TECH FORWARD
MBA CONFERENCE

October 24-25

Conference Background

The TechForward MBA Conference is a premier event hosted by the Scheller College of Business at Georgia Tech, designed to explore the cutting-edge intersection of artificial intelligence and business innovation.

Organized by the OneMBA Tech Club and founded by Rose Epsiritu, Brooke Patterson, and Analisa Wade, the TechForward MBA Conference serves as a vital networking platform for the tech industry. In response to the shift towards national recruitment models during the pandemic, this conference offers students the opportunity to engage in real-time AI conversations with experts and thought leaders.

By bringing together industry professionals and leaders, the event will provide a space for meaningful discussions on the pace of AI innovation. The conference aims to equip attendees with the knowledge and connections necessary to thrive in the rapidly evolving tech landscape.

The conference is structured around three key verticals: Big Tech, Retail Tech, and Startups & VC. Each track features insightful sessions led by industry experts who share their experiences and strategies for leveraging AI to drive business success. Attendees can choose from a variety of breakout sessions tailored to their interests, providing a deep dive into specific topics such as AI implementation, innovation strategies, and the future of tech-driven business models. This format ensures that participants gain practical insights and actionable knowledge that they can apply in their careers.

In addition to the educational sessions, the TechForward MBA Conference offers numerous networking opportunities, including a closing networking social. These events are designed to facilitate meaningful connections among attendees, speakers, and sponsors, fostering a collaborative environment where ideas can be exchanged, and professional relationships can be built.

By bringing together a diverse group of forward-thinking individuals, the conference not only enhances learning but also strengthens the community of tech and business professionals in the Southeast.

Table of Contents

Conference Founders

As a former Program Manager, transitioning to Product Management post-MBA, I wanted to help build a pipeline for companies to pull from the Scheller MBA program for Program and Product Management roles. I have always believed in the notion of "lift as you climb," so my why is simple. I want everyone around me to win too, so building a conference was something that would not only benefit me, but benefit the Scheller community for years to come.

Brooke Patterson

Full-time MBA 25 | Fashion Tech Enthusiast
Pursuing Product Management Roles

Coming from a non-traditional software engineering background, I've supported non-technical startup founders in building their ventures. I enjoy serving as a bridge for those from non-engineering backgrounds who are pursuing tech careers. My goal in creating this conference is to foster discussions on adapting to technological changes and to help individuals from diverse backgrounds prepare for and thrive in tech roles. I want to reassure them that there's a place for everyone in technology, regardless of their background.

Rose Espiritu

Evening MBA 25 | Microsoft
Sr. Engineering Manager

With a background in entrepreneurship and corporate settings, I initially struggled to reconcile these worlds. My first year at Scheller revealed their interconnectedness, helping me make more strategic decisions—an invaluable mindset for tech. Noticing classmates' interest in tech but uncertainty in their own career pivot story, I noticed the need for a space to bridge this gap. Hearing from tech industry leaders and learning their stories can help students discover opportunities and understand how they fit into the tech world.

Analisa Wade

Full-time MBA 25 | Technology Innovation
Pursuing AI Strategy & Innovation Roles

A Message From the Dean

Anuj Mehrotra

Dean and Stephen P. Zelnak Jr. Chair
Professor of Operations Management
Georgia Tech Scheller College of Business

We are thrilled to celebrate the launch of the TechForward MBA Conference at the Georgia Tech Scheller College of Business. This conference is more than just a gathering – it is a platform for exploring the transformative power of AI within the business landscape and fostering meaningful connections among students, industry professionals, and thought leaders.

In a rapidly evolving technological environment, the ability to engage in real-time conversations about business and innovation is essential. This conference provides a unique opportunity to gain insights from experts who are at the forefront of these changes. The structured focus on big tech, retail tech, and startups and VC not only enhances your understanding but also equips you with actionable strategies that can directly impact your career trajectory.

I want to recognize the exceptional efforts of our MBA students and OneMBA Tech Club in creating an opportunity that inspires and empowers students. Through the thoughtful discussions and networking sessions they have developed, we will grow our community of innovators and leaders committed to driving business success through technology.

Thank you for being part of this important initiative. We hope you seize the opportunity to deepen your knowledge and build relationships that will propel you forward in your professional journey.

