



UCLA

Center for
the Developing
Adolescent



**2026 ADOLESCENT BRAIN
DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT**

Applying Developmental Science to Support Economic Opportunity

MARCH 19, 2026 | 9:00 a.m. — 5:00 p.m.

SUPPORT PROVIDED BY: Bezos Family Foundation | Spring Point Partners |
Stuart Foundation | Annie E. Casey Foundation | Funders for Adolescent Science Translation

WELCOME

Thank you for joining us for our 2026 Adolescent Brain Development Summit.

The focus of this summit is economic opportunity, specifically on how we can support young people from 16 to 25 to find pathways to connected, meaningful work and lives as they navigate the transition to adulthood.

Between 16 and 25 years old, our maturing abilities and cognitive capacities combine with significant life transitions in ways that make this a key time to build the skills we need to thrive as adults. During these years, access to opportunities along with emotional, practical, and sometimes financial support and guidance can help us learn new skills, manage uncertainty, and harness our behavior and our emotions toward long-term personal and professional goals.

We have organized this summit around topic areas as well as around key themes of adolescent development: navigating uncertainty, building social and relational skills, cultivating a sense of purpose and agency, discovering our identity, leaning into and learning from mistakes, and acquiring the skills and experience to make sound decisions.

The day is divided into five sessions. Each session will start with a moderated panel between scientists, youth-serving practitioners, and young people, then move to discussions at the tables among the funders, scientists, practitioners, and policymakers here today. This format is intended to help us learn from all of you and to provide opportunities for all of you to learn from each other.

As you listen to the panels and discuss each topic and theme at your tables, we invite you to consider these questions:

- What can you learn from the people at your table, and what is important to share about your own work and expertise?
- How can a deeper understanding of the science of adolescent development help you in your work?
- Where are the gaps in this information, and what do you need from UCLA CDA that would help with your work?

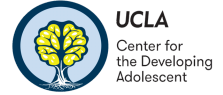
Sincerely,

Andrew Fuligni

Adriana Galván

Co-Executive Directors

AGENDA



9:00–9:30 a.m.

Welcome and Developmental Science Overview

Andrew Fuligni, PhD
Adriana Galván, PhD
Co-Executive Directors,
UCLA Center for the Developing Adolescent

9:30–10:15 a.m.

Keynote and Fireside Chat

Building a Stronger Bridge to Adulthood: Using Brain Science to Help Gen Z Thrive

Lisa Lawson, President & CEO,
The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Moderator: Adriana Galván

10:20–11:05 a.m.

Session 1: Navigating Uncertainty in the Future of Work for Young People

Preparing youth for an evolving labor market in the age of AI

Candice Odgers, UC Irvine
Mimi Haley, National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC)
Vicki Phillips, National Center on Education & the Economy
Jaime Jimenez, NYEC
Moderator: Ron Dahl, UC Berkeley

11:05–11:15 a.m.

Break

11:15–noon

Session 2: Later Adolescence as a Window for Developing Social and Relational Skills for the Workforce

Acquiring foundational skills for life and work

Margaret Sheridan, University of North Carolina
Michael Crawford, America Succeeds
Laura Handy, Heart of Oregon Corps
Jackie Ramirez, Heart of Oregon Corps
Moderator: Karen Pittman, KP Catalysts

Noon–1:00 p.m.

Lunch

1:00–1:45 p.m.

Session 3: The Role of Purpose in Career Exploration & Pathways

Systems and programs that prepare youth for meaningful economic success

Anthony Burrow, Cornell University

Erica Bouris, Jobs for the Future

Kate Naranjo, Year Up United

Walter Mendez, Year Up United

Moderator: Joanna Williams, Search Institute

1:45–2:30 p.m.

Session 4: Identity and the Pathways to Post-Secondary Opportunities

Providing pathways for young people to access and complete post-secondary education

Rebecca Covarrubias, UC Santa Cruz

Christine Brongniart, CUNY ASAP | ACE

Anthony Haddaway, Medgar Evers College CUNY ASAP

Naomi Castro, Career Ladders Project

Moderator: Shelley Waters Boots, FAST Funders

2:30–3:00 p.m.

Break

3:00–3:45 p.m.

