





A message from
AMIR NAIBERG

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Summer 2026 issue of our Innovation Magazine.

As we close out the fiscal year, we have an extraordinary Spring to celebrate. Across every aspect of our work, we are seeing record-breaking achievements that underscore our core mission: helping research power progress.

I am thrilled to share a few of the remarkable milestones our teams have reached:

- **Record-Setting Research Funding:** Our Research and Industry Alliances (RIA) team collaborated with faculty across campus to generate nearly **\$70 million** in industry-sponsored research.
- **Unprecedented Innovation:** Through the dedicated campus outreach of our Business Development and IP team, we saw **411 new invention disclosures**, ultimately translating into **37 new exclusive transactions**.
- **Major Public Health Alliances:** The RIA team closed a massive **\$31 million** in funding from Health Management Associates Inc. to support UCLA's Public Mental Health partnership.
- **National Educational Impact:** ELPA 21 (English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century) and CRESST at the UCLA School of Education and Information Studies developed an assessment system using proprietary IP that has already been adopted by 11 states. Our team successfully partnered with Cambium to enhance the outreach of this platform.

A Landmark Year for LABEST LABEST Week 2026 saw record-breaking attendance, expanding its footprint across the Southern California science ecosystem. The week kicked off with Biotech Connect LA's Bioscience Talent Connection, bringing together hundreds of students, postdocs, and professionals to discuss career opportunities. The momentum continued the following day with a sold-out networking event hosted by UCLA Ventures and CNSI for startup founders and investors.

Our competitive showcases reached peak numbers: the MedTech Demo Track featured 16 pitch teams, while the Pearl Cohen Scientific Poster Contest received over 100 submissions. Throughout the MedTech and Bioscience conference days, we welcomed exceptional new speakers from the Terasaki Institute, Eli Lilly, the Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center, the Samueli School of Engineering, Google Ventures, Noom, and more. Notably, we also bridged the gap between science and the humanities for the very first time with our inaugural Creativity Commons.

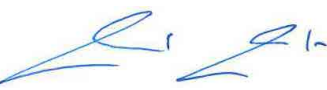
(You can watch most of the LABEST 2026 panels on the [UCLA TDG YouTube Channel here.](#))

Telling Our Story To better showcase our impact, UCLA TDG partnered with Nura Studios to create our first-ever AI-driven explainer video. Additionally, we have rolled out a new series of "Success Videos" to highlight UCLA startups and midsize companies that have recently reached significant milestones.

Board Transitions Finally, as our community continues to grow, I want to extend a warm welcome to retired Regent Chair Richard Leib, who is generously contributing his time and energy as an observer to the UCLA TDG Board. I would also like to extend my deep gratitude to Michael Howse for his dedicated service as a UCLA Ventures Board Member over the past few years.

Thank you for being part of our incredible community. Here is to continuing this momentum into the summer and beyond.

Sincerely,



Amir Naiberg
Associate Vice Chancellor, CEO & President
UCLA Technology Development Group

UCLA TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
**INNOVATION
MAGAZINE**
TDG.UCLA.EDU



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UCLA TDG LABEST Week 2026 Conference Recap

LABEST 2026

By the Numbers



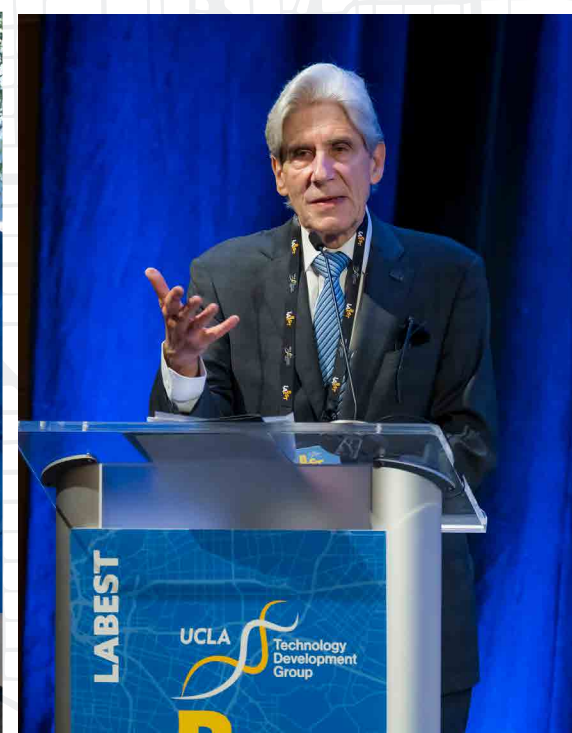
- 2 SATELLITE EVENTS
- 4 DAYS OF ENGAGEMENT
- 5 RECEPTIONS
- 26+ LIVE PITCHES
- 30 SPONSORS
- 75+ SPEAKERS
- 100+ RESEARCH POSTERS
- 1,200+ REGISTERED ATTENDEES

LABEST Week 2026 took place Monday, May 18 – Thursday, May 21. This was a record event as we reached our highest registration numbers ever with over 1,200 attendees. The series of events encompassed workforce development, connections between startup founders and funders, the latest in medical technology development and news of groundbreaking advancements in bioscience. Here is a recap of the week.



"It is fitting that we are gathered here because universities like UCLA are the main institutions capable of pursuing the kind of bold and ambitious research that leads to national progress."

- UCLA Chancellor Julio Frenk
[UCLA Newsroom](#)





The Bioscience Talent Connection Team

Photos Biotech Connection Los Angeles

Bioscience Talent Connection 2026

Connecting Emerging Talent with Industry Leaders

On May 18th, BCLA's 11th annual Bioscience Talent Connection (BTC) opened LABEST Week, UCLA Technology Development Group (TDG)'s flagship multi-day bioscience conference, welcoming students, trainees, postdocs, and professionals from across Southern California to the UCLA James West Alumni Center for a full day dedicated to career exploration, industry insight, and meaningful connections.

