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An elite university is offering a fast-track program for tech leaders that's more competitive than Stanford



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University of California, Berkeley, is debuting a new program that aims to launch the "tech leaders of tomorrow."

Eric Risberg/AP

Some of the biggest names in tech are known for dropping out of the [best colleges in](#) the US.

Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates, and Steve Jobs all left school before graduation to launch companies. Peter Thiel [has given millions to young entrepreneurs](#) willing to pursue their startups dreams instead of a diploma. These successes helped popularize the belief that dropping out of college can be a shortcut to success in Silicon Valley ([though that's often not the case.](#))

That hasn't stopped one university from broadening its offerings for budding entrepreneurs.

A new program at the University of California, Berkeley, wants to launch future tech leaders by teaching the wide variety of skills required of them in the real world. The [Management, Entrepreneurship, & Technology \(MET\) Program](#) will provide students with dual degrees in business and engineering in four years, in the hopes of giving graduates a command of leadership and technology skills and putting them on an accelerated path to CEO.

In the fall of 2017, Berkeley will enroll about 30 students in the inaugural class.

The program has already caught the attention of a top investment firm. Kleiner Perkins announced it will give an interview to every incoming MET student for its [fellowship](#), which lets students join its portfolio companies in design and engineering roles for the summer.

Michael Grimes, managing director at Morgan Stanley and one of Silicon Valley's [most influential dealmakers](#), has been pitching Berkeley (his alma mater) on a program like this for years. Sitting in his office, which is decorated with certificates and trophies commemorating the IPOs he led for Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Snapchat, Grimes offers a vision of MET as a tech industry pipeline.

"It looks like it is going to be the most elite tech leader factory there is," says Grimes, who is also a founding advisory board member of MET.



Quinn McElroy and the rest of the UC Rally Committee lead football fans to the California Memorial Stadium.

Keegan Houser and Facebook/UCBerkeley

Its integrated curriculum combines classes in Berkeley's top-ranked Haas School of Business and the College of Engineering, giving students an understanding of the business and technology mechanisms that run the tech industry. Students will be mentored by faculty of both schools, and have access to events, career fairs, and "field days" at major tech companies.

Berkeley students have always had the option to earn dual degrees in the two colleges, but the sheer number of academic credits required has deterred most. (Grimes knows of one student to do it in the last 20 years.) MET cuts back the electives requirements, so students won't be as overwhelmed, and gives them priority for getting into classes that count toward their majors.

Grimes worried that business and engineering students would come to resent MET students, because they receive special treatment. An analogy provided by a colleague calmed those fears.

"It's like the Navy Seals. They're going through a workload that nobody else is enduring," Grimes says. "Even though not every midshipman is doing the same thing, they respect the ones standing out in the cold water longer, up before the sun rises, to do extra reps."



The University of California, Berkeley, campus.

Melia Robinson/Business Insider

The Haas School and the College of Engineering raised more than \$10 million in endowments for the new program. Over 2,500 high school seniors applied for the 30 spots in MET, making it more selective than Harvard, MIT, and Stanford, with an acceptance rate of less than 2%.

Students have until May 1 to accept their invitations to join the inaugural class.

Part of the pitch for MET, which was largely inspired by the University of Pennsylvania's Jerome Fisher Program in Management and Technology (M&T), is that it offers a fast-track to C-suite roles in tech. Plenty of entrepreneurs study computer science and engineering in their undergraduate years, gain three to five years of work experience, and go on to earn their MBA. MET streamlines that path by teaching both disciplines at the same time.

Marjorie DeGraca, executive director of MET, says she saw a large number of engineers walk through her door during her time as the assistant dean of admissions at the Haas School.

"They're coming back because their career has been stopped or because they're not able to make that transition into more of a business function, because they've been labeled in a certain way," DeGraca says.

Andy Chen, a partner at Kleiner Perkins who heads up the firm's Fellows Program and recruits heavily from UPenn's M&T program, is promising interviews to every incoming freshman at MET.

"You tend to find that the engineer that just doesn't understand life beyond code is operating at 50% capacity. To have a broader understanding of the business is super important, especially when you're the founder of a company or you're an early employee at a company," Chen says.

Grimes is hopeful that the next Mark Zuckerberg and Evan Spiegel might graduate from Berkeley. And someday, he wants to make them billionaires. "I'll do their IPOs," he says.

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