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**Roanoke recruiting creative community planners from Virginia Tech and the New River Valley**

BLACKSBURG, Va., Feb. 17, 2009 -- Students, teachers, entrepreneurs, community leaders, and others with ideas for improving the economic vitality of the Roanoke and New River valleys are invited by the City of Roanoke to become "Creative Connectors."

The city is accepting applications from volunteers who are interested in joining a team that will help create projects aimed at turning Roanoke into one of the nation's most desirable and prosperous communities.

"These volunteers will represent a new generation of community leaders," said John Provo, associate director of the [Office of Economic Development](#) in Virginia Tech's [Outreach and International Affairs](#).

Provo, an expert in urban planning and community economic development, will join Jeanine Stewart, vice president for academic affairs at Hollins University, and the Creative Class Group in conducting a two-day seminar on March 30 and 31.

The seminar will help prepare the 30 selected volunteers for their 12 months of service in Roanoke's [Creative Communities Leadership Program](#). Provo, Stewart, and the Creative Class Group will guide the team in establishing a creative economy, identifying strategic economic goals, and developing projects to engage the Roanoke community.

The team of volunteers will work with Roanoke civic leaders, but the volunteers will become the leaders of the project, Provo said.

"The City of Roanoke wants to attract volunteers from the New River Valley because the two areas are economically interdependent," Provo said. "This is a great opportunity to better connect folks from both sides of Christiansburg Mountain."

The 30 Creative Connectors chosen from the pool of applicants will be asked to volunteer two to four hours of their time each week for 12 months. The City of Roanoke hopes the team will represent a diversity of experience, background, age, and race.

The Creative Communities Leadership Program was launched by international economic development expert Richard Florida and his firm, the Creative Class Group, which has led community engagement projects around the world.

To apply as a volunteer for the City of Roanoke project, visit <http://www.roanokeva.gov/creative>.

For more information, contact Stuart Mease, Office of Economic Development, City of Roanoke, [stuart.mease@roanokeva.gov](mailto:stuart.mease@roanokeva.gov).

As associate director of Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development, Provo has conducted analysis of the potential for development of a nanomaterials cluster in Southwest Virginia, conducted market analysis of opportunities for the state of Virginia in farmshoring/domestic outsourcing, and led a number of community facilitation and strategic planning efforts. His past professional experience includes working for Virginia's secretary of commerce and trade on implementation of revisions to the state's workforce development system.

Provo received his Ph.D. in 2005 from the School of Urban Studies and Planning at Portland State University, where he worked for the Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies. He earned his bachelor's degree from the College of William and Mary and his master's from Virginia Commonwealth University.