

Growth Sector, Cal State LA, Caltrans: Building Bridges to STEM Careers

Growth Sector, Cal State LA, and Caltrans Host Groundbreaking Expo Showcasing First-of-Its-Kind Engineering Degree Apprenticeship Pathway

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On Friday, August 1, 2025, Growth Sector, in partnership with California State University, Los Angeles, and [Caltrans](#), successfully hosted the inaugural Building Bridges to STEM Careers Expo, an inspiring day that spotlighted a groundbreaking new model for advancing equitable access to high-wage, high-growth careers in science, technology, [engineering](#), and math (STEM).



Cal State LA Lab Tour

Held at Cal State LA, the event gathered students, faculty, public sector leaders, and employers to mark the launch of the STEM Core Engineering Degree [Apprenticeship](#) Pathway, a bold initiative aimed at creating direct, supported pathways from community college to bachelor's degrees and employment in civil and general engineering.

“

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David Gruber, Co-Founder of Growth Sector

The event brought together more than 100 students, including Summer Bridge participants from Los Angeles City College (LACC), East Los Angeles College (ELAC), and Los Angeles Mission College (LAMC), along with 25 current STEM Core engineering interns from Cal State LA's Summer Making, Academic Prep, and Research for Transfer Students (SMART) Internship Program. Attendees engaged in a full day of interactive activities, industry panels, and networking with partners from the public and private sectors.

According to Charles Liu, Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering and event organizer at Cal State LA, "The SMART Internship offers a unique opportunity to explore academic and research pathways in a dynamic summer setting. Participants engage in immersive workshops, collaborative projects, and cutting-edge research activities, all while building the skills and confidence needed for a successful transfer and continued academic success."

The STEM Core Engineering Degree Apprenticeship Pathway is a national initiative spearheaded by Growth Sector to combat educational inequities and workforce gaps. The program is designed to ensure that community college students, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, have a clear, supported route to a four-year STEM degree and career success. "We're hoping to inspire more community college students to seek and achieve high-wage engineering careers," said David Gruber, Co-Founder of Growth Sector. "Programs like this help to show students there is a pathway and it's open to them." The model includes academic support, mentoring, and paid work experiences that align with each stage of students academic progression.

"This initiative is about tearing down long-standing barriers and building bridges for students to access opportunities that once felt out of reach," said Caz Pereira, Co-Founder of Growth Sector. "By combining structured academic support, paid internships, and apprenticeships, we're preparing students to thrive not only in college, but also in the STEM workforce of the future."

Participants in the pathway begin with a Summer Bridge experience, followed by paid internships in their second year and apprenticeships in their third, while completing their bachelor's degrees. Caltrans and other leading employers like NASA, JPL, Northrop Grumman, and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory are among the program's early partners, offering students real-world experience and access to engineering and infrastructure careers.

The effort in California is supported by funding from the U.S. Department of Labor's Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs Grant Program, as well as private philanthropic partners including the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, Crankstart, Tipping Point Community, Sobrato Philanthropies, and ECMC Foundation.

To date, Growth Sector has supported over 3,300 community college students across five states, placing more than 1,000 students in paid internships and setting a new national standard for STEM career preparation.

Event Details

Event: "Building Bridges to STEM Careers"

Date: Friday, August 1, 2025 (10am - 2:30pm)

Location: California State University, Los Angeles, Hosted by: Growth Sector x Cal State LA x Caltrans

Featured: LACC, ELAC, LAMC Summer Bridge Cohorts + Cal State LA STEM Core Interns

Additional Photos, Interviews, and Quotes Available Upon Request.

<https://www.growthsector.org>

<https://www.calstatela.edu/ecst>

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