At a Glance

Day 1

2:00-2:30	Check-in	Scheller 172 800 W Peachtree St NW
2:30-3:30	Presentations	Centergy One 75 5th St NW
3:30-4:30	Tech Trek Tours	Centergy One 75 5th St NW
4:00-6:00	Exhibition Hall	Scheller 3rd Floor 800 W Peachtree St NW
6:00-9:00	Welcome Reception	Cisco 756 W Peachtree St NW

Day 2

9:00-9:45	Check-in and Coffee	Scheller Atrium 800 W Peachtree St NW
10:00-10:30	Opening Ceremonies	Scheller 100 800 W Peachtree St NW
10:45-11:45	Panels	Scheller 800 W Peachtree St NW
12:30-2:30	Lunch and Keynote	Scheller 100 800 W Peachtree St NW
2:45-3:45	Workshops	Scheller 800 W Peachtree St NW
4:00-5:00	Closing Keynote	Scheller 100 800 W Peachtree St NW
5:30-8:30	Networking Event	Puttshack 1115 Howell Mill Rd

In Depth Overview

Day 1

2:00-2:30 p.m. Check-in | Scheller 172

2:30-3:30 p.m. Presentations | Centergy One (75 5th St NW)

15 minute presentations from
Southwire, Engage, and Home Depot
- Southwire - Michael Powell
- Engage - Hari Gopal
- Home Depot - Amy Hayes

3:30-4:30 p.m. Tech Trek Tours | Centergy One (75 5th St NW)

Split into 2 groups and rotate between
Southwire, Engage, and Home Depot

4:00-6:00 p.m. Exhibition Hall | Scheller 3rd Floor

Participating companies:

6:00-9:00 p.m. Welcome Reception | Cisco (756 W Peachtree St NW)

Cocktail reception with
welcome remarks
- Scott Herren
- President Angel Cabrera

Day 2

9:00-9:45 a.m. Check-in and Coffee | Scheller Atrium
- Check-in to get badge, coffee, and breakfast provided
- First 150 people get a swag bag

10:00-10:30 a.m. Opening Ceremonies | Scheller 100

Keynote Address - Innovation at the
Intersection of AI
- Juan Perez - EVP and CIO, Salesforce

10:45-11:45 a.m. Panels | Scheller

Big Tech @ Scheller 102
AI in Tech: Shaping the Future of Industry Roles
Panelists:
- Cedrick Gipson - Sales Director, Microsoft
- Daria Jordan - Senior Production Manager, Microsoft
- Anthony Agnesina - Senior Engineer, NVIDIA
- Kadeem Trimble - Solutions Architect, Google

10:45-11:45 a.m. ## Panels (Cont.) | Scheller

Retail Tech @ Scheller 103
How AI Impacts the Way We Shop
Panelists:
- • 	Dan Chiao - Head of E-commerce Engineering, SHEIN
- • 	Sarat Ramayya - CIO, Spanx
- • 	Don Johnson - Developer Relations Manager, NVIDIA

Tech Startups and VC @ Scheller 203
The Role of AI in Atlanta's Startup Ecosystem
Panelists:
- • 	Blake Patton - Managing Partner, Tech Square Ventures
- • 	Barry Givens - Managing Partner, Collab Capital
- • 	Aly Merritt - Managing Director, Atlanta Tech Village
- • 	Anastasia Simon - Managing Director, Techstars
 	WaterTech and Sustainability

12:30-2:30 p.m. ## Lunch and Keynote | Scheller 100

Keynote address - Strategies for Driving
Innovation in Tomorrow's AI-Powered Enterprise
- • 	Tony Paikeday - Sr. Director of AI Systems, NVIDIA
Panelists - Adapting to Change: Innovating with AI
- • 	Ankush Singla - FanDuel
- • 	Anubhavi Gupta - Director of Data Science -
 	Personalization and Marketing Optimization, Nike
- • 	Vish Ganapathy - CTO - Retail, Google
- • 	Jamal Miller - Sr. Director of Product Marketing,
 	Intuit Mailchimp

2:45-3:45 p.m. ## Workshops | Scheller

Learn How to Leverage Generative AI - Copilot @ Scheller 102
- • 	Niki Ozment Buchanan - Americas Azure Customer Success
 	Leader, Microsoft

AI and the Future of Work @ Scheller 103
Panelists:
- • 	Steven Ferguson - Principal Research Scientist and Managing Direc-
 	tor, Georgia AIM (Artificial Intelligence in Manufacturing
- • 	Rohit Pandeka - Partner and General Manager for Copilot, Microsoft
- • 	Denise Smith - CEO, DNS Consulting
- • 	Eric Overby - Catherine & Edwin Wahlen Professor and Professor of
 	Information, Georgia Tech Scheller College of Business

Creating a Culture of Ethical and Responsible AI @ Scheller 203
- • 	Alex de Aranzeta - Startup Advisor, MA JD

4:00-5:00 p.m. ## Closing Keynote | Scheller 100

The City of Atlanta Embracing Innovation
- • 	Donald Beamer - Senior Technology Advisor, CFA
Closing Keynote Discussion: The Future of Entrepreneurship:
Redefining Business Models and Innovation
- • 	Anuj Mehrotra - Dean, Stephen P. Zelnak Jr. Chair, and
 	Professor of Operations Management, Georgia Tech
 	Scheller College of Business
- • 	Sean Henry - CEO and Founder, Stord

