

2026

COMMUNITY COLLEGE INNOVATION CHALLENGE

Advancing Student Innovation & Impact



Judges Biographies



CRISTINA HNATOV (Poster Session Judge) is an experience and curriculum designer in the Academy for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the University of Maryland (UMD). She works with students, faculty, staff, and public sector professionals to build their creative confidence and equip them with tools for approaching big problems in new ways. Through classes like “Innovation Tools & Mindsets,” “The Innovation Studio,” and “Design Your Purpose,” Christina engages learners from across campus in active, experiential opportunities to learn design and innovation, and

connect their learning to the disciplines and issues that matter most to them. In addition to teaching, she leads workshops and collaborates with organizations like the National Orchestral Institute + Festival and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to help uncover unexpected possibilities for tackling complex challenges in their work. Outside of her responsibilities at UMD, Christina collaborates with organizations looking to make their work more human-centered and design-driven. Past projects have included facilitating Social Design Day at the Embassy of Switzerland, helping educators design learning experiences that positively leverage generative artificial intelligence, and developing curricula for a high school makerspace. She has a Master’s of Public Policy, specializing in fostering cultures of innovation in U.S. government agencies and is particularly interested in exploring divergent futures, understanding systems, and unpacking institutional and structural barriers to innovation and creativity.



STEVEN HOLZ (Pitch Judge) is the Associate Project Manager for the University Innovation (UI) Project at NASA. In this role, he supports NASA in educating the next generation of aeronautical innovators by providing opportunities for university-led teams to conduct research into transformative technology that supports NASA Aeronautics’ major research goals. Steven began his career at NASA working on the Environmentally Responsible Aviation (ERA) Project as a Pathways Intern while finishing his graduate engineering coursework. After converting to a

permanent civil service position, Steven worked conducting systems analysis as well as systems engineering for NASA projects. He received his Bachelor’s in Mechanical Engineering and Master’s in Industrial Engineering from the University of Central Florida (UCF).



ANELISA LAURI (Pitch Judge) is the Senior Program Manager at the Latino Business Action Network (LBAN), leading their national initiatives designed to accelerate the growth of U.S.-based businesses. With more than 15 years in this space, she is passionate about driving inclusive economic growth and empowering business owners to thrive. She is based in Orlando, Florida and the mother of two Disney-loving daughters.

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MARK LAWRENCE (Pitch Judge) is a visionary leader and innovator committed to transforming communities through the enabling power of entrepreneurship, innovation, and ecosystem building. With over 28 years of experience—eight as an entrepreneur and 18 in leadership roles at two “Big 4” consulting firms—Mark blends strategic insight with grassroots impact. He is the founder and managing partner of Inncuvate, an award-winning full-stack, entrepreneurship-led economic development enterprise headquartered in Maryland. Inncuvate creates purpose-built programs and

places that merge ideation, invention, incubation, and commercialization into innovation hubs that drive inclusive prosperity. He redesigned a computer lab at Prince George’s Community College’s into an innovation hub and secured \$400,000 in federal funding for the Ignite Tech program—partnering the NSA Technology Transfer Office with Bowie State University students and entrepreneurs to commercialize federal intellectual property. Mark is currently developing a 12,000-square-foot Inncuvate Innovation Studios in Largo, Maryland—a collaboration space supporting technology venture creation and emerging tech education—and leads the Crafted in Bowie Maker District initiative, revitalizing a historic downtown through entrepreneurship and maker culture. His work demonstrates the transformative potential of community college-led innovation. Mark has a BS degree in Electrical Engineering Technology from Temple University and a cross-disciplinary MS degree in Telecommunications from the University of Maryland College Park.



HINA MEHTA (Poster Judge) is a Program Director with the National Science Foundation (Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships) and involved with two of the agency’s cornerstone initiatives: the Accelerating Research Translation (ART) and Regional Innovation Engines programs. With over 15 years of experience across the life sciences, state economic development, and startup sectors, Hina is an expert in intellectual property, technology transfer, and commercialization strategy. She has a proven track record of designing and implementing

high-impact commercialization and startup funding programs that bridge the gap between academic research and market-ready innovation. A former biomedical researcher and startup co-founder, she is a recipient of the President’s Lifetime Achievement Volunteer Service Award and holds a PhD in Neuroscience and an MBA.



HOLLY MILLER (Poster Judge) is a distinguished educator and policy expert currently serving as the Federal Liaison for the NASA Office of STEM Engagement (OSTEM) at NASA Headquarters. In this role, she leads efforts to collaborate with federal agencies and supports initiatives aimed at expanding student opportunities at NASA. Holly is a passionate advocate for research-based educational policies that empower both students and teachers to reach their full potential in STEM fields. She supports international events for internships at NASA and collaborates with federal

agencies to promote STEM engagement. Holly completed an Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator fellowship. She served in the U.S. Senate in Senator Jacky Rosen’s office, working on policy and projects that promote success in STEM education. Prior to serving as an Einstein Fellow on Capitol Hill, Holly served as a STEM teacher for 12 years, teaching high ability students while serving as the school’s high ability and science fair coordinator. She believes in the power of out of school time learning, serving as Marian University’s summer STEM camp instructor, Camp Invention teacher, Gains in the Education of Mathematics and Science (GEMS) instructor, math bowl coach, and VEX IQ Robotics mentor. Holly has a BS in Psychological Science and Social Work, a MA in Teaching from Marian University, a MSW in Clinical Social Work from Boston University, and a PhD in STEM Curriculum and Instruction at Texas Tech University.

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SUSAN RUNDELL SINGER (Pitch Judge) is an experienced national and institutional leader in higher education, uplifting the value of a liberal arts education. She is St. Olaf College's president and was Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost at Rollins College. Previously, she led the Division of Undergraduate Education at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and was the Laurence McKinley Gould Professor of Biology at Carleton College, where she directed the Perlman Center for Learning and Teaching. Recruited to NSF, she was charged with implementing holistic, evidence-informed approaches to increase the persistence and success of all undergraduates. She led 14 federal agencies in achieving the undergraduate goals of the first Federal STEM Education 5-year Strategic Plan, including producing one million more STEM graduates by 2018. She pursues a career integrating higher education and science aimed at improving undergraduate education at scale. Her scholarship focuses on partnerships and networks of organizations collaboratively advancing undergraduate STEM education, with an emphasis on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Equitable and excellent undergraduate education is a signature element of her successes at Carleton, NSF, national organizations, Rollins, and St. Olaf, enhanced by a strong track record with partnerships and fundraising. Susan is an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Fellow, and recipient of the American Society of Plant Biology teaching award and Botanical Society of America Charles Bessey award. She is a past-chair of AAAS' Education Section. Currently, Susan is an Association of American Universities Senior Scholar, chairs the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) Board on Science Education, serves on the Science Museum of Minnesota board, HELIOS Open executive committee, and served on the Board on Life Sciences and the Roundtable on Systematic Change in Undergraduate STEM Education. She chaired several NASEM studies, including Discipline-based Education Research. Her Ph.D. is in Biology from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.



CHRIS SUTTON (Poster Session Judge) is passionate about addressing the nation's skills gap. Chris is a leader within Booz Allen's civil business unit and leads projects that focus on strategy, technology modernization, and change management at the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA), specifically at the Office of Apprenticeship and the Office of Job Corps. Chris holds a MA in Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a BA in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia.