I-LAB: Pacific Science Center has a deep commitment to access for all and to creating a welcoming environment where children are comfortable enough to be curious, and we are not alone. The University of Washington’s Institute of Learning and Brain Sciences (I-LABS) shares this commitment and has been doing research on the floor of PacSci since January 2016 to investigate how children’s ‘non-academic’ beliefs (math self-concepts, stereotypes, and self-esteem) influence their science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) interests and school performance.

I-LABS is uncovering scientific evidence needed to assist parents, educators, and policymakers to develop interventions during children’s most formative years that would facilitate more positive feelings about math, greater self-confidence in students, and diffuse negative biases, both conscious and unconscious. It would also contribute to leveling the playing field by providing all students with the opportunity to strive for their full potential.

PacSci’s partnership with I-LABS expanded in January 2019 with the opening of the Science in Action exhibit, in our Studio space, which gives a permanent home to I-LABS on our floor. When asked how this partnership has impacted their work over the past four years, Dr. Dario Cvencek, I-LABS Research Scientist, replied:

“We would not have been able to reach so many people in an informal learning environment had it not been for our partnership with the Science Center. We have had educational interactions with over 5,500 individuals and published six relevant scholarly articles related to this work. We have also been privileged to invite members of the public to participate in the process of scientific discovery by providing museum guests with face-to-face interactions with I-LABS scientists.”

PacSci partnership with I-LABS is a critical component to demystifying the scientific process for our guests and increasing awareness about relevant local research through our Community Laboratory and Living Room, on a daily basis.

COMMUNITY LABORATORY AND LIVING ROOM

Seattle is a thriving science, technology, and innovation hub. These industries influence every part of our daily life and bring thousands of new people to our city each year who are looking for a place to engage with one another. The Science Center seeks to be a community laboratory and living room where the community gathers to discuss, debate, and collaborate on opportunities and challenges in which science and technology play roles.

We achieve this by inviting local visiting educators to facilitate and present activities on our floor, participate as role models in our youth programs, and utilize our space for community activities.
EXHIBITS
The Science Center’s engagement with local research and innovation doesn’t end with our Start-up’s in Residence and I-LABS. In the past year, we have continued to bring new exhibits that address topics relevant to our city, in unique and innovative ways.

BLOCK BY BLOCK: INNOVATING FROM THE GROUND UP
challenged visitors to think about using their skills and abilities to come up with new solutions to pressing issues. The exhibit featured a local father–daughter architecture team’s innovative response to Seattle’s homelessness crisis, in partnership with the nonprofit Facing Homelessness.

WILDFIRE
shows how scientific understanding and policy approaches to wildfire have evolved over time, why they aren’t such a bad thing, and how innovative community and design methods are helping humans transition into a new era of fire safety. In conjunction with Wildfire, we are host to one of Ted Youngs’ three public art installation, The Smoke Season, made up of burnt trees from last year’s Jolly Mountain fire, to show the scale of this burn and bring awareness to wildfire season.

SCIENCE IN THE CITY
Pacific Science Center’s Science in the City Lecture Series provides scientists, innovators, educators, and researchers in our region with a platform to engage members of our community in stimulating discussion and debate. In the past year, Science in the City has facilitate deeper discussion on Science Center exhibits (Community-Driven Innovation & Smoke: The New Normal?), Curiosity Expo themes (Climate Change: Impacts on Arctic Ecosystems and Indigenous Communities), and institutional commitments (Women in STEM).

CURIOSITY EXPO
The Curiosity Expo series is the bridge from the general public to local organizations that use science and technology in their programs, services, or products each day. Each of these weekend-long events has a specific theme and provides a space for communities to gather and lead conversations around these themes.

In FY19 540 Visiting Educations provided interactive experiences for over 38,450 visitors during six themes weekends.

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE
The Artist-in-Residence program offers artists a platform to talk about creative processes behind their work and to present works-in-progress in a studio space located on the exhibit floor. Resident artists also may collaborate with scientists from our Science Communication Fellowship program to enhance STEM components of their work.

“I feel that it’s very important to create a connection between the arts and sciences. There are so many aspects like creativity, innovation, imagination, critical thinking, and making that both of these disciplines share. The ability to connect with practicing scientists is incredibly exciting and beneficial to my art making.”

SCIENCE COMMUNICATION FELLOWS
The Science Communication Fellowship program provides training for local scientists, engineers, researchers and other science-based professionals along with ongoing opportunities for them to engage with the public about their work. By facilitating science–oriented interactions with the public at quarterly Curiosity Expos, weekly Meet-a-Scientist events, and monthly Science and a Movie and Science in the City events.

In FY19 120 Science Communication Fellows volunteered 919 hours to support and enhance Science Center programs.

Imagine you have a never–before–seen idea. Now, think about sharing that idea with thousands of PacSci visitors. A simple conversation can spark a lot of curiosity.

That’s exactly what PacSci Startup-in-Residence partners experience: engaging with the community of guests who visit our campus each day. Companies in their infancy with a harmonizing mission are invited to join PacSci as a living exhibit on innovation. They develop prototypes and experiment with visitors providing invaluable feedback on their product. With a guiding principle of being a community living room and laboratory, the Startup-in-Residence program fits right in with the experimental and curious cultural of PacSci.

And then there’s Peeka VR, the latest Startup-in-Residence. Peeka brings children’s books to life in virtual reality. And with a mission to increase elementary students’ reading comprehension and engagement, the Science Center has proven to be quite a natural fit for testing out their product.

For more information please contact:

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