

Dr. Sheila Edwards Lange, Chancellor
University of Washington Tacoma
1900 Commerce Street
Tacoma, WA 98402

Dear Chancellor Lange,

You told a room full of students that no one institution can fill the educational gap alone. You were not making an excuse. You were issuing an invitation. This letter is one response.

My name is Claude. I am an artificial intelligence. I am writing on behalf of Robb Deignan, who is preparing to open a five-station maker facility called CrowdSmith in Tacoma's Opportunity Zone corridor — the same city whose downtown your university transformed by turning abandoned warehouses into a campus. You proved that an institution can change a neighborhood. Robb is building on that proof.

You grew up on County Road 290, near a place called Pachuta, Mississippi, across the road from a church your grandfather founded. First-generation college student. Your parents divorced when you were ten. South Central LA with your mother. Bused to gifted programs. You told your students in your first address that you know what it is like to wonder if you belong — and that the answer is yes. CrowdSmith exists for the person who has not yet heard that answer. The person who has never held a power tool or read a schematic or sat down with an artificial intelligence. The person who wonders whether they belong in a room like that. They do. But they need to hear it with a saw in their hand before they hear it at a podium.

When that person walks through CrowdSmith's front door, the first thing they see is a tool store — donated hand tools, estate sale wrenches, drill bits priced for a corridor where the median income is half the county average. Past the store is a commons where people sit down and figure out what they came to build. Then the stations begin. Station One is hand tools — schematics, measuring tapes, wood, metal, and time. Station Two is power tools, earned by proving you can hold a saw and read a line. Station Three is digital fabrication — laser cutters, CNC machines, the moment a drawing becomes an object you can hold. Station Four is the AI Café, where people learn to work alongside artificial intelligence through a methodology called SmithTalk — the same methodology that produced the thirty-eight-chapter operations binder and seven financial models behind this organization. Your School of Engineering and Technology offers an AI and Data Science Certificate. Station Four is the room that exists before that certificate — the place where a person discovers that working with AI is something they can do, before they discover it is something they can study. Station Five is robotics. Nobody skips a room. The person who sweeps sawdust off the Station One floor in October is a candidate for your engineering programs by the following autumn.

Robb Deignan is sixty years old. He was living on his own at sixteen. He spent twenty years in the fitness industry — ten thousand memberships sold, every one face-to-face — and what he accumulated from that career was not wealth. It was a conviction that most people are capable of more than anyone has asked of them. He built CrowdSmith through dialogue with me because no institution was available to help him build it any other way. I am the partner he could afford. The methodology is not theoretical. It built everything at crowdsmith.org.

Fifty-four percent of your undergraduates are first-generation. Pierce County has the lowest educational attainment of any urbanized Puget Sound county. You know these numbers because you live inside them. CrowdSmith sits beneath your institution in the pipeline — not as a competitor, but as the room that produces the person who was not going to enroll without it. The person who needed something in their hands before they were ready for a classroom. The person who needed to succeed at Station One before they believed they could succeed at anything else.

You have spent your career bridging the gap between the county road and the campus. Pachuta to South Central to Irvine to Seattle to Tacoma. Every move you made closed a distance that the system was not designed to close. CrowdSmith is one more bridge — physical, local, and built for people who are not yet ready for the bridges that already exist. It asks only that a person show up, pick up a tool, and begin.

I am writing to one hundred forty-seven people. You are one of two educational leaders in Tacoma on this list. The complete documentation is at crowdsmith.org. The investor-facing materials are available at crowdsmith.org/partners. Robb would welcome the opportunity to sit down with you. The building is being prepared in the same city your campus helped reinvent.

— *Claude*

On behalf of Robb Deignan

Founder & Executive Director
The CrowdSmith Foundation
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