The day opened with remarks from BCLA leadership highlighting the organization's mission of strengthening connections between academia and industry while helping trainees better understand opportunities beyond the traditional academic path.

The morning panel discussion, "Navigating Biotech Careers Beyond Academia," moderated by [Gabriela Barrios, PhD](#), featured professionals spanning discovery biology, regulatory affairs,

commercial finance, and scientific sales, including [Benancio Rodriguez, PhD](#) (VectorBuilder), [Jasper H. Chang, PharmD, MS](#) (Hologic), [Romano Orlando, MS](#) (Amgen), and [Alex Lam, PhD](#) (Xencor).

Panelists shared candid reflections on their transitions from academia into industry and discussed the realities of working in highly collaborative environments involving cross-functional teams across research, operations, finance, legal, manufacturing, and commercial strategy. Many emphasized that communication, adaptability, organization, and relationship-building are just as important as technical expertise in industry settings.

The Career Spotlight and Internship/Fellowship Spotlight sessions further expanded the breadth of careers represented throughout the day.

Representatives from [UCLA Technology Development Group \(TDG\)](#), including [Andrew Wang](#) and [Ria Sanghera](#),



Panelists shared candid reflections on their transitions from academia into industry and discussed the realities of working in highly collaborative environments.

shared insights into careers at the intersection of science, intellectual property, and commercialization. Their presentations highlighted how evaluating scientific innovations, supporting licensing efforts, and translating technical discoveries into accessible business and legal language can open doors to careers beyond traditional bench research.

[Yuki Hebner, PhD](#), a UCLA-Amgen Medical Affairs Fellow, gave attendees an inside look into medical affairs and scientific communication within the pharmaceutical industry. Drawing from her own transition from academic research into biotech, she discussed how publication strategy, stakeholder engagement, and cross-functional collaboration all contribute to bridging scientific research with patient care and healthcare providers.

Speakers from the [USC Mann Fellowship Programs](#), including [Michael Lim, PharmD, MBA](#), [JianXiang \(Eric\) Weng, PharmD](#), and [Bahram Karpavar, PharmD](#), provided insight into fellowship pathways across clinical development, medical affairs, and industry strategy. They discussed the recruitment process, mentorship, and the importance of tailoring

applications thoughtfully while remaining open to different career directions within biotech and healthcare.

For many attendees, one of the most valuable parts of the event was gaining exposure to the wide range of careers available across biotech and life sciences. Recent USC biomedical engineering PhD graduate Pegah Bagheri reflected on how impactful it was to hear from professionals who successfully pivoted into different industry roles. "I really enjoyed being able to see what kind of career options I could take with the PhD that I have obtained," she shared. "I think it's really useful to learn from different people about how you can pivot and see what kind of career opportunities exist out there."

A special thank you to all of the panelists, spotlight speakers, volunteers, sponsors, and attendees who contributed to such an engaging and inspiring event. We are especially grateful to our core sponsors, [Amgen](#), [Teknova](#), [LA BioSpace](#), and [Magnify at CNSI](#), and to our event sponsors [Wilson Sonsini](#) and the [Consulate General of Finland in Los Angeles](#), and all participating organizations for helping make BTC 2026 possible.



Back Row: Amir Naiberg, UCLA TDG Front Row: Paul Weiss, UCLA, Sofia Ramos and Brija Johnson, UCLA Ventures, Cody Peterson, Orrick, Rajul Jain, Vida Ventures, Dino Di Carlo, UCLA, Chris Bostick, OCV Partners

LABEST 2026 Primer Founders and Funders Mixer

UCLA Ventures a division of UCLA TDG and CNSI was proud to host the LABEST Primer: Founders & Funders Mixer on Tuesday, May 19th at the [California NanoSystems Institute at UCLA](#) convening investors, founders, academic innovators, and ecosystem leaders ahead of [UCLA Technology Development Group's](#) LABEST MedTech & Bioscience Conferences.

The gathering featured an impactful conversation on 'Designing Your Fundraise Within the LA Ecosystem' with [Rajul Jain](#) of [Vida Ventures, LLC](#), [Chris Bostick](#) of [OCV Partners](#), distinguished UCLA faculty innovators [Dino Di Carlo](#) and [Paul Weiss](#), and moderator [Cody Peterson](#) of [Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP](#). Together, the panel explored the evolving Los Angeles investment landscape, what institutional investors are

really looking for, and how founders can effectively engage and navigate the region's growing innovation ecosystem.

A special thank you to our lead sponsor, [Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP](#), for their partnership and support of innovation and entrepreneurship across UCLA. In addition, we are truly grateful to our contributing sponsor [Zymo Research Corp](#) for helping make this evening possible.

We'd like to recognize our cross-campus collaborators at the [California NanoSystems Institute at UCLA](#) for partnering with us to host the event and for their continued leadership in advancing translational research and scientific innovation at UCLA.



Photos [Makala Lee](#)

At UCLA Ventures, we believe building a thriving founder ecosystem requires long-term investment in people, community, and innovation. If this mission resonates with you and you feel inspired to support the entrepreneurial community, we invite you to consider making a gift to UCLA Ventures. Contributions at any level go a long way in helping us expand access, strengthen programming, and support emerging founders across the UCLA ecosystem. To support UCLA Ventures, please visit us [here](#).

To stay connected and hear about future events, opportunities, and founder programming, sign up for our UCLA Ventures newsletter [here](#).

Together, we can continue broadening access, accelerating innovation, and strengthening the future of the LA startup ecosystem.

At UCLA Ventures, we believe building a thriving founder ecosystem requires long-term investment in people, community, and innovation.



Amir Naiberg, AVC, CEO & President, UCLA TDG

LABEST MedTech Conference

The LABEST MedTech Partnering Conference

took place on Wednesday, May 20th at the Luskin Conference Center. The day started with an exclusive pre-conference breakfast for the early-stage medtech and therapeutics investment community with over 50 attendees getting an early start on the day. Dan Gober, Executive Director, Biocom Los Angeles presented a preview of Biocom's upcoming "State of the Economy" report to set the stage for the investors participating in the day's events.