5:30-8:30 p.m. ## Networking Event | Puttshack (1115 Howell Mill Rd)

Title: Rigorous Security Analysis for ML Systems and Algorithms
Faculty Member: Teodora Baluta

Abstract: Machine learning security has many open questions that lack principled analysis. I will present several fundamental challenges that arise from the gaps in our systematic understanding, and several new algorithmic tools to address this gap. These results show connections that can help harness computationally hard problems for building new security primitives, with applications in tracking provenance of models and datasets.

Title: Fusing Learning and Optimization for Engineering
Faculty Member: Kevin Dalmeijer
AI areas: Applications in energy, supply chains, and manufacturing

Abstract: The fusion of machine learning and optimization has the potential to deliver outcomes for engineering applications that the two technologies cannot achieve independently. This talk illustrates this potential with the concept of optimization proxy that can produce, in real time, feasible and near-optimal solutions to classes of optimization problems. The talk demonstrates its practical applications in power systems, supply chains, and manufacturing.

Title: Trustworthy Embedded Systems and IoT via Physics-Aware and AI-Powered Cybersecurity

Faculty Member: Saman Zonouz
Areas covered: cybersecurity and networking

Abstract: I will talk about our solutions on cybersecurity of embedded systems, controllers for cyber-physical systems and critical infrastructures. We have developed solutions to discover/patch security vulnerabilities in firmware, and online security monitoring of their real-time operations considering IT/OT interactions.

Title: Distributed Models for Warehouses, Power Grids, and Antenna Arrays

Faculty Member: Justin Romberg
AI area: "Distributed Foundational Models"

Abstract: We will talk about new algorithms to solve the fundamental problem of distributed covariance estimation and discuss their relevance to next-generation antenna arrays. We will also discuss work in AI4OPT on making large reinforcement learning problems tractable through decentralization.

Title: Differentially Private Data Release on Graphs: Inefficiencies and Unfairness

Faculty Member: Juba Ziani
AI areas covered: Privacy, fairness, networks

Abstract: Networks underpin essential sectors like telecommunications, healthcare, finance, energy, and transportation, often handling sensitive user data such as commuter locations and online activities. While differential privacy (DP) is the leading technique to protect individual privacy during data release, it introduces noise that can cause inaccuracies and biases. These biases can disproportionately affect different populations, raising significant fairness concerns. This talk will delve into how DP impacts bias and unfairness when privately releasing network data—a departure from previous studies focusing on releasing population counts. We will examine the effects of privately released network data on downstream tasks with a focus on shortest-path computations.

Name Badge and Connect

On the back of your TechForward MBA Conference badge, you'll find a QR code designed to enhance your event experience. By scanning this QR code, you gain instant access to:

- Interactive Schedule: Stay up-to-date with real-time updates and details of all conference sessions.
- Speaker Information: Explore a comprehensive list of speakers and connect with them through their LinkedIn profiles.
- Digital Program Book: Access the full program book, including session descriptions, bios, founder's sotry and additional resources.

Simply use your smartphone camera or a QR code scanning app to engage with these features and make the most of your time at the conference. Enjoy the event!

Speaker Bios

Alex de Aranzeta
Startup Advisor, MA JD

Alex de Aranzeta, MA, JD is a startup advisor, founder coach, and responsible AI podcast host specializing in responsible AI, culture, and strategy for early-stage and venture-backed startups.

Prior to tech, Alex held key roles in government, higher ed, and enterprise, guiding over 250 workforces in equity and compliance. With nearly a decade of experience in civil rights compliance and regulatory enforcement, Alex has led over 300 investigations, trained thousands of professionals, contributed to policy and regulation, and built an award-winning Language Access Program.

Alex's work now focuses on operationalizing ethical practices in AI, advising leaders on communication, and strategy. As the former founder of a compliance-tech SaaS and operator within a generative AI startup, she combines her expertise in policy and equity with practical insights from the tech industry to help startups scale effectively across teams and products. She's also a trusted voice on the intersection of AI, society, and culture, hosting "The Culture of Machines" podcast with top technologists and ethicists, and has spoken on equity, policy, and communication at Kapor Center, U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, World Congress of Bioethics, and the Women in Product Conference.

Aly Merritt
Managing Director, Atlanta Tech Village

Aly Merritt is the Managing Director of Atlanta Tech Village and community builder in South Downtown ATL. She has been a pivotal figure in Atlanta's tech ecosystem for more than a decade. Her startup journey includes roles as Head of Community at SalesLoft, where she also contributed to product management and customer experience and served as Chief of Staff.