Session 5: Youth Decision Making in Financial Support and Benefits Access

Developmentally aligned approaches to providing financial resources during the transition to adulthood

Catherine Hartley, New York University

Paige Swanstein, Students Basic Needs Coalition

Claudia Villicaña, MyPath

William Navarrete Moreno, Aspen Institute Financial Security Program

Moderator: Joanna Smith-Ramani, Aspen Institute Financial Security Program

3:45–5:00 p.m.

Closing Remarks & Reception

UCLA CENTER FOR THE DEVELOPING ADOLESCENT

The UCLA Center for the Developing Adolescent recognizes adolescence as a pivotal period of opportunity to shape positive outcomes for all young people. We work toward a world in which every adolescent has what they need to build their future and contribute to their community. Our mission is to promote the integration of developmental science into policies, practices, and public discourse and advance a shared commitment to creating the conditions that support adolescents.



Andrew Fuligni, PhD Co-Executive Director

Andrew is co-executive director of the UCLA Center for the Developing Adolescent and a professor in the departments of Psychology and Psychiatry at UCLA. He is also director of the Adolescent Development Lab at UCLA. Andrew's research focuses on the interaction between sociocultural experiences and biobehavioral development among adolescents from diverse ethnic, immigrant, and economic backgrounds.



Adriana Galván, PhD Co-Executive Director

Adriana is co-executive director of the UCLA Center for the Developing Adolescent and dean of undergraduate education at UCLA. She is also a professor in the Department of Psychology and director of the Developmental Neuroscience Laboratory at UCLA. She is a faculty affiliate of the UCLA Brain Research Institute and the UCLA Neuroscience Interdepartmental Program. Adriana's work examines how neurobiological changes impact behavioral development during adolescence, particularly in the areas of decision making, risk taking, and emotional health.

Building a Stronger Bridge to Adulthood— Using Brain Science to Help Gen Z Thrive



Lisa Lawson, JD

President and CEO, Annie E. Casey Foundation

Lisa M. Lawson is president and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a national philanthropy committed to improving outcomes for children, youth, and families. Since taking the helm in 2019, she has championed bold initiatives, including Thrive by 25®, which focuses on the well-being of Generation Z. She is the author of *Thrive*, a book about these efforts and how to better see and serve young people. Lawson previously served as Casey’s executive vice president and chief program officer. She spent 14 years at UPS in executive roles and serves on numerous boards. She holds degrees from UVA and Michigan Law, and an honorary doctorate from Livingstone College.

Navigating Uncertainty in the Future of Work for Young People



Moderator

Ron Dahl, MD

Professor, UC Berkeley School of Public Health

Ron is chair of UCLA CDA's advisory board and was the founding director of CDA. He is also the host of CDA's podcast, *Adaptivity: The Science of Adolescence*. He is a distinguished professor in the School of Public Health at UC Berkeley, served for 12 years as director of the Institute of Human Development, previously served as president of the Society for Research on Child Development, and was one of the founding editors of the journal *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*.



Candice Odgers, PhD

Associate Dean and Chancellor's Professor, UC Irvine

Candice Odgers is associate dean for research and a chancellor's professor of psychology and informatics at UC Irvine. She co-directs the Child & Brain Development Program at the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research and has led research on adolescent mental health for over 20 years. She is the author of over 100 publications, has been internationally recognized for her scientific contributions, and has had her work broadly disseminated via major media and policy organizations.



Mimi Haley, PhD

Executive Director, National Youth Employment Coalition

Mary Ann (Mimi) Haley is the executive director of the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC). Prior to joining NYEC, Dr. Haley served as deputy director/interim CEO of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. Over her career, she has designed and led projects in areas such as youth mental health, reentry, juvenile justice, foster care youth, flexible funding, childcare assistance, youth leadership, and housing interventions. She is also a recovering academic, having published and taught in the field of political economic development, and currently serves as the chair of the Connecticut Governor's Office of Workforce Strategies DEIA Youth Subcommittee.

PANELISTS: Session 1 (cont.)



