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UNIVERSITY

LUCAS COLLEGE AND
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS | CENTER FOR BANKING AND
FINANCIAL SERVICES

2026 Economic Summit



**Presented
by Western
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Friends and colleagues:

Welcome to the 2026 San José State University (SJSU) Economic Summit, presented by Western Alliance Bank. We are pleased to support the dedicated faculty and staff at SJSU and our co-sponsors to bring you this informative event.

This year, Dr. Christopher Thornberg of Beacon Economics returns to share his balanced perspective on the regional and national economies. Also joining us is Ahmad Thomas, CEO of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, to share his insights. We look forward to joining our clients, colleagues and community partners for this important discussion about our regional and national economic health.

It has been an exciting and dynamic year on a global stage for the South Bay. The Super Bowl, NCAA Men's Basketball playoffs and upcoming World Cup have spurred attention, investment and energy that further cemented the region as a center of innovation, talent and economic power. At the same time, the rapid evolution of AI is fueling new growth and redefining how businesses operate and scale domestically and globally. Silicon Valley and technology sectors continue to show resiliency and expansion amid geopolitical tensions and inflationary pressures.

This year, you may notice that summit materials include the Western Alliance brand. In 2025, Bridge Bank and five other banking divisions took on the Western Alliance Bank name and branding. This change helps customers by more clearly linking our strong regional roots and deep innovation sector expertise with Western Alliance's national resources and expertise across more than 30 industries and sectors. We're the same company, with the same people, processes and dedication to building and sustaining lasting client relationships. By any name, we remain singularly focused on helping businesses solve today's challenges to succeed tomorrow.

Thank you to San José State University for fostering this meaningful dialogue and preparing Silicon Valley's next generation of leaders. We are proud to be part of the Economic Summit conversation.

Bob Curley

Deputy Chief Banking Officer and NorCal Market Head
Western Alliance Bank, Member FDIC

San Jose State University Economic Summit

Panelists

Ahmad Thomas

CEO, Silicon Valley Leadership Group (SVLG)

Dr. Christopher Thornberg

Founding Partner of Beacon Economics, LLC

Moderator

Jay Ross

Partner, Lathrop GPM

Agenda

9:00am – 9:10am

Welcome

9:10am – 10:25am

Panel Presentations

10:25am – 11:00am

Q&A Discussion Moderated by Jay Ross

11:00am

Event Concludes

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Dr. Rangapriya (Priya) Kannan

Dr. Rangapriya (Priya) Kannan is the dean of the Lucas College and Graduate School of Business at San José State University (SJSU).

Dr. Kannan is a first-generation immigrant and holds the distinction of being the first woman and the first person from India to permanently lead the Lucas College and Graduate School of Business as dean. This year, she was recognized by the Silicon Valley Business Journal as a 2025 Woman of Influence.

Before joining SJSU, Dr. Kannan served as the associate dean of faculty and accreditation, and as a professor of strategic management, innovation, and entrepreneurship at the University of San Diego. She also holds a position as a research professor of entrepreneurship at the University of Exeter Business School, a leading institution in the UK.

Prior to her role as Associate Dean, Dr. Kannan was the inaugural chairperson of the i3 department at the Knauss School of Business, which encompasses Innovation and Entrepreneurship, International Business, and Interdisciplinary Studies. She also founded and directed the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Catalyzer (The CatalyZer).

Dr. Kannan's academic achievements include a PhD from the UCLA Anderson School of Management. She earned a Master's in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from SJSU, where she was recognized as a Sally Casanova Scholar. Additionally, she holds a Master's in Personnel Management & Industrial Relations from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (India), and is a graduate of the Cost and Works Accountants Society (India). Her undergraduate studies were completed at the University of Bombay (India), where she received a Bachelor of Commerce degree.

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Bob Curley

Bob Curley serves as Western Alliance Bank's Deputy Chief Banking Officer and NorCal Market Head where he has responsibility for the bank's special industries units as well as specialty finance products.

Mr. Curley has over 30 years of experience in lending, investment banking, venture debt and equity financing. Based in San Jose, he and his teams serve clients throughout the United States.

Mr. Curley joined the Bank in 2018 as Chief Credit Officer for the legacy brand Bridge Bank. He later became Deputy Chief Credit Officer for Western Alliance Bank and subsequently served as Chief Executive Officer for the Bridge Bank legacy brand until October 2025. Previously, he held senior positions in venture equity and debt financing at City National, Silicon Valley Bank, Pinnacle Ventures, Credit Suisse First Boston and Bank of America.

