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New Sandhu Residence Hall and Conference Center Dedicated

ORANGE, Calif., Sept. 10, 2009 -- After a year and a half of construction, Chapman University opened its new residence hall and conference center in late August 2009, just in time for the students to move in for the fall semester. On Sept. 9, the university named and dedicated the hall -- the Sandhu Residence and Conference Center -- thanks to a generous gift from Mohindar S. "Sandy" Sandhu and his wife Harriet Sandhu.

Guests at the dedication ceremony and dinner heard from Chapman officials and from students, all of whom praised the new building -- the biggest enclosed structure on the Chapman campus at more than 200,000 square feet -- and extolled its many virtues. On the student side, the building contains residential rooms for more than 300 upperclassmen, study rooms and recreation areas.

A highlight is the new student dining commons, which some guests exclaimed looked like "a high-end Vegas restaurant" -- complete with a pizza station, wood-fire grill, sushi station, sandwich and salad bar, and a chef's station for special orders. (Chapman plans to shoot a new TV cooking show in the chef's kitchen, for the OC Channel.)

The other half of the building is a conference center with all the bells and whistles, including a main hall with room for more than 500 conference-goers, break-out rooms, a catering kitchen, and hotel-like guest suites for visiting speakers and VIPS.

Sandy Sandhu, founder and CEO at SRS Technologies, said the new residence hall and conference center made him think about all that's changed in his life since he went to school in Canada, where students had to brave the snow at night to go to the bathroom. For him, the new building is all about providing a special place to rest and study so students come out with a solid education.

"I'm fortunate to get a good education. Otherwise, I would still be milking goats and riding camels on my farm in India. So education is a great equalizer, and we are proud to be a part of it."

Harriet Sandhu closed her remarks by reading a poem she wrote for Chapman students, which is inscribed on a bronze plaque in the residence hall's lobby. Here are the final lines:

"This is the age to fulfill your dreams under Chapman's dome.
Be happy here, be respectful -- and take pride in your new home."

The couple then sealed the dedication by smashing a bottle of champagne -- on the second attempt -- against one of the building's cornerstones.