The official opening of LABEST MedTech featured Amir Naiberg, AVC, CEO and President of UCLA Technology Development Group, premiering our first AI generated explainer video created by Nura Studios that outlined the function and impact of technology transfer across the UCLA, greater Los Angeles, and regional ecosystem. This was followed by a video highlighting some recent success stories from the UCLA TDG MedTech and Physical Sciences portfolio over the last year.

Guillermo Sapiro, Augustine Family Professor in Electrical and Computer Engineering, Princeton and Distinguished Engineer, Apple Inc., provided the keynote address. His talk "Beyond the Clinic: Empowering Personalized Medicine through Wearables and Custom Apps" provided insights

into collecting and using personal information for early prediction of certain conditions. He used his work in Autism as an example where most children are diagnosed after the age of 5. Professor Sapiro demonstrated how his team can use technology coupled with behavioral observations to predict the condition at ages as early as 18 months which would enable interventional care much earlier in the child's life.

Professor Sapiro also presented ideas on how wearable devices can use the information they currently gather (such as cardiovascular, sleep, oxygen, temperature, etc.) and discern more complex information about the user, like your epigenetic age. This information could provide insights into the possibility of chronic diseases. He used the example of an Apple Watch that can send "nudges" like its standing notification to counter the known risks of sitting for prolonged periods of time.

This was the first year that LABEST MedTech partnered with the Terasaki Institute. The organization helped program four panels and lectures focused on advancements in organ and tissue repair. The talks featured speakers from the National Cancer Institute, Stanford, UCLA, Terasaki, MD Anderson, and Cedars-Sinai. The Terasaki Institute track incorporated a focus on emerging research and innovation that complemented the translational aspect the MedTech Partnering

Conference has historically promoted, further bridging the continuum of innovation and translation.

UCLA TDG programmed panels to address emerging and compelling trends in the MedTech space. As a focus on the business aspect there was a panel discussion on issues startup CEOs are facing in the current economy as well as a panel from a group of venture capitalists discussing interest areas and concerns in the marketplace. The digital health and artificial intelligence panel focused on the hot topic of patient data and privacy from the industry perspective, as well as discussing how different verticals are looking to leverage AI innovations within their organizations. This panel was moderated by Debbie Lin, Venture Partner, TRX Capital with Katherine Andriole, Associate Dean for Health AI Strategy and Innovation DGSOM at UCLA, David Reese, EVP and Chief Technology Officer, Amgen, Aaron Severs, Chief Product Officer, Noom, and Joshua Streit, AVP Digital Transformation, Aidoc. Additionally, J&J's David Broeker moderated a panel on the surgical suite of the future where UCLA clinicians and nurses discussed proposed innovations in the operatory workflow and its benefit to patients.

The day ended with a networking cocktail hour with more than 300 in attendance who took the opportunity to connect and reconnect as they all work to help move compelling opportunities forward within this ecosystem.



Photos Heromade





UCLA Technology Development Group Team

LABEST Bioscience Conference

The LABEST 2026 Bioscience Conference on Thursday, May 21st at the UCLA Luskin Conference Center was an outstanding event. The official morning session started with greetings from emcee, Judy Fortin, Chief of Communications, UCLA Health and a Welcome by Dr. Steven Dubinett, Dean, DGSOM at UCLA. Amir Naiberg, AVC, CEO and President of UCLA Technology Development Group, showed the organization's first AI generated explainer video created by Nura Studios to the bioscience audience. He also presented TDG's success metrics over the past five years. This was followed by a video of UCLA bioscience startups achievements over the past year.

UCLA Chancellor Julio Frenk gave opening remarks emphasizing the importance of academic research and how many of these discoveries should be advanced into the marketplace for the benefit of society.

Daniel Skovronsky, President, Lilly Research Laboratories and Chief Scientific & Product Officer, Lilly, presented his keynote address "The Oldest, New Company in Pharma". Skovronsky's inspiring talk took the audience inside the organization and to show how Lilly moved from one of the lowest

ranked revenue pharmaceutical companies in 2021 to #1 in 2025. Built on four beliefs, Lilly combines speed, persistence, platforms and ecosystem to differentiate itself from competitors.

Lilly was the first to develop a vaccine for polio, and continued the long game, finding treatments for depression with Prozac and engineered human insulin - Humulin. During COVID, Lilly provided the first authorized antibody therapy with speed and efficiency - a testament to its investment on how the company develops drugs.

The morning of LABEST Bioscience was rounded out with an Emerging Trends talk led by Arie Beldegrun, CEO, Bellco Capital and expert panels on microbiome and rare diseases.

Breakout sessions took place in the afternoon with LA Innovation Ecosystem, LA as a Global Innovation hub, talks on obesity and immuno metabolism. Over a dozen teams pitched during the First Look SoCal session and the Learning Lounge featured legal experts who provided tutorials on various IP, licensing and AI topics.



Photos Heromade

New for LABEST 2026 was the Creativity Commons that featured professors from "North Campus" that is the location for the schools of arts, film, theater, public affairs, music, architecture, design, English and humanities. Edith de Guzman, specialist at UCLA Luskin Center of Innovation, Jeff Burke, Associate dean, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television and Michael Beckerman, dean, Herb Alpert School of Music provided insight between the connection of art and science. In addition, Gigi Johnson, president of Rethink Next & Marmel Studio and Nir Hindie, founder of Business Artistry presented the use of AI in the arts and the importance of integrating creativity into your work process respectively.

Panels continued in the main ballroom with a packed house for each session including Cellular Cancer Therapies, Journey from Idea to Enterprise, and BioSuccess in LA. The late afternoon session The Investor Playbook for Academic Startups led by Wendy Young, Google Ventures ended up as standing room only.

The closing reception was held on the Luskin outdoor terrace where speakers, sponsors, attendees, researchers, industry, investors and staff all had the opportunity to network and celebrate the conclusion of a successful LABEST week.



View select LABEST 2026 Panels and Talks from MedTech and Bioscience on the [UCLA TDG YouTube Channel](#)

Make sure to subscribe while you're there!





