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Heads up

# USF outsourcing study to be released today

By Times Staff Writer  
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Are too many quality jobs being siphoned away from the Tampa Bay area to lower-wage workers overseas? Inquiring minds want to know. Enough to prompt a \$30,000 contract from the University of South Florida Globalization Research Center to study labor outsourcing in the Tampa Bay area.

Results of that study will be announced today by USF and Guy Hagen of Innovation Insight Inc., the lead consulting firm that did the regional study looking at the past 10 years. The goal is to establish a baseline so that future shifts in regional outsourcing can be better gauged.

Outsourcing has become a controversial business subject and is a key political topic in this year's presidential campaign. President Bush, while not directly praising outsourcing, clearly is in favor of free-trade agreements that encourage U.S. businesses to hire low-cost but qualified workers overseas, even at the expense of U.S. workers. Sen. John Kerry argues he cannot stop outsourcing but wants to provide tax incentives to companies to maintain more jobs in this country. Kerry also wants to review so-called free-trade agreements that, the candidate says, have not been properly enforced.

Many mainstream business economists say outsourcing concerns are overblown because the number of jobs heading overseas remains relatively small. And, they say, not enough attention has been given to so-called "insourcing" - the addition of jobs in this country by foreign companies.

Outsourcing is bound to become more important in the years ahead as the globalization of business gathers steam. Getting a better handle on the real regional numbers is a good start.

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