

# Leatherby Center Celebrates Record Growth & Community Impact, Driving Orange County's Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Forward

ORANGE, CA, UNITED STATES, February 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Chapman University's Ralph W. [Leatherby Center for Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics](#) has released new impact metrics showcasing its growing influence on innovation, education, and economic development across Orange County.



CHAPMAN  
UNIVERSITY

**Argyros College of  
Business and Economics**

Leatherby Center for Entrepreneurship  
and Business Ethics

The Leatherby Center for Entrepreneurship is a part of the Argyros College of Business and Economics, at Chapman University

As Orange County's only [Accelerate California Inclusive Innovation Hub](#), funded by the California Office of the Small Business Advocate (CalOSBA), the Center continues to break barriers in access to entrepreneurship – connecting students, alumni, and community members with the resources and mentorship needed to turn ideas into thriving ventures.



Every founder we work with and every mentor who volunteers contributes to a stronger, more inclusive economy for our region."

*Cynthia West, Director of The  
Leatherby Center*

"We are proud to be Orange County's Accelerate California Hub offering 10+ programs that foster innovation and entrepreneurship across a wide range of industries," Dr. Cynthia West, Assistant Dean of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Programs for the Leatherby Center at Chapman's Argyros College of Business and Economics.

By the Numbers: A Growing Hub for Innovation

Since June 2023, the Leatherby Center has:

Welcomed 56,000+ visitors to its entrepreneurial space

Engaged 2,200+ attendees at events, workshops, and pitch competitions

Delivered more than 8,000 hours of mentorship through its Entrepreneurs-in-Residence and faculty mentors

Supported 150+ members through the Chapman Entrepreneurship Organization

Guided 165 founders and startups through its Incubator and Accelerator Programs

Hosted 52 events bringing together students, founders, investors, and partners

Collaborated with 60+ strategic partners across education, industry, and community organizations

### Driving Economic Growth

The Leatherby Center's momentum reflects its commitment to expanding the pool of founders – including women, veterans, first-generation immigrants, and individuals from underserved communities.

Through its Incubator and Accelerator Programs, Mentor Program, and [CalOSBA Innovation Grant](#) initiative, the Center helps startups build the skills, networks, and capital access necessary for long-term success.

“After 30 years as a co-founder in tech startups, and often the first woman on the leadership team, it is wonderful to be a guide for other entrepreneurs in their journeys. To be able to help other diverse founders is a dream come true for me,” said Dr. Cynthia West, Assistant Dean of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Programs for the Leatherby Center at Chapman's Argyros



California Office of Small Business Advocate Logo



Leatherby Center Event with Amanda Goetz on Toxic Grit

College of Business and Economics.

By serving as both an academic resource and a public hub, Leatherby Center bridges the gap between university innovation and real-world business development. Its programs are offered at no cost to participants, reinforcing Chapman University's broader mission to foster inclusive growth and economic mobility in Southern California.



Leatherby Center Future of Food Event Networking

### Celebrating Success Stories and What's Next

In addition to supporting hundreds of local entrepreneurs, Leatherby Center has become a launchpad for award-winning and grant-funded startups across emerging industries such as artificial intelligence, sustainability, and education technology.

Founders who begin their journeys at the Center often go on to secure investment, launch companies, and create new jobs that strengthen Orange County's innovation ecosystem.

"These numbers represent more than activity – they represent momentum," said Dr. West. "Every founder we work with and every mentor who volunteers contributes to a stronger, more inclusive economy for our region."

### About the Ralph W. Leatherby Center for Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics

The vision of the Leatherby Center for Entrepreneurship is to inspire, educate, and empower the next generation of talent to have an entrepreneurial mindset. To teach students how to innovate and take risks, whether they are starting their own venture, or working inside a corporation. Through our curriculum and our incubator, we provide hands-on experience to the next generation of talent, teaching them how to develop, scale, and launch their own ventures as future global citizens in the world economy. Ralph W. Leatherby Center for Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics | Chapman University.

### About Chapman University

Founded in 1861, Chapman University is a nationally ranked private university in Orange, California, about 30 miles south of Los Angeles. Chapman serves nearly 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students, with a 12:1 student-to-faculty ratio. Students can choose from over 100 areas of study within 11 colleges for a personalized education. Chapman is categorized by the Carnegie Classification as an R2 “high research activity” institution. Students at Chapman learn directly from distinguished world-class faculty including Nobel Prize winners, MacArthur fellows, published authors and Academy Award winners. The campus has produced a Rhodes Scholar, been named a top producer of Fulbright Scholars, and hosts a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, the nation’s oldest and most prestigious honor society. Chapman also includes the Harry and Diane Rinker Health Science Campus in Irvine. The university features the No. 4 film school and No. 66 business school in the U.S. Learn more about Chapman University: <http://www.chapman.edu/>.

Media Contact:

Maddie Casserly | [mcasserly@chapman.edu](mailto:mcasserly@chapman.edu)

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Maddie Casserly  
Chapman University  
[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)  
[Instagram](#)  
[Facebook](#)  
[YouTube](#)  
[X](#)  
[Other](#)

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