



SPRING 2023 NEXTGEN MENTORSHIP PROGRAM REPORT



Submitted by:
Sulaiman Kenyatta
NextGen Program Leader

Judy Kruger
President & CEO

What is the Santa Monica NextGen Leadership Program?

Launched in the Fall of 2021, the Santa Monica NextGen Leadership Program is led by the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Santa Monica College to partner students of color with Chamber members who have experience related to the student's field of study and cultural background.

The program connects SMC students to mentors – Santa Monica-based business owners, entrepreneurs, and industry professionals – who can offer guidance and insight to increase students' career and professional development opportunities. The program is structured as six weekly hour-and-a-half mentoring sessions, with weekly journals expected from students after each session to help students develop leadership skills, teach them how to network, and build professional relationships.



Santa Monica College Partners

Chris Baccus

Counseling Faculty
Adelante/Black Collegians

Sherri Bradford

Adelante/Black Collegians
Program Leader

Destiny Johnson

Career Counselor
Adelante/Black Collegians

Maria Martinez

Adelante and Black
Collegians Program Leader

Janet Tercero

Student Services Coordinator
Black Collegians/Adelante

Jocelyn Winn

Student Services Coordinator
Black Collegians/Adelante

Esmeralda Martinez

Career Counselor
Adelante/Black Collegians

Ann Marie Leahy

Career Services
Advisor

Program Structure: A Look Back

March 2023 - May 2023

Recruitment

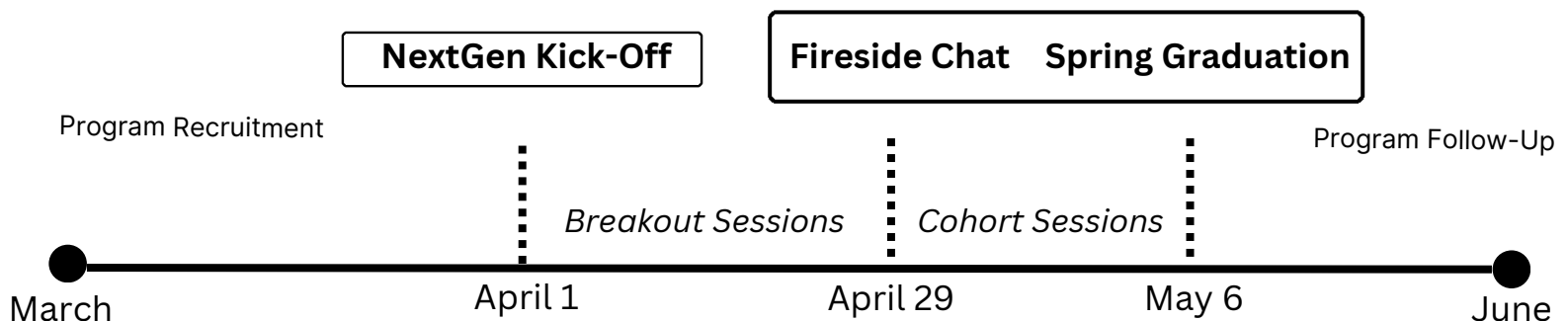
- Interest form sent to 1,200 Black Collegians and Adelante students
- From more than 70 interest responses, 50 students were selected to participate
- 22 Mentors selected from SM Chamber of Commerce members
- Spring 2023 Curriculum developed from student survey
- Programmatic materials and Mentor Orientation

Breakout Sessions

- Three 90-minute breakout sessions with mentors and mentees
- Fireside Chat with featured Mentor | Abdulkamal Abdullahi
- Graduation Ceremony with Commencement Speaker | Councilmember Lana Negrete
- Student closing with highlights and favorite moments

Program Follow-Up

- NextGen Leadership Certificate sent to graduating students
- Final Survey sent to students to gather feedback on experience
- Findings collected and reported to SMC Foundation Board of Directors
- Final Report Released and participants added into NextGen Alumni Community





Professional Development Topics

Civic and Community Engagement

Mentors: Jasson Crockett, Ebonicia Fisher

Students explored the importance of civic engagement, the role of individuals in community development, and strategies for meaningful involvement. Students also learned about various avenues for civic engagement, such as volunteering and advocacy. By the end of the program students were equipped to actively engage in their communities around issues of their choice.

Finding Internships and Entry-Level Jobs

Mentors: Antonio Watson, Sonia Ordonez, Randal Gaines

Students learned how to research relevant job openings using online platforms such as LinkedIn and find industry-specific resources. Discussions also explored how to create targeted resumes, cover letters, and interview preparation to help applicants stand out as strong candidates. By the end of the program students had developed strategies to increase their chances of securing internships and entry-level roles in their desired industry.

