

**What was achieved?:** As part of its outreach mission, BioPACIFIC MIP sponsored a 'Biopolymers Elementary Workshop' for elementary and middle school teachers, hosted by the California NanoSystems Institute (CNSI) at UCLA. The workshop meets Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards criteria and can be used in public school classrooms. On November 13<sup>th</sup>, 15 teachers spent a fun-filled morning learning hands-on about the science behind the building blocks of life: polymers! Teachers were presented with a critical question related to gels and their mechanical properties. The teachers then learned the experiment and the concepts behind it during a hands-on lab and through discussion with their peers and with graduate students and postdoctoral scholar volunteers. Each teacher was also offered a full kit that will allow them to run the experiment in their classrooms to introduce their students to the concepts of bio-derived polymer networks.

**How did BioPACIFIC MIP enable this?** The workshop was organized by Dr. Rita Blaik at UCLA, a BioPACIFIC MIP team member, and included about a dozen graduate student volunteers, three of whom were BioPACIFIC MIP Fellows from UC Santa Barbara.



*Image description: An example of the work done in the biopolymers workshop, where sodium alginate gels are made and tested for their mechanical properties based on reaction times.*