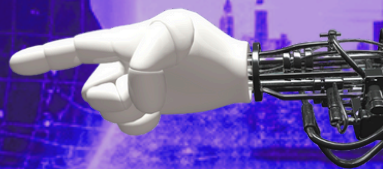


# classroom to career

conference agenda

STEM PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION



 school connect

**GRAND CANYON  
UNIVERSITY**

K12 EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER, 23, 2024**

GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY

2700 W CAMELBACK RD, PHOENIX, AZ 85017



STEM PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION



welcome!

Welcome to the Classroom to Career Conference on October 23, 2024, presented by Grand Canyon University and School Connect. You are joined by schools and STEM professionals from across the state! We are thrilled to gather on this momentous occasion to examine how we can forge partnerships that will bridge the gap between STEM education and STEM career. As we foster innovation, build economic growth, and develop the skilled workforce ready to address global challenges, we are shaping the future of our communities.

Today, we aim to provide students with hands on STEM experiences, valuable connections, and career opportunities that will prepare them for highly technical STEM careers.

We are joined by inspirational leaders like our host, Eric J. Rodriguez, who casts vision for our potential saying,

*"I am reminded of the transformational power of community engagement in education...Together, we are not just preparing students for the future; we are empowering them to invent it."*

We have the opportunity and the power to forge partnerships that will change the future. There is a growing gap between STEM education and industry, but together, we can make the difference.

Thank you for your leadership and heart!

In partnership,

Dr. Carol Lippert and Tracey Beal

*Carol & Tracey*



# classroom to career

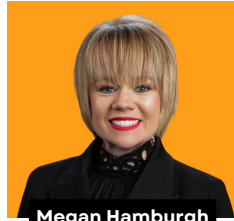
conference speakers



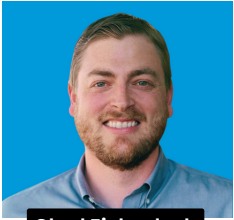
**Dr. Carol Lippert**



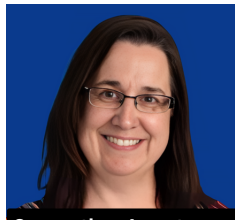
**Eric J. Rodriguez**



**Megan Hamburg**



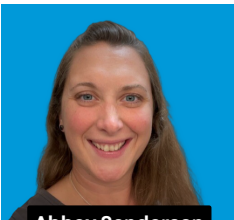
**Chad Eichenlaub**



**Samantha Armstrong**



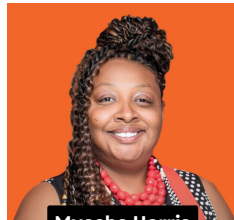
**Robert Loy**



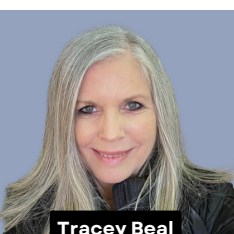
**Abbey Sanderson**



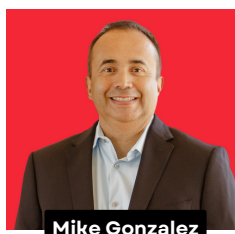
**Debbie Kovesty**



**Myesha Harris**



**Tracey Beal**



**Mike Gonzalez**



# introducing

## Host

**Eric J. Rodriguez**

*Global Keynote Speaker  
Technology Leader  
Community Advocate*



Eric J. Rodríguez is a visionary leader and Global Keynote Speaker, dedicated to Building the Future of Human Experiences through technology and empathy. At eleven, moving from Houston to Ecuador exposed Eric to stark socioeconomic disparities, igniting his belief in education's power to bridge gaps. This conviction deepened when his seventh-grade class at El Colegio Javier was the first to use the school's new computer lab, connecting Eric to a world of possibilities and sparking a lifelong passion for technology.

