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Andrew Masuda

College of Engineering launches UCSB's first fully online master's degree program

The Robert Mehrabian College of Engineering (COE) at UC Santa Barbara will launch the university's first fully online master's degree program, an expansion of UCSB's engineering curriculum designed for working professionals. The new Master of Engineering and Technology Leadership ([METL](#)) program marks a significant milestone for UCSB, extending the college's internationally recognized research excellence into a digitally native professional degree built for the modern engineering workforce around the globe.

Following approval by college and campus leadership, the program received final authorization from the University of California and President James B. Milliken in April. The program's final approval is expected this month, when the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission will conduct its concluding review.

The inaugural METL class will start in fall 2027, and the application window for admission opens in September.

"UC Santa Barbara is excited to offer the Master of Engineering and Technology Leadership, which builds on the interdisciplinary strengths of our campus and our Robert Mehrabian College of Engineering to provide a truly innovative professional

degree program bridging technology, business, and management,” said UCSB Chancellor [Dennis Assanis](#). “I congratulate our campus colleagues who have worked tremendously hard to create this distinctive new online program as part of our unwavering commitment to advance the frontiers of research education and prepare our students for success.”

Designed for early- to mid-career technology professionals, METL is an interdisciplinary professional master’s program combining advanced technical training with leadership, business and technology management education. The fully online format is structured so that students can continue to work while earning a UCSB engineering degree, regardless of geographic location or time zone.

“This program represents a major milestone for UC Santa Barbara,” said [Umesh Mishra](#), dean of The Robert Mehrabian College of Engineering. “METL allows us to extend UCSB’s engineering excellence beyond campus in a way that meets the realities of today’s workforce — providing flexibility, relevance, and rigor for professionals who are ready to step into leadership roles.”

METL was developed in response to growing industry demand for professionals who possess both deep technical expertise and the ability to lead teams, manage complex systems, and translate innovation into impact. The program is designed to accelerate career advancement for professionals seeking to move into technical leadership, management and executive roles.

Initially, the 38-unit program offers four specialization tracks that align with areas where UCSB is internationally recognized for research excellence and industry engagement: semiconductor technology, quantum information, AI and machine learning for science and technology and technology management.

“These fields are central to today’s most pressing technological challenges, and they are disciplines in which our faculty have shaped industries, advanced fundamental science, and trained generations of innovators,” said Mishra. “METL builds directly on that legacy, translating UCSB’s research excellence into a flexible, professionally focused program designed to meet the needs of the modern engineering workforce.”

Students will complete a combination of advanced technical coursework, core leadership and management courses taught by the Department of Technology Management, seminars and workshops led by faculty and industry experts, and a culminating capstone project, which may be completed online, at a company, or in a

UCSB research lab during the summer.

METL's curriculum is delivered through a blend of pre-recorded video content, readings and assignments, high-quality multimedia coursework and live sessions designed to maximize interaction with faculty, peers, and industry leaders. The structure will enable students to balance coursework with professional and personal responsibilities while maintaining the academic rigor expected of a UCSB engineering degree.

The program can be completed in as little as 10 months with full-time participation, or part-time students can take up to four years, providing flexibility for working professionals at different career stages.

Because METL is delivered fully online, it allows UCSB to expand graduate enrollment without increasing on-campus headcount, thus addressing long-standing physical and housing constraints while creating a scalable model for future growth in professional education.

A defining feature of METL is its strong integration with industry. Courses and seminars will be taught by a combination of UCSB faculty and experienced industry professionals, and capstone projects will be developed in partnership with corporate collaborators. These relationships are designed to ensure that graduates gain immediately applicable skills and are well positioned for career advancement within their organizations or the broader technology sector.

Market analyses and employer feedback conducted during program development indicate strong demand for graduates with METL's blended technical-leadership skill set, particularly in areas critical to national competitiveness, such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence and emerging quantum technologies.

"METL was intentionally designed from the ground up as an online program—not as a retrofit of an on-campus degree," said [Ilan Ben-Yaacov](#), COE associate dean for online education and lead designer of the program. "That allowed us to rethink how advanced engineering education can be delivered to working professionals — combining faculty-led coursework with modular, high-quality digital content and meaningful interaction with industry leaders. The result is a program that preserves the depth and excellence of a UCSB engineering degree while making it accessible to learners wherever they are in the world."

Courses and materials are being developed by more than 20 faculty members and members of industry.

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About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.