



Engineering Leadership Conference 2026

Step into a world where engineering expertise meets impactful leadership! The Schulich Engineering Leadership Conference is your gateway to connecting with trailblazing industry professionals and community engineering leaders who are shaping the future of the profession. Join us for this **free**, dynamic, in-person event on Saturday, March 21, 2026, to explore inspiring presentations on career growth, professionalism, career readiness, engineering trends and the vital role of leadership in engineering.

This is your chance to:

- **Learn from the Best:** Hear from industry experts and leaders about their journeys and the skills that set them apart.
- **Expand Your Network:** Connect with peers, industry representatives, and leadership experts to build meaningful relationships.
- **Boost Your Career:** Gain insights that will set you apart as a leader in the engineering profession.

Last year's conference brought together over 300 passionate students from diverse programs, including Certificates in Engineering Leadership and Engineering Entrepreneurship, PhD Catalyst, and MEng, and leaders from Schulich clubs, teams, and societies. This year, it is your turn to be part of this growing legacy.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to sharpen your leadership edge and become the engineering leader of tomorrow!

Sat, March 21, 2026, | 8:45 am-4:15 pm

Location: MacEwan Hall A/B and Schulich School of Engineering

Conference Schedule

Engineering Leadership Conference Saturday, March 21, 2026, 8:45 a.m. – 4:15 p.m.					
Block	Time	Room ENC 201	Room ENG 207	Room ENA 103	Room ENG 03
	8:45 – 9:15 a.m.	Registration – MacEwan Hall A/B			
1	9:15 – 9:30 a.m.	Opening Remarks – MacEwan Hall A/B			
	9:30 – 10 a.m.	Keynote – MacEwan Hall A/B Nannette Ho-Covernton - Engineering Leadership in a World that Won't Sit Still: Resilience, Collaboration and Courage to Build What's Next			
	10 – 10:15 a.m.	Move to concurrent sessions			
2	10:15 – 11 a.m.	W1 – Erin Thorp Don't Wait to Be Ready: Entrepreneurial Thinking for Early-Career Engineers	W2 – Jessica Soodeen Conflict Mastery: The Post-Grad Skill Nobody Teaches (But Everyone Needs)	W3 – Catherine Betancourt Lee Busy on Purpose: Time Management and Resiliency for School, Leadership, and Life	W4 – Shannon Giroux-Wong Building Relationships for Your Engineering Future
	11 – 11:15 a.m.	Move to concurrent sessions			
3	11:15 a.m. – 12 p.m.	W5 – Peter Zhou Farmer's method to Project Management 100 - An introduction to venture project management	W6 – Angie Alexander When the Script Disappears - From Controlled Competence to Adaptive Confidence for Early-Career Engineers	W7 – Kiran Somanchi Career 3.0: Designing your career for maximum fulfilment	W8 – James Tomasson Networking Beyond the Job: Building Mentors, Visibility, and Career Momentum
	12 – 1 p.m.	Lunch: MacEwan Hall A/B			
4	1 – 2:15 p.m.	Industry Panel: Early-Career Engineering Leadership: Experiences, Skills, and Growth – Room MacEwan Hall A/B Brian Brix – Sustainability Steven Ng – AI Megan Leslie – New paths Rajesh Krishnan – New Paths Moderator: Minli Huang			
	2:15 – 2:30 p.m.	Move to concurrent sessions			
5	2:30 – 3:15 p.m.	W9 – Jasmeet Singh Gugnani Is It Just Me, or Is Everything Still Sh*t?	W10 - Leda Stawnychko From Technical Expertise to Leadership Impact	W11 - Gregory Osmond Preparing a Speech for Beginners!	W12 (room ENA 201) – James Armstrong Hackers, Nations, and the World Stage: Why Geopolitics & Cybersecurity Matters
	3:15 – 3:25	Move to ENA 201 for closing remarks			
	3:25 – 4:15 p.m.	3:25 – 3:40 p.m.: Closing Remarks – ENA 201 – Dr. Jeff Pieper Supervisors and Interns of Merit: Celebration – ENA 201 3:40 – 4:15 p.m.: Networking – SSE Atrium and Social Staircase (and ENGG Lounge)			