With a background in journalism and a passion for innovation, bolstered by an MBA from Georgia State University, Aly has dedicated her career to advancing local startups and elevating Atlanta's national profile, with a particular emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion. She previously organized and emceed ATL Startup Village, fostering connections between entrepreneurs and investors. As a co-founder of ATL Unlocked, she continues to drive collaboration between startup hubs across the city.

Amy Hayes
MBA '23 – Project Manager, Technology Enablement, Home Depot

Amy Hayes is a Senior Project Manager at The Home Depot's OrangeWorks Innovation Lab, where she plays a pivotal role in managing the lab's operations and events. Her responsibilities include supporting the engineering team and overseeing the internship experience for students during the Fall and Spring semesters. Under her leadership, the lab serves as a hub for innovation, driving technological advancements and developing talent through collaboration with Georgia Tech students.

Before joining The Home Depot, Amy was the Director of Full-time MBA Recruiting at Georgia Tech's Scheller College of Business, where she also earned her MBA. During her time at Scheller, she was instrumental in increasing diversity within the MBA program and served as Co-Chair for Women in Business, demonstrating her commitment to fostering inclusive environments.

Anastasia Simon
Managing Director, Techstars WaterTech and Sustainability

Anastasia Simon is the current Managing Director of Techstars WaterTech and Sustainability in partnership with the University of Alabama and the TCEDA. She has over a decade of experience in the startup ecosystem spanning marketing and business development, branding and storytelling, community building, and venture capital across multiple verticals.

Anastasia is an experienced operator who has designed programming for the first fully virtual incubator for early stage proptech companies, managed strategic partnerships with large scale organizations, and lent her expertise as a mentor during Facebook's North American Community Accelerator.

She holds a bachelor's from Louisiana State University and began her career working in the apparel industry supporting both large and small brands with their wholesale sales strategy.

Ankush Singla
Director of Technology Innovation and Strategy, FanDuel

Ankush Singla is the Director of Technology Innovation & Strategy at FanDuel, where he focuses on using technology to bring innovative solutions to life that enhance customer experiences and drive business growth. With a strong background in product management and entrepreneurship, Ankush has built products from the ground up, led cross-functional teams in both early-stage and established environments, and conceptualized and pitched new startup ideas. He's passionate about turning ideas into impactful products and has a proven track record of launching initiatives that leverage new technologies to drive strategic growth. Ankush also advises early-stage startups and enjoys mentoring students in entrepreneurship and product management. He holds an MBA from the Texas McCombs School of Business and a BS in Electrical Engineering from Georgia Tech.

Anthony Agnesina
Senior Engineer, NVIDIA

Anthony Agnesina is a Senior Engineer for the NVIDIA Hardware VLSI team. He focuses on researching and developing creative and innovative electronic design automation algorithms using GPU acceleration and AI for future NVIDIA products. He originally joined NVIDIA in June 2022 as a Research Scientist. Anthony received his Ph.D. and M.S. degrees in Electrical and Computer Engineering from Georgia Tech and a Diplôme d'Ingénieur from CentraleSupélec.

Anubhavi Gupta
Director of Data Science - Personalization & Marketing Optimization, Nike

Anubhavi Gupta is a leading expert in using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for personalizing customer journeys. She is currently supporting NIKE's customer experience strategy as Director of Data Science - Personalization & Marketing Optimization using AI/ML capabilities to continually raise the bar on creating consumer connections throughout all their touch points.

Prior to NIKE, Anu served in various Data Science leadership positions at Publicis, AT&T, DunnHumby and GE (now Symphony). Anu has been recognized by ARF as a Marketing Sciences Evangelist and she is also a vocal supporter of women in STEM, along with providing mentoring for Correlation One & AnitaB.Org. members to develop diverse talent in AI/ML space. She holds a master's degree in Operational research & Marketing analytics, and a bachelor's in Statistics. She is based out of Atlanta, GA and lives with her husband and two kids.

Anuj Mehrotra

Dean, Stephen P. Zelnak Jr. Chair, and Professor of Operations Management, Georgia Tech Scheller College of Business

Anuj Mehrotra is the dean and Stephen P. Zelnak Jr. Chair and a professor of Operations Management at the Georgia Tech Scheller College of Business. He joined Scheller on January 1, 2024, after serving as dean of the George Washington University School of Business. Prior to that, Mehrotra was senior vice dean and vice dean of Faculty Development and Research at the University of Miami School of Business Administration.