How to Advocate for Yourself in the Workplace


Mentors: Adam Cuevas, Daisha McDaniel, Roger Garcia

Students learned essential skills to effectively advocate for their needs in professional environments. Through interactive discussions and role-playing exercises, the discussions covered topics such as strategies for building confidence, expressing opinions, and negotiating for fair treatment. By the end of the workshop students gained best practices on how to navigate challenging conversations and address workplace concerns with confidence.

How to Research and Learn More About a Specific Industry

Mentors: Carol Zhu, Mauro Agnellini, Veronica Estrada-Edeh

Students explored proven techniques to effectively explore and conduct in-depth research on an industry of their choice. By the end of the program participants had gained the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct comprehensive research to enable them to make informed decisions, explore career opportunities, and stay updated with the latest industry trends and developments.





Interviewing Do's and Don'ts

Mentors: Lennox Brown, Abdulkamal Abdullahi, Stephanie Chavez Alvarez

Students learned essential knowledge and skills to excel in job interviews including how to effectively prepare for interviews by researching the company and role, crafting compelling answers, and mastering non-verbal communication. By the end of the program participants had the tools to navigate interviews confidently and increase their chances of success in landing their desired job.

Leadership (Corporate and Individual)

Mentors: Angela D. Scott, Rose Pelinkan

Students learned how to excel as leaders in corporate settings and as individuals through discussions on effective leadership principles. The breakout sessions also emphasized self-leadership, fostering self-awareness, resilience, and a growth mindset. By the end of the program students possessed the skills and mindset to make a positive impact by utilizing strategic decision-making and prioritizing social responsibility.

Managing Interpersonal Relationships Before and After Internship or Job

Mentors: Carissa Dean, Jasmine Alvarado-Salinas, Nichole Mysaysana

Students discussed strategies to effectively navigate and foster positive relationships in professional settings. The workshop emphasizes developing effective communication techniques, conflict resolution strategies, and the importance of building strong connections. By the end of the program students were well-equipped to navigate interpersonal dynamics of an office environment and cultivate collaborative relationships.

Navigating Racial Climate in the Workplace


Mentors: Delana Gbenekama, Dee Royal

Students were equipped with actionable strategies to effectively navigate challenging conversations about race, respond to discriminatory behaviors, and promote respect and inclusivity. The breakout session also explores unconscious biases, power dynamics, and actionable strategies for systemic change within organizations. By the end of the program participants gained skills to navigate racial dynamics, foster an inclusive work environment, and contribute to positive organizational change.

Networking tips and Professional Associations

Mentors: Jay Sherrard, Katie Westbrook

Students learned valuable networking techniques to enhance their career prospects. The breakout session also covers effective networking strategies, including building meaningful connections, leveraging social media platforms, and mastering the art of informational interviews. By the end of the workshop, students will have the tools and knowledge to confidently navigate networking opportunities, opening doors to future professional growth and success.



Thank you to the Spring 2023 NextGen Mentors!



Abdulkamal Abdullahi
Manager, Market Insights &
Competitive Intelligence
Activision



Jasson Crockett
Public Policy Manager
Snap Inc.



Mauro Agnelli
Game Producer,
Diablo Immortal
Blizzard



Adam Cuevas
Associate Producer
Activision



Jasmine Alvarado-Salinas
Senior Associate Release
Engineer
Activision



Carissa Dean
Manager, Media
Operations & Traffic
Starz (*formerly*)



Lennox Brown
Game Content Moderator
Activision



Veronica Estrada-Edeh
Recruiting Associate,
Global Early Careers
Activision



Stephanie Chavez-Alvarez
Sr. Technical
Program Manager
Activision



Ebonicia Fisher
Game Content Moderator
Activision





Randal Gaines
Coordinator Emerging Call of
Duty Esports Product
Blizzard



Sonia Ordonez
UI Artist
Activision



Rogelio Garcia Areizaga
Associate Art Outsource
Director
Blizzard



Rose Pelikan
Executive Director
of Nursing
St. Johns Health



Delana Gbenekama
Equity and Communications
Coordinator
City of Santa Monica



Dee Royal
Sr. Technical Sourcer,
Talent Acquisition
St. Johns Health



Daisha McDaniel
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Talent Integration Advisor
Blizzard



