Economist and author Richard Florida, who became a faculty star at George Mason University for his pioneering work on "the creative class," has left the Fairfax County university for a post at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management.


His departure comes just a few months after GMU featured him in a Business Week advertisement touting the Washington region's blend of cultural, sports, academic and service amenities as being a magnet for the best and brightest young people.

At Rotman, Florida will be a professor of business economics and academic director of the school's newly established Centre for Jurisdictional Advantage and Prosperity, a $120 million project to study how localities make themselves more attractive to companies and top-flight talent.

Florida's hiring is a coup for the Rotman School, which has been trying to raise its profile among the world's top business schools. Roger Martin, its dean, said he has been trying to get Florida for years.

"It took me a few years to get to know him well enough," Martin said. "We almost did a deal a few years ago, but we didn't have the funding in place."

The school received $60 million for the center from the province of Ontario, plus an additional $10 million from its top benefactor and namesake, Canadian banker Joseph L. Rotman.

"That helped create the environment in which Richard can say he was confident that he could get the work done that he really wanted," Martin said.

Florida did not return messages left for him seeking comment.

-- Thomas Heath