



2025-2026

# Jacobs Talent Initiative

## ANNUAL REPORT



# San Diego Has a Talent Problem. It's Not What You Think.

**San Diego produces some of the strongest STEM talent in the country.**

Every year, thousands of students graduate from our local universities - CSU San Marcos, Pt. Loma Nazarene University, San Diego State University, UC San Diego and USD - with the knowledge, skills and experiences to contribute to high-growth tech companies.

***And every year, too many of them leave.***

*Not because they want to.*

*Because they never meaningfully connect with local employers while they're here.*

**When students lack strong connections to local employers, it results in:**

- ✓ limited access to career opportunities
- ✓ weaker sense of belonging in the local ecosystem
- ✓ decreased likelihood of starting their careers locally

## Here's the Problem

San Diego risks losing emerging talent, slowing industry growth, and weakening its competitive position as a leading innovation hub



*Jacobs Talent Initiative is a unified effort across our tech community in San Diego to retain and grow our workforce developed in our local universities*

# Jacobs Talent Initiative

JTI connects college students with local tech companies **before** they graduate, positioning San Diego as their career destination.

## Mission

### KEEP TECH TALENT IN SAN DIEGO

JTI is a workforce and talent retention program that connects local university tech students with regional employers. It focuses on retaining STEM talent by access to industry leaders and awareness of regional opportunities through:

- Tech Tours
- Externships
- Internships
- Mentorships
- Networking
- Employment
- Career-Related Programs
- Tech San Diego Events
- Tech Community Engagement

## Vision

### INTEGRATE COLLEGE TALENT INTO SAN DIEGO COMPANIES

Through engagement, collaborations and programs, JTI strengthens the partnership between academia and industry. This ensures local companies have a growing pool of qualified tech talent to consider and recruit.



**Ultimately, the goal is to keep local university tech talent in the region by establishing San Diego as their career choice and integrating them into our regional workforce before and after college graduation.**



# Jacobs Talent Initiative

## San Diego's Powerful Talent Retention Engine



*More than 85% of students who participated in JTI programs report they are more likely to consider starting their careers in San Diego*

## Why?

***Because the program creates channels that empowers them to stay in the region:***

### ✓ Gain Real Access to Local Tech Companies

Through direct exposure to companies, internships, and professionals, students see direct career paths in San Diego that they may not have otherwise discovered.

### ✓ Build Trust & Credibility With Regional Employers

Industry experiences, mentorship, and interactions with tech executives provides students career confidence and also gives employers confidence in them.

### ✓ Understand How to Navigate the Local Job Market

Students learn what skills are in demand, how to position themselves, and how hiring actually works - making the transition from school to work feel achievable locally.

### ✓ Develop Relationships, Not Just Awareness

Meaningful connections with tech professionals turn San Diego from an abstract job market into a network they feel part of.

### ✓ See Themselves Belonging in the San Diego Innovation Community

Exposure to real people and companies helps students envision a future in San Diego, shifting their mindset from "I have to leave to succeed" to "I can build my career here."

# By the Numbers

## Measuring Momentum & Impact

- **1,227 students** engaged with regional tech company executives
- **113 employers** participated across events, panels and programs
- **5 universities** actively integrated into the Tech San Diego JTI ecosystem
- **21 campus department touchpoints** creating employer-student interactions
- **15 student organizations collaborations** to expand reach and diversity

***This is not passive exposure, these are direct interactions.***

These types of engagements with early talent create outcomes we need:

- ✓ **Reduces time-to-hire** for local tech companies
- ✓ **Expands access** to early talent beyond top-tier pipelines
- ✓ **Creates scalable, repeatedly** workforce systems for San Diego



# Employer Value

Companies that engage early are often best positioned to attract and retain top talent in San Diego.



## JTI gives employers:

- ✓ Early access to emerging talent before traditional recruiting cycles
- ✓ Direct visibility on campus without building internal university programs
- ✓ A level playing field for small and mid-sized companies competing with larger brands
- ✓ Stronger employer positioning with students who value real engagement over job postings

*For many companies, JTI creates a consistent pathway into the university ecosystem, making access to student talent more structured, transparent, and scalable.*

## JTI Students are Ready to Work

The **Ready to Work Program** has equipped over 150 STEM college students from across the local universities to successfully transition from campus to career; it's not through theory, but through direct engagement with industry for skill development.

At its core, the program creates meaningful connections between students and local employers, turning introductions into relationships and relationships into real opportunities.

The result is a stronger, more prepared talent pipeline - students who are not only career-ready, but ready to be hired!



# Uniquely San Diego

## Small & Mid-Size Companies:

Make up about 95% of the San Diego Region

Many small and mid-sized companies are not set up to hire early-career talent. Unlike large firms, these companies often lack campus recruiting teams, structured internship programs, or clear pathways to engage with universities.

