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First Commerce presents
Power Forward with Airbnb
Head of Global Hospitality & Strategy, Chip Conley

Tallahassee's largest annual business event will mark 5 years on January 31, 2018

TALLAHASSEE, FL – In the midst of Tallahassee's Startup Week, First Commerce unveiled the Power Forward Speaker Series will feature hospitality industry disruptor Airbnb. Entrepreneur and business rebel Chip Conley, a leader at the forefront of the sharing economy, will serve as the fifth speaker in the series. Established as Tallahassee's largest annual business event, Power Forward with Airbnb's Chip Conley will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 31, at 3:30 p.m.

"We believe small businesses are the backbone of our community, and Power Forward is just one way we support entrepreneurship by keeping our business leaders inspired," said Cecilia Homison, CEO of First Commerce. "This year, we wanted to bring in a true industry disruptor from the new sharing economy, and we loved Chip's story from Airbnb."

Conley founded Joie de Vivre Hospitality at age 26 – taking an inner city motel and turning it into the 2nd largest boutique hotel brand in the world. He was CEO of his innovative company for 24 years. In 2013, he accepted an invitation from the founders of Airbnb to help transform a promising home sharing start-up into what is today the world's largest hospitality brand. As Head of Global Hospitality & Strategy, Chip taught his award-winning methods to hundreds of thousands of Airbnb hosts in nearly 200 countries. In addition, he created the Airbnb Open that brings thousands together in a global festival of belonging. Conley transitioned to a part-time role as Strategic Advisor for Hospitality and Leadership in January 2017.

In 2013, Conley founded Fest300 to share his passion for travel and the world's best festivals (the company merged with Everfest in 2016 where he is part-time Chief Strategy Officer). Conley has received hospitality's highest honor, the Pioneer Award, joining industry icons Marriott, Kimpton and Wynn. He is the founder of the Celebrity Pool Toss, which has raised millions for the Tenderloin neighborhood where he opened his first hotel, and San Francisco's Hotel Hero Awards that shine a light on the unsung heroes serving hotel guests every day.

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Past speakers in the Power Forward Speaker Series have included NFL legend and entrepreneur Jim Kelly; Randi Zuckerberg from the Facebook startup team; Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple Inc.; and Barbara Corcoran of the entrepreneurial hit, “Shark Tank.”

The fifth annual Power Forward event is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 31, at 3:30 p.m. at Ruby Diamond Concert Hall. A limited number of tickets are available at tickets.fsu.edu (\$40* base price for main level seating and \$30* base price for balcony seating; \$10* for students – student ID required for college students). Tickets also will be sold at the FSU Fine Arts Ticket Office (in the lobby of the Fine Arts Building at 540 W. Call St.) Limited sponsorship opportunities are available.

Follow Power Forward with Airbnb on Twitter: Hashtag #PwrFwd @FirstCommerceCU

Other sponsors of Power Forward with Airbnb include the FSU College of Business, City of Tallahassee, WCTV, the Tallahassee Democrat, 100.7 WFLA, 850 Business Magazine, and Lamar Advertising.

For more information about Power Forward with Airbnb, visit FirstCommerceCU.org/PowerForward.

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*Service fees apply

ABOUT FIRST COMMERCE CREDIT UNION: First Commerce Credit Union has proudly supported the communities we serve for 75 years. Headquartered in Tallahassee, First Commerce is a full-service financial institution currently serving more than 48,000 business and members in Northwest Florida and Southwest Georgia. First Commerce has 11 financial centers – eight in Tallahassee, one in Marianna, and one each in Thomasville and Valdosta, Ga. First Commerce was named “Top Credit Union of the Year” for 2014 by the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) North Florida District Office. Business products and services include SBA 7a and 504 loans, commercial vehicle and equipment loans, real estate loans, lines of credit, credit cards, ACH origination, merchant & payroll services, payroll & employee expense reloadable cards, wire transfers, free business checking, interest-bearing business checking, community checking, online & mobile banking, BillPay, remote deposit, real-time text/email account alerts, CDs, IRAs, savings & money market accounts, and more. In addition, First Commerce offers a wide range of financial planning and investment services through our subsidiary, Six Pillars Financial Advisors, and commercial & personal insurance through First Commerce Insurance Agency. For more information, visit FirstCommerceCU.org/Business or call (850) 410-3559 or (850) 488-0035. First Commerce is federally insured by the NCUA and is an equal opportunity lender.