Mehrotra's research interests are in large-scale optimization and interdisciplinary applications. His work has been published in top-tier academic journals, including Management Science, Mathematical Programming, Naval Research Logistics, and the Informs Journal on Computing. Mehrotra has worked with more than two dozen Fortune 500 companies, and his previous experience includes visiting positions at the Carnegie Mellon University Tepper School of Business and the T. J. Watson Research Center. In 2022, his expertise in his field was honored with a chaired professorship in his name at Woxsen University in Hyderabad, India.

Mehrotra received his doctoral degree in Operations Research from the Georgia Institute of Technology, his master's degree in Operations Research from Virginia Tech, and his bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the Birla Institute of Technology and Science in India.

Barry Givens

Managing Partner, Collab Capital

Barry Givens co-founded Collab Capital in 2018 with Jewel Burks Solomon and Justin Dawkins where he advises emerging entrepreneurs (mostly minorities) launching their companies. He previously served as the Managing Director for Techstars Social Impact Program powered by Cox and served on the board for Venture Atlanta.

Prior to becoming an investor, Barry was a founder and entrepreneur launching Monsieur. At Monsieur, he and his team developed a patented mixing technology that evolved the way the hospitality industry markets, sells, and dispenses mixed adult beverages (cocktails). The technology is currently being utilized in popular venues ranging from sports venues (e.g. Churchill Downs), to large cinema chains (e.g. Regal Cinemas).

Barrys is a Georgia Tech alumni graduating with a BS in Mechanical Engineering. He began his career as a design and manufacturing engineer with John Deere and held roles in project management and sales at Caterpillar.

Blake Patton
Managing Partner, Tech Square Ventures

Blake Patton is the founder and Managing General Partner of Tech Square Ventures where he leads investments in enterprise software, marketplace, and platform technology companies. Under his leadership, the firm has invested in more than 100 early-stage companies and launched Engage, an innovative corporate innovation and enterprise startup accelerator program.

Prior to founding Tech Square Ventures, Blake was General Manager of ATDC and served as President & COO of Interactive Advisory Software and EVP of iXL. He was part of the executive team that grew the company from startup to over $400 million in annualized revenue and an IPO.

Blake earned a Bachelor of Industrial and Systems Engineering degree from Georgia Tech, where he was captain of the swim team. He is also a part-time Professor at Georgia Tech's Scheller College of Business, where he teaches Entrepreneurial Finance.

Cedrick Gipson
Sales Director, Microsoft

Cedrick Gipson is a Sales Director at Microsoft with over a decade of experience in the high-tech industry. He has driven transformational results for leading brands across various sectors, including high-tech, retail, financial services, and AEC. Over the past three years, Cedrick has significantly grown Microsoft's cloud market share in the Transportation & Logistics industry in the South, forming strategic partnerships with major railroads and trucking companies.

Cedrick holds a bachelor's degree in Information Technology from Furman University, where he played on the Division 1 football team and has an MBA from Georgia Tech Scheller College of Business.

Outside of work, he is a devoted husband and father, an athlete, sports enthusiast, an avid chef, and investor. He values inclusion, fairness, integrity, and honesty, and is committed to a living a healthy lifestyle.

Dan Chiao
Head of E-commerce Engineering, SHEIN

Dan Chiao is head of U.S. ecommerce engineering at SHEIN, based in the company's Bellevue, Washington office. He is an experienced engineer and software architect, with over twenty years' experience building global teams at some of the fastest-growing tech companies.

Dan co-founded a number of successful tech start-ups, including Dark Matter Research, a productivity tool using AI and IoT to give knowledge workers a distraction-free workday, and Fliptop, one of the original predictive analytics start-ups, which was acquired by LinkedIn. Dan began his career at Zoomerang, one of the earliest online survey platforms. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from Cornell University.

Daria Jordan

Senior Product Manager, Microsoft

Daria Jordan is a Senior Product Manager at Microsoft, where she leads teams in driving innovative AI and cloud solutions that enhance user experiences and business growth. Daria has implemented strategies that have significantly increased product adoption and customer conversion across global platforms, increasing millions in revenue.

Prior to Microsoft, Daria was Head of Product at unboXt, a startup funded by the Google for Startups Black Founders Fund, where she scaled user engagement by over 125%. She also spent five years as a Senior Consultant at Deloitte, leading global technology projects for CPG and telecommunications clients.

Daria holds an MBA from Duke University, where she specialized in strategy and finance, and a B.S. in Computer Science from Spelman College. She is passionate about expanding representation in STEM and actively mentors youth in underrepresented communities. Daria led several projects geared toward deploying capital to minority communities, including developing a total impact portfolio with above market returns. At the intersection of AI and innovation, Daria is committed to leveraging technology to solve complex problems and create lasting impact.

