

PROSPERITAS

Quadruples Membership in Second Year

Business leaders, philanthropists and social entrepreneurs have come together to ignite ideas, create connections and raise awareness about critical topics of the times.

By Mary Patrick

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS AT PROSPERITAS, a group of successful leaders, philanthropists and entrepreneurs meeting semimonthly at the Merage School, experienced such a sharp rise in 2009/2010 that it was necessary to start a waiting list. Executive Director Mary Patrick attributes the wave of new interest to a variety of factors, most importantly, a hunger for camaraderie and debate regarding key social, political, and scientific issues challenging the local, national and global economy.

Patrick commented, “The group exists to fill a clear need that individuals have to come together and face the enormous challenges of our world in a community of proven problem-solving professionals. There is obviously a need in the business community for the kind of relevant conversation and action-oriented ideas that lead to informed decisions and positive change.” She adds, “Our salon-like setting closely connects our members to the thought-leaders available through UC Irvine’s Paul Merage School of Business and members’ personal networks, and it has proven enormously popular.”

examine how best to put resources to use personally, politically, and philanthropically. After completing its first year, the program was retooled to be more inclusive of the larger business community, which was accomplished by shortening the meetings, adjusting the membership fee, and creating more frequent networking and idea exchanges. Proceeds from the group will underwrite a new microfinance loan fund that is intended to offer support to the growth and success of innovative, sustainable, and socially relevant businesses launched by Merage School students and other UC Irvine community members.

“My aim is to present a variety of diverse topics and opinions so that it’s not a group of people sitting around agreeing with one another,” said Kavanaugh. “We listen to people who are developing new ways of solving old problems. Inviting a cross section of the community to get insight from some of the Merage School’s top thought-leaders offers us fresh, creative perspectives for debate. Now more than ever it’s apparent that the secret to survival and success requires remaining focused and optimistic,



“It is exciting to see the growth of this innovative organization,” said Jone L. Pearce, Dean’s Professor of Leadership at the Merage School. “Clearly, there is great interest among business leaders in learning how to make their philanthropy more effective. The rapid growth of Prosperitas shows that the School has developed a vehicle that helps those who want to make a difference to do so.”

The name Prosperitas is the Latin term for “hope” and “success.” Founded by UC Irvine Alumnus Frank Kavanaugh, the group was originally designed to be a forum for high net-worth individuals to band together to

informed and connected. This group offers up an environment to make that happen,” Kavanaugh concluded.

The 2009-2010 Prosperitas program features twice-monthly lunch meetings in salon-like settings where members can exchange ideas with thought-leaders and peers. Some of the scheduled topics include the California economy, stem-cell research, bioethics, biomimicry, climate change, aging and memory, and global investment opportunities. The group is organizing a June Idea Incubator that will be open to the public. For more information, visit merage.uci.edu/go/prosperitas. ■