Vicki Phillips, PhD

President and CEO, National Center for Education & Economy (NCEE)

Dr. Vicki Phillips is president and CEO of the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), where she leads NCEE's work to help states, districts, and schools discover, design, and deliver high-performing education systems. At NCEE, Dr. Phillips guides a team of globally recognized researchers, experienced policymakers, and expert practitioners who collaborate with leaders around the world to create education systems that prepare young people for the modern demands of work and life. She previously served as director of education at the Gates Foundation, where she focused on ensuring all students graduate prepared to thrive in college, career, and life.



Jaime Jimenez

Youth Policy and Engagement Coordinator, National Youth Employment Coalition

Jaime Jimenez is a 23-year-old advocate, public speaker, and space fanatic who graduated from UCLA with a BA in business economics. He started his leadership journey at the Annie E. Casey Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential (LEAP) fellowship where he was exposed to NYEC's Youth Advisory Council. Jaime was also the host and speaker at the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC)'s Youth Days where he interviewed Dr. Reginald Hicks, director of facility workforce in the CHIPS Program Office in the Department of Commerce about how the CHIPS Act, designed to strengthen US semiconductor research, development, and manufacturing, can support opportunity youth, practitioners in workforce development, and the growing apprenticeship culture. Jaime's dream is to become a space lawyer, and it is this creative mixture of disciplines that he hopes to inspire in other youth.

PANELISTS: Session 2

Later Adolescence as a Window for Developing Social and Relational Skills for the Workforce



Moderator

Karen Pittman, MA

Partner, Knowledge to Power Catalysts

Karen has made a career of starting organizations that promote youth development, including the Forum for Youth Investment, co-founded with Merita Irby in 1998. She stepped out of the CEO role in 2022 to create Knowledge to Power Catalysts (KP Catalysts) as a base for supporting timely projects. In 2025, KP Catalysts assumed management of the online publication Youth Today and created the Alliance for Youth Thriving to ensure equitable, year-round access to high-quality, real-world learning experiences for adolescents. Karen is a prolific author and a sought-after advisor. She was recently appointed to the National Commission for Ecosystems and awarded the NEA Foundation's 2026 Outstanding Service to Public Education Award.



Margaret Sheridan, PhD

Professor, UNC Chapel Hill

Margaret Sheridan is a professor in the Clinical and Developmental Psychology Programs at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Dr. Sheridan and her team examine how early life adversity impacts development leading to risk for psychopathology in adolescence. Dr. Sheridan and her colleague developed, and then extensively tested, the dimensional model of adversity and psychopathology (DMAP), which delineates the neural pathways through which adversity impacts health for better targeting interventions. Her research program combines cutting-edge research techniques with clear theoretical frameworks, often grounded in pre-clinical studies, to move the field forward and positively impact child health.

PANELISTS: Session 2 (cont.)



Michael Crawford, PhD **VP of Strategic Initiatives, America Succeeds**

Michael Crawford is the VP of strategic initiatives at America Succeeds, where he leads efforts to advance durable skills. Prior to this role, Michael held positions in research, strategy, and partnerships at organizations including the VELA Education Fund, Western Governors University, Real World Scholars, and the Kauffman Foundation. Michael holds a BA in psychology from the University of Michigan, an MS in sport psychology from Michigan State University, and a PhD in educational psychology from the University of Kansas.



Laura Handy, MA **Executive Director, Heart of Oregon Corps**

Laura is a transformative leader with proven experience facilitating change, developing people, building partnerships, increasing organizational capacity, and advocating for opportunity youth. She has served as the director of Heart of Oregon Corps since 2012. She earned an MA in transformative leadership from the California Institute of Integral Studies and a BA in rhetoric and composition, women's studies from the University of Puget Sound.



Jackie Ramirez **Team Leader, Heart of Oregon Corps**

Jackie is an AmeriCorps Team Leader at Heart of Oregon Corps' Food Heroes Program, and previously earned her high school diploma and pre-apprenticeship certification at Heart of Oregon Corps YouthBuild. She is thriving while building leadership skills through service at a community food program her own family once benefited from. She is proud of being able to use her Spanish bilingual skills to help make guests at the Food Pantry feel welcome. She dreams of owning her own construction business in the future.