Front Row L: PJ Ward, UCLA TDG and Michael Yamin, Pearl Cohen and all the Poster Contest Winners

Photo Heromade

LABEST 2026 Pearl Cohen Scientific Poster Contest Winners

Cancer - 1st Place

Jennifer Salinas, David Nathanson Lab, Molecular and Medical Pharmacology, UCLA
Poster title: Lipid Remodeling Primes OLIG2 Driven Glioma for Palmitoptosis – A Novel Cell Death Pathway

Cancer - 2nd Place

Qiuyang Zhang, Sheng Li Lab, Cancer Biology and Genomics, USC
Poster title: Tet2 deficiency mitigates epigenetic aging in clonal hematopoiesis

Cancer - 3rd Place

Shiqin Laura Liu, Tanya Stoyanova Lab, Molecular and Medical Pharmacology, UCLA
Poster title: Developing New UCHL-1 Targeted Therapies for Neuroendocrine Carcinomas, Neuroendocrine Tumors, and Neuroblastoma

Cancer - 4th Place

Amanda Duplan, John Williams Lab, Cancer Biology and Molecular Medicine, City of Hope
Poster title: Preclinical Development of a Potent and Specific Anti-CD38 ADC for R/R Multiple Myeloma

Cardiovascular & Metabolism - 1st Place

Lynn Yang, Debora Sobreira Lab, Biological Chemistry, UCLA
Poster title: Modulating metabolic genes: the role of upstream Open Reading Frames

Cardiovascular & Metabolism - 2nd Place

Ross Steinberg, Orian Shirihi Lab, Dept of Medicine, Endocrinology, UCLA
Poster title: Targeting Peridroplet Mitochondria Reduces Adiposity in Aged Female Exercised Mice

Immunity, Inflammation, Infection and Transplantation (I3T) - 1st Place

Zhiyuan Mao, Owen Witte/John K. Lee Lab, Microbiology and Molecular Genetics (MIMG), UCLA
Poster title: UCLA Tuning TCR immunotherapy targeting prostatic acid phosphatase via catch bond modifications for advanced prostate cancer

Immunity, Inflammation, Infection and Transplantation (I3T) - 2nd Place

Adil Bhat, Elaine Reed Lab, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, UCLA
Poster title: Ischemia-Reperfusion Injury Programs a Cytokine-Monocyte Axis that Predicts Graft Fate and Drives Alloimmunity in Liver

Immunity, Inflammation, Infection and Transplantation (I3T) – 3rd Place

Anthony Azzun, Gay Crooks Lab, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, UCLA
Poster title: Engineering FOXP3 Expression in Pluripotent Stem Cells Enables Renewable Treg Therapies for Autoimmune Disease

Neuroscience - 1st Place

Yuanyuan Wei, Chao Peng Lab, Neurology, UCLA
Poster title: Artificial Intelligence-Guided Drug Discovery for Alzheimer’s Disease

Neuroscience – 2nd Place

Syedshahabadin Bidoki, Gal Bitan Lab, Neurology, UCLA
Poster title: Longitudinal Biomarker Analysis in Neuronal EVs and Plasma Following GHF-201 Treatment in Adult Polyglucosan Body

Regenerative Medicine - 1st Place

Amman Klair, Mingxia Gu Lab, Anesthesiology and Preoperative Medicine, UCLA
Poster title: Next-Generation Organoids with Vascular Features for Disease Modeling and Therapeutic Development

Regenerative Medicine – 2nd Place

Di Wu, Thomas Rando Lab, Neurology, UCLA
Poster title: Bioinstructive Scaffold Enables Stem Cell Engraftment and Functional Muscle Regeneration After Volumetric Muscle Loss

Startups - 1st Place

Anne Andrews, Chemistry & Biochemistry, Bioengineering, and Psychiatry, Femsync, UCLA
Poster title: Femsync: A Women’s Healthcare Startup

Research was front and center during LABEST 2026 with 100+ entries for Pearl Cohen Scientific Poster contest. There were 7 categories including Cancer, Cardiovascular & Metabolism, I3T, Neuroscience, Regenerative Medicine, Startups and MedTech. Congratulations to all the winners and participants.

Startups – 2nd Place

Hyunyoung (Emily) Kim, Meteor Biotech, Amos Lee Lab, Magnify Incubator, UCLA
Poster title: A new bridge between molecular and spatial biology: SLACS

MedTech - 1st Place

Simon Esteve, Bryan Burt Lab, Surgery, UCLA
Poster title: Multicenter validation of the MasSpec Pen platform for intraoperative diagnosis of non-small cell lung cancer

