



The Program for Leadership and Character and Educating Character Initiative at Wake Forest University invite submissions for the following conference:

Building Communities of Character

December 3-5, 2026

Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem, North Carolina



Photo credit Marlene Holston

In partnership with the [Face to Face Speaker Forum](#), the Program for Leadership and Character will welcome **Michael Schur** as the keynote speaker for the conference. Over his nearly 30-year career, Schur has created or co-created shows like *A Man On The Inside*, *The Good Place*, *Parks and Recreation*, *Brooklyn 99*, *Rutherford Falls*, and the new show *Dig* on Peacock. He has also served as Executive Producer on *The Office*, *Hacks*, and *Master of None*, among others. In 2022, he authored *The New York Times* bestseller *How to Be Perfect*. A moderated discussion will take place on December 3 at 6 p.m. in Wait Chapel at Wake Forest University. Tickets will be provided to conference attendees as part of registration.

Themes and Aims

[Building Communities of Character](#) is an international, interdisciplinary conference designed to foster conversation, collaboration, and community in support of a movement to educate character within higher education. Together, we are working to make character development a defining feature of a college and university education.

The three-day gathering, hosted by the [Program for Leadership and Character](#) and its [Educating Character Initiative](#), will be held on campus at Wake Forest University from **December 3-5, 2026**. During our time together, we hope to:

- cultivate community among educators from different backgrounds and institutions who can learn from and support each other in the work of educating character in their own institutional and disciplinary contexts;
- deepen our collective understanding of character and what it means to form character in higher education settings;
- equip faculty, staff, and administrators with concepts, strategies, and resources to support their efforts to educate character in distinct contexts; and
- create spaces for interdisciplinary and cross-institutional conversations that promote collaboration and partnership across academic specializations, institutional silos, and institutions.

Call for Submissions

Subject Matter

To achieve these aims, the conference will feature multiple opportunities for participation, presentations, and community-building. We welcome submissions that address questions about character in higher education. Submissions can be on any topic addressing character or character education in higher education, with a preference for work closely connected to the role of communities in the formation and expression of character. Submissions may involve discussions of practical examples of existing courses, programs, interventions, or initiatives designed to educate character or support the kinds of communities and structures that form character; scholarly, practical, or pedagogically-focused work that shares tools, frameworks, activities, and other strategies that can equip other educators to form character in their distinctive contexts; or scholarly research on character or character education and its relevance to higher education.

Eligibility

We welcome submissions from faculty, staff, or leaders in any academic discipline or administrative unit from any institution of higher education or from organizations working with undergraduate or graduate student populations. We encourage submissions from a wide range of public and private institutions of higher education. All those submitting abstracts or proposals for review must be [registered members](#) of the Educating Character Initiative community. Registration is free and open to all, including those from outside the U.S.

Conference Tracks

We invite submissions along several conference tracks. Across the tracks, we ask that individuals limit their total submissions to one (inclusive of proposals to co-present).

- Workshops: Please submit a proposal of up to 500 words to lead a workshop for educators at institutions of higher education focused on character formation. Abstracts should include key learning outcomes and describe workshop activities aimed at meeting those outcomes. We welcome submissions for an individual stand-alone 20-minute workshop or a multi-part workshop designed to span the entire 75-minute concurrent session.
- Integration Presentations: Please submit a proposal of up to 500 words outlining a course, program, intervention, or initiative designed to educate character, with a focus on how this work is being implemented or applied within your settings. Abstracts should describe the work, the key dimensions of its integration within your settings, and what other individuals or institutions might learn that could be adapted to their contexts. We welcome submissions for an individual stand-alone 20-minute presentation or a series of connected individual presentations designed to span the entire 75-minute concurrent session.
- Ideas Presentation: Please submit a proposal of up to 500 words that invites conversation about or advances understanding of character or character education in higher education. We will consider a range of proposals, including: individual 20-minute presentations; a series of thematically-connected presentations on a particular topic designed to span the 75-minute concurrent session; 75-minute panel discussions; 10-minute flash book talks on newly published works in character; or roundtable conversations.

In addition to participation in the above conference tracks, representatives from ECI grantee institutions (past or present) may submit a proposal for a Poster Session.

- ECI Grantee Poster Session: We invite ECI grantee institutions (2024-present) to present a poster about their character-building efforts. Please submit a proposal of up to 500 words for your poster session. The proposal should include the title of the poster and the name of the presenter from your team. Limit one poster per ECI grantee institution. Due to space constraints, the conference program will allow for only one representative from the institution to serve as a poster presenter.

Potential questions that your presentation may address:

- What are the possibilities and limits of character and character education in higher education?
- What institutional, communal, or cultural conditions are crucial to support character development efforts in higher education?
- Which strategies, frameworks, or resources might be most useful for educating character? How do we design courses, programs, and interventions to foster character?

- How might a focus on character and character education help to shape us to live well within community?
- Which virtues or character qualities are most important for cultivating good communities and pursuing common goods? How do college and university educators support the development of these virtues?
- How do we tailor efforts and resources to educate character to particular disciplines, courses, types of institutions, populations of students, or areas of student life (e.g., athletics, arts, residence life, study abroad, etc.)? How do we work in particular areas while contributing to the character education of the whole student and across an entire institution?
- What approaches to assessment and measurement are adequate to the task of educating character? What are the benefits and limits of such efforts? What might specific examples of successful assessment and measurement teach us?
- How can we build robust networks of individuals and institutions committed to educating character? How can we productively learn from one another, share resources, and support one another as educators aimed at cultivating communities of character?

This list of topics is meant to be suggestive and by no means exhausts the possibilities for excellent submissions on the conference theme. We look forward to your submissions, to the conversations to come, and to the partnership in the important work of building communities of character in the university.

Submission Process

All submissions should be 500 words or fewer and submitted to the ECI Conference Submission Portal by **June 22, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. ET**. We anticipate communicating decisions by early August, with registration opening in early September. Any questions should be directed to LCconfer@wfu.edu.

Sponsors

This conference and keynote are made possible through the generous support of Lilly Endowment Inc., the John Templeton Foundation, the Kern Family Foundation, the Face to Face Speaker Forum, and Wake Forest University.

About the Organizers

[The Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University](#) aims to inspire, educate, and empower leaders of character to serve humanity. Through innovative teaching, creative programming, and cutting-edge research, the Program seeks to transform the lives of students,

foster a culture of leadership and character at Wake Forest, and catalyze a broader public conversation that places character at the center of leadership.

[The Educating Character Initiative](#) (ECI) is catalyzing a movement for character education at colleges and universities across the United States. Through our work in grantmaking, collective learning, and community engagement, we equip institutions of higher education with the funding, resources, and support necessary to integrate character into their distinctive institutional contexts, curricula, and cultures. Our broad aspiration is to enable institutions of higher education across the world to become communities of character that form students, staff, and faculty to act with character and for the common good. For more information on the Educating Character Initiative, visit our website and [register for the ECI Community](#).