PANELISTS: Session 3

The Role of Purpose in Career Exploration & Pathways



Moderator

Joanna Williams, PhD
Senior Director of Research, Search Institute

Joanna is the senior director of research at Search Institute. She was previously an associate professor in applied developmental science at the University of Virginia and school psychology at Rutgers University, where her research focused on race, identity, and positive youth development. She is also a faculty affiliate of both Youth-Nex: The University of Virginia Center to Promote Effective Youth Development and the Center for Parent and Teen Communication.



Anthony Burrow, PhD
Director, Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research at Cornell University

Anthony Burrow is the Ferris Family Associate Professor of Life Course Studies in the Department of Psychology at Cornell University. He is also director of the Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research and director of the Purpose Science and Innovation Exchange, known as PSiX. In addition, he serves as the senior associate dean of outreach and extension at Cornell Human Ecology.



Erica Bouris, PhD
Senior Director, Jobs for the Future

Erica Bouris serves as a senior director at Jobs for the Future (JFF), leading a portfolio focused on next-generation workers. Dr. Bouris brings more than 25 years of experience across nonprofits, higher education, and government. With decades-long work as a practitioner delivering economic opportunity programs to thousands of low-income individuals and deep experience leading technical assistance, capacity-building, and research and evaluation initiatives at the regional, national, and global scale, Dr. Bouris remains inspired by the possibility of driving and sustaining change that helps people thrive.

PANELISTS: Session 3 (cont.)



Kate Naranjo, MPP
Director of Solution Development,
Year Up United

Kate Naranjo has spent her career working to create more opportunity for low-income workers and families. At Year Up United (YUU), she builds strategies and solutions for increased impact. Like many YUU staff, she is a coach for young adults completing the program. At Opportunity@Work, she started the policy function for skills-based hiring for government jobs. She also led research projects with Dr. Luke Shaefer at Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan. She holds an MPP from University of Michigan and a BA from Tufts University, but learned her most important skills from two years of Americorps service with City Year.



Walter Mendez
Chair of Los Angeles Alumni Board,
Year Up United

Walter Mendez is the chair of Year Up United's Los Angeles Alumni Board and a creative director and technologist. Born in Panama, raised in Little Rock, and building in Los Angeles, Walter's work sits at the intersection of AI literacy, blockchain technology, and community empowerment. He is passionate about making emerging technology accessible and ethical—ensuring that advances in AI and Web3 create opportunity for underrepresented communities.

PANELISTS: Session 4

Identity and the Pathways to Post-Secondary Opportunities



Moderator

Shelley Waters Boots, MPA

Director, Funders for Adolescent Science Translation

Shelley Waters Boots brings over 25 years of experience as a writer, researcher, and policy expert on issues affecting the lives of low-income children and families. She runs a philanthropic consulting business where she advises a number of leading foundations on investment strategy, research, policy, and communications. With a passion for collaboration and integrative design thinking, Shelley works to bridge people, ideas, and actions to create positive change for families. In the past, she was a researcher at the Urban Institute and has honed additional skills in senior positions at the New America Foundation and the Children's Defense Fund. She holds a BA from Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, and an MPA from the Maxwell School in Syracuse, NY. She is a proud mom to two college-aged young adults.



Rebecca Covarrubias, PhD

Professor of Psychology, UC Santa Cruz

Rebecca Covarrubias is a professor of psychology at UC Santa Cruz and director of the Collaborative Research for Equity in Action (CREA) group. She focuses on topics related to community cultural wealth, educational equity and access, identity and the politics of belonging, and intersectionality and resistance within higher education settings. A first-generation college graduate, Covarrubias has co-founded and co-led several collectives—UCSC First Generation Initiative, Student Success Equity and Research Center, Center for Reimagining Leadership, Hispanic-Serving Institution Research Colectiva, Social Psychologists Standing For Our Science—with a shared mission to bridge research, policy, and practice and to reimagine higher education institutions.

PANELISTS: Session 4 (cont.)



Christine Brongniart, MS **Executive Director, City University of New York**

Christine Brongniart is an accomplished systems leader with over 20 years of experience advancing equity and student success across public and nonprofit sectors. As executive director and associate dean at the City University of New York, she oversees the nationally acclaimed ASAP and ACE programs, guiding large-scale operations, research initiatives, and strategic partnerships that drive transformational graduation outcomes. A recognized expert in scaling evidence-based models, Christine has raised more than \$50M to expand degree completion initiatives and leads national replication efforts now active at nearly 60 colleges.