Denise Smith

CEO, DNS Consulting

Denise Smith is a globe-trotting change magician with over two decades of experience transforming businesses across the globe, having collaborated with leaders in 152 countries. As CEO of DNS Consulting, she delivers high-impact, AI-driven solutions that accelerate growth for companies ranging from tech startups to industry giants. Known for her strategic prowess, Denise has served as a fractional CEO, CTO, and COO, guiding businesses through game-changing pivots, high-stakes negotiations, and future-focused transformations.

Denise holds an Executive MBA from Georgia Tech and a Bachelor of Science from Spelman College. Whether advising executive teams or coaching founders, she brings heart, hustle, and precision to everything she does. Beyond business, Denise is deeply committed to mentoring and serving on for-profit and nonprofit boards, empowering the next generation of leaders in tech and business.

Don Johnson
Developer Relations Manager, NVIDIA

Don Johnson is a developer relations manager at NVIDIA. In this role he works with developers, engineers, and product managers to introduce them to NVIDIA solutions, like Omniverse, that can be leveraged to build AI solutions across many industries. These solutions will help innovate, transform, and improve their business processes. In his career, Don has had roles in systems engineering, software development, and product management and has worked in both retail and telecom industries.

Donald Beamer
Senior Technology Advisor, CFA

Donnie Beamer, CFA was appointed by Mayor Andre Dickens as Atlanta's first-ever Senior Technology Advisor. He serves as the Mayor's chief liaison with the tech sector and assists with shaping policy and programs to grow the ecosystem. Beamer also works with Invest Atlanta to attract new companies to the city, grow existing ones and advises the Administration on fostering Atlanta's technology workforce.

Prior to joining the City, Beamer was the General Manager of LotVision Automotive at Cox2M, Cox Communication's commercial IoT business line and was responsible for the product roadmap and strategy for their flagship vehicle tracking and telematics platform.

Beamer was also an Atlanta tech entrepreneur, leading the Monsieur team that created an automated bartending system that was deployed in movie theaters, hotels, and sports & entertainment venues. Although his first job out of undergrad was in investment management at BlackRock in NYC where he served institutional clients and earned his CFA charter.

Beamer studied Economics as a Division I student-athlete at the Georgia Institute of Technology and earned an MBA from The Wharton School at UPenn.

Eric Overby
Catherine & Edwin Wahlen Professor and Professor of Information, Georgia Tech Scheller College of Business

Eric Overby is the Catherine and Edwin Wahlen Professor and Professor of Information Technology Management at Georgia Tech's Scheller College of Business. Broadly stated, his research focuses on the transition of activities and processes from physical environments to electronic environments. He teaches courses on emerging technologies (such as generative AI), information systems, and research methods.

Hari Gopal
Lead Corporate Insights, Engage

Growing up, when school was out, rather than attending summer camps, Hari decided to do his own book reports, which sparked his early interest in research. After studying business with a minor in engineering and management at Georgia Tech, Hari kicked off his career applying his research mind to the professional world. Hari's early career spanned both small and large consulting firms. At inCode, he worked on new product and technology consulting, with a focus on go-to-market business cases. He also worked at Deloitte to do high-level strategy, including black swan event planning, working closely with C-suite executives. He then joined Cox as an Innovation Manager, where he explored a range of products across industries like energy, gaming, and private networks. Currently, Hari serves as the Corporate Insights Lead at Tech Square Ventures, where he helps our Engage corporate partners better understand emerging technologies and guides startups on how to collaborate with large corporations. Outside of work, Hari is a proud father of two, enjoys performing stand-up comedy, and once reached the quarterfinals in a state-wide Georgia Monopoly tournament (his wife went even further as a semifinalist).

Jamal Miller
Sr. Director of Product Marketing, Intuit Mailchimp

Jamal Miller is Sr. Director of Product Marketing at Intuit Mailchimp, where he leads the team responsible for product positioning, go-to-market strategy and execution, and field enablement for the Mailchimp portfolio of solutions, serving over 11 million customers globally.

Jamal has been at Intuit Mailchimp since 2019 in various product marketing roles supporting areas of the business such as developer engagement, integrations, core product development, and AI product strategy. Overall Jamal has nearly 20 years of experience in product marketing, digital marketing and lifecycle marketing roles, including previous stints at Amazon (Kindle and Ring brands) and the Graduate Management Admissions Councils (GMAC). Jamal received his BA from Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA, and holds an MBA from the University of Maryland, Smith School of Business.

Juan Perez
EVP and CIO, Salesforce

Juan Perez is EVP and CIO at Salesforce. He is responsible for the global IT team, driving digital strategy, and the technical integration of newly acquired companies. Juan also partners closely with customers to advise on their digital transformations.