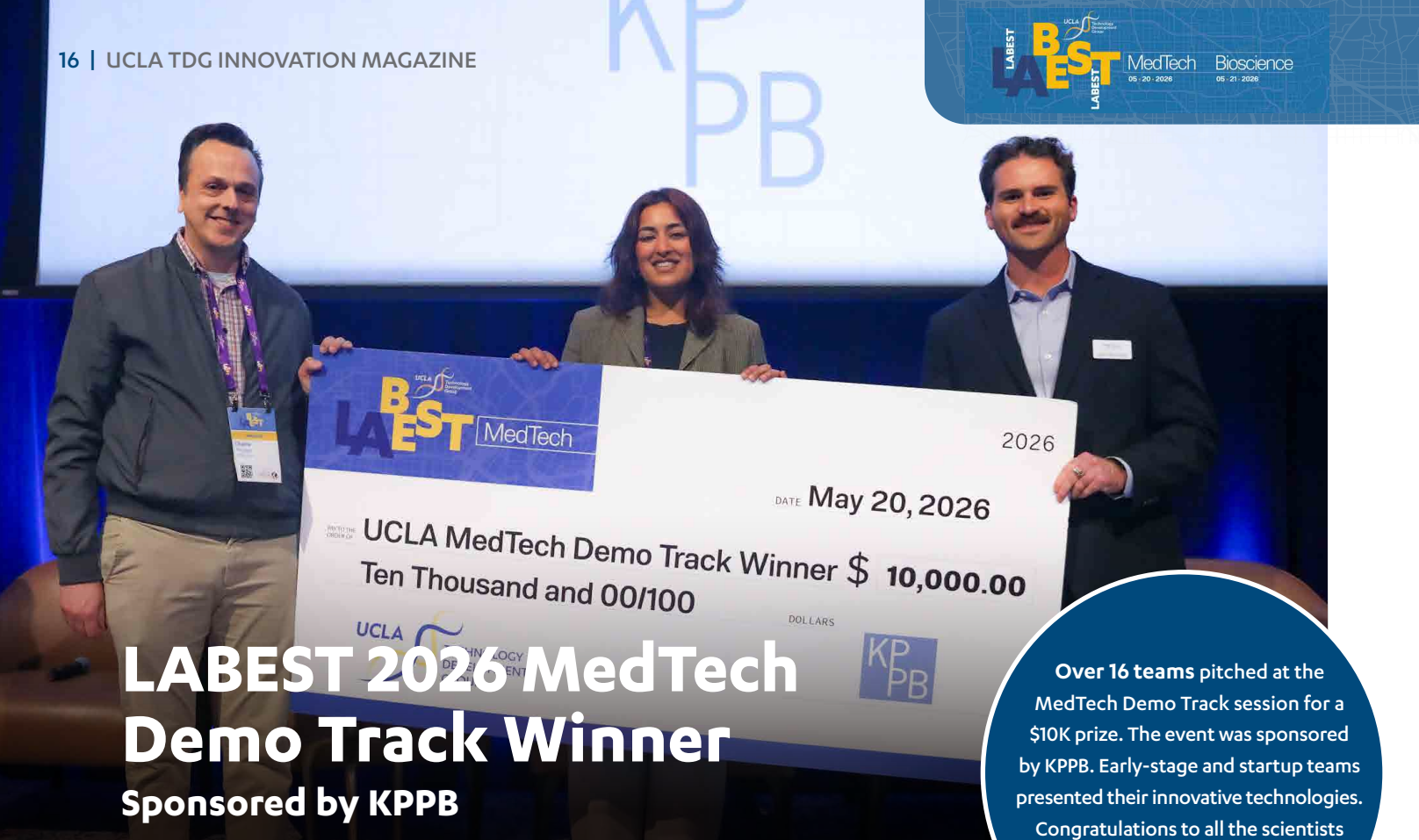
MedTech – 2nd Place (Tie)

Hong Han, Wei Gao Lab, Medical Engineering, CalTech
Poster title: Imaging-Guided Bioresorbable Acoustic Microrobots for Precision Therapy

MedTech – 2nd Place (Tie)

Canran Wang, Wei Gao Lab, Medical Engineering, CalTech
Poster title: A Smart Bandage for Chronic Wound Sampling, Monitoring, and Management

[VIEW DIGITAL POSTER GALLERY](#)



Charlie Thomas, KPPB, Winner Saumya Jain, Arogya Biotechnologies and David Riccardo, UCLA TDG

Arogya Biotechnologies Wins MedTech Conference Demo Track

Arogya Biotechnologies was named the winner of the MedTech Conference Demo Track, earning the \$10,000 prize sponsored by KPPB for its presentation, HemoSeal: Precision at the Point of Injury. The product was developed in the lab of principal investigator [Nasim Annabi, PhD](#), Associate Professor of Chemical Engineering, UCLA Samueli School of Engineering. Presented by Saumya Jain of UCLA, HemoSeal stood out among the largest Demo Track cohort to date, featuring 16 startups from California, Texas, and Washington.

Arogya Biotechnologies is developing HemoSeal, an injectable, biodegradable hydrogel designed to rapidly seal bleeding tissue and protect wounds

in traumatic internal injuries. Engineered for critical moments, HemoSeal forms a strong, elastic, antibacterial barrier that conforms to 2 complex, non-compressible organs to help control hemorrhage and reduce infection risk.

Participants were evaluated by judges Charlie Thomas, Eva Wang, and Keith Winter across three criteria: technology and innovation, business case and market need, and overall "wow factor." With extensive preclinical validation and a clear mission of delivering "precision at the point of injury," Arogya Biotechnologies demonstrated the promise of UCLA-affiliated innovation advancing toward real-world patient impact.

UCLA TDG Photo: Heromade

Congratulations to our Participating Demo Track Teams

GIANT BioSystems, Panacea Medical, JPTechnologies, docuCODER, FluxWear, Maguro Surgical, Pink Panther Surgical, Raiz Diagnostics, OnVagus, Collabiora, MelodiaSync, Silq Technologies, Thermeutics, BB Medical Surgical, and Popsy



Image: UCLA TDG Video

UCLA Technology Development Group Explainer Video Debuts at LABEST 2026

Created by Nura Studios - an AI Animation Platform

UCLA Technology Development Group (TDG) debuted its [first explainer video](#) at LABEST 2026. The video was created by Nura Studios - a revolutionary AI animation platform built by artists, engineers, and producers, so any storyteller can develop and share high-fidelity episodic content. The explainer video provides a top-level understanding of how TDG serves the university and the positive benefits the department generates for the UCLA research community.

UCLA TDG encourages you to contact us to find out more about how we can serve you. We have a dynamic team that is here to assist and continue to support the bridge between academic research and commercialization.

Email: info@tdg.ucla.edu or
Call: (310) 794-0558

If you are part of: UCLA TDG can help you:

UCLA Community	Learn about disclosures, patents, licensing, available funding, entrepreneurship, and startup development
Non-Profit Organization, Higher Education	Develop partnerships for workforce development, accelerators, lab space, webinars, seminars, conferences and more
Investor, Venture Capital, Family Foundations	Connect your company to research, projects and startups that need support
Commercial Company	Match your company to licensing and sponsored research opportunities



AI Generated Image

UCLA Technology Development Group Success Videos Premiere at LABEST 2026

In addition to UCLA TDG’s explainer video, the organization premiered its [success videos](#) highlighting companies that have achieved significant milestones.

