



## **SXSW Announces First Keynotes and Featured Speakers for the 2027 Innovation Conference and SXSW EDU**

*Renowned AI Thought Leader Timnit Gebru to Deliver Keynote at SXSW Innovation Conference, Plus Featured Sessions With Timm Chiusano, Allison Ellsworth, Joanna Lepore, Amy Webb, and More*

*New York Times-Bestselling Author Mac Barnett to Deliver Keynote at SXSW EDU, Plus Featured Sessions With W. Kamau Bell, Arielle Fodor, Alison Luchs, and More*

*SXSW and SXSW EDU Badges On Sale Now At Lowest Rate of the Season*

**September 15, 2026 | Austin, Texas — South by Southwest® (SXSW®)** today announced the first speakers for the 2027 SXSW Innovation Conference (March 15-20) and SXSW EDU Conference & Festival (March 13-16).

### **SXSW Innovation Conference**

SXSW Innovation is where business, technology and creativity converge. From March 15-20, the full business ecosystem—founders, customers, investors, partners, mentors and more—will gather in Austin for professional growth and real business development. SXSW Innovation will feature 11 programming tracks, with thought leaders and decision-makers navigating rapid industry changes and presenting creative solutions to real problems. Keynotes and Featured Sessions are open to all attendees with Platinum, Innovation, Music, and Film & TV badges.

“Today we are thrilled to share an early look at the dynamic lineup we have in store for SXSW Innovation in 2027. As always, this year’s programming will directly address the massive cultural and technological shifts ahead of us, and cut through the noise with real solutions,” said Katie Perera, Senior Director of SXSW Innovation Conference. “More than just technological advancement, SXSW Innovation highlights a broad range of emerging voices and innovations shaping the future of business, culture, and society.”

### **Keynote**

***Deep Unlearning: The Rise of AI and the Radicalization of a Tech Idealist***—From Apple, to Stanford, to her high-profile departure from Google’s Ethical AI team over AI bias concerns, **Timnit Gebru** has been present at nearly every inflection point in technology’s recent history. In her keynote, Gebru will explore how poor decisions, destructive ideologies and outsized egos have damaged our environment, economies, and everyday lives, and how better decisions can still be made today.

### **Featured Sessions**

***A Conversation with Timm Chiusano on the Art of Appreciation***—Through personal stories, surprising research, and practical exercises, **Timm Chiusano**, Emmy Award-winning creative executive, producer, and digital storyteller, will draw a distinction between gratitude and appreciation and how the latter can strengthen relationships, build self-worth, and make every moment count.

***Amy Webb Launches Technology Convergences 2027***—Futurist **Amy Webb** returns to SXSW to explore "Second Nature"—the emerging tools reshaping business, culture, and human history. Using data-driven scenarios, she will decode critical tech trends to give attendees actionable strategies for navigating the future.

***Beyond the Exit: The Founder's Next Act***—Poppi co-founder and Chief Brand Officer **Allison Ellsworth** will explore the emotional and professional realities of a founder's second act, including the unique pressure placed on female founders, in conversation with Inc. Editor-in-Chief **Mike Hofman**.

***From Founder to Acquirer: Lessons From Both Sides of M&A***—As AI accelerates M&A across tech, and the old playbook on selling a company is already out of date. **Rahul Vohra**, founder and Head of Superhuman, will sit down with Bloomberg reporter **Rebecca Torrence** to discuss Vohra's first-hand experience selling and acquiring companies in the age of AI.

***Growth Beyond the Horizon: Moving Past Innovation Paralysis with Strategic Foresight***—Global foresight strategist and futurist **Joanna Lepore** of Dig Insights will draw on firsthand experience building foresight as an enterprise-level capability inside some of the world's biggest brands. Attendees will learn to use foresight to fuel innovation, drive growth and make better decisions.

***In an Age of Bullying, Can We Make Social Bravery Contagious?***—Social psychologist **Amy Cuddy** will reveal how we can flip harmful social norms, practice social bravery, and make courage contagious, turning the same social forces that spread bullying—attention, silence, conformity, and fear—against it.

***Social Media Masterclass with Ex-YouTube & Instagram Insider***—Learn how to find inspiration and better ideas for your social posts from social media expert **Jon Youshaei**. No matter your platform or channel of choice, this talk outlines a repeatable process to grow your audience in 2027 and become a respected voice in your niche.

