Stephen Edmonds  
Edmonds Consulting Corporation, President  
Edmonds Turbine Company LLC, President

Mr. Edmonds is a graduate of West Virginia University (1965), with a Bachelor of Science degree in Aerospace Engineering. He previously worked with Pratt & Whitney Aircraft, a division of the United Technologies Corporation. At Pratt & Whitney Aircraft, Mr. Edmonds was a senior project engineer responsible for the design of compressors for the F100 (F-15, F-16), F119 (F-22), and F135 (F-35) engines. He was also the Director of Japan Programs and the Director of Business Development and Strategic Planning.

Currently, he is the president of Edmonds Consulting Corporation (ECC) and Edmonds Turbine Company, LLC (ETC). ECC provides gas turbine design and development services. ECC helped to develop gas turbine laboratory facilities at WCU including a high technology structures laboratory, turbine heat transfer water flow visualization rig and cascade wind tunnel. ETC is a startup company developing a new high performance gas turbine for Distributed Power Generation and propulsion.

Jack David Bolick  
Gryphon Investors, GEAB Advisor and Investor  
Member of Gryphon Executive Advisory Board, Fund Investor

Mr. Bolick is a proven senior executive and leader with a Global Fortune 100 diversified industrial manufacturing Corporation and high technology growth businesses.


Mr. Bolick’s specialties include: 30+ years semiconductor, microelectronics and software experience He has market experience in Oil & Gas, Refining and Petrochemical, Pharma, Spec Chem, Paper & Pulp, Mining, Semiconductors, Textiles, Furniture, etc.

Charlie Kimmel  
Kimmel & Associates, President & Chief Executive Officer

President and CEO, Charlie Kimmel, has dedicated his more than 20-year career to executive search at Kimmel & Associates. Charlie officially began his career at Kimmel & Associates in 1990 as a recruiter. In 1993, he graduated with honors from the University of North Carolina-Asheville where he received a BA degree in History.

During the following 13 years, he worked his way through the ranks: as research assistant, recruiter for general construction in the Southeast; to consultant for regional and national commercial builders; consultant in our Heavy Civil Division; and corporate trainer, prior to being named chief operations officer in 2003. Six years later, Charlie assumed his role as president and in 2012 was named chief executive officer.

In his free time, Charlie enjoys supporting his community by running in several 5K events each year for various charitable organizations. Charlie leads Kimmel & Associates with a focus on setting and enabling the highest levels of professional standards and client service — all with the aim of delivering outstanding results for our clients.

Mike Keenan  
Eaton Corporation, Human Resources Manager

Lisa Leatherman  
Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC, Duke Energy Nantahala Area District Manager

Lisa is a native of Franklin, NC and holds a Bachelor’s degree in Biology from Elon College.

Lisa has been an employee of Duke Energy for 26 years. She has worked in other various customer facing roles through her 26 year career at Duke Energy including lake services, hydro relicensing, hydro operations, engineering and vegetation management.

She is a member of the Franklin Daybreak Rotary Club. She serves on boards for the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee River, Macon County CareNet and Macon County Department of Social Services. She has also served on the board for Macon County Habitat for Humanity.
Richard L. Robinson
Meritor, Leans System Manager

Richard Robinson is a North Carolina native with a wealth of experience in the field of manufacturing operations, Lean/Sigma transformation and global project management in corporate settings both domestically and internationally. He has worked with colleagues at all levels and with diverse cultural backgrounds over a 25-year career. Richard completed his undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He has received corporate training in the Toyota Production System in Nagoya, Japan, Business Driven Leadership training in Copenhagen, Denmark, and both Six Sigma and Design for Six Sigma certifications through General Electric.