(Subject to change without previous notice)

Keynote Speaker: Nannette Ho-Covernton

Executive Director, ETC Foundation

Room: MacEwan Hall A/B

Engineering Leadership in a World that Won't Sit Still: Resilience, Collaboration and Courage to Build What's Next

Come join me for a conversation about engineering leadership that's less about being perfect and more about being human — including the messy, funny, and very real parts we don't usually talk about. We'll explore resilience, innovation, collaboration, and the surprising power of transparency and vulnerability — not as buzzwords, but as things we all wrestle with. Hopefully you'll leave with a few insights, a bit of encouragement, and hopefully the comforting realization that none of us have this leadership thing fully figured out... and that's exactly why we get better together.



Nannette Ho-Covernton, BSc(Eng)'87 | Executive Director, ETC Foundation

A champion for service driven leadership, innovation and inclusion, Nannette is the 2025 Arch Award for Alumni Service recipient whose impact spans mentorship, volunteerism and transformational leadership in the energy sector and beyond.

Today, Nannette serves as Executive Director of the ETC Foundation, where she leads transformative initiatives that accelerate innovation and sustainability across sectors. Her work is rooted in collaboration, systems thinking, and a deep commitment to driving meaningful change.

Her career is a powerful reminder that leadership isn't measured by title — but by the people, communities and futures we help build. We can't wait to learn from her insights and lived experience.

10:15 am – 11:00 am

Workshop 1 Room: ENC 201

Session title: Don't Wait to Be Ready: Entrepreneurial Thinking for Early-Career Engineers

Entrepreneurial thinking isn't just for startups—it's a critical skill for engineers and business professionals navigating their first years in the workforce. This session challenges students to move beyond "doing what's asked" and think like value creators within organizations. Through real-world examples and practical reflection, students will learn how to take initiative, challenge assumptions, and leverage their unique influence—no matter their title or experience level. Participants will leave with a clearer understanding of how entrepreneurial thinking accelerates learning, builds credibility, and sets the foundation for early-career leadership.

Key Ideas Covered:

- **Be Proactive:** Look beyond the task to identify root causes, anticipate needs, and take action—even when the outcome isn't perfect. Early mistakes are powerful teachers when paired with ownership and reflection.
- **Challenge What You Think You Know:** Understand how beliefs and identity are formed, how the brain seeks evidence to confirm them, and why regularly updating your thinking is essential for growth and adaptability.
- **Use Your Points of Power:** Learn how to recognize and intentionally use different forms of power—position, relationships, personal credibility, task ownership, and knowledge—to influence outcomes and create impact early in your career.

Presenter: Erin Thorp, P.Eng | Founder / Owner, ELF Solutions Inc.

Erin Thorp is a speaker, author, and coach who helps leaders integrate empathy into their leadership approach, especially under pressure. Creator of the Tactical Empathy podcast and author of Inside Out Empathy, she provides actionable insights through keynotes and workshops that transform team dynamics.

Session 2, Room: ENG 207

Session title: Conflict Mastery: The Post-Grad Skill Nobody Teaches (But Everyone Needs)

Conflict management is one of the most critical skills you'll need after graduation, yet it's rarely taught in engineering programs. Drawing from her career as an international motorsports race engineer and Global Director of Engineering, Jessica shares real stories of savage conflict from both the racetrack and the boardroom - moments where milliseconds and millions were on the line. Through a race weekend analogy, you'll discover practical techniques to bring grace and compassion into high-pressure situations, learning how authentic active listening and emotional regulation can transform you from a good engineer into an exceptional leader.

Presenter: Jessica Soodeen, MEng | CEO, Emotion In Motion / O'Leary Mech Design Corp.

