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# Intellectual Entrepreneurship at The University of Texas

by [J.D. Meyer](#)

## An answer to industry growth initiative strategy #1: Higher Education Consortium

The City of Tyler developed the Industry Growth Initiative (IGI), a plan to bring the city further into the Innovation Economy. First, there was a front page Tyler newspaper article entitled, "[Industry Growth Initiative Aims to Attract People](#)," by Casey Murphy (Sunday, November 22, 2009). Murphy reported the call from the city leaders in Strategy 1: Higher Education for a consortium, noting that our three colleges generate vastly lower money per student than many college towns—a difference of \$7500/student versus as high as \$100,000/student. IMPLAN is the computer program that was used to generate this data. Much of this situation is due to the bulk of the college-population being concentrated in the first two years of college; only UT-Tyler has a graduate college of the three institutes of higher education. We need more applied research.

Then the City of Tyler released a giant 84-page document on the entire Industry Growth Initiative in 2010 and posted a link at the city website. Much of the research is based on the work of Dr. Richard Florida of the University of Toronto. Dr. Florida wrote *The Rise of the Creative Class* in 2003 when he was a professor of Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh. He likes to document changing trends in urban development and predict the future with his many colleagues. Dr. Florida believes that an exciting downtown area attracts creative professionals. He believes that cities need to remember the Three T's: talent, tolerance, and technology. Importantly this Creative Class contains as much as 30% of the workforce with a smaller percentage in the super-creative core. Dr. Florida is truly a public intellectual. Check out Dr. Richard Florida and his Creative Class website; [www.creativeclass.com](http://www.creativeclass.com)

The Industry Growth Initiative cites a more recent book of Florida's, *Who's Your City*. Tyler's proximity to Dallas is a major asset. Dr. Florida's most recent book is *The Great Reset* about the future adjustment to the current economic downturn. The Atlantic interviewed Dr. Florida several months ago about this book.

**Intellectual Entrepreneurship at the University of Texas at Austin**

The Intellectual Entrepreneurship (IE) program at the University of Texas at Austin could be the answer to a consortium that can generate more money from applied research. Intellectual Entrepreneurship is an intercollegiate consortium involving eight colleges and four schools at the University of Texas at Austin. It's a program not a major. The colleges are Communications, Liberal Arts, Fine Arts, Natural Science, Law, Education, and Pharmacy. The schools are Engineering, Information, Public Affairs, and Social Work.

Intellectual Entrepreneurship (IE) views academics as creators of wealth and agents of social change—not stuck in the ivory tower. The mission is to create citizen-scholars. Students learn best by being engaged. IE students develop projects while tolerating ambiguity and taking risks: conditions in real innovation. The metaphor in IE changes to “discovery-ownership-accountability” from [“apprenticeship-certification-entitlement.”](#)

Inadvertently, IE serves as a force for diversification in graduate college. Minorities and first generation college students enroll in IE courses at a far better percentage than average. Reasons include the social relevance of IE projects. Moreover, IE graduate students mentor pre-IE undergraduate students further increasing overall numbers going into the graduate program. When I first told one of our city leaders about IE, he went straight to one of the deans at UT-Tyler.

I recall one [study](#) in Austin concerned overuse of hospital emergency rooms—one of my no-no's. Oral history and arts entrepreneurship are among the other projects at UT-Austin. You can find a link on how to do oral history at The City of Tyler website also!

In “What is Meant by IE,” Dr. Richard Cherwitz, the founder of Intellectual Entrepreneurship at UT-Austin defines some key terms. Dr. Cherwitz is also a Professor of Composition and Rhetoric, a great field for a persuader, who is building university-community partnerships. When we materialize ideas, they make a difference for our goal is to change the world, not just understand it. “Action research is solid research tied to some implementation plan; it's research with outcomes.” The entrepreneur is not only sensitive to the moment but creates it and has the “passion and courage to move,” together with skill, knowledge, and intelligence to carry through.”

The IE program has many fans at UT-Austin and scattered across the nation and world. The Library and Information Sciences Dean sees the doctorate holder of the future as more interdisciplinary and problem solving—providing a telescopic rather than a microscopic view. An anthropology prof feels “pleasure and relief,” noting that space for “weighty public debate” can be opened and “turn received wisdoms and couch-potato forms of logic on their head.”

Did Intellectual Entrepreneurship exist prior to its start at UT-Austin, and has it spread to other universities and received national recognition? The answer to both questions is “yes.” In 1995, Thomas Dandridge, Bengt Johannisson, and Stefan Kwiatkowski advanced an empirical framework for IE. Later these results became a volume in a Warsaw, Poland entrepreneur academy. <http://www.wspiz.pl/~unesco/indexeng.htm> Michigan, Arizona

State (Culture of Academic Enterprise) and Stanford have IE departments. Recognition for the UT-IE program comes from places like Fast Company magazine, the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship foundation, the Council of Graduate Schools, and US News and World Report.

### **Conclusion**

I'd like to encourage everyone reading this article to check out the Intellectual Entrepreneurship website at the University of Texas at Austin, as well as the Creative Class website of Dr. Richard Florida. We're fortunate to have a university with graduate college that is a part of the same system! Achieving better diversity in graduate college is particularly important for Tyler partly because of the higher percentage of both African-Americans (26%) and Hispanic-Americans (24%) compared to the rest of the United States--13% and 14%, respectively. IE can make higher education cool because of its relevance to social issues and real world problems. On a more basic level, Tyler has a large percentage of functionally illiterate adults. Wouldn't that be a great project for an IE program in Tyler, especially if it addressed the bilingual community also?