Angela D. Scott
Digital Content Manager
Activision



Nichole Mysaysana
Player Experience Auditor
Activision



Jay Sherrard
CEO
Mass Media Films





Antonio Watson
Associate Game Designer
Blizzard



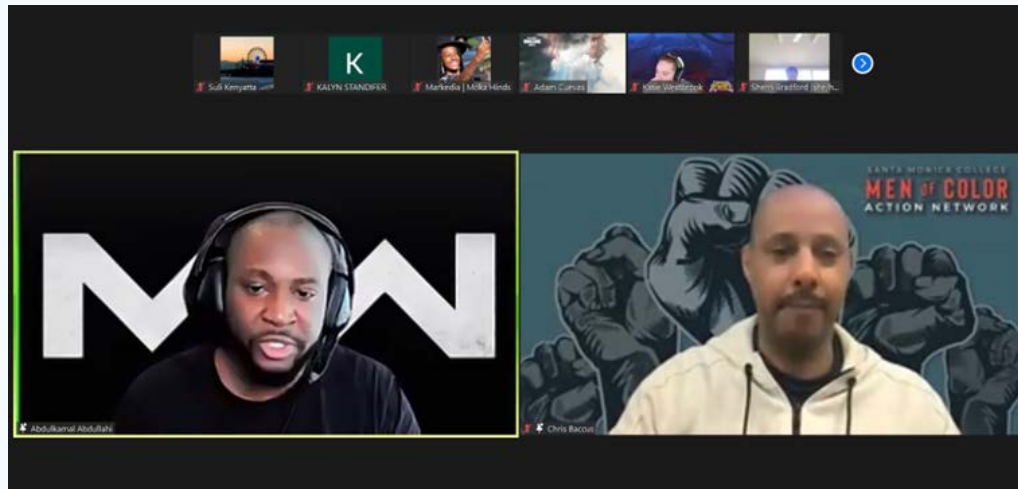
Katie Westbrook
User Researcher
Blizzard



Carol Zhu
Sr. Manager, International
Content Analytics and Insights
Starz



NextGen Highlights



Fireside Chat between Abdulkamal Abdullahi
and Chris Baccus



Graduation Ceremony with Commencement Speaker
City of Santa Monica, Mayor Pro Tem, Lana Negrete

Congratulations to the NextGen Spring 2023 Graduates!

Emily Andrade

Hiyab Gebreegziabher

Yasin Mohamed

Marcqees Banks

Brooke Graham

Waldemar Monroy

Graciela Barrera

Alexa Gutierrez Reyna

Nneka Okenwa

Ta-ning Connai

Lillian Guzman

Frida Rios

Christine Contreras

Larry Hardnett

Kadiatou Sibi

Richard Cruz Sanchez

Graciela Barrera

Kalyn Standifer

Sonya Curiel

Markedia Hinds

Marcus Thomas

Jovanna De La Trinidad

Miguel Jimenez

Chanel Todd

Zahria Eaves

Shaynalin Lawani

Oscar Vargas

Anthony Espinoza

Juan Pablo Lemus Gomez

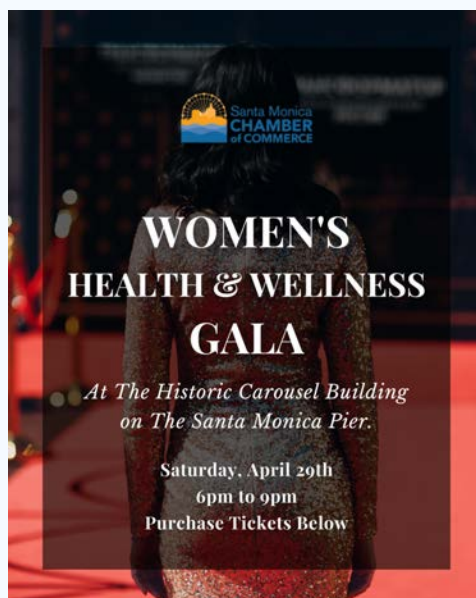
Ulises Vigo

Katie Farwell

Forest McClendonn

Ivette Flores

Jocelyn Moguel



**Thank you to the SMC Women's
Gala Student Volunteers!**

Reyna Alexa Gutierrez
Leisha Smith
Sonya Curiel
Brigitte Amaya
Kailyn Standifer

Student Journal Reflections

"I learned the importance of self-care. I tend to burn out and am so scared to say no, especially in a work setting. I learned that I need to put myself and my well-being first in order to help me succeed." - *Oscar Vargas*

"I liked being able to connect with the mentors through their experience. I as well liked having free range to ask them many questions." - *Frida Rios Juarez*

"I learned the steps to follow before an interview - research to find out more about the company; what to wear; making eye contact; and asking viable questions." - *Nneka Okenwa*

"I really liked that I was talking to successful people that looked like me, it was what kept me excited to show up every Saturday with a list of questions." - *Emily Andrade*

"I learned about the power of resilience, how to social network, how to maintain mentor relationships by reaching out, the importance of mental health and how to set boundaries in the workplace." - *Kailyn Standifer*

"One thing I enjoyed about the mentorship program was how the mentors shared their work experience with the students. Second thing I enjoyed was how welcoming everyone was when sharing their journey as well as providing great feedback." - *Richard Cruz Sanchez*

"I learned that your career can have many pivots but it's the impact and story you tell that matters." - *Miguel Jimenez*

