

INLAND EMPIRE STEP PROGRAM CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY AT BOURNS INC.



THIS YEAR MARKS the 20th anniversary of the Science and Technology Education Partnership (STEP), which was the first organization in the Inland Empire focused on bridging the skills gap between local K-12 students and the employment needs of the high-technology industry. STEPCon is a three-day experience, hosted by Bourns Inc., that provides more than 5,000 students and 300 educators with exciting hands-on STEM learning experiences.

Bourns, Inc. is a leading global manufacturer of electronic components and sensors that are found in an array of common products like cell phones, kitchen appliances and cars, plus not-so common products such as a vehicle on Mars. "I feel that it is imperative that businesses such as Bourns are committed to partnering with educational entities to nurture and develop the STEM workforce pipeline," said Gordon Bourns, Chairman of the STEP Board and CEO of Bourns Inc.

The STEPCon19 experience for about 4,800 K-8 students from across Riverside and San Bernardino counties begins once they arrive at the Bourns Technology Center. The students begin their session with the Science Show, which is an engaging science and engineering show that is presented by General Atomics. After the show, the students participate in more than 50 interactive exhibits that provide a relevant opportunity for K-8 students to gain experience in electronics, biosciences, geology, programming, robotics and a variety of other STEM fields. These exhibits are provided by local civic, education and industry partners that believe in the STEP mission to stimulate and inspire students' interest in pursuing careers in math, science, engineering and technology.

Students also have the opportunity to view the Science Show, which is an engaging science and engineering show presented by General Atomics.

"Thanks to the support of many

local businesses, our universities and government agencies, the students have a much clearer understanding of the many exciting career opportunities in STEM," said Yamileth Shimojo, STEP board member and STEM administrator for the Riverside County Office of Education.

The STEPCon19 experience for about 350 high school students included spending an afternoon at the Center for Environmental Research and Technology (CE-CERT), part of UC Riverside's Marlan and Rosemary Bourns College of Engineering. Students were able to participate in engaging sessions to help them understand air quality, how CE-CERT measures vehicle emissions, the basics of bioenergy and mini-projects under the direction of Bourns College of Engineering students.

On the first day of STEPCon19, 275 teachers at the Educator Conference heard from two student keynotes on how understanding more about STEM has led them to

set their sights on careers in education and engineering. After hearing a keynote from a Sony executive, the teachers selected breakout sessions that connected them with fellow educators. The teachers shared new approaches to make STEM more interesting and relevant for their students.

Over the last 20 years, over 80,000 students and 4,000 teachers have been exposed to STEM careers through the STEP Conference. Slightly more than half of the students were girls, consistent with the goals of educators who are actively working to achieve parity among boys and girls in order to prepare the next generation for careers in math, science and technology. Women and minorities have been historically underrepresented in these fields.

STEP will continue to raise parental, industry and community awareness of the skills gap between K-12 students and the labor needs of the high-tech sector. More information about STEP is available at www.stepconference.org.

PHOTOS:

Students attend STEPCon19 at Bourns Technology Center in Riverside on Thursday, Oct. 3. PHOTO: DOUG HENDERSON

Students are out-of-their-seats excited at the STEPCon19 at Bourns Technology Center in Riverside. PHOTO: DOUG HENDERSON

Engineer Alex Nagy plays "Dr. Quark" as he shows one of the electron orbitals during "Chatter About Matter" as students attend STEPCon19 at Bourns Technology Center in Riverside on Thursday, Oct. 3. PHOTO COURTESY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NEWS GROUP