

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact: Amanda Kennedy, Senior PR Specialist
412-365-1125 (akennedy@chatham.edu)

Chatham's Center for Women's Entrepreneurship develops new online mentoring community for women business owners in southwestern Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands

Virtual learning community is designed to help women business owners access customized entrepreneurship programs on their own time

PITTSBURGH (February 24, 2011) ... Since its founding the Center for Women's Entrepreneurship at Chatham University (CWE) has developed new and innovative programs to assist women in southwestern Pennsylvania develop and expand new businesses. Today CWE announced that it is seeking to bring economic growth and development to the Laurel Highlands with the launch of its new online business and mentoring community, **CWE Connect**.

Funded in part by the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation and developed in partnership with The Progress Fund, The Trail Town Program®, and the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, CWE Connect is designed to provide an online nexus for women entrepreneurs and business owners to easily gain access to experienced facilitators, mentors, and resources to help women succeed in business.

“The Benedum Foundation is particularly interested in helping rural communities prosper. This is precisely the kind of program that brings the assets of an urban center like CWE to women entrepreneurs in small, often isolated, towns” said Jim Denova, Vice President of the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation.

CWE is offering a three-month complimentary trial of its online programs beginning March 1, 2011 and running through May 31, 2011 which will include Peer-to-Peer Mentoring, a Kauffman FastTrac® Listening To Your Business Workshop™, and complete access to an online business resource library, the CWE Toolkit.

Interested participants can enroll in the trial program by either calling the Center for Women's Entrepreneurship at 412-365-1253 or by emailing cweconnect@chatham.edu. Membership in CWE Connect is from March 1, 2011 through February 28, 2012 and is \$125. For more information visit www.chatham.edu/cwe/connect.

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“As a nonprofit community development lender, we are reminded every day that running a small business needs to be done smartly. Women-owned businesses represent 43% of our client base and are a significant piece of the local economy,” David Kahely, President and CEO of the Progress Fund, declared. “To help them further succeed, we formed a partnership with The Center for Women's Entrepreneurship which provides these women with access to an incredible universe of business resources. CWE's mentoring programs and peer-to-peer exchanges help these entrepreneurs skillfully apply critical knowledge to their own circumstances and situations. I could not be more pleased with our partnership and CWE's commitment to the success of these business owners.”

“CWE Connect is going to make a difference in this region, bringing economic development and making accessible the kind of networking and business workshops that many women business owners in the Laurel Highlands simply don't have easy access to,” Rebecca Harris, CWE Director, stated. “The Laurel Highlands has always been a destination for tourists, for example, and with the completion of the Great Allegheny Passage more opportunities will develop for women to start or expand their businesses. We want to give women the tools they need to take advantage of the growing business opportunities and have them be able to access those resources at their convenience.”

“Pick up any newspaper, read any blog, or watch this evening's headlines and you can see that operating a business in today's environment can be daunting and challenging. Every little bit of knowledge can give you an edge in advancing your investment,” Ann Nemanic, Director of the Laurel Highlands Visitor's Bureau, explained. “That is why we are excited about our partnership with Chatham University and the opportunities through CWE Connect. We are confident that women will find benefit in the curriculum and the peer-to-peer connections they will make over the next twelve months.”

Components of the **CWE Connect** program include the following:

Peer-to-Peer Mentoring

The Peer-to-Peer Mentoring program is designed to bring women business owners together in an environment of sharing, discovery, and learning. Participants work together and with the facilitator through informal online discussions. The participants help to form the agenda for these discussions and post their thoughts in the discussion groups when it is convenient for them.

One-on-One Mentoring

The One-on-One Mentoring program gives business owners insight, knowledge, coaching, and connections. Each participant will be paired with an individually selected mentor according to their customized needs.

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Kauffman FastTrac® Listening To Your Business™

The award-winning Kauffman Entrepreneurial training program Listening To Your Business is offered as a series of virtual workshops. Listening To Your Business lets business owners work on their businesses – not just in their businesses. Taught by expert facilitators, the workshops will also be archived so participants can follow along on their own time and go at their own pace.

CWE Toolkit

CWE Connect includes an online business library, known as the “CWE Toolkit” with videos, PowerPoints, spreadsheets, and useful, easy-to-understand documents for business owners in the categories of Marketing, Finance, Legal, and Business Development.

“This is a great opportunity for women throughout the Laurel Highlands to either realize the dream of owning their own business, or expanding their current business beyond what they might think is possible,” Ms. Harris said. “We’re grateful to the Benedum Foundation for their support as well as for our new partnerships with The Progress Fund, The Trail Town Program®, and the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau to help us reach a new group of women entrepreneurs.”

About CWE

The mission of the Center for Women's Entrepreneurship at Chatham University is to educate, create economic opportunities, and foster entrepreneurial thinking for women entrepreneurs, women in business, and students. The Center for Women's Entrepreneurship at Chatham University (CWE) provides opportunities for women entrepreneurs in both new development and growth stages of their businesses to start, develop and significantly grow their companies by utilizing Chatham resources, programs, faculty expertise, and student assistance. CWE also provides programming targeted to local and regional women in business designed to teach women in business how to think and act entrepreneurially by focusing on innovation and creativity within the context of an existing organizational environment. Current and initial funding for CWE provided by the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation. Initial funding for CWE was provided by the Lois Tack Thompson Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation. For more information about programs offered by CWE call 412-365-1253 or visit www.chatham.edu/cwe

About Chatham University

Chatham University prepares students from around the world to help develop solutions to some of the world's biggest challenges. Consistently ranked among the top master's level institutions in the Northeast by *U.S. News & World Report* and *The Princeton Review*, Chatham University is also ranked in the top five percent of graduate-intensive institutions nationally and experienced the fastest-growing enrollment in the Pittsburgh region over the past decade. Founded in 1869, Chatham University includes the Shadyside Campus, with the historic 39-acre Woodland Road arboretum and Chatham Eastside facility; and the 388-acre Eden Hall Campus north of Pittsburgh. For more information call 800-837-1290 or visit www.chatham.edu.

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