

2025 CCST Science & Technology Policy Fellows

PhD scientists, engineers, and social scientists making California's policies #StrongerWithScience.



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2025 Placements Celebrating 16 Years of Fellows

The 2025 Fellows arrived at CCST's offices on November 1st to kick off their monthlong training program. From hometowns and degree institutions that span the country and the globe, these **14 PhD scientists** have converged in Sacramento to help make California's policies stronger with science and technology.



CALIFORNIA STATE ASSEMBLY



John Bennett (he/him/his)

Assembly Privacy and Consumer Protection Committee

Originally from Southern California, John undertook studies in identifying novel drug targets in the parasite that causes malaria.

PhD: Chemistry, Stanford University

BA: Biochemistry, Classical Studies, Colgate University



Kristen Koenig (she/her/hers)

Assembly Utilities and Energy Committee

Born and raised in Sacramento, Kristen has researched and led a lab studying the evolution and development of visual systems across animals.

PhD: Cell & Molecular Biology, UT Austin

BA: Molecular and Cell Biology / History, UC Berkeley



Aron Judd "AJ" Mendiola (he/him/his)

Assembly Transportation Committee

Born and raised in the Philippines before immigrating to Los Angeles county. AJ moved to Davis to study epigenetics in neurodevelopment.

PhD: Biochemistry, Molecular, Cellular, Developmental Biology, UC Davis

MS: Chemistry, Biochemistry Option and **BS:** Biochemistry, Cal State LA



Julia Mouat (she/her/hers)

Assembly Local Government Committee

Born and raised in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Julia moved to northern CA to study multigenerational genetic and environmental risk factors for autism.

PhD: Integrative Genetics and Genomics, UC Davis

BS: Microbiology, University of Pittsburgh

EXECUTIVE BRANCH



Jessica Bolivar (she/her/hers)

California Natural Resources Agency

Inspired by a professor who recognized her potential, Jessica embraced the opportunity to delve into the world of Cell and Molecular Biology.

PhD: Biochemistry, Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology, UC Davis

BS: Biology with a concentration in Botany, SF State University



Hannah Griggs (she/her/hers)

California Energy Commission, Office of Chair Hochschild

An astrophysicist turned energy scientist, Hannah studied the cascading effects of outages on energy infrastructure.

PhD: Physics, Georgia Institute of Technology

BA: Physics & Mathematics, Bryn Mawr College



Ayana Henderson (she/her/hers)

**Department of Toxic Substances Control,
Office of Legislation and Regulatory Review**

Originally from the D.C./Maryland area, Ayana moved to Boston to explore the reproductive health effects of chemicals found in consumer products.

PhD: Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Harvard University

BS: Biological Sciences, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

CALIFORNIA STATE SENATE



Adam Cooper (he/him/his)

Senator Ben Allen

After moving from the Florida coast to San Diego, Adam studied how pollution in the ocean becomes airborne and which chemicals people are inhaling.

PhD: Atmospheric Chemistry, UC San Diego

BS: Chemistry, Stetson University



Benjamin Lu (he/him/his)

Senator Catherine Blakespear

A self-effacing East Coast transplant, Ben studied how cognitive and biological constraints shape the human decision-making process.

PhD: Neuroscience, New York University

BS: Psychology, Princeton University



Taylor McKie (she/her/hers)

Senate Environmental Quality Committee

With a love for the environment and people, Taylor's pursuing a career in climate policy to serve communities disproportionately impacted by climate change.

PhD: Oceanography, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego

BS: Environmental Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology



Jenna Roper (she/her/hers)

Senator Henry Stern

Arizona native and long-time Californian, Jenna developed low-cost diagnostic technologies to increase equitable access to healthcare.

PhD: Bioengineering, UC Riverside

BS: Bioengineering, UC Riverside



J Humphreys (they/them/theirs)

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment

Originally from Texas, they moved to California to study volcanic systems and pivoted to studying lithium in the Salton Sea Geothermal Field.

PhD: Geological Sciences, UC Riverside

BS: Geoscience, UT Dallas **BA:** Visual & Dramatic Arts, Rice University



Raisa Rahim (she/her/hers)

California Department of Food and Agriculture

Given her lived experience, Raisa wants to expand beyond her research in child ADHD interventions into the environmental justice sphere.

PhD: Neuroscience, UC Davis

BS: Psychology, with an Emphasis in Biology, UC Davis



Haynes Stephens (he/him/his)

California Air Resources Board, Office of the Chair

A Bay Area native, Haynes studied climate change impacts on agriculture as well as transmission infrastructure for energy planning.

PhD: Geophysical Sciences, University of Chicago

BA: Astronomy & Astrophysics, UC Berkeley