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EXCLUSIVE REPORTS

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USF research center hires local high-tech team to study outsourcing

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Staff Writer

TAMPA -- A team led by Guy Hagen, an expert in high-tech economic development and founder of the firm Innovation Insight, has won a \$30,000 contract from the University of South Florida Globalization Research Center to study labor outsourcing in the Tampa Bay area.

Hagen said he plans to put together focus groups, made up of human resource and other experts from area companies, to provide feedback before the study is completed Sept. 15.

In addition to Innovation Insight, others participating in the study are the USF Center for Economic Development Research; the University of Tampa Center for Innovation and Knowledge Management; Forrester, a Cambridge, Mass.-based independent research company; and Brad Fischer, senior counsel at Foley & Lardner's Tampa office.

Statistical information on outsourcing is scarce, Hagen said, so the input from local companies will be vital.

Some industry groups have conducted their own research on outsourcing, said Mark Amen, director of the Globalization Research Center.

For instance, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said its study, published in April, "found there is little hard data to support fears about outsourcing and claims of an impending exodus of U.S. jobs overseas." A study sponsored by the Information Technology Association of America released in March said outsourcing strengthens U.S. corporations, builds U.S. jobs and increases real wages.

"My read on those findings, both of which supported the advantages to the U.S. of offshore outsourcing, was that solution was there before the study was completed," Amen said.

Amen said the goal of the USF study is to produce accurate information that can be the basis for public policy decisions about labor outsourcing.

"Once the report is done, we will organize a public forum in the last two weeks of October, invite the community to hear a summary of the report, and encourage some discussion in the Tampa Bay area about what policies should be pursued at the city and county level in response to the findings," Amen said.

Amen said there's widespread interest in the report from the Florida congressional delegation.

The study also could draw national attention, with its release scheduled shortly before the November presidential election.

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