

## **MR. RUSSELL J. "RUSTY" HAMMER**

Former President and Chief Executive Officer  
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

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The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce established the Russell J. Hammer Scholarship Fund to honor the service and memory of Russell J. "Rusty" Hammer, who served as the President and CEO of the Chamber from 2001-2004. The Scholarship Fund benefits the Los Angeles Cash for College Scholarship Program (L.A. CFC), which awards college scholarships to deserving, low-income students in Los Angeles County who are often the first in their family to attend college. The goal of the Fund is to annually raise at least \$50,000 for the CFC Scholarship Program that is administered by the Los Angeles Area Chamber Foundation (nonprofit federal ID 95-2597392).

Eight years ago, Rusty was instrumental in founding the Cash for College Program. He gathered key leaders from the Mayor's Office, the Community Development Department, and the Los Angeles Unified School District to collaborate on a series of events that would leverage the tremendous resources necessary to help thousands of L.A. high school students understand how to apply to and finance a college education. Rusty was aware that the future economic health of the Southern California region depended on sustaining a workforce with the education and training that regional employers required. From a small conference and a handful of workshops, the College & Career Access Campaign (as it is now known) today conducts a two-day Convention attended by more than 10,000 students, and more than 100 workshops that annually help more than 8,000 families understand how to apply for state and federal college financial aid.

Several of Rusty's decisions have been pivotal to sustaining the growth of the College & Career Access Campaign and the CFC Scholarship Program. He established the Chamber's Education and Workforce Development Department to focus on building the connections between the business community and education that would lead to a strong workforce. Rusty cultivated relationships with key intermediary groups, and established affiliate relationships with several key community-based organizations, such as UNITE-LA. Rusty is also credited with a number of programs that helped the Chamber rebound from a loss of resources and direction, to a flourishing organization that is respected and renowned for the services it provides to meet the business interests of Los Angeles.

Inspired by the hope and optimism of John F. Kennedy, Rusty Hammer got an early start in politics. Upon graduating high school, he was elected to the City Council in Campbell, California, in 1972, becoming the youngest elected official in US history at the age of 18. A short three years later, he was elected Mayor of Campbell, California, the youngest Mayor of an incorporated city in U.S. history. After serving two terms as Mayor, Rusty "retired" from politics in 1982 though he continued to serve the issues in which he believed through his every-day work and volunteer activities.

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Rusty went on to work in private consulting before serving at Quadrex Corporation in a variety of management and senior management positions with responsibilities for international marketing, communications, finance, administration, human resources and a variety of line management responsibilities. He joined the Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce as CEO in 1994 and moved to Los Angeles to serve as the President and CEO of the L.A. Chamber in 2001.

Rusty received many honors throughout his life including: five Outstanding Young Men of California; Who's Who in the West; Who's Who in America; Who's Who in Industry; and the 1996 JCC Friendship Cup Award. He was also recognized by the following legislative bodies: US Congress; California State Assembly; California State Senate; Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors; Sacramento County Board of Supervisors; Campbell City Council; San Jose City Council; Sacramento City Council; Los Angeles City Council and Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

Unfortunately, Rusty Hammer was diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia in 2003 that forced him to step down from his position with the L.A. Chamber in 2004, though he continued to advise the Chamber and its affiliates during his convalescence. Rusty lost his battle with cancer in January of 2008, but he will always be remembered fondly by the Chamber staff, board members and his wife, Pamela, who are all deeply involved in the effort to continue his work through the Russell J. Hammer Scholarship Fund.