

enterprise

YOLO COUNTY NEWS

Local News

UCD receives funding for blockchain education and research

By Caleb Hampton

MouseBelt, a blockchain accelerator, has announced a new partnership with UC Davis, UC Los Angeles and UC Santa Barbara.

The blockchain promoter plans to invest \$500,000 for student projects and another \$500,000 to fund researchers, spread between the three campuses. It also plans to support as many as five early-stage companies by investing up to \$100,000 in each one — MouseBelt would take a percentage of equity — through its new UC Blockchain Entrepreneurship program.

By investing in research and education on UC campuses, MouseBelt aims to advance blockchain technology while helping the University of California meet growing demand from students who are keen to learn about the emerging technology.

Professor Mohammad Sadoghi currently offers UC Davis' only blockchain class, which is reserved for graduate students. Sadoghi says there is a lot of demand from students for more opportunities to learn about the blockchain technology. "There has been enormous interest," Sadoghi says, estimating that his class' waitlist might get up to 30 students.

Without any undergraduate courses dedicated to blockchain, undergraduates have formed a student group, called Blockchain at Davis, which Sadoghi advises. While MouseBelt's investment won't fund any new classes or faculty, students can apply for support for independent projects.

In large part, MouseBelt's investment has not been made up front but has allocated funding for students and faculty who apply for it. "What we have put in place with MouseBelt is an extensive agreement that allows a formal path for students and faculty to apply for funding," Sadoghi says.

In the last few years, blockchain has emerged as a technology that could revolutionize the way that data management and transaction processing are done. Originally devised for digital currencies like Bitcoin, blockchain is a growing list of records that serves as a public transaction ledger.

Sadoghi, who has authored multiple books on transaction processing, calls the blockchain technology a paradigm shift. With blockchain, "the information is not stored in a single place. It is decentralized. Everyone has the information," Sadoghi says. Because of this, he says the technology can impact the fabric of society, making it more democratic and increasing integrity, accountability and transparency in the way society tracks financial transactions and banking.

MouseBelt Capital has invested over \$40 million across more than 60 blockchain projects, including working with student association-run programs at Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge.

"We aim to help these universities become a driving force for innovation in the blockchain space, as well as provide students and researchers with the opportunity for both theoretical and industry experience," Ashlie Meredith, the Program Director at MouseBelt University, said in a press release.

MouseBelt says the academic grants will also connect researchers with partners in the blockchain industry to fund projects in alternate cryptographics, post-quantum cryptography and blockchain peer-to-peer networks.



UC Davis computer science professor Mohammed Sadoghi. Courtesy photo

Sadoghi hopes this investment will help to make UC Davis a blockchain hub. "I'm excited and very happy to be part of this," he says. "I think the students are also really excited and appreciate the opportunities."

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Details

For individuals interested in partnering with MouseBelt, the following are key dates for academic grants and the entrepreneurship program:

Academic Grants

Sept. 15: Cross-campus meetings

Nov. 1: Research proposals due

Nov. 21: Introduction to external funding partners

Entrepreneurship Program:

Sept. 15: Program launch

Jan. 1: Proposals due

Feb. 1: Announce investment companies

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