Eric's journey was profoundly influenced by his math teacher, Mr. Villegas, who instilled in him a passion for the precision of mathematics, further fueling Eric's drive to harness technology's potential for societal impact. Holding a BS in Electrical Engineering from the University of Houston and an MBA from Loyola University in New Orleans, Eric has become a key player in the tech sector. His work with organizations such as Aguila Youth, SHPE, Prospanica, the Intel Foundation, and INROADS has showcased his commitment to empowering communities through innovation.

As the host of "The Future of Human Experience" podcast, Eric extends his impact by exploring how digital transformations can foster more understanding and empathetic world connections. In an era marked by rapid change and disruption, Eric equips his audiences with an empowered perspective on the significant impact they can make, inspiring action towards a more inclusive future.

**Made possible by:**



# agenda

3:00 PM **Vendor Showcase.**

3:30 PM **GCU Welcome.**

Dr. Carol Lippert, *Assistant Vice President, Educational Development*, Grand Canyon University

## **Host Welcome.**

**Host:** Eric J. Rodriguez, *Global Keynote Speaker, Technology Leader, and Community Advocate*, [Eric J. Rodriguez](#)

## **Educator Panel.**

**Facilitated by:** Eric J. Rodriguez

- Megan Hamburg, *Principal, Westar Elementary*
- Chad Eichenlaub, *Director of Career and Technical Education, Peoria Unified School District*
- Samantha Armstrong, *Principal, Estrella Vista STEM Academy*

## **Special Speaker.**

Robert Loy, *Assistant Dean, Technology Division, College of Engineering and Technology*, Grand Canyon University

## **Business Leader Panel.**

**Facilitated by:** Eric J. Rodriguez

- Debbie Kovesdy, *Founder & CEO, GenTech*
- Myesha Harris, *Engineer, Women in Transportation, City of Phoenix*
- Abbey Sanderson, *Community and Government Relations Coordinator, Vulcan Materials Company*

4:40 PM **Partnership Discussions and Activity.**

Tracey Beal, *Founder & CEO, School Connect*

Dr. Carol Lippert, *Assistant Vice President, Educational Development*, Grand Canyon University

## **Keynote Speaker.**

**The Intersection Between STEM Education and STEM Industry**

Mike Gonzalez, *Vice President, McCarthy Building Companies*

## **Closing Comments.**

**Host:** Eric J. Rodriguez and School Connect CEO: Tracey Beal

6:00 PM **Event Close.**

# education panel

Presented by: **CHASSE**  
BUILDING TEAM

## Samantha Armstrong

Samantha Armstrong is the principal at Estrella Vista STEM Academy, an innovative engineering careers school. Now in her second year in this role, Samantha has been instrumental in fostering valuable connections between the school and industry leaders, enhancing the educational experience for students passionate about engineering and technology.

One of her most notable achievements has been strengthening the collaboration with Phoenix Raceway, a prominent local partner located within the school district. This partnership, along with an alliance with NASCAR, has opened up exciting opportunities for students to engage with cutting-edge motorsports technology and engineering practices.



## Chad Eichenlaub

Chad Eichenlaub is Peoria Unified School District's new Director of Career and Technical Education (CTE).

With a diverse background spanning multiple states and roles, Chad brings a wealth of experience and a fresh perspective to this pivotal position and continues to demonstrate his commitment to innovative education and student success. As Chad steps into this new role, he carries with him a passion for empowering students through career and technical education.



## Megan Hamburg

In May 2024, under Principal Hamburg's guidance, Rogers Ranch STEM Academy became the first school in Arizona to achieve the prestigious National Institute of STEM Education certification, a result of a year-long, strategic effort.

As the new principal of Westar Elementary, Principal Hamburg wants to expose the students and community to more STEM opportunities and careers such as STEM community nights and career days.



