Kerry O’Connor  
Dress for Success Charlotte

A former newscaster, Kerry Barr O’Connor changed career directions after becoming involved with the AmeriCorp VISTA program and has since been involved in non-profit management for more than 25 years. She has worked, volunteered, and consulted for organizations in New York, Ohio and North Carolina developing nationally recognized initiatives and raising millions of dollars to move forward the missions of these organizations. With a philosophy that everyone has something to give, Kerry is most passionate about organizations that provide the tools and support needed to help people realize their potential and work towards self-sufficiency.

Kerry was named Executive Director for Dress for Success Charlotte in December 2005 and charged with re-building the organization shut down due to a lack of sustainable funding. Dress for Success Charlotte re-opened its doors to clients in after developing and implementing a business plan that called for a more diverse donor base, expanded board of directors, and new community partnerships, including a 60 member community advisory committee. In 2008, Dress for Success Charlotte, was named Rookie of the Year for Best Practices in all area of operations.

In April 2009, Dress for Success Charlotte launched a capacity building campaign to move its operations to newly renovated Boutique and Career Transformation Center. The design won the coveted “Design Is” Global Award from Shaw Contract Group and was named the 2010 “People’s Choice” with more than 400,000 votes.

Dress for Success Charlotte provides a continuum of service, including job preparedness, job acquisition, employment retention, and career advancement programs and services, to more than 900 women annually seeking employment as a means to achieve economic independence and strengthen their families. The organization was recognized by the Mayor of Charlotte for its economic and environmental impact and named the 2014 Community Waste Reduction Partner of the Year for diverting nearly 30 tons of textiles from the landfill each year. These items increase the sustainability of individuals and organizations, thus laying a foundation for a stronger community.

Kerry’s awards and recognition include the National Association of Women Business Owners Nonprofit Leader of the Year, Rotarian of the Year, and twice named among the Most Stylish Woman in Business by Charlotte Style Magazine. She resides in Matthews, North Carolina with her husband Tim, and daughter Devin, UNCC Class of 2014 and son Timmy, UNCC Class of 2017.