

Richard Florida, economic development expert, comes to UTA

Written by Amanda Gonzalez, The Shorthorn staff
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Economic development expert [Richard Florida](#) will be on campus Thursday to discuss his two-year research involvement with the [School of Urban and Public Affairs](#).

Florida is the founder of [Creative Class Group](#), an economic advisory firm. Florida and his associate, Steven Pedigo, research and community director, will serve as visiting scholars to aid research related to urban and economic development in North Texas.

[Barbara Becker](#), School of Urban and Public Affairs dean, said the collaboration with Florida and the group will generate research pushing UTA and the North Texas economy forward.

Becker said Florida is meeting with faculty and students today to begin planning research projects.

She said Florida and Pedigo's involvement with the university will benefit research and enhance the learning experience students receive.

"This type of visibility in addressing urban issues is a win for this university. Our work that we are already doing will be better known," she said. "For the campus as a whole, this is exciting."

University spokeswoman [Kristin Sullivan](#) said universities bring in internationally known leaders in economic development to help crystallize research. She said they enter communities to discuss how to shape and drive them.

"Florida and Pedigo provide a framework of how the university can do this research to shape the economy for the future," she said.

Sullivan said bringing in these types of scholars is a hallmark of Tier One.

In addition to visiting the campus, Florida will spend part of the day with Arlington Mayor [Robert Cluck](#) and other city officials and tour some of the entertainment districts in the area.

Pedigo will also visit different areas of Dallas and Fort Worth, including the Oak Cliff community.

Deputy city manager [Trey Yelverton](#) said the city of Arlington will assist Florida in his efforts to conduct research in the North Texas area.

He said the university's initiative to have Florida contribute to research demonstrates its commitment to Tier One status.

"Making these kinds of contributions to the community is helping in those efforts," he said. "We welcome this and many other outgrowths that come from it."

Yelverton said Florida will significantly contribute to the economy and how the city is situated.

"I think there are tons of things we can learn and benefit from as [Florida] moves forward," he said.

Becker said the initial meeting with Florida will spur more in depth discussions in the future.

She said the work done with Florida will ultimately be a large collaboration between the university and the North Texas area to create relevant research.

"Everyone will come out with something that is of value," she said.