Juan joined Salesforce in 2022 from UPS where he was CIO and Engineering Officer and a member of the Executive Leadership Team. Juan was a key part of UPS' adoption of new technologies, including AI, virtual assistants, and virtual reality solutions for driver training. He was also responsible for all technology, including operations, airline, automation, sortation, and customer and back-office systems.

Juan has been named a Top Latino Leader by the Council for Latino Workplace Equity, received the Distinguished Mexican Abroad award from the Mexican government, and received the Forbes CIO Innovation Award for his work on UPS' Global Smart Logistics Network.

Juan is a senior member of the Institute of Industrial Engineers and serves as a program evaluator for the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET). He also serves on the board of the Hershey Company and the advisory boards for the School of Industrial and Systems Engineering at the University of Southern California and the School of Business at Georgia Tech. Most recently, Juan was honored with the Héctor P. García Legacy Award, the National Latino Leadership Conference's Legacy award that celebrates the dedicated service and accomplishments of Dr. Héctor P. García, a physician, military veteran, and advocate for the rights of Latinos in the U.S.

Juan holds a B.S. in industrial and systems engineering and an M.S. in computer and manufacturing engineering from the University of Southern California.

Kadeem Trimble
Google

Kadeem Trimble is an emerging tech leader who sets out to cultivate the synergy between community and technology. He is currently a Solutions Architect in the Shopping Ads sector at Google, where he serves as the technical, strategic relationship manager with Google's largest clients. Previously, he was a Program Manager for Google Cloud where he managed top accounts like Twitter, Snap, and Intel. Kadeem holds a Bachelor of Science in Quantitative Theory & Methods from Emory University and M.B.A. from Georgia Tech.

Merry Hunter Caudle
Associate Director for Economic Development, Georgia Tech

Merry Hunter Caudle is the Associate Director for Economic Development in the Office of Institute Relations at Georgia Tech. In this role, she is responsible for developing key external relationships with industry and government that support new economic growth in Georgia. In support of city, state, and regional economic development efforts, Merry Hunter identifies and aligns higher education resources and capabilities to support the recruitment of new companies and overall industry ecosystem expansion in Metro Atlanta and Georgia.

Merry Hunter also supports the continued growth of Georgia Tech's innovation hub model in Tech Square, Science Square and surrounding areas, including the development and acceleration of co-located corporate sites. Working closely with both new and established corporate partners, Merry Hunter helps mobilize campus resources and corporate innovation, technology, and other teams to create and maintain meaningful engagements across Georgia Tech.

She previously served as Education Policy Advisor, responsible for early childhood, K-12, and higher education policy, as well as Deputy Director of Communications for Governor Nathan Deal. Merry Hunter holds a B.S. in Public Policy from Georgia Tech, a M.A. in Communications with a research emphasis on crisis rhetoric in higher education from Georgia State University, and a M.B.A. from Georgia Tech. She is an incoming board member of the Association of University Research Parks (AURP), a member of the Atlanta Fire Rescue Foundation's Young Executives Board, and previously served as a member of the Alliance Theatre's Advisory Board. Merry Hunter is a member of the LEAD Atlanta Class of 2020, the Zell Miller Leadership Institute Class of 2019, and is an active volunteer with the Junior League of Atlanta. Merry Hunter received the AURP Rising Star Award in 2020. She and her family reside in Atlanta.

Michael Powell
Manager of Technology Partnerships, Southwire Company

Michael Powell is a highly accomplished professional who graduated from Southern Polytechnic State University with a degree in Industrial Engineering and Business. Currently, he serves as the Manager of Technology Partnerships at Southwire Company's innovation Center Southwire Spark located at Tech Square. Michael's primary job responsibilities include collaborating with national laboratories, academic institutions, government agencies, and start-up companies on breakthrough technologies. By leveraging these partnerships, he ensures that Southwire remains at the forefront of technological advancements in the industry. Throughout his career, Michael has earned a reputation for his exceptional problem-solving skills and strategic thinking. He consistently delivers innovative solutions to complex engineering challenges, enhancing the company's products and processes, and challenging the norm by exploring transformative technologies. He has worked on multiple projects from ideation to commercialization and currently holds 32 granted patents and has 72 patents pending between United States and internationally filings. He is also a distinguished researcher; being recognized as a R&D 100 Award finalist in 2017.

Niki Ozment Buchanan
Americas Azure Customer Success Leader, Microsoft

Niki is a seasoned leader with extensive experience in technical and customer success roles. Currently serving as the Americas Azure Customer Success Leader at Microsoft, Niki leads the Americas Cloud solution architect and strategic account team including the Azure AI team. The AI team is driving key initiatives around ChatGPT and co-pilot launches including strategic initiatives to enhance ROI through exceptional customer service, account management, and operational deployment. Her leadership has been pivotal in improving KLAS scores and aligning teams towards both profitability and customer satisfaction.

