**Preparation for the Biotech Decade**

**Event Leadership**

**Chairs**
Thomas S. Sayles, Senior Vice President for University Relations, University of Southern California
Guillermo "Willie" Zuniga, President, Grifols Biologicals Inc.

**Honorary Committee**
Xavier Becerra, U.S. House of Representatives
Kevin de León, President Pro Tempore, California State Senate, SD 24
Ed Hernandez, California State Senate, SD 32
Miguel Santiago, California State Assembly, 53rd District
Hilda Solis, Chair, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, First District
Eric Garcetti, Mayor, City of Los Angeles

**Senior Vice Chairs**

- Maria E. Torres Flores, Board of Education, Los Angeles, California
- Mónica García, President of the Los Angeles Urban League
- Geoffrey L. Baum, President, Grifols Biologicals Inc.
- Martha Escutia, Los Angeles City Council Member, 14th District, City of Los Angeles
- Eric Garcetti, Mayor, City of Los Angeles
- Hilda Solis, Chair, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, First District
- Miguel Santiago, California State Assembly, 53rd District

**Representatives**

- Osvaldo Arango, President, Grifols Biologicals Inc.
- Paul M. Schuller, Sr., President for University Relations, the Los Angeles Biotech Center

For more information, or to become involved in the Los Angeles Biotech Park please contact biotech@usc.edu

---

**STEM Pathways Begin in East LA**

Panelists share advice and personal insights into the road leading to a career in biotechnology

By Flavio Moral

**What are the keys to become part of the biotechnology evolution?**

Panelists representing USC, East Los Angeles College (ELAC), and Theodore Roosevelt High School addressed curious middle and high school students, and their parents, with information about rewarding careers related to biotech, medical discovery and technology, and the academic careers that begin with strong foundations in math and science. "It’s exciting to be in the lab working on experiments that could help bring change to the world,” said Valerie Beltran, a middle school student enrolled in USC Neighbor Academic Initiative program. As Valerie and the other 200 parents and students at the "Full STEM Ahead" workshop learned, taking the right courses is just the beginning.

**Find a Mentor**

First-generation college students often feel isolated and unequipped for college, largely because their parents aren’t able to provide first-hand advice. As a result, many of these students feel like they don’t belong and are reluctant to seek help from faculty and staff.

“Many times, we make the mistake of looking for mentors that look like us. Mentors come in many colors and sizes. Never think they have to look like you, to help you,” said Armando M. Rivera, dean of STEM and professor of chemistry, East Los Angeles College. “As long as they take a genuine interest in you, they can help.”

**Expect to Work Hard**

For parent and college student Felipe Hernandez, it's become part of his routine to spend 3 a.m. and still be required to be in class the next morning at 6 a.m. As a USC civil engineering student, and Norman Topping Scholar, the hunger to learn and work towards a brighter future helps him overcome obstacles. “When I was twelve years old, I started helping my parents sell cut fruit on the street to make ends meet. One day we only sold $28 worth, and $6 of that was in food stamps so we had very little profit,” shared Hernandez. “The memory of that day motivates me to work and study harder.”

**Parental Involvement is Vital**

From leveraging technology to regularly communicating with teachers, to easing any barriers to parental involvement is vital, especially as students advance in their coursework. Parents need to be in partnership with the school and support what is being done in the classroom. By working together, parents can supplement the efforts of the school, said Raul Mata, college and career advisor at Theodore Roosevelt High School.

“Parents should also seek out the academic and emotional support resources that schools offer to ensure their children are accessing the help they need to succeed.”

**Workshops Recap**

From left to right, panelists Jan Perry (general manager, Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development), Theda Douglas (USC assistant vice president for government partnerships and programs), and Miguel Santiago (senior vice president, Los Angeles Biotech Center) answer questions about job-training, certificate programs, and "BioSTART" degree programs that lead to long-term employment in the biotech and healthcare fields.

---

**East LA getting down to work in the biotech decade**

**By Ron Moslovich**

Four people who know the way to permanent, high-paying jobs mapped out career pathways at a biotech jobs workshop Saturday, October 1. The workshop was part of a bilingual community event for East Los Angeles families called “Preparing for the Biotech Decade,” and explored opportunities in biotechnology for people of all backgrounds and education levels.

“When I think of biotechnology, I think about improving the quality of life for others,” said Willy Zuniga, President of El Seroeto based Grifols Biologicals, a major sponsor of the event. Zuniga graduated from Wilson High School in El Sereno, and earned a business degree at California State University, Los Angeles.

“I got married when I was 18. I had my first daughter when I was 20. I quit school because I had to feed my daughter,” Zuniga said. “I found Grifols. We’re making amazing medicines, we’re saving lives, and we want to expose individu als to all the mass opportunities and the different types of roles that it takes to make good quality products for our patients. We hire people who are working on certificates at community colleges, and we hire Ph.Ds.”

About 150 people listened to the panel that included Zuniga, Theda Douglas of USC government partnerships and programs, Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development General Manager Jan Perry, and moderator Maritza Duble-Uriffe of LA County Community and Senior Services.

Also on the panel was Andrew Chavez, a Grifols employee and graduate of Los Angeles Trade Technical College. "My career’s given me two things: a living and a passion,” said Chavez. “I can provide for my daughter. She’s the fuel to my fire. Now, the sky’s the limit. When you strive to make a difference for yourself, you’ll make a difference for others.”

Chavez is on the leading edge of a national boom in biotechnology investment, one that USC hopes to bring to East Los Angeles, as the university has advocated for a biotechnology park adjacent to its Health Sciences Campus.

“When we see people hired from Roosevelt High and East Los Angeles College,” Perry said, “People who are committed and want to stay, so people can benefit from growth and not be disenchanted or kicked out.”

Martin Santillan, 25, stood up during the question and answer session and told Zuniga, “I want to work for you at Grifols.”

Santillan, a student at California State University, Los Angeles, said, “I want to work in the biotech field. Grifols is a great company, right here across the street from us. I appreciate that they came here and gave us this information. It’ll help me get my foot in the door in this field.”

Santillan and others like him may get into the biotech field in unconventional ways, including what Perry called “stackable degrees.”

An example of this type of incremental career-building path is USC’s Concurrent Enrollment Dental Assistant Certificate program.

“When they finish the first 15 weeks of the program, our students can receive two certifi cates,” said Theda Douglas, who heads the program. “One allows them to do dental - x-rays and one is in infection control. So they’re eligible to go to work, but they can continue taking classes.”

Jan Perry reinforced the value of these programs, especially for low-income and first-generation students.

“A person can go in and get certified in an area of emphasis. It can be more affordable and completed in a shorter period of time for a person who’s trying to work toward a two-year or four-year degree by doing it in phases, and adding to their earning capability as they move along their academic career. You have to work and study at the same time, with no downside to that.”

More than 5,000 people graduate yearly from Los Angeles universities with degrees in science, engineering and technology — more than San Diego and San Francisco combined. Zuniga hopes to see this STEM pipeline flowing directly into East LA.

“The great dream of the biotech corridor is to bring these companies to the heart of East Los Angeles, with the USC Health Center,” Zuniga said. “Eventually, we’ll have a three or four mile corridor of high-tech companies, hotels, restaurants, everything that our community desires and deserves.”

---

For more information, or to become involved in the Los Angeles Biotech Park please contact biotech@usc.edu