A Bay Area resident since 1995, Mr. Curley serves on the executive committee and board of the San Jose Chamber of Commerce. He has founded and coached several youth and high school lacrosse teams in the Bay Area and played collegiate lacrosse at Notre Dame.

He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance from the University of Notre Dame.

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Ahmad Thomas

Ahmad Thomas is the CEO of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group (SVLG), one of the nation's most dynamic business associations representing the global technology companies powering the innovation economy.

Thomas has catalyzed industry-leading initiatives to harness the potential of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, founding the Institute for California AI Policy (I-CAP) to help shape the regulatory posture needed to support its rapid development and deployment. He has also focused efforts with global technology brands to operationalize change and to reinvigorate STEM talent pipelines.

A former investment banker and senior Congressional aide, Thomas brings over 20 years of experience working both in and on behalf of businesses, social enterprises, and government, where he has honed a deep understanding of the essentiality of public-private partnerships and the intersection of commerce, public policy, and technology that drives Silicon Valley's innovation infrastructure.

He previously managed over \$15 billion in public infrastructure, social impact, and development financings across multiple sectors including most notably executing the first ever Social Bonds issuance for a non-profit in the U.S. municipal bond market.

Thomas serves on several boards aligned with his passions for technology, sports, and advancing opportunity, and was selected as a "Top 50 Diverse Board Candidate" by the Nasdaq Center for Board Excellence and Equilar.

He is a Life Member of the Council on Foreign Relations, an American Leadership Forum, Senior Fellow and is included in the Silicon Valley Business Journal "Power 100" – recognizing the most influential people working in Silicon Valley today.

Thomas holds a B.S. from Cornell University, Master's degree from the London School of Economics, and M.B.A. from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

For more details go to:

www.sjsu.edu/economicsummit/about/panelists.php

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Christopher Thornberg

Dr. Christopher Thornberg has been called many things throughout his career, but his favorite thing to be called is correct.

Notably, he predicted the collapse of the sub-prime real estate bubble in 2006 and the Great Recession that followed. During the Covid-19 pandemic he was one of the few economists on record to correctly push back against the forecasting community's panicked predictions of a depression. In the past two years, he has again stood against the grain, and stood out, for accurately forecasting that there would be no recession.

Dr. Thornberg left a teaching position at UCLA's Business School in 2006 to found Beacon Economics, and under his leadership, the firm has become one of the nation's most respected economic research organizations. He consults globally for private industry, cities, counties, and public agencies. A dynamic public speaker, he challenges audiences to question popular narratives – and to ask the right economic questions.

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Jay Ross

Jay Ross is a partner at Lathrop GPM and member of the firm's Litigation & Dispute Resolution practice group. Going back to his professional roots at Hopkins & Carley, San Jose has been the home for his law practice for nearly 36 years, representing clients in contract, business, and payment disputes, including representation of creditors in bankruptcy proceedings, as well as real estate disputes, including construction, commercial purchase and sale transactions, commercial landlord-tenant disputes, easements, and land use. Jay is a staunch advocate for the San Jose community, having served on the Boards of Directors for the San Jose Chamber of Commerce, Baseball San Jose, the Rotary Club of San Jose and its Foundation and the San Jose Repertory Theater. He has been selected among The Best Lawyers in America® since 2018. Jay has a J.D. from the University of California-Hastings and a B.A. in Political Science from the University of California-Santa Barbara.

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**The Center for Banking and Financial Services
congratulates the following recipients of the 2026
scholarships for their outstanding academic performance:**

Laila Al-Hafnawi

Rosalia Black

Annah Cardoza

Cyrus de Souza

Meghana Kumar

Gabriel Lin

Daxon Smith

Christopher Soto

Ryder Stimpel

Sivagami Subramanyan

Janelle Tran

Eva Yan Lia

SJSU | CENTER FOR BANKING AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

The mission of The Center for Banking and Financial Services (CBFS) is to establish valuable partnerships with financial institutions, provide an important complementary component to students' curricular education in the area of financial intermediation, and reward excellence among students through scholarships.

The CBFS:

- Promotes knowledge of topics related to financial intermediation through presentations and lectures. Experts bring to the classroom their professional experience and share with students the latest business practices.
- Develops and enhances students' leadership skills by organizing professional development events, where opportunities for interaction with professionals from the banking and financial services sector are offered.
- Organizes "study tours" where groups of selected students visit the headquarters of corporate partners. During such visits, students have the opportunity to learn about various business models and different career options in banking and financial services.
- Assists its corporate partners in the recruiting process for internships and permanent positions.
- Rewards excellence by awarding scholarships to the best and brightest students. Thanks to the financial support of our corporate partners, the CBFS has awarded \$434,000 in scholarships since its inception in 2009.

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