

William Hemond

- NextFlex

This summer I worked at NextFlex, an advanced manufacturing organization that runs a STEM education and outreach program called FlexFactor, which helps to introduce K-12 students to viable STEM educational and career pathways. The goal of FlexFactor is to create interest and awareness in an industry that students may not have otherwise considered by building 21st-century-skills and providing the educational experience needed to enter into the advanced manufacturing sector. Prior to the project, NextFlex did not have insight into how parents in the community perceive STEM pathways. The goal of my project was to improve how NextFlex communicates with parents of K-12 students about STEM pathways in community college in a way that reflects the specific differences of each community.

For the first four weeks, I served as a researcher investigating the role of parents in postsecondary education of their children in Santa Clara county, Los Angeles, and Anaheim. In order to do this, I did extensive research into demographic information about each area and the history and outreach techniques of NextFlex's four collegiate partners. I also scheduled interviews with directors at each community college as well as teachers who the community colleges interfaced with and prepared corresponding interview protocols to gather consistent information from every region.



After finishing the in-person qualitative interviews, I had to figure out best practices for coding and interpreting qualitative data. I then used the data analysis results to develop outreach improvements for NextFlex. Specifically, I created several research-backed visual printable half-sheets to be delivered to parents in an effort to communicate the most important messages uncovered during the process of my research.

Starting this fall, NextFlex will trial the visual components I produced across their entire California ecosystem. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to learn so much about educational pathways across different backgrounds in

America.