

MIX debuts to great praise

George Mason University President Ángel Cabrera joined Virginia's Secretary of Technology Karen Jackson, regional business leaders, and members of the campus and community to celebrate the grand opening of the new student-centered collaboration and event space, called the MIX.

Conveniently situated at the heart of George Mason's Fairfax Campus, the 14,000-square-foot facility is a place where student innovation and experimentation come to life on a daily basis. The building features ample space for co-working, multidisciplinary collaboration, and experiential learning with more than 90 tabletop surfaces and an array of different work stations that include 3-D printers, vinyl cutting machines, and heat presses.

"It's all about collaboration," said Sean Mallon, Mason's associate vice president for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. "We want the MIX to be a place where creative and innovative collisions happen every day."

The event was also a kickoff celebration for Growth4VA, a larger statewide plan that aims to boost Virginia's economy, while expanding access to more high-paying jobs and retaining the state's lofty business ranking. Mason is joining the state effort, along with VCU and Old Dominion.

Mason is the latest in a growing number of schools seeking to transform open work areas into a 21st-century collaboration hub, joining the likes of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, George Washington, New York University and others. The idea is to encourage students to develop their entrepreneurial, problem solving, and collaboration skills by working together.

Throughout the year, the MIX will host dozens of events and programs aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and innovation at Mason, in the Washington, D.C., area, and beyond.

"It's an open space for everybody," Mallon said. "It doesn't belong to any one unit within the university. It's a university resource, much like the library is a university resource."