

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Chicago to host conference on microfinance during economic downturn**

“Navigating the Markets: Microfinance in a New Economy” is the theme of the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Chicago Microfinance Conference. Amidst challenging economic times, microfinance experts from around the world will gather in Chicago to discuss the future of the field.

The Chicago Microfinance Conference is a collaborative effort among leading graduate business and policy institutions that brings together practitioners, academics and emerging industry leaders to advance the strategic debate of the future of microfinance. Panels will cover how to address obtaining capital in difficult markets, new for-profit models, securitization, assessment, and the alleviation of poverty. Attendees will gain knowledge to take back to their own businesses and research and an opportunity to network with others in the field of microfinance.

Keynote speakers include: Mr. Vikram Akula, Founder and Chairperson, SKS Microfinance; Mr. Michael Chu, Senior Lecturer in the Initiative on Social Enterprise of the General Management Group of the Harvard Business School; and Mr. Raghuram G. Rajan, Eric J. Gleacher Distinguished Service Professor of Finance in the Booth School of Business.

TIME Magazine named Akula, a University of Chicago PhD, one of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2006, and SKS Microfinance made the list of Business Week's Top 5 Companies to watch in 2009.

Chu serves as co-founder and Managing Director of the IGNIA Fund, an investment firm based in Monterrey, Mexico, dedicated to investing in commercial enterprises serving low-income populations in developing countries. He also continues to serve as Senior Advisor and a founding partner of Pegasus Capital, a firm in Buenos Aires dedicated to deploying equity capital in Latin America, with a portfolio which includes major companies in Argentina.

From 2003-06, Rajan served as the Economic Counselor and Director of Research at the International Monetary Fund. Among Rajan's many honors, he won the inaugural Fisher Black Prize awarded by the American Finance Association in January 2003 as the person under 40 who has contributed the most to the theory and practice of finance.

Other panelists include Jonathan Brereton, Chief Executive and Lending Officer, ACCION Chicago; Jason Cons, Director of Research and Project Design, Goldin Institute; Mike Gabriel, Program Officer, Grameen Foundation; and Kathleen Robbins, consultant on “green” initiatives in microfinance, such as biofuels development. A current list of speakers can be found at <http://www.chicagomicrofinance.com/speakers.htm>.

The conference will take place Friday, May 8 at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business Harper Center in Hyde Park. The address is 5807 South Woodlawn Ave, Chicago IL, 60637.

Sponsors include the University of Chicago Booth School of Business Emerging Markets Group; Center on International Affairs for Public Policy at the Harris School for Public Policy of the University of Chicago; the Zell Center for Risk Management at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management; and the Center for International Business Education and Research at the UCLA Anderson School of Management.

For registration and further information, please visit our website:  
[www.chicagomicrofinance.com](http://www.chicagomicrofinance.com).

Please contact Aaron Andersen either by phone at 312-282-0093 or email at [andersen@chicagobooth.edu](mailto:andersen@chicagobooth.edu) or contact Meghan Sheehan at 859-221-6319 or at [msheehan@chicagobooth.edu](mailto:msheehan@chicagobooth.edu) for additional information.

###