

The Fast Track to Being a CEO-Engineer

- A dual undergraduate program in engineering and business is gaining traction with students.

Shubham Banerjee is a typical teenager—playing football, losing himself in video games, doing homework—except when it comes to his career ambitions. The high school senior says he's known for several years that he wants to found and lead a company, to be a "legendary CEO." The founding part should come easy: At age 13, Banerjee started a company that makes Braille printers.

Last spring, as he started to consider colleges, he learned of a program at the University of California-Berkeley that would allow him to earn both a bachelor of science in engineering and a bachelor of business in four years. He recently was notified that he's among the fewer than 3 percent of about 2,500 applicants accepted into the incoming freshman class in Berkeley's Management, Entrepreneurship, & Technology (MET) program.

Interest in such combined programs is increasing among students and prospective employers, according to Phil Kaminsky, the executive associate dean at UC-Berkeley's college of engineering, and Michael Grimes, the head of

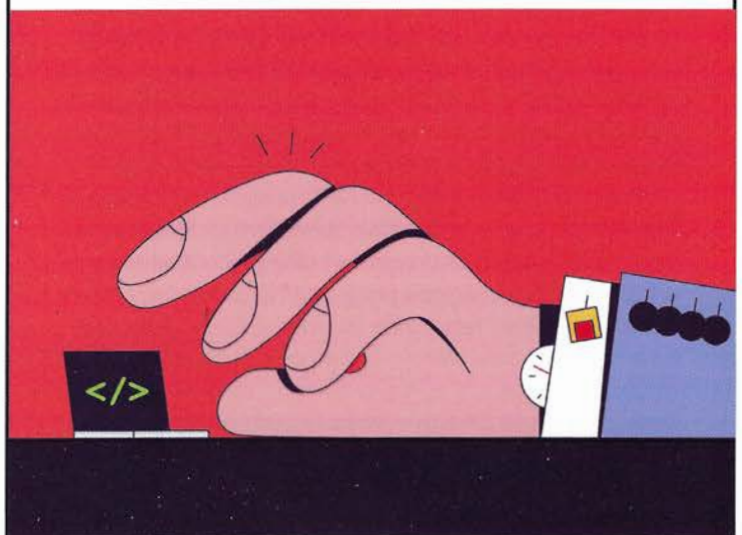
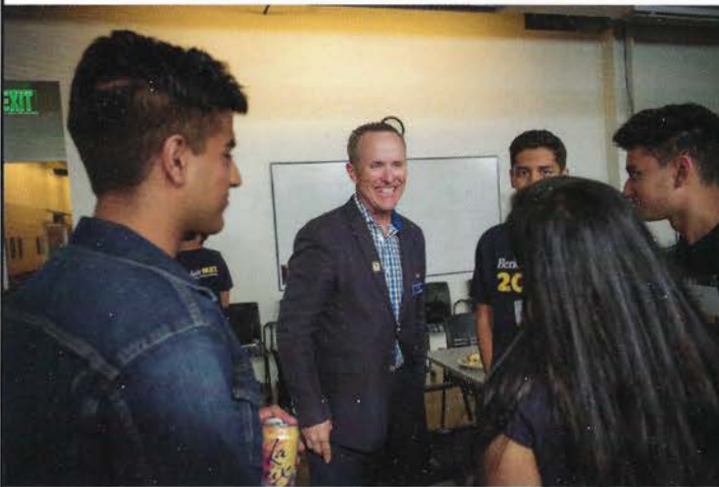


ILLUSTRATION: JUSTYNA STASIK FOR BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK

technology banking at Morgan Stanley. "There is a shortage of coders who lead and leaders who code," Grimes says. "It's like looking for a needle in the haystack to find someone who is both."

Grimes pitched Berkeley, his undergraduate alma mater, on the concept of MET in 2016 and offered to donate a significant portion of the \$10 million endowment needed to get it off the ground. He was inspired, he says, by the Jerome Fisher Program in Management & Technology at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, started in 1977. His son graduated from that program.

Grimes also knows several of that program's graduates, including Herald Chen, who leads the technology, media, and telecommunications team in the Americas for the private equity firm KKR & Co. "Having people that are already more multifaceted, as opposed to going to engineering undergrad and then business school, it's a lot more efficient and a lot more grounding," Chen says. "The engineering background gives you more credibility



Grimes speaks to freshman students enrolled in the MET program during an orientation on the UC Berkley on Aug. 17, 2018. PHOTOGRAPHER: DAVID PAUL MORRIS/BLOOMBERG

to sit with the engineers in the room.”

In its first year and a half—the inaugural class started in the fall of 2017—MET has drawn students from the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. Freshman Diego González chose Berkeley-MET over MIT and Carnegie Mellon’s school of computer science. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, González was founder of his high school’s entrepreneurship club and the U.S. Presidential Scholar winner from the island in April 2018. Berkeley’s location, close to Silicon Valley, was appealing—he wanted to be in the thick of the tech industry. This summer, González will intern at Eventbrite, the ticketing company based in San Francisco.

Berkeley quickly got on board with the idea after the pitch. Grimes and his reputation in the tech industry—he’s overseen some of the biggest tech deals of the past decade, including Facebook Inc.’s and Google’s initial public offerings—lend a lot of credibility to the program, according to several Berkeley faculty and administrators involved in creating MET. Still, rolling out MET presented challenges. “Berkeley is a large institution,” says former Haas School Dean Rich Lyons. “When you start talking about adding new programs and dual degree programs,” there are many questions to address: “How does the revenue flow? Who pays for what? What are the curriculum requirements?”

Grimes doesn’t have a formal role at MET—he devotes a lot of time to connecting students and graduates with potential employers, carrying students’ résumés in a folder or on a USB drive as he goes about



Kelley Han, a freshman enrolled in the MET program, center, listens to Grimes during orientation. PHOTOGRAPHER: DAVID PAUL MORRIS/ BLOOMBERG

his day job, meeting with the world’s top technology execs. And he’s the program’s biggest champion—the vanity plate on his Tesla reads BKLYMET. “We are finding those needles,” he says, “and putting them in a group of needles just as unique as they are.” —Alex Barinka and Olivia Zaleski

THE BOTTOM LINE Students and prospective employers, especially in the tech sector, increasingly are interested in dual programs such as Berkeley’s MET, giving them an edge in their postgraduate job search.

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Berkeley M.E.T.
Management, Entrepreneurship, & Technology