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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Ashford University, Downtown Partnership Look to Strengthen Downtown Startup Scene**

*Expert panel convenes during San Diego Startup Week*

As part of its ongoing efforts to support the startup community, the Downtown San Diego Partnership and Ashford University today convened an expert panel during San Diego Startup week to discuss strategies to nurture and grow Downtown San Diego's thriving innovation ecosystem.

The event brought together startup pioneers from each stage of the startup lifecycle and more than 70 attendees, including entrepreneurs, investors and educators, to continue an ongoing dialogue for how Downtown San Diego can continue to serve as a hub for tech startups. Panelists shared first-hand accounts of the rewards and struggles of starting their own technology businesses.

"Innovation is largely driven by collaboration. That is why technology companies are looking to our Downtown in search of an environment that allows smart people and great ideas to come together," said Kris Michell, president and CEO of the Downtown San Diego Partnership. "Our region's ability to compete depends on our ability to attract and retain innovation within the urban core."

Increasingly, companies and their employees are searching for urban centers that provide both the energy and synergy to fuel emerging technologies. There are more than 70 tech startups in Downtown San Diego currently. More than 30 companies from a variety of industries have relocated to Downtown within the past 18 months.

Among the priorities and the feedback discussed as part of the discussion were:

- Fostering relationships among like-minded individuals in the tech start-up community. Panelists today agreed that the most difficult challenge throughout the startup process is finding the right people to work with and creating a community to serve that need is essential.
- Expanding opportunities for venture capital and other forms of funding for the new creative and tech startup economy in San Diego is both a goal and a challenge. The “seed” stage of any startup is one of the most difficult hurdles in the industry, and finding the right people and venture capital firms with the “right” vision could not only help the startup community, but also San Diego as a whole.

Feedback from today’s discussion will be taken back to the Downtown Partnership’s Tech Startup Committee to be included in a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy focused on bringing talent to the urban core. The Partnership created its Tech Startup Committee in 2013 to support and grow Downtown’s tech community, a key area of focus in its 20-year vision plan called “Imagine Downtown.”

Dr. Richard Pattenaupe, president and CEO of Ashford University, said “The Forbes School of Business at Ashford University’s Bachelor of Arts in Entrepreneurship program supports new business growth. Students who complete this program will have very specific theories, concepts and skills that are essential in the creation of new business. Despite recent PR that dropping out of college to startup is the entrepreneurial way – 95 percent of entrepreneurs have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Creativity, knowledge and experience are a necessary combination for an exceptional strategy that fuels continuous innovation and business growth.”

The panel discussion was moderated by Rich Karlgaard, publisher of *Forbes* magazine, and was sponsored by Ashford University’s Forbes School of Business. Andrew Clark, founder of Bridgepoint Education, kicked off the event with opening remarks. Bridgepoint Education owns and operates Ashford University.

Event Moderator and Panelists:

Rich Karlgaard, publisher, *Forbes* magazine

Al Bsharah, Email Copilot

Elizabeth Dreicer, Posiba Inc.

Austin Newdecker, Rev.com

Andrew Clark, Bridgepoint Education

*The Downtown San Diego Partnership is a non-profit, member-based organization that serves as the leading advocate for the revitalization and economic health of Downtown. To learn more about the Downtown Partnership, visit [www.downtownsandiego.org](http://www.downtownsandiego.org).*

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