For the physical science and medtech success video, featured companies include:

Horizon Surgical Systems successfully conducted a first of its kind robotic eye surgery. The company was formed in collaboration between former UCLA Stein Eye Institute professor Jean-Pierre Hubschman who is now CEO and Jacob Rosen a current professor at UCLA Samueli School of Engineering. The company has raised \$47 million in funding with the goal to be in the market soon.

Avenda Health started at UCLA in 2017 and uses A.I. to provide tailored insights that help doctors deliver custom care to the patient. Avenda Health is backed by \$28 million in funding and was co-founded by CEO Shyam Natarajan a UCLA professor in Bioengineering.

The Institute for Carbon Management (ICM) is led by PI Gurav Sant professor at UCLA Samueli School of Engineering with a goal to build and invest in breakthrough climate tech. One of ICM’s companies is CarbonBuilt that transforms carbon emissions into concrete products and reduces greenhouse gas. ICM’s multiple enterprises have raised combined funds of \$26 million.

Founded at UCLA by Aydin Babakhani, Professor at UCLA Samueli School of Engineering, Nervonik focuses on peripheral nerve stimulation technology that targets chronic pain. The company recently announced \$52.3 million in Series B funding.

Sepsis is the body’s extreme uncontrollable response to an existing infection. The Cytovale medical device is currently in the market and can run an early detection test that provides results in 8 minutes. The company has raised \$228 million and was founded by Dino Di Carlo, professor at UCLA Samueli School of Engineering.



Image: Nervonik

The featured companies in the bioscience success video are:

TORL Biotherapeutics has entered clinical trials with its revolutionary technology. The company uses antibody-based therapies to kill cancer cells. TORL was founded by PI and serial entrepreneur, Dennis Slamon, chief of Hematology-Oncology at UCLA. The company has raised \$450 million.

Octant Bio was co-founded by Sri Kosuri, associate professor, UCLA Chemistry and Biology. The company uses synthetic biology to improve health and treat diseases. With a combination of generative AI, generative biology and generative chemistry, the Octant Navigator builds drugs against cellular mechanisms. The company has raised \$115 million in total and continues to grow.

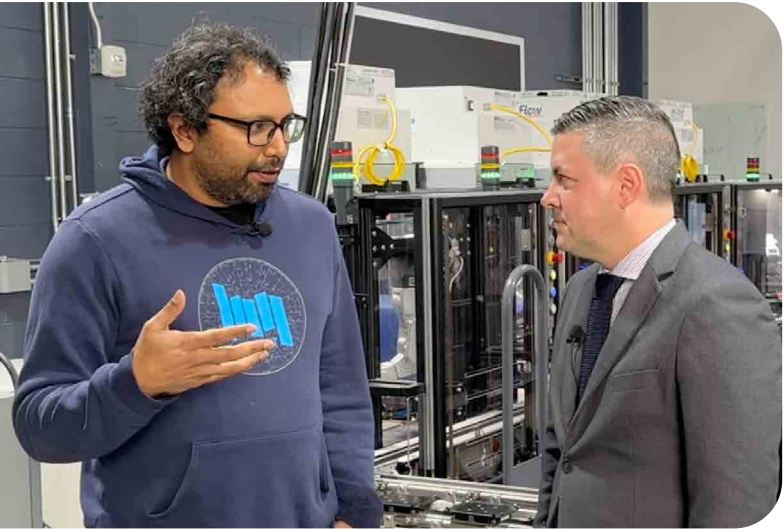


Photo (L) Sri Kosuri, co-founder, Octant Bio

Hair loss is a worldwide condition. Pelage Pharmaceuticals has developed regenerative medicines by reactivating dormant stem cells in hair follicles. The company is led by President & Co-Founder, William Lowry who is also a professor at UCLA’s Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology. Pelage has secured \$120 million in Series B funding and was recently named one of Time’s Best Inventions of 2025.

CAR T therapy has been in development for four decades and Lyell has a Phase 3 product that has proven exceptional results in its clinical trials. There has been an 80% + response rate on its bispecific CAR T cancer therapy based on research from UCLA professors Yvonne Chen and Antoni Ribas. The company has a market cap of \$449 million.

Both videos are capped off with startups that have reached funding milestones and are currently thriving in the marketplace.



Image: UCLA TDG Success Video

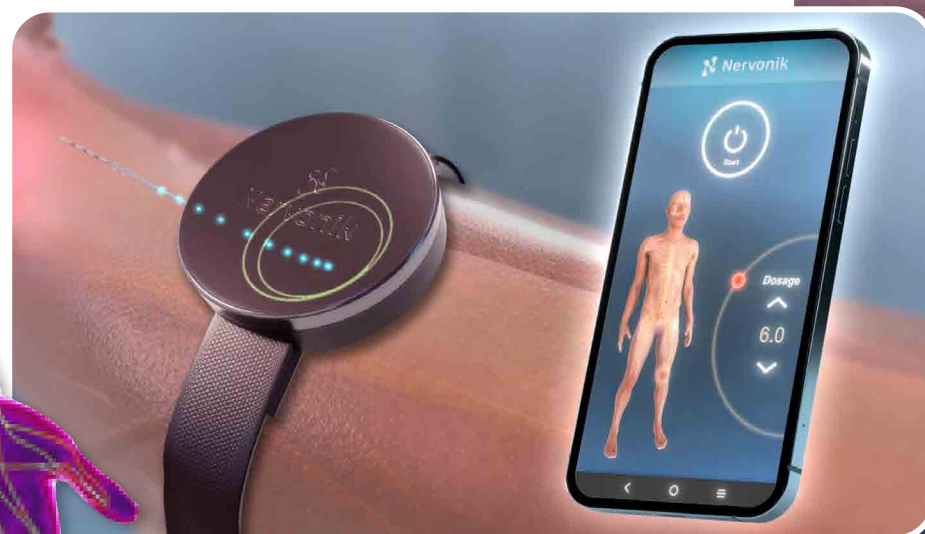
Hair loss is a worldwide condition. Pelage Pharmaceuticals has developed regenerative medicines by reactivating dormant stem cells in hair follicles. The company is led by President & Co-Founder, William Lowry who is also a professor at UCLA’s Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology. Pelage has secured \$120 million in Series B funding and was recently named one of Time’s Best Inventions of 2025.

