: "College Admissions Unlocked: Cracking the Code to Your Future"
Presented by: Fatima Castro, Admissions Counselor, Winthrop University
Ever wonder what really happens behind the admissions curtain? In College Admissions Unlocked, you'll step into the shoes of a college admissions officer and discover what makes an application stand out. Through interactive activities, real-world scenarios, and insider tips from the Director of Admissions at the University of South Carolina Lancaster, you'll learn how to navigate the college search, application timelines, essays, scholarships, and more without the stress. By the end, you'll walk away confident, organized, and ready to take the next step toward your college future!

Courage to Lead: Doing What's Right When It's Hard
Presented by: Jason Rabon, Director of Process Management, Comporium
In this discussion-centered session, students explore what ethical leadership really means through Ray Bradbury's "All Summer in a Day." Guided by an elected official, participants will unpack key moments from the story, examine how group dynamics shape moral choices, and practice making courageous decisions as leaders. Through interactive exercises, ethical scenario challenges, and reflections, students discover how the lessons of Bradbury's story apply to their own schools and communities — and to real-world public leadership.

AI: How Artificial Intelligence Is Shaping and Transforming the IT Field
Presented by John Rouda, EVP of Media and Technology, Inspiration Network
Step into the future of technology. In this eye-opening session, students will explore the rapidly evolving world of Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence—and discover why these fields are reshaping every industry on the planet. Mr. Rouda brings real-world expertise to unpack the latest trends, career pathways, and groundbreaking innovations driving the digital landscape. From machine learning and cybersecurity to automation and emerging tech roles, you'll gain a clear understanding of how AI is redefining the skills, jobs, and opportunities of tomorrow. Whether you're curious about IT or ready to pursue a tech-driven career, this session will equip you with the insights and inspiration to thrive in a world powered by intelligent technologies.

Identifying and Impressing the Gatekeepers to Your Dream: Interview & Résumé Skills
Presented by: Janet Wanta, Human Resources Talent Acquisition Specialist and Ana Fecorotti, Human Resources Coordinator from the City of Rock Hill
Behind every dream job, college acceptance, or competitive opportunity is a decision-maker—and knowing how to reach them can unlock doors you never imagined. In this dynamic session, you'll learn how to identify the "gatekeepers" who influence your goals and how to present your strongest, most confident self. Discover how to craft résumés that rise to the top, communicate your strengths with clarity and impact, and leave a memorable impression in interviews and professional interactions. You'll walk away with practical tools, insider insights, and the confidence to navigate any gateway on the path to your future.

How to Balance and Maximize Your Personal Finances and Budget
Presented by: Founders Federal Credit Union
****REQUIRED COURSE FOR ALL SENIORS****
Ready to take control of your money? This session will teach you practical strategies for creating a budget, managing expenses, and making the most of your personal finances. Learn how to balance your spending and saving while setting yourself up for financial success—whether you're planning for college, your first job, or future goals.

Grow Where You're Planted: Acts of Kindness and Community Service
Presented by: Jonathan & Crystal Nazeer
Uncover the power you already have to lift others, spark opportunity, and create lasting impact—right where you are. In this inspiring two-part session, students are invited to recognize their unique strengths and step confidently into leadership through everyday acts of kindness and meaningful service. You'll explore why community service matters, how it shapes both personal growth and collective wellbeing, and practical ways you can make a difference in your own community. Then, put your learning into action as you meet and engage with local nonprofit organizations during our Community Service Fair - an opportunity to connect, volunteer, and begin planting seeds of positive change. Grow boldly. Lead with your heart. Make an impact that starts today.

Connect & Influence: Communication Essentials for Future Leaders
Presented by: Watts Huckabee, York County Council
Effective communication is the foundation of strong leadership. This interactive session guides students through key skills like active listening, clear messaging, nonverbal communication, and empathy. Through engaging activities tailored to teen experiences, participants will learn how to build trust, navigate difficult conversations, and lead with confidence and respect. This session equips emerging leaders with the tools to connect authentically, speak with purpose, and lead with clarity.

Paying the Price of Admission: Finding Resources to Help Pursue My Goals
Presented by: Sara St. Pierre, Associate Director of Financial Aid Operations, York Technical College
Reaching your dreams often comes with a large price. This interactive session will help you uncover scholarships, grants, and other resources to support your journey. Learn how to navigate the scholarship application process, meet qualifications, and take advantage of opportunities that can help you pursue your goals.

Looking to Work for Yourself? Keys to Successfully Starting Your Own Business
Presented by: Craig Craze
Dreaming of being your own boss? This session will guide you through the essentials of starting and running your own business. From developing a business plan to building a brand and managing finances, you'll learn practical steps to turn your passion into a successful venture.

Pursuing A Career In Service: How To Meet Your Goals In The Military
Staff Sergeant Justin Richardson, United States Army Recruiter
Considering a career in the military? This session will provide insights into what it takes to succeed in a life of service. Learn how to prepare for the enlistment process, explore career opportunities within the military, and set goals to maximize your experience. Whether you're drawn to leadership, specialized training, or long-term service, this session will help you navigate the path to a fulfilling military career.

Frontline Heroes: Becoming the Next Generation of First Responders
First Responder Panel Comprised of: City of Rock Hill Police and Fire
Discover what it takes to step into the vital role of a first responder. This session will explore the challenges, rewards, and impact of careers in emergency services, from firefighting to paramedics and law enforcement. Learn how you can prepare to serve your community, make a difference, and become a true frontline hero.

Future Makers: Trades That Pay
Presented by: York Technical College
College isn't the only way to build a successful future. In this hands-on breakout session, you'll explore real careers in manufacturing and construction through interactive challenges and teamwork. Learn what skilled trade jobs actually look like, how much they can pay, and why these careers are in high demand.
If you like building, fixing, creating, or working with your hands—and want a future that's practical, stable, and rewarding—this session will help you see new options and bring your future into focus.

Maintaining Relationships with Friends, Co-Workers and Family Members - Setting Healthy Boundaries
Presented by: Winthrop University
By the end of this session, participants will be able to recognize and navigate challenging relationships using strategies rooted in emotional intelligence, effective communication, and conflict resolution. Participants will leave with practical tools to manage emotions, communicate more effectively, and resolve conflicts in various relationship scenarios, including friendships, family dynamics, work interactions, and peer conflicts.

Leading from Within: Self-Care for Future Leaders
Presented by: Sarah Titman, Professor, Department of Social Work, Winthrop University
Great leaders know that caring for others starts with caring for themselves. This session explores the importance of self-care as a foundation for effective leadership. Discover practical strategies to manage stress, maintain balance, and cultivate resilience so you can lead with clarity, confidence, and purpose—both now and in the future.

Unlock Your Potential: Identifying Your Personal Strengths
Presented by: Celeste Tiller, York County Regional Chamber of Commerce
Every student has unique strengths and talents, but they're not always easy to identify. In this interactive session, students will discover what makes them stand out, explore how their strengths can be applied in school and leadership roles, and practice articulating these strengths in real-world scenarios.