Jessica Soodeen (U of C Mech Engg grad) worked as an international motorsports race engineer turned leadership facilitator who bridges technical excellence and emotional intelligence. With a Master's in Motor Racing Competition and leading global engineering teams at Honeywell to VP of Engineering, she brings unique perspectives on high-stakes leadership from Formula racing circuits across Europe to corporate boardrooms. Now she specializes in Keynote Speaking and teaching Social and Emotional Intelligence to emerging and experienced leaders, equipping engineers with the relational skills that schools don't teach - but careers desperately need.

Workshop 3, Room: ENA 103

Session title: **Busy on Purpose: Time Management and Resiliency for School, Leadership, and Life**

Engineering programs demand a lot - intense coursework, group projects, deadlines and often extracurriculars to set you apart for things like scholarships, internships and most importantly - your future career. In this session, join Catherine for a session on time management techniques, how to tackle leadership challenges and how to practice resilience in your hectic daily life as an engineering student. Learn actionable techniques to stay productive, lead confidently and live intentionally!

Presenter: **Catherine Betancourt Lee, BSc, EIT | Medical Student, Cumming School of Medicine**

Catherine Betancourt Lee is now a first year medical student that completed her bachelor's degree in Biomedical Engineering at the University of Calgary. During her engineering degree, she was incredibly involved in the engineering community, including Women in Science and Engineering, Go Baby Go, the Engineering Students' Society, Scholar's Academy and the Canadian Federation of Engineering Students. She was also part of the planning committee for both the Canadian Engineering Leadership Conference and the Canadian Engineering Competition. She also participated in research, presenting her work at several conferences and serving as co-author on six publications. When she graduated, she worked at Boston Scientific before returning for medical school. In her free time she enjoys line dancing, playing music and staying active. With such a busy schedule, she's mastered different time management strategies, skillfully organizing her days to optimize productivity and maintain balance in all areas of her life.

Workshop 4, Room: ENG 03

Session title: **Building Relationships for Your Engineering Future**

Strong relationships are one of the most powerful career tools you can build as an engineering student—whether you're exploring career paths, searching for internships, or growing into a future leadership role. In this fast-paced, interactive workshop, you'll learn practical strategies to start networking with confidence and turn new connections into meaningful professional relationships.

Shannon Giroux-Wong, BSc, CCDP | Career & Internship Advisor, University of Calgary

Shannon is a National Certified Career Development Professional (CCDP). She is an experienced Career Development professional who strives to connect with individuals and explore ways to add value while supporting and empowering them on their unique career development journey. With a commitment to excellence, she aims to contribute her expertise and enthusiasm to further enhance the student experience and prepare post-secondary students for a successful transition into their careers.

She began her UCalgary journey 6 years ago as a Student Recruitment Specialist; the opportunity to work alongside the students more closely came in the form of the Engineering Student Centre (ESC) as a Master of Engineering Advisor. Re-connecting with her first passion career development in the Engineering Career Centre (ECC) three years ago as a Career Advisor was a dream realized. Prior to joining the UCalgary, she worked for the Calgary Board of Education in high schools for 10 years as a Career Advisor.

Shannon holds a BSc in Social Sciences (Psychology) and a minor in Management & Society from the University of Calgary. She has completed the Career and Academic Advising Certificate from the University of Calgary.

The Engineering Career Centre (ECC) supports our Engineering students from their first day through graduation. We connect industry with future engineers, partner on a variety of career events, from panel discussions to workshops. We support our students interested in the Engineering Career Practicum, early career readiness and preparedness. We oversee our Engineering Internship Program, for undergraduate and MEng students. Students are invited to connect with a Career Advisor via WaitWell.

11:15 am – 12:00 pm

Workshop 5, Room: ENC 201

Session title: Farmer's method to Project Management 100 - An introduction to venture project management

This session will provide students a view into different types of career success. Career success is generally viewed as a linear journey through life that involves working hard, delivering on results and achieving goals. Whilst this is true, it ignores an important aspect: careers are often non-linear. In this talk, we will explore and examine what the broader landscape of career development and growth looks like in the 21st century.