***"Hamburg plans to do that using the partnerships she has made with School Connect, Vulcan Materials and Grand Canyon University." ~ West Valley View***

# businessa panel

## Debbie Kovesdy, GenTech

Debbie Kovesday, GenTech's CEO, has been an educator for over 30 years, in the classroom and at district and state levels. A forward thinking self-proclaimed "tech geek", Debbie seeks to fill gaps in K-12 STEM education by creating a progressive STEM curriculum which builds from kindergarten all the way to high school graduation. This highly technical programming prepares students for unique STEM career pathways including Engineering, Programming, Information Technology, Cybersecurity and Computer Science so that these students not only benefit from STEM experiences, but graduate ready to enter the workforce in highly competitive, dynamic fields.



## Myesha Harris, City of Phoenix

A dedicated professional with a strong background in engineering and construction, Myesha Harris is a proactive connector for K-12 students, partnering with the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arizona to provide her expertise as an engineer for middle school students at STEM Game Day field trips on college campuses across the state.

With a bachelor's degree in construction engineering from Arizona State University's Del E. Webb School of Construction, she has accumulated over 20 years of experience in the field of construction management.



## Abbey Sanderson, Vulcan Materials

Abbey Sanderson is a Community and Government Relations Coordinator in the Western Division of Vulcan Materials Company. She joined Vulcan in 2015 after working in environmental consulting for nine years as a Field Geologist and Project Manager at Brown and Caldwell.

We first met Abbey as she worked with the Laveen School District and Vulcan Materials Company to provide Wi-Fi devices and services during the pandemic, Chief Science Officer sponsorship, donations for STEM programs and STEM field trips. Now their student projects support community members working to increase the number of students entering a STEM profession.



# Keynote.

## Mike Gonzalez

### *Vice President, McCarthy Building Companies*

As Vice President, Mike is primarily responsible for the Education market sector in the Southwest Region. He has more than 33 years of construction experience managing design-build, design assist and traditional construction projects servicing multiple industry sectors, including life-science, infrastructure, manufacturing, industrial, energy, hospitality, healthcare, technology and higher education. As the executive sponsor leading McCarthy's southwest regional diversity and inclusion program, he is actively involved in driving the vision of creating an environment where the composition of the firm's workforce and suppliers are representative of the diverse communities and geographies served by the firm.

As keynote, Mike will share the many ways we can bridge career pathways between K-12 education all the way to post-secondary education and STEM career. Not only has Mike navigated his own successful career pathway, but he serves as an ACE mentor, working alongside high school students to assist their career aspirations and constantly investigates ways to close the gaps that exist for students entering STEM fields.

### **A Legacy of Service**

Mike has served for more than 28 years as a United States Army Engineer officer, where he is currently a colonel in the Arizona Army National Guard commanding the Regional Training Institute. A LEED Accredited and DBIA Professional, he is a member of the U.S. Green Building Council, Design-Build Institute of America, Mechanical Contractors Association of America, Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors National Association, and Alliance for Construction Excellence, and serves on the Industry Advisory board for Arizona State University Del E. Webb School of Construction and Western Maricopa Education Center HVAC program. Mike has a bachelor's degree in construction management from Syracuse University.







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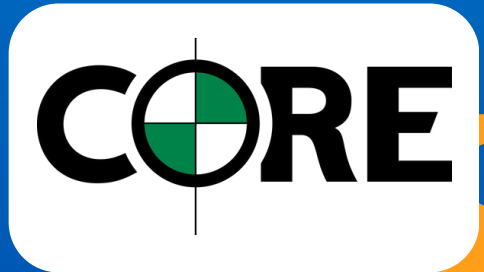
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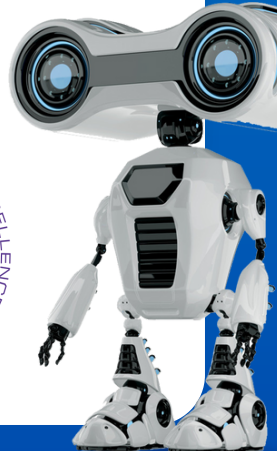
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