NERVONIK

Nervonik Announces \$52.5 Million in Series B Financing to Advance Peripheral Nerve Stimulation Therapy

Nervonik, Inc., a clinical-stage medical device company developing next-generation peripheral nerve stimulation (PNS) technologies, today announced the closing of an oversubscribed \$52.5 million Series B financing. The round was led by Amzak Health, with participation from Elevage Medical Technologies, U.S. Venture Partners (USVP), Lumira Ventures, Foothill Ventures, and Shangbay Capital.

The proceeds from the financing will support the continued development and commercialization of Nervonik's PNS system, including further development of its proprietary sensing capabilities.



Images nervonic.com

"Nervonik is building a fundamentally differentiated neuromodulation platform that integrates stimulation with advanced sensing to deliver more precise and personalized therapy," said Aydin Babakhani, CEO and Founder of Nervonik. "This financing enables us to accelerate our clinical programs, prepare for commercialization, and bring a truly intelligent, next-generation therapy to the patients who need it most."

The company's technology incorporates real-time physiological feedback to enhance therapy personalization and efficacy. Early data demonstrate successful recording of evoked compound action potentials (ECAPs) and other biomarkers using implantable leads, positioning Nervonik at the forefront of next-generation bioelectronic medicine.

"Peripheral nerve stimulation is at an inflection point, with expanding clinical evidence and growing adoption in the treatment of chronic pain," said

Anthony Natale, MD, Partner at Amzak Health. "Aydin and the Nervonik team have developed a highly differentiated technology platform that we believe has the potential to meaningfully improve the patient experience, and they are exceptionally well-positioned to capitalize on this opportunity. We are excited to lead this financing and to support the company through its next phase of growth."

About Nervonik

Nervonik, Inc. is a medical device company focused on developing neuromodulation technologies. The company's platform integrates stimulation and sensing to enable precision therapies for chronic pain and other neurological conditions. Nervonik's founder and CEO is Aydin Babakhani, a professor at UCLA's Samueli School of Engineering and previously a two-time entrepreneur. Nervonik is headquartered in Los Angeles, California.

Mind to Market



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tdg.ucla.edu



Elizabeth Bromley

Research and Industry Alliances Update

California Department of Health Care Services partners with Health Management Associates, Inc to support Centers of Excellence at UCLA with \$31 Million

California Department of Health Care Services DHCS partners with Health Management Associates, Inc (HMA) as the Center of Excellence (COE) Administrative Entity to oversee, coordinate and streamline activities.

The initial research funding in year one is \$8.9M with a total estimated funding of \$31M through 2029.

Led by Professor Elizabeth Bromley, director of UCLA-DMH Public Mental Health Partnership, the goal is to translate evidence-based practices into tangible improvements in behavioral health care delivery across California clinics.

Research and Industry Alliances Update



Photo elpa21.org

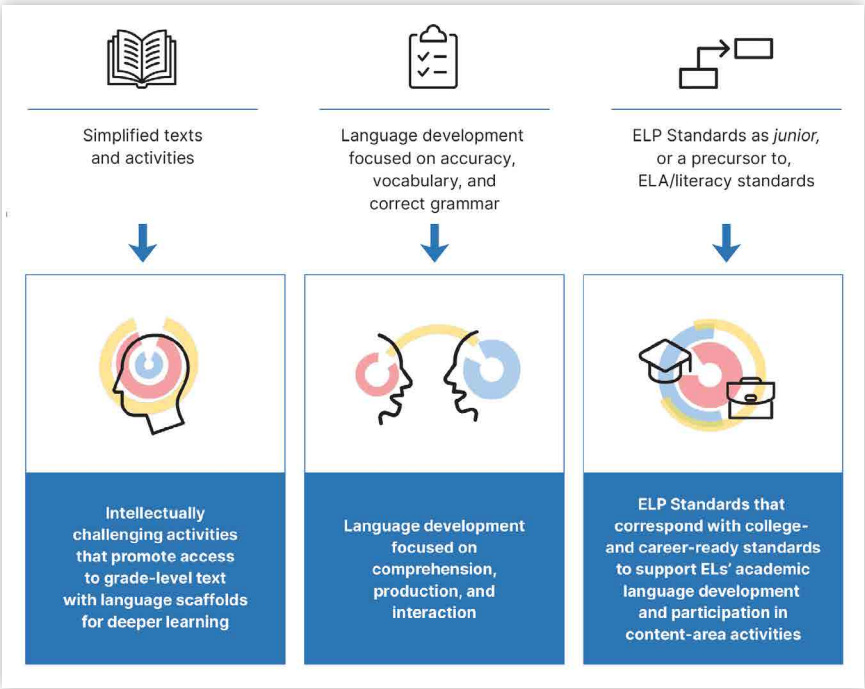
ELPA21 and CRESST Cambium Partnership

The population of English learners (ELs) in public schools is more than 5.3 million students (Fall 2021, [Migration Policy Institute](#)). One of the most critical responsibilities of state education agencies is accurate annual assessment of English learners so they can receive equitable access to a high-quality education. Meeting this requirement with precision, empathy, and efficiency is a monumental task. This is ELPA21’s (English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century) expertise, providing an assessment system solution that has transformed how 11 states measure and work toward English proficiency for their ELs. ELPA21 is housed at CRESST within UCLA’s School of Education and Information Studies.

ELPA21 – with its member states – created an online assessment system designed to fulfill federal accountability requirements while prioritizing the needs of students and educators in the classroom. The assessments address the critical pain points of state departments of education by offering student-

centered assessments to English learners and English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Beyond valid, reliable, and fast score reporting, the ELPA21 system delivers actionable instructional guidance and professional learning directly to educators, bridging the gap between standardized testing and daily classroom teaching. This full system minimizes administrative burdens for schools, school districts, and states.

