

WE DEFINE THE *Future*



PRESS RELEASE

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Registration open for Defining the Future conference, set for April at CSUSB

PALM DESERT, Calif. – Cal State San Bernardino will host Defining the Future, the nation’s first conference dedicated to accelerated workforce development in emerging technologies, set for April 15-16.

[Registration is now open](#) for the conference and the event will run simultaneously with the university’s [Meeting of the Minds](#) student research showcase, which features more than 300 student researchers each year.

“It’s increasingly clear that new and emerging technologies are here to stay and tech jobs will make up more than 90 percent of the employment sector in the next 10 years,” said Ryan Keating, co-organizer of the conference. “The Defining the Future conference is designed to introduce students to the wide array of jobs in a variety of fields where they can leverage their interests and their experiences to move from campus to careers.” Keating is a CSUSB professor of history, director of CSUSB’s Office of Student Research and executive director of the Applied Innovation and Economic Development Center.

The conference is open to professionals, researchers, innovators, students and anyone interested in technology, business innovation, sustainability and future trends shaping industries and society.

It is the result of a collaboration between the Office of Academic Research, led by Timothy Akers, chief research officer, associate provost and co-organizer of the conference, and the Office of Student Research.

Akers is a nationally recognized expert in public health, criminology and quantum literacy. He founded the [National Quantum Literacy Network](#), a nonprofit organization advancing quantum AI technologies for workforce development. He has served on national advisory committees for the White House and U.S. Department of Energy, and his innovations in quantum education, patented medical technologies and advocacy for technical and community-based learning have made him a leading force in preparing the nation’s future quantum AI workforce.

Together, Keating and Akers saw an opportunity to link what students learn on campus with the skills employers are demanding in these new industries. “When Dr. Akers came to CSUSB, he brought his experience in quantum literacy and emerging tech spaces,” Keating said. The goal is to prepare students not just for today’s workforce, but for the workspace that awaits them in the future, Keating added.

“We spend a great deal of time educating our students, teaching them to be critical thinkers, critical readers, critical writers and strong academicians,” he said. “But we need to bridge that with forward thinking about what jobs will look like five years from now, 10 years from now, 20 years from now, so that students are not only prepared to make an impact now but also be on the cutting edge as industries change.”

Keating said that for many CSUSB students — eight out of 10 of whom are the first in their families to attend college — events like this answer an important question: Do I really need college?

“This conference shows them that their university experience is relevant, practical and powerful,” he said. “It shows there’s a pipeline of careers waiting for them.”

The three-day event will feature industry presentations, hands-on workshops, exhibits and a recruitment fair connecting students with leading companies in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, semiconductor manufacturing and other emerging fields.

“All students can attend for free,” Keating said. “They’ll hear from industry experts, see the kinds of products companies are developing, and talk directly with recruiters.”

At the same time, hundreds of CSUSB students will present their own research posters and talks during the Meeting of the Minds showcase. “It’s going to be a space of convergence where ideas meet opportunity, where networks are created and pipelines are developed,” Keating said.

He added that the university’s strong research culture gives students a head start. “Every year, more than 3,000 students take part in Office of Student Research activities,” he said. “They learn both hard and soft skills — teamwork, data analysis, communication — but they’re not always taught how to showcase those skills to employers. This conference will help them do exactly that.”

Beyond student development, Keating said Defining the Future will advance public-private partnerships and regional economic growth. “Public-private partnerships play a vital role in advancing university research and innovation by connecting academia with industry expertise and resources,” he said. “Faculty will have structured opportunities to meet industry partners, build collaborations and pursue external grants.”

The conference also highlights CSUSB’s leadership in turning the Inland Empire into a hub for innovation. “We’re ‘open for business’ with regards to our desire and willingness to collaborate with private sector partners, and our long-term vision of changing the Inland Empire into a hub for innovation and new technologies,” Keating said.

“We know that our students are really exceptional. We also know that more than 85 percent of our students stay within 100 miles of the university. We want to let companies know that by investing in this region, they’re going to invest in access to a workforce that is highly skilled, highly competent and invested in the success of their communities.”

Conference organizers hope Defining the Future will become an annual event. “We don’t want this to be a one-time thing. We’re excited about our university becoming a model for what can be accomplished by building out public-private partnerships by melding the power and the vision of the private sector with the excellent research that the faculty and students on our campus are engaged in,” said Keating.

The Defining the Future conference will take place at Cal State San Bernardino – 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407.

For more about the conference, visit the [Defining the Future website](#).

Also, follow the conference on [LinkedIn](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

About the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus: The [CSUSB Palm Desert Campus](#) is dedicated to providing a transformative educational experience in the Coachella Valley. With a focus on academic excellence and community engagement, the campus offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs designed to meet the diverse needs of its students and the region.

For more information about the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, contact Mike Singer in the Office of Marketing and Communications at msinger@csusb.edu or (760) 341-2883, ext. 78107, or visit the PDC website at www.csusb.edu/pdc.