Rohit Pandeka
Partner and General Manager for CoPilot, Microsoft

Rohit Pandeka joined Microsoft 4 years ago as Partner and General Manager and he leads an engineering organization that is focused on maximizing value for our customers through their cloud Investments, driving growth and improving our products through customer driven feedback and signals. He is also leading customer success efforts for customers implementing and adopting our AI capabilities called Copilot.

Additionally, he serves as the Leader for Microsoft Atlanta where we have over 3000 employees and leads our charters of nurturing diverse talent pools, employee experiences and engaging with our customers and communities locally. His 20 plus year career has been in technology industry, and he is customer obsessed and dedicated to aligning people's strengths and aspirations to solve customer and business problems for all. And he finds his passions align to our company mission of empowering everyone everywhere through our technology and AI capabilities.

Sarat Ramayya
CIO, Spanx

With over two decades of experience in technology leadership, Sarat Ramayya currently serves as the Chief Information Officer at Spanx since May 2023. Prior to this, Sarat spent over a decade at Carters Inc., where he held various senior roles, including VP of Enterprise Applications and Sr. Director of Supply Chain IT, spearheading key initiatives that enhanced operational efficiency and global distribution. His expertise also extends to professional services, having served as Vice President at Idhasoft for nearly nine years. A graduate in Chemical Engineering from the University of Michigan, Sarat Ramayya combines a strong technical foundation with strategic leadership to deliver impactful IT solutions across industries.

Sean Henry
CEO and Founder, Stord

Sean is the co-founder and CEO of Stord. Having experienced the fragmentation and disconnected technology of the third-party logistics (3PL) industry first-hand, when both running e-commerce businesses and working in supply chain optimization at an automotive manufacturer in Germany, Sean founded Stord in 2015 with Jacob Boudreau to make supply chains a competitive advantage for brands of all sizes. Sean attended Georgia Tech prior to founding Stord, and has since been recognized as a Thiel Fellow, in the 2019 Forbes' 30 under 30 list, and in 2021 by Forbes as the youngest CEO of a $1B+ company.

Steven Ferguson
Principal Research Scientist and Managing Director,
Georgia AIM (Artificial Intelligence in Manufacturing)

Steven Ferguson is a distinguished leader with over 27 years of experience in the technology, manufacturing, higher education, and workforce development sectors. Currently, he serves as a Principal Research Scientist and Managing Director of Georgia AIM (Artificial Intelligence in Manufacturing) at the Georgia Institute of Technology. In this role, Steven bridges the gap between industry leaders and emerging Industry 4.0 technologies, enhancing manufacturing processes through strategic AI integration. Additionally, he is the Executive Director of the Georgia Tech Manufacturing 4.0 Consortium, where he develops partnerships that help translate research into practice.

Educationally, Steven holds an M.S. in Information Technology from Southern Polytechnic State University, a B.S. in Information Technology from Columbia Southern University, and an A.S. in Engineering from Gainesville State College.

Tony Paikeday
Sr. Director of AI Systems, NVIDIA

Tony Paikeday is Senior Director of AI systems at NVIDIA, responsible for the go-to-market for AI infrastructure solutions. In his role, Tony helps enterprises address the challenges of operationalizing AI development at scale. Tony was previously with VMware, responsible for bringing desktop and application virtualization solutions to market, as well as key enabling technologies including GPU virtualization and software-defined data center. Prior to joining VMware, Tony was at Cisco, building its data center solutions. Prior to Cisco, he held business development roles working with enterprise and service provider accounts, after having started his career as a Manufacturing Engineer for Ford Motor Company. Tony holds an engineering degree from the University of Toronto.

Vish Ganapathy
CTO - Retail, Google

Vish Ganapathy is a seasoned retail technology executive with over 28 years of experience, working with 8 of the top 10 retailers worldwide across North America, Europe, and South America. Currently serving as Field CTO - Retail at Google Cloud, he engages with customers on solutioning, develops transformation roadmaps, and translates business requirements into technical solutions. His expertise spans cloud modernization, digital platforms, merchandising, supply chain, advanced analytics, AI/ML, data modernization, business transformation, and retail enterprise architecture. Throughout his career, Vish has held significant leadership roles at major technology and consulting firms, including Google Cloud, Accenture, and IBM. He has led major transformations and secured substantial deals, such as Tiffany & Co.'s Global Supply Chain Transformation and IKEA's Digital Transformation, both valued at over $60M and $80M respectively. His ability to build trusted relationships with C-level executives and drive technology-enabled business transformations has been a hallmark of his career, working with renowned brands like Starbucks, Nike, Safeway-Albertsons, Walmart, and many others.

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