Richard’s early career was with a large international company from Finland in R&D and process engineering related to paper making and machinery in the field of structural and fluid dynamics. In 1997, he took a Six Sigma Black Belt position for manufacturing operations with a division of General Electric Corporation. In 1999, he was recruited for a key and newly created position of Master Black Belt for Dana Corporation for the startup of a “greenfield” 400,000 sq ft facility as a result of a business acquisition of the Echlin manufacturing operations. He was subsequently promoted to the Operations Manager. With a decline in the global truck market and the divestiture of various Dana businesses in 2001, Richard transferred to Volvo Construction Equipment in which he led all major North American product introductions and manufacturing expansions for Volvo Asheville Plant along with managing all aspects of manufacturing. While with Volvo, he established an exceptional track record in the areas of project and manufacturing management, Lean/Six Sigma, operational development, and policy deployment leading to the Volvo, Asheville Plant receiving national recognition as a Shingo Silver Medallion award winner, considered the Nobel Prize for Manufacturing.

In 2007, Richard launched and managed a successful re-introduction of fabrication and machining back into the Volvo Asheville Plant. During this project implementation time, he specialized in cultural team building, capital investments and implementation, employee recruitment, employee training, and certification. By collaborating with the local community college (Asheville Buncombe Technical College), Volvo was awarded a $250,000 grant to provide the necessary training in order to reestablish the specialized machining and heavy welding business. The partnership with AB-Tech led to the receipt of the Distinguished Partners for Excellence Award given by the State of North Carolina.

In 2010, Richard joined Meritor, the recognized leader in providing advanced drivetrain, mobility, braking and aftermarket solutions for the global commercial vehicle and industrial markets, as the Engineering Manager of the Asheville Plant. During this time, he led a $40 MUSD capital investment in the Asheville plant along with applying for and receiving two State grants related to job growth and Technology for a total of $279,000. In July of 2013, he took the Corporate Lean Systems Manager position for Meritor’s North America Truck business. Richard is also currently serving as a Board Member for United Way, Henderson County.

Richard and his wife Tammy, a Real Estate Professional with Beverly Hanks at the Ramble community in South Asheville, have been married for 22 years. Richard and Tammy reside in Mills River with their Golden Retriever, Wilbur.

Brett Woods
Western Carolina University, Director of Development

During college, Brett worked for Radio Shack and then J. C. Penney where he sold electronics on commission (and where he was able to play with all the latest innovations like cassette tape and “Dolby FM.” Brett’s post-college career found him working for the U. S. Bankruptcy Court and the U. S. District Court for the Southern District of Alabama. Toward the end of his federal stint, while completing his Master’s, Brett stumbled into a new world of higher education fundraising. Brett’s fundraising career has enabled him to work with generous donors from Spring Hill College, Brevard College, the University of South Florida College of Engineering and Western Carolina University. Brett holds an undergraduate degree in Business Administration and a Master of Liberal Arts. Brett has served on the Board of the Association of Fundraising Professionals of Western North Carolina for 8 years, two of which he served as their President. Brett holds the Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) credential, a certification held by less than 6,000 fund raisers globally. In addition, Brett completed his certification from Duke University in Non Profit Management. Brett was recently accepted into the Graduate School of Western Carolina University where he plans to pursue either an MBA or a Masters in Project Management. Brett resides in “downtown” Sylva where he is active with his church and enjoys cycling and running.

Jeffrey Ray
Western Carolina University
Kimmel School, Dean

Jeffrey Ray is the Dean of the Kimmel School at Western Carolina University. Prior to his deanship at Western Carolina University, Jeffrey served as dean and professor of mechanical engineering technology at Southern Polytechnic State University for seven years. During his tenure as dean at SPSU, Ray helped develop his school’s first strategic plan, coordinated three major accreditation processes, and acquired funding for more than $2.5 million in new and replacement equipment. He also created and developed two new undergraduate programs and one new graduate program.

Prior to joining SPSU, Ray served as director and professor in the School of Engineering at Grand Valley State University from 2004 until 2007, and as associate professor and chair of the mechanical engineering program there from 1997 until 2004. He also previously was an assistant professor of mechanical engineering at Youngstown State University and a biomedical research engineer at Vanderbilt University.

Ray is a member of the ASEE, serving as chair of the organization’s engineering technology council and vice president of its institutional councils. He earned his doctorate in mechanical engineering at Vanderbilt University and his master’s and bachelor’s degrees in mechanical engineering at Tennessee Technological University.