



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (July 27)

Cal-Bridge Program Awarded \$4 million by State to Diversify STEM at Public Universities

One-of-a-kind program uses funds to recruit and support underrepresented students helping them to be successful in the STEM workforce including faculty positions

POMONA, Calif. – The Cal-Bridge program has been awarded \$4 million in the 2023-2024 California state budget. The funds will be used to help diversify science, technology, engineering and mathematics in the workforce including academia by providing high-potential, historically underrepresented groups with scholarships, mentoring and development opportunities including workshops and summer research experiences.

“I am thankful to the forward-looking leadership who continue to support this one-of-a-kind program that is helping STEM reach its full potential through diversification,” said Cal-Bridge Executive Director Alexander Rudolph, professor of physics and astronomy at Cal Poly Pomona. “Cal-Bridge represents a comprehensive approach by supporting diverse talent throughout the entire pathway from undergraduate STEM through their doctorate and into the workforce.”

The program is a unique statewide partnership between nine University of California (UC), 23 California State University (CSU), and 116 California public community colleges. Scholars are recruited from CSU and community college campuses across the state, with the help of local faculty and/or staff liaisons at each campus. Community college students transfer to a participating CSU to join the program. It is the only program of its kind in the country that provides students critical financial aid, mentoring, and professional development assistance throughout their entire experience. Since its founding in 2014, Cal-Bridge has supported more than 300 underrepresented scholars including primarily people of color, women, LGBTQ+ and first-generation college students from recruitment, through undergraduate and graduate studies into the workforce including faculty positions in California public universities.

“Cal-Bridge is a transformational program that creates a pathway for its scholars to achieve an advanced degree while unlocking opportunities to engage with seasoned professionals and embark on fruitful careers in the STEM field. I am proud to support funding for Cal-Bridge, and eagerly anticipate seeing its success for our underserved Californians. By dismantling barriers and fostering inclusivity, we can equip the next generation with the tools and resources needed to thrive in our great state,” said State Senator John Laird, chair of the Senate Budget Subcommittee on Education and an early proponent of the funding.

More than 70 percent of Cal-Bridge scholars who applied to PhD programs were directly admitted from their undergraduate program, a statistic unmatched nationally. Over 100 Cal-Bridge scholars are currently enrolled in PhD programs nationwide, with 36 enrolled in the UC system. Two Cal-Bridge scholars recently accepted tenure-track faculty positions, one at a CSU and one at community college, demonstrating the potential of the program to diversify the California public university professoriate. Both start their positions this fall.

“I enthusiastically support ways that increase opportunities to succeed. Cal-Bridge has been instrumental in opening doors for underrepresented students in science and technology. Additional funding in the latest state budget for this program ensures diversity increases among Californians who are pursuing advanced degrees in these fields,” said Assembly Budget Chair Phil Ting (D-San Francisco).

Cal-Bridge scholars have diverse backgrounds. Almost 70 percent are persons of color, 43% are women or non-binary, 19% are LGBTQ, 19% are disabled and 62% are first-generation college students. This fall, a record 67



new scholars were accepted to join the tenth cohort, including 38 physics and astronomy scholars, 19 computer science scholars and 10 math scholars.

“The role of Cal-Bridge in bringing underrepresented students to STEM fields is essential not only to closing the racial gap at our UC and CSU campuses, but also to help secure needed diversity in the growing role of STEM in every aspect of our lives. As chair of the Senate's budget committee, I was proud to support funding again this year for Cal-Bridge,” said state Senator Nancy Skinner. “This year's state funding will enable Cal-Bridge to continue to attract underrepresented students to STEM fields, while also inspiring students of color to pursue academic careers in such fields as physics, computer science, and mathematics.”

To learn more about Cal-Bridge please visit calbridge.org.

About Cal-Bridge: The Cal-Bridge program has the mission to create a comprehensive, end-to-end pathway for undergraduates from the diverse student population of the CSU system through graduate school to a PhD, postdoctoral fellowship, and ultimately membership in the professoriate and science and technology workforce.

Students in the program are referred to as Cal-Bridge scholars. The program is a partnership between 9 University of California (UC), all 23 California State University (CSU), and the 116 community college campuses in California, thus fulfilling the promise of cross-segmental cooperation envisioned in the California Master Plan for Higher Education. Scholars are recruited from CSU and community college campuses across the state, with the help of local faculty and/or staff liaisons at each campus. Community college students transfer to a participating CSU to join the program.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Alexander L. Rudolph, PhD
Executive Director, Cal-Bridge
Professor of Physics and Astronomy, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
(909) 717-1851
alrudolph@cpp.edu