Presenter: Peter Zhou, P.Eng, MEng, MBA | Product Development Lead, Carbon Upcycling Technologies

Peter is a professional engineer turned venture leader. With over 8 years of global experience in carbon utilization, renewable chemistry, and machine learning, he has immense empathy for building in the lab, scaling-up, application engineering, and deploying technology with the first customer. Peter co-creates high performing environments by harnessing fun and creativity to bring passionate people together and to create a positive impact.

Workshop 6, Room: ENG 207

Session title: When the Script Disappears - From Controlled Competence to Adaptive Confidence for Early-Career Engineers

Engineering education builds controlled competence and success in structured environments with clear problems and expectations. The workplace, however, often requires engineers to act, decide, and collaborate before clarity arrives. This interactive session explores the shift from controlled competence to adaptive confidence, using applied improv techniques to help students respond effectively in ambiguous, unscripted situations. Participants will practice staying present, adaptable, and collaborative when the script disappears.

Presenter: Angie Alexander, P.Eng, CPQC | President & Founder, Sage Leader Consulting

After over two decades in the oil & gas industry, Angie discovered that her superpower lies in bringing together her unique skills and experiences to support leaders and aspiring leaders. She is a professional engineer, executive leadership consultant and mental fitness coach who loves to help leaders, teams and individuals shine.

Workshop 7, Room: ENA 103

Session title: Career 3.0: Designing your career for maximum fulfilment

This session will provide students a view into different types of career success.

Career success is generally viewed as a linear journey through life that involves working hard, delivering on results and achieving goals.

Whilst this is true, it ignores an important aspect: careers are often non-linear. In this talk, we will explore and examine what the broader landscape of career development and growth looks like in the 21st century.

Presenter: Kiran Somanchi, P.Eng, MBA | Snr Product Manager, Benevity

Kiran Somanchi is a wide achiever who has had a wide ranging career in multiple industries such as upstream exploration and production to enterprise saas product management. He is the author of multiple SPE papers and articles on various topics. Currently, he works as a Snr Product Manager at Benevity helping serve the mission of spreading goodness through the world.

Workshop 8, Room: ENG 03

Session title: Networking Beyond the Job: Building Mentors, Visibility, and Career Momentum

This session reframes networking from a short-term activity used to land a job into a long-term career practice that supports mentorship, visibility, and informed career decision-making. Students will learn how to build and maintain meaningful connections with leaders, peers, and mentors both inside and outside their organization, and how those relationships can surface new paths they may not yet see. Drawing on real examples and practical frameworks, the session emphasizes consistency, curiosity, and relationship-building over transactional job-seeking.

Presenter: James Tomasson, PhD | Alumni Career Advisor, UCalgary

James brings over 15 years of experience in higher education, spanning teaching, curriculum design, and professional training across Arts, Medicine, and Business. He previously spent six years at the Haskayne School of Business as a career advisor, supporting student development, employer engagement, and job-readiness initiatives. Trained as a sociologist, his work is shaped by a deep interest in learning, resilience, and navigating change in evolving labor markets.

1:00 pm – 2:15 pm

Industry Panel

Room: MacEwan Hall A/B

Industry Panel – Early-Career Engineering Leadership: Experiences, Skills, and Growth

This panel brings together six leaders working at some of the most exciting frontiers in engineering - from deepfake-detection AI and biotech innovations in wound healing, vaccines, and therapeutics to wildfire-response robotics, carbon capture, sustainable energy systems, and more. Together, they represent the diverse future of the profession across sustainability, innovation, artificial intelligence, and emerging multidisciplinary career paths.

Panelists will share first-hand experiences navigating early leadership roles in rapidly evolving sectors, highlighting the technical, interpersonal, and strategic skills required to lead in increasingly complex engineering environments. Through practical stories and reflections, they will explore how young engineers can break into emerging industries, build influence without formal authority, and adapt to rapid technological and societal change.

Discussion topics will include sustainability, innovation and AI, non-traditional and multi-disciplinary career paths, and the mindset shifts involved in growing from individual contributor to early career leader.

Designed for engineering students across all disciplines, this session offers candid insights, lessons learned, and actionable advice for developing leadership capacity and the skills that matter most in fast-changing fields like biotech, AI, and sustainability.

