



# NEXTGEN MENTORSHIP PROGRAM REPORT SPRING 2025

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#### WHAT IS THE SANTA MONICA NEXTGEN MENTORSHIP 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.

This innovative program matches Santa Monica College students with mentors from the local community, including business owners, entrepreneurs, and industry professionals. Through six weekly 90-minute mentoring sessions, students gain invaluable guidance and insights to expand their professional development and career opportunities. To further strengthen leadership abilities, networking skills, and professional relationships, students complete reflective journal entries after each session. By facilitating meaningful connections with established local leaders, the program aims to empower students, unlock their potential, and equip them with resources to achieve their goals.

#### Santa Monica College Partners

Chris Baccus Counseling Faculty Adelante/Black Collegians

> Sherri Bradford Program Leader Black Collegians

Destiny Johnson Career Counselor Adelante/Black Collegians

> Maria Martinez Program Leader Adelante

Janet Tercero Student Services Coordinator Adelante

Jocelyn Winn Student Services Coordinator Black Collegians

Esmeralda Martinez Career Counselor Adelante/Black Collegians

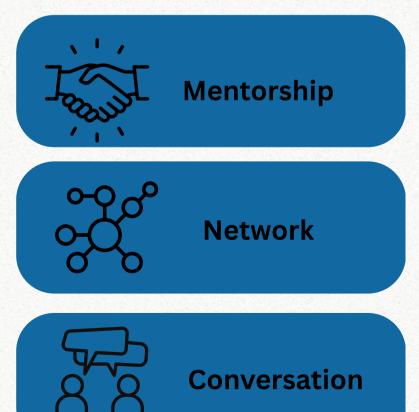
### Spring 2025 Program Structure

#### March 2025 - April 2025

At the start of the Spring semester, the NextGen interest form was distributed to members of the Santa Monica College Black Collegians and Adelante student groups.

The outreach yielded over **50** student responses, from which **32** students were selected to participate in the program. Additionally, **15** mentors were recruited from the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce to support the student cohort.

The program is structured into three 90minute breakout sessions, where mentors and mentees engage in meaningful discussions on various professional development topics. obstacles they have encountered.



One highlight includes a fireside chat, providing students the opportunity to ask pressing questions and participate in a community conversation addressing challenges and obstacles they have encountered.

This semester there were **25** graduates who met the attendance requirements for the program. To celebrate their achievement, the NextGen participants gather for a graduation brunch, during which students receive their certificate of completions and are celebrated in Community!



## **Professional Development Topics**

#### Leadership (Corporate and Individual)

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.



George Burciaga, Santa Monica Police Department

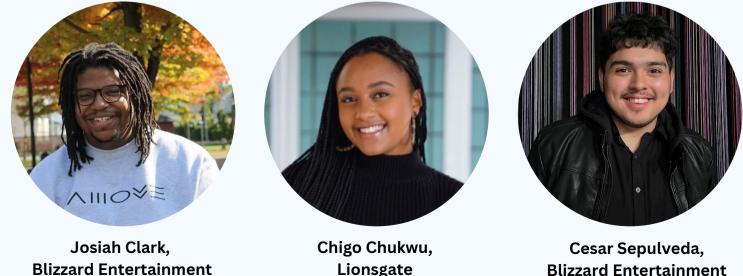


Andre Jackson, Jonathan Club in

#### **Networking Tips and Professional Associations**

in

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



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#### Learning How to Advocate for Yourself

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.



Treyarch in

**Blizzard Entertainment** 

in

City of Santa Monica

in

#### Managing Interpersonal Relationships

Students discussed strategies to effectively navigate and foster positive relationships in professional settings. The workshop emphasized 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.



Danny Cizek, Treyarch



Pema Choden, St. John's Providence

in



Christian Enriquez, **Reality Experience Design** 



in

#### How to Research and Industry or Field

Students discussed systematic approaches to thoroughly investigate key aspects of a particular field or sector. In the conversations students acquired methods to dig deeper and find reliable information to make data-driven career decisions, identify emerging opportunities, and stay current with notable industry developments. By the end of the program participants had developed valuable research capabilities to inform both their career and industry knowledge.



Ismael Tavera, Santa Monica Police Department



Keanna Pardassie, Advantage Gold Financial



Carey Littlefield, Blizzard Entertainment

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#### Thank you to our Mentors and Chamber Partners!



On Saturday April 12<sup>th</sup>, the Spring 2025 program culminated with the 4<sup>th</sup> annual NextGen Brunch, hosted at the Jonathan Club Santa Monica.

The NextGen graduation provides the important opportunity for mentors and students to meet in-person for the first time and celebrate the completion of the program in Community!









Thank you to the Jonathan Club for hosting and catering the NextGen Brunch!



## NEXTGEN GRADUATION BRUNCH



## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

## Matt Hill

Battalion Chief "C" Platoon Santa Monica Fire Department

## **SPRING 2025 CELEBRATION**

SATURDAY, APRIL 12TH 11:00a - 1:00p

Jonathan Club Santa Monica, 850 Palisades Beach Rd, Santa Monica, CA 90403

Attire: Smart Casual

COME CELEBRATE IN COMMUNITY!







#### **Student Journal Reflections**

Following each NextGen Session, students are invited to complete a journal prompt reflecting on the most impactful insights and how they plan to implement these lessons in both their professional and personal lives. The testimonials below offer a glimpse into the transformative learning and growth sparked by the NextGen experience:

I will implement taking notes and jotting down the qualities I see in leaders, taking the first step to showing respect in hopes of getting it back, and leading by example.

<sup>I</sup> I learned to treat intern opportunities as you would a job opportunity, to be honest with yourself and others about your skillset, the importance of building alliances, and a strong reputation to create change in your work environment.

I learned to empower others to step into the confidence we all have and help others discover that in themselves and always consider the team effort.

I learned some key leadership traits are empathy, confidence, and respectful. At the end of the day, you are working with people so it's always nice to show empathy to others.

I learned to advocate for myself and being able to express your feelings to others. It's okay to not feel well and express your concerns to others instead of being silent about it.

I learned that it could help to think of networking as having a regular conversation or making a new friend instead of a strictly business mindset.

I learned from my mentors the importance of having a work life balance and finding a schedule that works for you.

Success is different for everyone but for the most part, something that fulfills you in and out of work is a great start.

#### **Congratulations to the NextGen Spring 2025 Graduates!**

Christopher Acosta Kiera Anderson Eleazar Ashebir Samantha Barrera Ines Bourdette Steven Calderon Luis Castaneda Aalyiah Edwards Jesse Guadron Jasmine Houston Shapri Hudson Sabrina Korsnes Dexter Martin Lillian Guzman Ella Njonjo

Jozephine Gbadamosi

Kaitlyn Perez Maliyah Ponce Leilani Refugio Tito Rosas Harmony Simpson London Tennell Amanda Williams Aaron Winston

## SAVE THE DATE

The Fall 2025 NextGen Program will be launching in October!

To learn more about how to get involved, please contact judy.kruger@smchamber.com