New technology center in Lafayette to employ 400

Gov. Bobby Jindal listens to remarks by James Peake, president of CGI Federal, during the announcement of CGI’s intent to open an onshore IT delivery center in the University of Louisiana at Lafayette’s Research Park on Monday morning at the Lafayette Economic Development Authority offices. The facility will create about 400 jobs in the area with a $22 million annual payroll.

State aims to triple number of graduates in computer science

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LAFAYETTE — Information technology company CGI will open a technology center in the University of Louisiana at Lafayette’s Research Park, a facility that in four years will directly employ 400 high-tech workers with annual salaries averaging $55,000, CGI executive James Peake announced Monday.

CGI will begin hiring in a few months and will start operations at a temporary location later this year, Peake said. Construction is to begin later this year on the $13.1 million, 50,000-square-foot building, a Louisiana-financed facility that will be leased by CGI and owned by UL-Lafayette or a nonprofit associated with the university.

CGI chose Lafayette over other U.S. sites after a nearly two-year selection process, Peake said, because it’s in a business-friendly state and because of UL-Lafayette School of Computing and Informatics’ strong reputation in high-tech circles for graduating top-notch personnel.

Peake said CGI officials also were drawn to Lafayette because of events such as Innov8 Lafayette, the ongoing festival celebrating innovation and technology, and the just concluded Festival International de Louisiane.

“All of these are great examples of the spirit of the community,” said Peake, president of CGI subsidiary CGI Federal.

CGI is a 38-year-old Canadian information technology company with 68,000 employees working around the world.

CGI said the move to Lafayette will be the company’s fifth Onshore Center of Excellence in the United States, an effort to keep high-tech jobs in North America rather than sending them overseas, or “offshore.”

“The company continually looks for locations offering access to a quality workforce, strong economics and partnerships with state and local government, academia and industry,” the company said in a release.

As part of the CGI project at Research Park, Louisiana will fund a $4.5 million program over 10 years to enhance UL-Lafayette’s School of Computing and Informatics. The goal is to triple the number of four-year computer science degrees awarded each
year so Louisiana's growing high-tech sector can stay staffed, Gov. Bobby Jindal said.

"The school will be among the top 25 (in the nation) in the number of bachelor degrees awarded, right here in Lafayette," Jindal said at the CGI announcement Monday, made at the Lafayette Economic Development Authority, located in the Research Park.

In the 2013-14 academic year, the School of Computing and Informatics graduated 22 seniors, according to Charlie Bier, of the university's Office of Communications and Marketing.

CGI Vice President Dave Henderson cited UL-Lafayette's top-ranked computer science program and Lafayette's growing workforce and fiber-optic network.

Terry Huval, who runs the Lafayette Utility System and LUS Fiber, said the fiber system, with its one gigabyte per second speed, gives companies and residents in Lafayette the fastest information highway speed possible.

"It's important because there are no bottlenecks in the system," Huval said at the CGI announcement.

Jindal said the state pledged other incentives to get CGI to locate an office in Lafayette. He said Louisiana will provide a grant of $5.3 million to help offset the cost of relocating personnel, to recruit and train employees, and to pay for building operating expenses.