"I enjoyed the valuable information that we received, the small groups we broke into and the conversations were informative. I liked that we also got a set of questions to ask some of us don't really know what to ask, that was helpful." - *Ivette Flores*

"The most important things I learned from this program were the surprising amount of flexibility in the paths you can take towards your career and what you can do to help make a workplace interview more personal and engaging for both parties." - *Larry Hardnett*

"I know that we have resources in our neighborhood that can make us feel like our voice matters and can actually facilitate change. I also loved the strategy to practice speaking in the mirror! Practice makes permanence." - *Markedia Hinds*

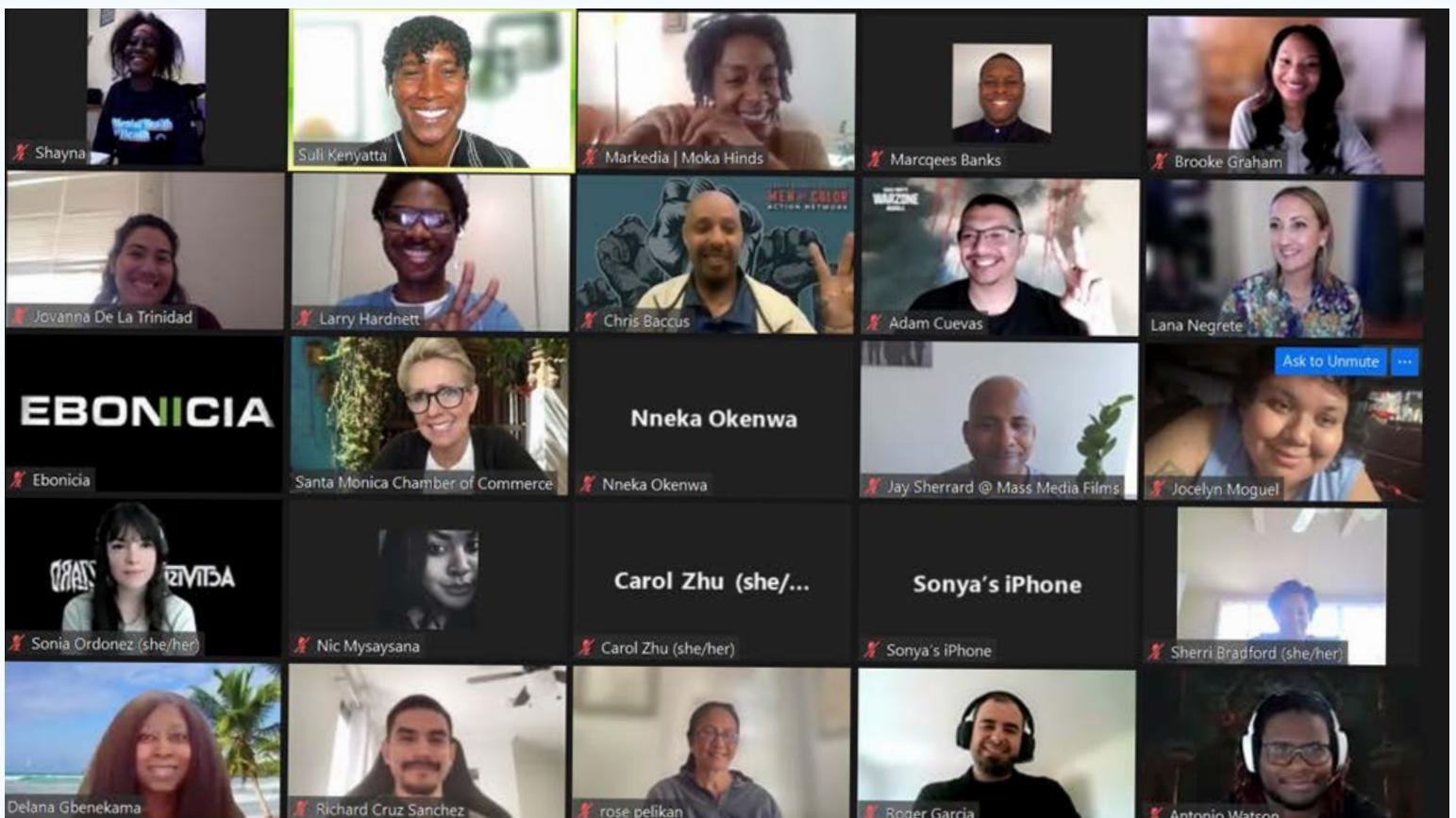


Thank you to the NextGen Program Sponsors!

Santa Monica College

We Are Santa Monica Fund

Santa Monica Rotary



SAVE THE DATE

Fall 2023 NextGen Program: September 23 - October 28

If you are interested in participating,
please email judy.kruger@smchamber.com to learn more!