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Fort Lauderdale wins bid for 660 Kaplan jobs

BY DARCIE LUNSFORD

After trolling the economic waters of three states for the best deal, Kaplan University appears set to bring its new 660-job hub to Fort Lauderdale.

The new jobs will have an average annual wage of \$40,331, according to Broward

County documents. That is \$10,000 more than the average annual wage listed for the county by Enterprise Florida, based on 2003 figures.

The city was pitted against Atlanta and Chicago for the 100,000-square-foot support center, which is needed to help the rapidly growing university educate its

21,000 mostly online students.

Kaplan's decision to expand its Cypress Creek Road support operation was delivered to county economic officials in early July, according to James Tarlton, president of the Broward Alliance.

"They called me at the end of last week," he said. "Chicago gave us a real

run because their commercial real estate market is relatively soft."

Kaplan also operates a 225-person support center in Chicago.

But in the end, Broward County, the city of Fort Lauderdale and the state's willing-

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MARK FREERKS

Kaplan may end up in a building similar to its existing one in the Cypress Creek area.

Alter Group in process of working out the lease

KAPLAN, from Page 1

ness to ante up \$1.98 million in public incentives appears to have been sufficient to reel in the jobs.

The county and city each will contribute \$198,000, with the balance coming from the state's Qualified Target Industry program.

Kaplan spokesman Charles Lynn declined to confirm that a site had been selected.

The company is expected to exercise its lease option for a second 96,948-square-foot building on Cypress Creek Road near the Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport in the Cypress Creek Concourse business park. Kaplan moved into its existing building at the 48-acre corporate park, owned by Chicago-based developer Alter Group, in January.

"There is not a signed lease," Alter VP Gregg Metcalf said. "We are in the process of trying to work a lease through."

Kaplan began looking for a spot to build or lease its fifth support center last year.

Kaplan University is based in Davenport, Iowa, and has a physical campus there, but it services the bulk of its students nation-

wide through support centers. The centers house the professors, financial aid, student advisors, administrators and clerical staff needed to run the institution.

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James Tarlton
President, Broward Alliance

South Florida is home to three of those centers, which soak up 162,000 square feet of space and employ more than 900. The other two, smaller facilities are in Delray Beach and Boca Raton.

Following in the wake of DHL

The Kaplan job-generating deal marks the second such arrangement for Broward County in recent weeks. DHL is on the verge of signing a lease that will place 600 jobs at Cornerstone Two in Plantation. Those jobs include corporate officers, senior managers, marketing and human resource positions with an average wage of \$54,000 a year. DHL stands to collect \$440,000 in county job growth incentives for creating those posts.

"I think that it demonstrates the business climate that we have and that we are interested in being a very diverse community," Tarlton said. "One more time, this tells a story about what we are becoming, which is a powerhouse here in South Florida."

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