**The result is a disconnect: strong local talent exists, but smaller employers are not positioned to access it.**

***JTI closes this gap by making employer engagement simple and practical.***

Through tech tours, networking events, and curated introductions, we remove the friction of university engagement.

- ✓ Participation allows companies to experience the value of early-career talent firsthand, often shifting perception from “too resource-intensive” to “competitive advantage.”
- ✓ Over time, this exposure helps companies build the confidence and internal capability to hire, even without formal recruiting infrastructure.

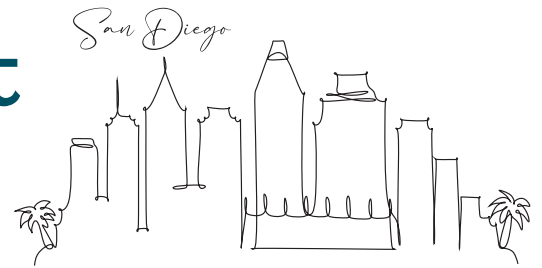
## The Outcome:

Stronger, more inclusive talent pipeline where both students and companies are better prepared to connect, compete and grow within the region



# Employer Engagement

The following demonstrate how JTI connects university students across the region with the tech leaders and companies driving San Diego's innovation ecosystem:



- **Aicadium** - Mock Interviews, Ready to Work Committee, CSTEM Speaker at CSUSM
- **Baker Tilly** - Executive Connect: Early Talent Networking Mixer
- **Brain Corp** - Industry Tech Tour, Engineering Community Hour at UCSD
- **Callaway Golf** - Industry Tech Tour with CSUSM
- **Clarity Design** - Women in STEM Empowerment Panel at UCSD
- **Cooley** - AI Learning Series: Building AI Outside the Lab
- **Creative Electron** - Executive Connect: Early Talent Networking Mixer
- **Cushman & Wakefield** - Executive Connect: Early Talent Networking Mixer
- **Cyber Center of Excellence** - Students at Cybersecurity Awards
- **ESET** - Executive Connect: Early Talent Networking Mixer
- **Freeberg Industrial Fabrication** - Ready to Work Industry Interactive
- **General Atomics**: Engineering Community Hour at UCSD
- **Indyme** - Meet the Boss, Startup & Small Companies Panel at USD
- **Infracore** - Executive Connect: Early Talent Networking Mixer
- **Insider One** - Executive Connect: Early Talent Networking Mixer
- **Lipman AI Group** - Executive Connect: Early Talent Networking Mixer
- **Nextivity** - Ready to Work Committee, Resume Boost, Mock Interviews
- **Northrop Grumman** - Engineering Community Hour at UCSD
- **Procopio** - Ready to Work Program
- **Qualcomm** - Latinas in STEAM Conference at SDSU
- **Raytheon** - Industry Tech Tour Prep Session at UCSD
- **SDG&E** - Latinas in STEAM Conference at SDSU
- **Solar Turbines** - Ready to Work Industry Interactive
- **Sony PlayStation** - Women in STEM Empowerment Panel at UCSD
- **Tandem Diabetes Care** - Tech Tour, Mock Interviews, Women in STEM & Recruiters Panels
- **Top Tech Awards San Diego** - Students at Top Tech Awards Celebration
- **Turtle Beach** - Executive Connect: Talent Networking Mixer, DataX Speaker at SDSU



# Driving Regional Impact

JTI is not just a talent initiative, it is an **economic development strategy** focused on retaining high-value STEM talent in the San Diego region.

## Every STEM Graduate Who Stays in San Diego

Contributes to the local economy through wages, spending and long-term career growth

*Supports the broader ecosystem including housing, small businesses and local services*

## Retaining Early Career Talent is a “Must Have”

Keeps San Diego as a leading, talent-powered tech hub with strong economic momentum

*Easier for companies to scale, attract investment and remain headquartered locally*

**Over time, this creates a multiplier effect:** more talent leads to stronger companies, which leads to more job creation, higher wages, and increased regional economic activity.

**JTI plays a critical role in this cycle** by ensuring that local graduates are not only prepared for careers, but connected to opportunities within the region before they graduate.

## The Result:

More resilient, self-sustaining innovation economy where talent retention directly translates into long-term economic growth



# University Partnerships

Working closely with the local universities is central to JTI's approach, embedding industry engagement for student outcomes. By working with university leadership, faculty, colleges and campus departments, JTI created consistent connections between students and local employers, aligning education with industry needs and strengthening the regional talent pipeline.

