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November 2025 Newsletter

The Power of Mentorship at STEM Advantage



STEM Advantage mentor Kevin Gray, Chief Technology Officer at Metrolink, with mentees Charles, now an alumnus earning a PhD at USC and a mentor in our program, and Hasti, a Computer Science major at Cal Poly Pomona.

During this season of gratitude, we are extremely grateful to our mentors. Their commitment creates pathways, builds confidence, and provides access to

opportunities that first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students often struggle to find.

A significant body of research underscores the *transformative power* of mentorship. A Stanford University study on belonging and persistence found that students who experience consistent, supportive relationships with adult mentors are far more likely to stay engaged academically, persevere through challenges, and see themselves as capable of long-term success.

Our mentors don't simply provide advice, they build identity, belonging, and resilience. Every conversation they have, every insight they offer, and every moment of encouragement they provide contributes directly to these outcomes.

"One conversation can change the trajectory of a student's confidence."

To learn about our mentorship program and get involved, please contact our mentorship program manager Tania at tania@stemadvantage.org



STEM Advantage Alumna Lia at Women in Technology Hollywood Summit



STEM Advantage alumna, Lia Metz, represented us on a panel at the Women in Technology Hollywood (WiTH) SoCal Leadership Summit highlighting WiTH's charity partners. Lia's story is the definition of perseverance, reinvention, and the power of opportunity. A female who grew up in an underprivileged family, Lia originally built a career as an actor, director, and dancer. In her mid-30s, she made the courageous decision to go back to school at Cal State Dominguez Hills, where a single cybersecurity class sparked a new passion. Encouraged by classmates, she applied to STEM Advantage. Through the program, Lia received a scholarship, mentorship, and an internship with Internet Brands, which helped

launch her professional journey. Today, she is a Sr. Cyber Security Operations Center Analyst at NBCUniversal, contributing to major events like the Super Bowl and the Olympics.

During the panel, Lia shared how STEM Advantage opened doors she never knew existed, and how that opportunity continues to ripple forward through her commitment to “Pay It Forward.” She shared, “STEM Advantage is an amazing organization that provides opportunities for brilliant minds who wouldn’t have opportunities otherwise. As a first-generation student, there aren’t a lot of opportunities. STEM Advantage helps lift us up.”

We are incredibly proud of Lia—her journey, her impact, and her dedication to giving back as a mentor. Thank you for representing STEM Advantage with such heart and authenticity! And, thank you Women in Technology Hollywood for selecting STEM Advantage as a charity partner and welcoming our Scholars and alumni into the WiTH community.

Seeking Internships & Entry-Level Jobs

What do these companies have in common?



These are just a few of the amazing companies where our Scholars have secured summer internships and entry-level jobs!

If your company - or someone you know - offers paid internships and/or entry level roles, we have vetted skilled talent ready to make a valued contribution to your team. Please contact Jasmyn at jasmyn@stemadvantage.org to discuss your hiring needs. *Thank you!*

WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE 2025

AI AND THE FUTURE WORKFORCE:

CAN AI HELP CLOSE THE OPPORTUNITY GAP IN STEM—OR WILL IT WIDEN THE DIVIDE?

WITH CHARLES SIMS, ANA POMPA ALARCÓN, JOANNA POPPER, FAIZAN HUSSAIN, AND MONICA MONIQUE



At our Workforce of the Future panel on November 13 at Sony Pictures, we brought together an extraordinary group of thinkers and practitioners who are actively shaping what the next era of work will look like. Our speakers included Joanna Popper, Chief Executive Officer of Laurel Beach LLC, Ana Pompa Alarcón, Chief Executive Officer of Founders Registry Inc., Faizan Hussain, Senior Software Engineer at The Walt Disney Company, and Monica Monique, Founder of Chain Reaction with Charles Sims, Technical Founder & CEO of SkaFld Studio. Each person brought a unique perspective, touching on entrepreneurship, technology, workforce development, equity, and the real-life experience of building teams and adapting to rapid change in an AI-enabled world.

Together, they unpacked one of the most urgent questions facing organizations today: How will rapid advances in artificial intelligence reshape not only the skills we need, but the systems, norms, and power structures we've long accepted as "normal"?

Our panelists dug into the cultural, economic, and relational shifts already unfolding — from the changing nature of soft skills, to how AI is challenging

traditional pathways to opportunity, to the ways founders, creators, and early-career professionals must reimagine their roles.

A special Thank You to our Panelists and Sponsors!

Sponsors



Invest in STEM Talent

Talent is equally distributed, but opportunity is not. STEM Advantage Scholars have the talent, grit, and ambition to succeed -- they just need someone to open the door. Your investment and generosity can provide internships and vital career-building experiences, mentors, scholarships, and community for first-generation, low-income, and underserved students. Together, we can unlock potential and change lives.

Please join us in creating opportunities for those who need it most. We sincerely appreciate your support.

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To learn more and get involved, contact Lee Ann at leeann@stemadvantage.org, visit <http://www.stemadvantage.org> and follow us on social media.

