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TRADE AND TRANSPORTATION: China trade seminar attracts a crowd

By Christopher Calnan

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Organizers of this month's seminar on doing business with China said the event attracted more interest than expected.

The seminar at Florida Community College at Jacksonville drew 70 paid attendees, although only 50 were expected. And now more such events are scheduled to give business people advice and guidance on how to take advantage of the China market that has become available because of a change in trade relations with the United States.

Turnout at the FCCJ event "certainly was a very pleasant surprise," business consultant and Jacksonville lawyer Jim Valenti said. "Not only were we pleased with the number but the caliber of the folks who attended."

Valenti, the president of Jacksonville's World Trade Group LLP, presented an overview of trade with China.

In November, FCCJ announced the establishment of the Chinese Business Education Center, which offers short-term and semester classes in the Chinese language, history and culture, and the Chinese business, social and political systems.

A schedule of courses is due out any day now.

Valenti said the seminars will run simultaneously in three tracks for four-month periods. The seminars will be designed to be practical and no-nonsense, Valenti said.

"It's geared toward filling the needs of local businesses," he said.

Last month, President Bush granted China permanent normal trade status, ending a quarter-century policy of using access to U.S. markets as an annual enticement to the communist giant to expand political and economic freedoms. The new trade status took effect Jan. 1.

Valenti said businesses that are in the greatest demand in China include logistics, sales, marketing, distribution services and education.

"Companies for the first time understand the magnitude of the business opportunities in China," Valenti said.

"And just as importantly, they understand that this is the time to be looking at those opportunities."