- **Cal State San Marcos:** Career Center, College of STEM, Women and Gender Equity Center
- **San Diego State University:** Career Services, College of Engineering, College of Sciences, Fowler College Patrick-Clayes Center for Career Development, Women's Resource Center
- **Southwestern College:** MESA Program
- **UC San Diego:** Career Center, IDEA Center, Jacobs School of Engineering, Women's Center
- **University of San Diego:** Career Development Center, Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering

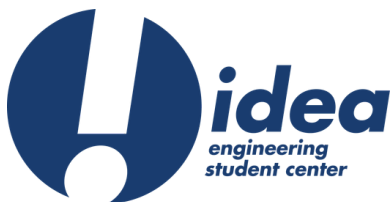
## Initiatives Strengthening Regional Impact

- **Campus Collaborations:** JTI partners with universities to embed industry perspectives into the student experience - aligning academic preparation with workforce needs.
- **Early Talent Engagement:** Through active involvement in STEM student programs, JTI reaches out to a diverse pool of talent building pathways into the region's tech community.
- **Workforce Development Programs:** The Ready to Work Certificate Program continues to equip selected students with essential skills to connect education and career success.

UC San Diego

**SDSU**

San Diego State  
University



**CSUSM**  
CSTEM



# A Legacy of Leadership and Support

## Dr. Irwin Jacobs

**The Jacobs Talent Initiative** is made possible through the visionary support of Dr. Irwin Jacobs and the enduring legacy of Joan Jacobs, whose commitment to education, opportunity, and the San Diego community continues to shape this work.

*Their belief in the power of connecting university talent to meaningful careers within the region remains central to JTI's mission.*

Through Dr. Jacobs' generosity, we are able to expand access to industry, strengthen connections between students and employers, and create clear pathways for students to build their careers in San Diego.

We are deeply grateful for Dr. Jacobs' leadership and for the lasting impact that he has made in advancing opportunity and strengthening the region's innovation ecosystem.





## JTI Director's Message

It has been inspiring to see the JTI continue to strengthen its impact in developing and retaining university tech talent across our region. Through intentional partnerships, meaningful industry engagement, and thoughtfully designed programming, JTI has expanded access to opportunities for STEM students throughout San Diego. This past year has reinforced the value of this work in tangible ways!

- As students gain confidence through direct engagement with industry, we see a clearer pathway from education to career.
- As employers share positive feedback on the preparedness and contributions of JTI participants, we see the strength of a more connected and responsive talent pipeline.
- And as we reflect on the year's milestones, it is evident that these efforts are contributing to a more aligned, collaborative, and stronger tech community.

I am grateful to play a role in advancing this work and proud to contribute to the continued growth of San Diego's innovation economy.

*Christy Quiogue*

Director, Jacobs Talent Initiative - Tech San Diego

# Acknowledgements

Tech San Diego would like to recognize the following executives who have supported the creation of the Jacobs Talent Initiative:

**Peter Ellsworth**, Legler Benbough Foundation – Legler Benbough provided early seed funding for the JTI and Peter was a mentor and helped to guide the JTI to where it is today.

**Tom Clancy**, Tom was one of the founders of Tech San Diego and an early thought leader on the formation of the JTI.

**Robert Akins**, Former CEO Cymer, Bob planted the seeds of the JTI many years ago by approaching the executive director of Tech San Diego and saying ‘Tech San Diego is missing out by not collaborating with regional universities! Bob would go on by saying these assets were underutilized and a smart group would someday realize that! (Bob, Tech San Diego is that smart group!)

**Rajesh Gupta**, Founding Director, HDSI, UC San Diego – Rajesh hosted the first outreach efforts Tech San Diego had with UC San Diego by hosting ‘Coffee with the Dean’ where we brought technology CEOs on campus. This also germinated the idea that we needed to facilitate more direct interactions between industry and the local universities. Rajesh currently serves on the Tech San Diego Board of Directors - recognizing how important Data Science and AI is to the regional innovation economy.

**Dean Albert Pisano**, Dean of Jacobs School of Engineering, UC San Diego – Dean Pisano was an early supporter of the JTI and continues to facilitate Tech San Diego's presence on campus.

**Mary Walshok**, Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of Extension, UC San Diego. I have often told Mary she started this by telling me to ‘Just go on campus and hang out – interesting things will happen!’ They did! My first time on campus, I sat next to then chair of the Jacobs School, Rajesh Gupta, and we struck up a conversation that reverberates to this day.

**Pradeep Khosla**, Chancellor of UC San Diego. Pradeep was an early supporter of our efforts and wrote a strong letter of support that helps JTI access UC San Diego resources.



**The Jacobs Talent Initiative** is a core program of Tech San Diego, built to strengthen the region’s innovation economy by connecting emerging talent with the companies that need it most.

While JTI focuses on preparing and engaging the next generation of professionals, its long-term impact is made possible through the broader network, resources and leadership of Tech San Diego’s member community.

**For organizations looking to play a more active role in shaping the future workforce, we invite you to join Tech San Diego.** Membership provides access to the region’s talent pipeline, engagement with university partners and a seat at the table alongside fellow leaders committed to keeping San Diego competitive.

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