



■ **ERWIN CHEMERINSKY** was chosen to be the founding dean of the UC Irvine School of Law with the belief that his formidable reputation would help put the school on the map. It has.





# A PREMIUM ON TALENT

IF YOU WANT TO TAKE YOUR BRAND TO THE NEXT LEVEL, A STRATEGIC INVESTMENT IN A MARQUEE NAME CAN PAY BIG DIVIDENDS. **BY JERRY HICKS**

**T**HERE'S A SMALL PLAQUE IN FRONT OF A WHITE METAL BENCH LOCATED JUST OUTSIDE THE DOORS OF THE DODGE COLLEGE OF FILM AND MEDIA ARTS BUILDING AT CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY IN ORANGE. THIS PLAQUE DESIGNATES IT AS THE STORYTELLER'S BENCH, IN MEMORY OF THE LATE SCREENWRITER TOM MANKIEWICZ.

The tales that Mankiewicz related to students from that bench – Hollywood war stories and deeper thoughts on the art of film – symbolize a huge part of the success of Dodge College.

“About 15 years ago, nobody knew much about Chapman at all,” says Robert Bassett, Dodge College’s dean. “I was thinking, ‘How can we raise our visibility and strengthen or create ties to the entertainment business?’”

He came up with an idea to bring more attention to the college: a filmmakers-in-residence program. A \$1 million

endowment from philanthropist Virginia Knott (*of the Knott's Berry Farm family*) helped make it happen. The growth of film studies at Chapman, Bassett says, is intricately woven with the big-name concept behind the filmmakers-in-residence program, for which Mankiewicz played a key role.

Finding well-established talent – bringing in household names, or those who are considered household names in their respective fields – is often a key strategy for success.

This effort may be aimed at launching something new or

kick-starting something that’s established, but going a bit stale.

Sometimes “new blood” is needed to get your audience excited. Arte Moreno, the owner of the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim, probably got a little excited himself, when he managed to land Albert Pujols, the biggest fish in Major League Baseball’s free-agent pond, in 2011. And a similar thing occurred during the nationwide search for the founding dean of what was the soon-to-be-opened UC Irvine School of Law, when a constitutional law expert with a stellar reputation answered the call to lead.

### **Courting the best**

Erwin Chemerinsky may not be a household name in the same way Pujols is, but he carries significant clout in legal circles. His high-profile pedigree led to his hiring as the founding dean of the UC Irvine School



of Law, which recently graduated its second class.

Chemerinsky, an unabashed liberal, is a longtime educator and legal scholar. His "Constitutional Law Supplement" is a must-read at almost every law school in the country.

Yes, bringing Chemerinsky to conservative Orange County in 2007 initially resulted in some controversy. Michael Drake, UC Irvine's chancellor, almost vetoed the dean's appointment. But Chemerinsky calls all that "ancient history," and Drake is now among his fans. In fact, each year they teach a class together.

"The success of the law school is mainly due to Dean Chemerinsky," Drake says.

Not long after Chemerinsky was hired, Brian Leiter, a University of Chicago law professor who writes a popular blog about legal education, says the combination of the UC Irvine name and Chemerinsky almost guaranteed success. "They've recruited the right kind of people from the right kind of places," he wrote. "And someone of Erwin's stature obviously helps."

UC Irvine supporters – Donald Bren of the Irvine Company threw in \$20 million to jump-start the law school – were convinced it needed someone with Chemerinsky's credentials to create a quality school.

Linda Cohen of the UC Irvine faculty (*now in both economics and law*) was part of the dean-search committee. Chemerinsky, she says, has proven them right.

"We were extraordinarily lucky to get someone with his vision and energy," she says. "With his standing and reputation, and with the sources and backing of the university, he's been able to do something really special here."

The number of applications has doubled in the last two years, and the first graduating class had the second-highest bar-pass rate among all the law schools in California. (*Stanford University topped the list.*)

Chemerinsky's next project: raising funds for a new building.

## A spectacular catch

IF YOU'RE AN ANGELS FAN, THE RESULTS PROBABLY HAVEN'T BEEN WHAT YOU HAD EXPECTED AFTER THE LATE-2011 ANNOUNCEMENT THAT ALBERT PUJOLS, AT THE TIME THE NATION'S TOP BASEBALL FREE AGENT, WOULD BECOME A HALO, THANKS TO A 10-YEAR, \$250 MILLION CONTRACT.

But even with the Angels off to a slow start, as well as their absence from the 2012 post-season, Pujols has rejuvenated interest in the team.

The first two days after his December 2011 signing, the Angels sold more than 1,000 new season tickets, an unprecedented figure. Pujols jerseys, at \$120 a pop, sold out faster than the team's stores could

order them.

Angels fan Naum Conceros, a high school senior from Irvine, says that he clearly remembers the day Pujols, now 33, was signed.

"I was on the fence – fans of both the Dodgers and the Angels," he says. "But when they got Pujols, it was strictly the Angels for me. If I go to a game, it's mainly to see him. He's awesome."

William Wallace,

assistant principal at Orange County School of the Arts in Santa Ana, keeps a color picture of Pujols on his desk. It was a Christmas gift from his brother-in-law, who, as a St. Louis Cardinals fan, was unhappy to see Pujols leave, but jokingly showed no hard feelings.

"I will remember the signing; it was huge for Angels fans," Wallace says. "He was the top free agent in baseball who had already led his team to win the World Series. We all thought this was tremendous."

The Pujols signing – 4,000 fans showed up just for

## FILM EXPOSURE

At Chapman, Dean Robert Bassett of the Dodge College of Film and Media Arts now has three endowments to attract filmmakers to the campus. A guest speaker comes once a week to meet with a small, select group of students; show one of his or her own films; and discuss it with a larger group of students. That's followed by dinner with more students.

"They've seen the business change over the years," Bassett says. "It changes every day. I don't think the students can hear that enough."

The first to come was Arthur Hiller, who created a blockbuster

with "Love Story." Subsequent visitors have included A-list directors William Friedkin ("*The Exorcist*," "*The French Connection*") and Mark Rydell ("*On Golden Pond*," "*The Rose*"). There are writers, too, such as Mankiewicz, who worked on the James Bond series and "Superman: The Movie." He was also well known as a script doctor, helping scores of producers improve material that had already been written by others. After his semester in residence, Mankiewicz returned to teach classes. He died three years ago at age 68.