***SuperJoost State of Play: Games, AI & Disruption***—State of Play from **Joost van Dreunen** is SXSW's annual trend report on how games forecast the future of media, tech, and culture. The games industry is the canary in the coal mine for the AI disruption coming for film, music, and publishing, and this data-driven session will map how disruption travels across creative industries.

***Think Outside the Boss: How Autonomy Beats Bureaucracy in the AI Era***—In this frank, funny, and first-person talk, futurist and Notre Dame professor **Mike Bechtel** will return to SXSW to make the case that the AI-fueled future favors people and organizations willing to move at the speed of small.

For more on confirmed SXSW Innovation Conference speakers and sessions, see [here](#).

## **SXSW EDU Conference & Festival**

SXSW EDU is a lifelong learning event, celebrating education at every stage of life, from early childhood through higher education, to continuing education and workforce development. From March 13-16, SXSW EDU will welcome educators and administrators, education founders and business professionals, nonprofit leaders, and policymakers to Austin to kick off a new path forward for students and careers.

“As we head into the back-to-school season, we’re excited to announce the first sessions for SXSW EDU 2027,” said Julia Shatilo, Senior Director of SXSW EDU. “These are a collection of stories you can only find at our event. Our program emphasizes lifelong learning and critical human skills like imagination, critical thinking, communication, adaptability and curiosity, sitting at the intersection of education with culture, media, creativity, and digital innovation. These sessions not only signal the themes that will drive the year ahead, but serve as a reminder to leaders in business, non-profits, public service, and more that education impacts everyone in every industry.”

### **Keynote**

***A Conversation with Mac Barnett***—As educators navigate rapid changes in technology, literacy, and how young people learn and engage with the world, **Mac Barnett**, New York Times-bestselling author and U.S. National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature, will share why children deserve respect and art just for them.

### **Featured Sessions**

***Lore Drop: The Museum Rizzler & Friends Live***—**Alison Luchs** is curator and deputy head of the Department of Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the National Gallery of Art, and has helped drive 30+ million social media views with her art history lore. Go behind the scenes with Luchs and the National Gallery's social media team, **Sydni Myers** and **Mary King**, to discover how they blended scholarship with comedy to build brand affinity across generations, reach new audiences, and turn a legacy institution into cultural conversation.

***The Classroom Is Telling Us Something***—Emmy Award-winning producer and comedian **W. Kamau Bell** will bring teachers to the stage to share their perspective from the front lines of cultural shifts, before they become national headlines. They will also put a spotlight on schools as important third spaces, where students find food, connection, trusted adults, technology, and safety.

***What Kindergarten Can Teach Us About Democracy—Arielle Fodor***, better known online as Mrs. Frazzled, will share how the skills that help kindergarten students participate in a classroom are also the skills adults need to participate in civic life, translating what early childhood educators know about fairness, disagreement, and belonging into practical strategies for civic life.

For more on confirmed SXSW EDU speakers and sessions, see [here](#).

### **About SXSW**

SXSW helps creative people achieve their goals. Founded in 1987 in Austin, Texas, SXSW is known worldwide for conferences and festivals that celebrate new frontiers in business, entertainment and culture. With its flagship event in Austin and SXSW London, which launched in 2025, SXSW brings together global artists, entrepreneurs and audiences for sessions, showcases, screenings, exhibitions, networking, and unexpected discoveries focused on the future of creative industries: Brand & Marketing, Cities & Climate, Comedy, Creator Economy, Design, Film & Television, Gaming, Health & Wellness, Lifestyle, Music, Podcasts, Sports, Startups, Technology & AI, Workplace, and more.

SXSW 2027 runs March 15-21 in downtown Austin, preceded by SXSW EDU, March 13-16. Learn more at [sxsw.com](https://sxsw.com).

### **About SXSW EDU**

The SXSW EDU® Conference & Festival reflects the world's most critical social issues through the lens of education. The event brings together learners, educators, entrepreneurs, and visionaries to share ideas, find solutions to complex challenges, and build reimagined paths forward. SXSW EDU is a place for attendees to renew their purpose, deepen their practice, and connect with a passionate community committed to the future of teaching and learning. Join the SXSW EDU community March 13-16, 2027, in Austin, Texas.

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Editor's Note: Media accreditation is now open for SXSW 2027 through February 12, 2027. Please visit the [SXSW Press Center](#) or the [SXSW EDU Press Center](#) to submit your application.

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