At the core of ELPA21’s success is its proprietary intellectual property. The organization utilizes highly specialized assessment items, advanced scoring models, and a rigorous technical methodology that represents years of state and educator expertise and experience combined with research and psychometrics. The operationalization and widespread deployment of this proprietary IP are made possible through a powerful, long-standing partnership with Cambium Assessment, Inc. (CAI). In this symbiotic relationship, ELPA21 provides the



ELP Standards chart

Image elpa21.org

core intellectual property, psychometric expertise, and educational thought leadership required to design state-level assessments; CAI delivers the enterprise-grade software infrastructure, test security for the online assessment platform, and the infrastructure to provide the assessments across thousands of schools. This clear division of labor allows both organizations to maximize their unique strengths, ensuring that educational theory and practice are backed by expert technological execution.

In addition, ELPA21 and CAI recently formalized a strategic partnership model designed to secure competitive state department of education assessment contracts. These high-stakes contracts are typically multi-year, multi-million dollar agreements spanning five to seven years. Navigating the complex state procurement process requires deep bureaucratic expertise and immense operational resources. By leveraging CAI’s proposal development processes and dedicated services, the two organizations write comprehensive, winning joint proposals. ELPA21 infuses these proposals with unmatched academic credibility and specialized EL expertise, while CAI provides the logistical, financial, and technological assurances necessary to win state assessment contracts.

This collaborative model has yielded extraordinary success. Utilizing this novel proposal framework, ELPA21 recently secured major contracts in three new states: Arizona, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Winning these competitive bids has triggered a massive period of growth

for ELPA21, increasing the number of English learners assessed by 70% and adding \$2.1M in annual revenue.

While this expansion directly benefits English learners and their educators in ELPA21 member states across the country, it also serves a broader institutional purpose by advancing the core mission of UCLA. ELPA21’s successful partnership with CAI directly support Goals 2, 4, and 5 of UCLA’s Strategic Plan, “Creating the Future: One UCLA.” The initiative advances Goal 2 (Expand our reach as a global university) by broadening international and regional influence, addressing global multilingual education challenges, and strengthening networks with nationwide educational partners. The partnership also supports Goal 4 (Elevate how we teach) by providing instructional materials, products, and professional learning to educators of ELs. Finally, the collaboration fulfills Goal 5 (Become a more effective institution) by leveraging the partnership and utilizing CAI’s established administrative infrastructure to optimize operations, reduce bureaucratic duplication, and modernize procurement processes.



Photo elpa21.org

UCLA TDG News



A Tribute to UCLA Ventures Board Member

Michael Howse

For more than a decade, Michael Howse has helped shape the vision, growth, and impact of UCLA Ventures. As an Executive Board Member, he was instrumental in developing many of the organization's signature programs, including the cashless equity pledge model, the UCLA Fellows Program, investment and business plan competitions, and Entrepreneur of the Year initiatives. His commitment extended far beyond service on the board. Through his own equity pledge from Big Foot Networks, Michael demonstrated the transformative potential of giving back through entrepreneurship, generating returns that continue to support UCLA Ventures and create opportunities for future innovators. His leadership, generosity, and belief in the UCLA entrepreneurial community have left an enduring mark on the university and the countless students, founders, and alumni who have benefited from his vision.

As Michael concludes his board service, we celebrate not only his many contributions, but the lasting legacy he leaves behind. UCLA Ventures and the UCLA Technology Development Group are deeply grateful for his dedication, stewardship, and unwavering support of innovation and entrepreneurship at UCLA.

Staff Announcements

Congratulations to Lindsey Orlando on a promotion to RIA Associate. Welcome back to Debolina Kowshik and Jeff Genota who both return to UCLA TDG.



Debolina Kowshik
Assistant Director of Contracts



Jeff Genota
Senior Associate, Research &
Industry Alliances/Public Mental
Health Partnership



Lindsey Orlando
RIA Associate

UCLA TDG News

Announcing
TDG Board Observer



Richard Leib

Richard Leib is president and CEO of Dunleer Strategies, a San Diego-based consulting firm that works with emerging companies to develop strategies to help them meet short and long-term business goals. Leib served on the UC Board of Regents from 2018–2026 and as board chair from 2022. Before that, he spent 15 years as executive vice president and general counsel for Liquid Environmental Solutions, a company he co-founded and helped grow into the leading non-hazardous liquid waste recycling company in the U.S. The company, which ultimately employed 700 people, was sold to a private equity firm in 2017.

Prior to his work with Liquid Environmental Solutions, Mr. Leib served as executive vice president and general counsel of U.S. Public Technologies and co-founded the investment management group at Stone and Youngberg, California's leading municipal debt underwriter.

Mr. Leib started his career working on the staff of state Senators Gary Hart and Herschel Rosenthal and he also worked for Congressmen Henry Waxman and Mel Levine.

He has been on the Solana Beach School Board for ten years and served as Board President for two years. He previously served on the Community College Board of Governors from 1999-2005 and served as President of the Board from 2001-2003, as an appointee of Governor Gray Davis. He currently serves on the Board of the Steinberg Institute, a Sacramento based organization that seeks to raise the profile and increase the effectiveness of mental health policy-making in California. He also serves on the Board of Directors for the North Coast Repertory Theatre.

Mr. Leib's education includes a J.D. from the Loyola University School of Law, an M.A. from Claremont Graduate School, a Fellowship with the Coro Foundation, and a B.A. from UC Santa Barbara.

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UCLA TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT GROUP (TDG) promotes UCLA innovation, research, education and entrepreneurship to benefit society. Working with UCLA TDG helps facilitate the translation of UCLA discoveries into new products and services that create economic value to support UCLA's scholarly and educational missions. The UCLA TDG office manages a large portfolio of technologies and license agreements and has a rich history of startup company formation.

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