Moderator: Minli Huang | Business Development Specialist, University of Calgary

Panel Speakers:

Rajesh Krishnan, PhD | Vice President, Providence Therapeutics

Healthcare industry – New Paths topic

Rajesh Krishnan is the Vice President of Delivery Technology and Development at Providence Therapeutics, where he oversees the end-to-end development of the company's drug products. He has played a pivotal role in advancing Providence's lipid nanoparticle (LNP) delivery systems, a core technology underpinning the company's therapeutic platforms. Rajesh holds a PhD in chemistry and brings 17 years of postdoctoral industry experience to his leadership role.

Megan Leslie, BSc, BCom | CEO & Co-Founder, NanoTess

Healthcare industry – New Paths topic

Megan holds two degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Finance. Her professional work experience has focused on designing and implementing enterprise-wide strategy and workforce transformations for Fortune 500 companies through a human-centered design approach. Megan has worked with members of large enterprise Executive Leadership Teams (C-suite) to achieve alignment and vision for long-term people-centered, Future of Work business strategies. At NanoTess, Megan has led the company to achieve numerous critical milestones. Notably, securing funding from federal, provincial, and military sources, completing a successful project with the Canadian Department of National Defense, and successfully completing a project in collaboration with the CAN Health Network, Alberta Health Services, and University of Calgary's W21C research team for NanoTess' flagship product - NanoSALV Catalytic Advanced Wound Care Treatment Matrix.

Brian Brix, MBA, CPA | Manager, Sustainability & Emissions Management, ATCO Energy Systems

Energy industry – Sustainability topic

Brian Brix is a Chartered Professional Accountant, educated at the University of Iowa, specializing in accounting and finance, and more recently completed his MBA from the University of Toronto and SDA Bocconi in Milan. He is currently the Manager of Sustainability & Emissions Management at ATCO Energy Systems where he is responsible for strategy and reporting for both ATCO Gas and ATCO Electricity. Currently leading a team of high-functioning engineers responsible for developing decarbonization and emissions strategies and leveraging low carbon technologies and adapting government policies into practice.

Steven Ng, BSc | CTO & Co-Founder, Momenta

Technology industry – Artificial Intelligence topic

Steven is the Co-Founder & CTO of Momenta, an AI lab specializing in deepfake security for voice, video, and identity. Prior to his entrepreneurial leap, he spent a half-decade developing AI infrastructure for global leaders in the semiconductor and autonomous vehicle industries. Steven now leads the technical execution at Momenta, where he focuses on safeguarding digital integrity and human trust in the age of generative artificial intelligence.

2:30 pm – 3:15 pm

Workshop 9, Room: ENC 201

Session title: Is It Just Me, or Is Everything Still Sh*t?

We are living through one of the most uncertain moments in recent memory (one could argue its only gotten more uncertain since 2024). The world feels chaotic, the future feels blurry, and the pressure to “figure it out” has never been higher. This talk, I want to unpacks why everything feels so overwhelming right now, what makes the student experience uniquely nerve wracking in 2026, and share some real experiences to navigate that ambiguity with confidence, clarity, and self awareness. Blending real-world insight, lived experience, and practical tools, I would love to chat, understand and create a safe space for all of us to share how we all might be feeling like "sh*t" and hopefully discuss a relatable roadmap for making progress even when everything around you feels like it’s falling apart.

Presenter: Jasmeet Singh Gugnani, MMI | Manager, PwC

Jasmeet is a leader in technology strategy and transformation space. As a manager at PwC Canada, his day to day is to help client leadership teams turn complex technology and business goals into decision-ready narratives and durable operating rhythms. A lifelong debater and active coach, he brings an audience-first, facilitative style to the his day to day to manage ambiguity, drive clear choices, and land change. His recent work spans Cloud, AI and emerging tech (ie Quantum) across various industries (Public Sector, Utilities, Manufacturing) from guiding AI costing conversations to translating infrastructure decisions into business outcomes and scale plans. Beyond delivery, Jasmeet is a community builder supporting active inclusion networks and a hobby collector! loves trying new things and experiences and always down for recommendations.

