



For more information on MTC, contact: Elizabeth Barnes, ebarnes@macdonaldcenter.org or 813 870-1300 ext. 310
For more information on TLA, contact Christine Hugh, chugh@usf.edu or 813-974-2840

The Learning Academy at USF and MacDonald Training Center Announce Technology Collaboration

TAMPA, Florida, June 24, 2019 - The Learning Academy at USF and MacDonald Training Center proudly announce a unique collaboration to provide new educational programs in technology for people with disabilities. Students will have the opportunity to earn globally recognized industry certifications in a variety of technology fields, all with the goal of technology-based employment, one of the fastest growing sectors in Florida.

[MacDonald Training Center](#) teaches foundational technology courses required for jobs in many contemporary office environments from Help Desk to Front Desk. Students earn certifications including Microsoft Office Specialist, Microsoft Technical Specialist and IC3 certification (IC³). Specialized instruction at The Learning Academy can build upon foundational skills taught at MacDonald Training Center Courses through their first *Emerging Process Automation Technologies Course* located at USF, Tampa, which launches in October 2019. Advanced Technology instruction will yield proficiencies in robotics, automation, safety standards and process management. Students may take a continuum of classes in both locations or enroll in the program best suited to their vocational goal.

The collaboration is the vision of Dr. Karen Berkman, Director of the Learning Academy Services at USF and Karenne Levy, President/CEO of MacDonald Training Center. Dr. Berkman was the driving force for the successful “Autism Friendly Tampa” initiative that has changed the landscape of Tampa’s public parks, first responders, police and other city employees, adding many resources for families and individuals across the lifespan in our community. Collaborating to provide effective workforce development geared to the skills and affinities of adults on the Autism Spectrum is a natural next step of this initiative.

“Technology is a solution for young people with the gifts of exceptional concentration, attention to detail, and an untapped talent pool for STEM businesses looking for capable employees,” explains Dr. Berkman. “Our partnership is an intentional, caring “what’s next” resource for families looking for options for their young adult children. It’s an expedited track to employment in high growth jobs in the Tampa Bay area.”

“The focus is on careers, not just jobs that offer the possibility of earning a living wage leading to economic self-sufficiency and full inclusion in our society. This collaboration is a testament to mutual respect, our years of experience providing the evolving training and employment services that people with disabilities deserve,” says Karenne Levy. “This collaboration is a thoughtful response to the needs of our community.”

[The Learning Academy](#), part of the University of South Florida, is a customized transition program that assists in preparing young adults diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder for employment. MacDonald Training Center is a leading nonprofit provider of vocational education for people with all disabilities. Both organizations are approved by the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for specialized vocational training and as a job placement service for individuals with disabilities. After completion of the technology training, students may choose either organization for employment placement assistance.