Naomi Castro, PhD **Chief Program Officer, Career Ladders Project**

Naomi Castro leads Career Ladders Project's dual enrollment work and is widely recognized for her expertise on community college reform in California, serving as a California Education Policy Fellow (2019 to 2020) and providing legislative, regulatory, and policy advising to strategic college leaders. She holds a doctorate in educational leadership, administration, and policy from Pepperdine University and a master's in teaching and teacher education from the University of Arizona. She serves as an adjunct professor of education at Compton College, and previously as Pathways Director at El Camino College and as a middle and high school teacher and principal in Tucson, Arizona.



Anthony Haddaway **Student Ambassador, CUNY & ASAP**

Anthony Haddaway is a student majoring in financial economics and minoring in public administration at CUNY Medgar Evers College. He is an ASAP student and also serves as an ASAP Student Ambassador, supporting engagement and retention initiatives that advance higher education access while addressing barriers to completion for students.

PANELISTS: Session 5

Youth Decision Making in Financial Support and Benefits Access



Moderator

Joanna Smith-Ramani, MPP
Co-Executive Director,
Aspen Institute Financial Security Program

Joanna Smith-Ramani is co-executive director of the Aspen Institute Financial Security Program (FSP), a leading national voice on Americans' financial security. Joanna has more than 20 years of experience across community, personal finance, and financial security. Before joining FSP, Joanna served as Senior Innovation Director at Commonwealth, leading the unit that designs, tests, and evaluates promising financial service innovations. Joanna holds a master of public policy degree from the Harvard Kennedy School and a BA in Urban Studies from Barnard College, Columbia University. Joanna also serves on the boards of Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI), the CASH Campaign of Maryland, and Business for America's Future Fund.



Catherine Hartley, PhD
Professor of Psychology and Neural Science, NYU

Catherine Hartley is a professor of psychology and neural science at New York University. Her research characterizes how dynamic changes in brain circuits across adolescence influence the learning and decision-making processes that support adaptive goal-directed behavior, leveraging an array of methodological techniques, including neuroimaging, psychophysiology, experience sampling, and computational modeling. Her work has been recognized with awards from the National Academy of Sciences, the Association for Psychological Science, the Society for Neuroeconomics, the Cognitive Neuroscience Society, and the Social Affective Neuroscience Society. A central goal of her research is to understand the developmental mechanisms underpinning psychological vulnerability and resilience.

PANELISTS: Session 5 (cont.)



Paige Swanstein
Co-Founder and Executive Director,
Student Basic Needs Coalition

Paige Swanstein is the co-founder & executive director of the Student Basic Needs Coalition, a nonprofit expanding access to public benefits and basic needs supports for college students. She leads the development of peer-led outreach models and technology tools that have helped refer more than 50,000 students to over \$100M in SNAP and Medicaid benefits. Paige has been featured in Forbes and Fast Company and regularly advises campuses and policymakers on strategies to close the benefits gap.



Claudia Villicaña, MPP
Chief Program Officer, MyPath

Claudia Villicaña is a youth advocate and chief program officer at MyPath, where she leads national programs that introduce financial concepts at developmentally appropriate moments in young people's lives. Her work focuses on supporting adolescents and young adults as they navigate key transitions and financial firsts. Previously, Claudia spent nine years at UC Berkeley, building a nationally recognized peer-to-peer financial wellness program serving more than 10,000 students annually.



William Navarrete Moreno
Community Advisory Group Member, Aspen Institute

William Navarrete Moreno serves on the Aspen Institute Financial Security Program Community Advisory Group and is a 2024 Obama-Chesky Voyager Scholar studying human biology and public health in Colorado. Through research at Harvard and Johns Hopkins, he examined how structural racism creates psychophysiological health disparities among youth, directly impacting their economic mobility. As founder of TheCHANGEproject, a health equity nonprofit, he mobilizes young people as policy advocates and community organizers, successfully championing Colorado's Hospital Community Benefit Bill. William also leads Change Labs, developing AI tools to democratize healthcare access.



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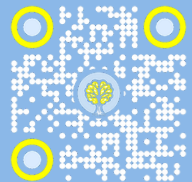
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