Workshop 10, Room: ENG 207

Session title: From Technical Expertise to Leadership Impact

What does leadership look like for engineers today? This session invites participants to rethink leadership as a set of everyday skills rather than a formal role or title. Drawing on research and real-world examples, participants will explore practical strategies for developing self-awareness, influencing others, and leading effectively in complex, technology-rich environments. Through guided reflection and interactive discussion, participants will consider how they can apply these leadership strategies in team projects, early career roles, and professional transitions.

Workshop 11, Room: ENA 103

Session title: Preparing a Speech for Beginners!

Join Gregory for an engaging and practical session about the book “Say It Well” by Terry Szuplat (former speechwriter for President Barack Obama). The book is packed with tips on how to improve your speeches. In the first half, relax and listen to Gregory deliver a speech about speeches. Then, you'll be given an opportunity in the last half to plan and write a speech. Depending on time, 1-2 participants will give their short speeches, along with audience questions! This is an excellent opportunity to gain practical experience preparing and delivering a speech.

Presenter: Gregory Osmond, P.Eng, PMP | Manager, Customer Project Development, AltaLink Management Ltd.

After graduating from university, Gregory spent nearly a decade at an advanced technology firm deploying transit-oriented technology around North America. In 2012, Gregory joined AltaLink as a professional engineer. He's served as a Project Manager, completing maintenance projects at substations around Alberta, and then moved to the Customer Project Development team as a Senior Project Manager and now the Manager of the team. The Customer Project Development team is focused on leading customers through the process to connect facilities to the grid.

Workshop 12, Room: ENA 201

Session title: Hackers, Nations, and the World Stage: Why Geopolitics & Cybersecurity Matters

Hackers, Nations, and the World Stage: Why Geopolitics & Cybersecurity Matters explores how cyber threats have become a central tool of modern state power and international competition. Governments now use cyber operations for espionage, influence, economic advantage, and even as a substitute for traditional military force, blurring the lines between peace and conflict. Attacks on critical infrastructure, elections, supply chains, and private companies show that cybersecurity is no longer just a technical issue but a strategic one that affects national security, economic stability, and diplomatic relations. As nations compete and cooperate in cyberspace, understanding the geopolitical motivations behind cyber activity is essential for anticipating risks, shaping policy, and protecting societies in an increasingly interconnected world.

Presenter: James Armstrong, CD, MA | SVP, Technology & Global Security, ATCO Ltd.

James was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Canadian Armed Forces serving as an Intelligence Officer for 27+ years. He has served as the Deputy Director of Transnational Intelligence where he was responsible for threat detection including nation, terrorist, and cyber threats. He has also served as the Military Attaché to Jordan and Iraq, and as an exchange Intelligence Officer with the US intelligence community where he received the US Meritorious Service Medal for his work. He has completed several tours of duty in Afghanistan, as well as in the Middle East, US, and Europe. James holds a master's degree in international relations and is a graduate of the US Air Force Command College.

James Armstrong is the SVP, Technology & Global Security and is responsible for ATCO's Technology, IT/OT, Cybersecurity, Corporate Security, and Business Continuity teams. Prior to this, he spent five years as Shaw Communications SVP, Data Technology & Chief Security Officer/Chief Information Security Officer. He also spent four years as the Vice President of Security and Emergency Management at the Ottawa Airport. He was recognized as one of Canada's Top 10 CISOs in 2022 and as Canada's Top Security Executive in 2017. James holds a master's degree in international relations and is a graduate of the US Air Force Command College. He is a Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP), Certified Information Security Manager (CISM), Certified Data Privacy Solutions Engineer (CDPSE), and a Certified Protection Professional (CPP).

3:25 pm – 4:15 pm

ENA 201

3:25pm – 3:40pm: Closing Remarks

Supervisors and Interns of Merit – Celebration

SSE Atrium and Social Staircase

3:40pm - 4:15pm: End-of-day casual networking over afternoon snacks

All presenters / panel speakers / students / industry guests are invited