

LAKE MICHIGAN COLLEGE

College enters new era with housing

Officials break ground for 200-unit complex to open in '14

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI
H-P Correspondent

BENTON TOWNSHIP — Lake Michigan College's decision to build a 200-unit student housing complex at its Napier Avenue campus promises a big change for an institution long known as a commuter campus.

However, the rewards won't take long to be felt, LMC President Bob Harrison said during Tuesday's ground-breaking ceremony for the project.

"This will, without any question, change the face of Lake Michigan College," Harrison said. "We'll be able to provide more services — not only to our residential students, but also to our commuter students, where they'll be able to see more student-focused activities and services."

The project is a game-changer for LMC, Board Chairman David Maysick agreed in his brief comments.

"What we're building here will be different, and will change the face of this college forever," Maysick said.



HARRISON



Don Campbell / HP staff

Members of the Lake Michigan College Board of Trustees and LMC President Robert Harrison break ground Tuesday for construction of a new student housing facility at the college's Napier Avenue campus. The three-story, \$8 million complex will feature 200 units, three lounges, six study spaces and private rooms in two or four person suites. Construction is scheduled to be completed by fall of 2014. An artist's rendering of the project is shown above.

"It will be different having students here, 24/7, but I think it will be great."

About 100 people attended Tuesday's ground-breaking, which took place under a tent on the campus's west side.

Construction begins this week and is supposed to be completed for fall 2014.

LMC is developing the project with Student Suites of Independence, Mo., which helps two-year community colleges design student housing.

The total estimated cost is \$8 million, which the college is financing through bonds to be repaid from student housing fees over

30 years.

The three-story complex will offer private rooms in two- or four-person suites, plus in-suite bathroom, kitchen and laundry facilities, and all the latest technological resources, the college reported in a news release.

Hollis & Miller Archi-

itects' design includes a beach volleyball court, disc golf course, courtyard, lounges and study spaces, the college's release notes.

LMC's entry into the student housing field coincides with a growing national trend, too, Harrison said.

See LMC, page B2



LMC

► From page B1

About 25 percent of U.S. community colleges provide student housing, while LMC will be the seventh in Michigan to do so, he said. Southwestern Michigan College opened student housing last year in Dowagiac.

Harrison said there will be several immediate benefits at LMC.

"The student housing will support our health programs, where we have students traveling from Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo and South Bend on a daily basis, to attend school here," he said.

The project will boost LMC's energy production program, "where we'll have students coming from across the country," Harrison said. "We're starting a soccer program here, and the first season will be this fall. We also expect students from the team to take up residence in our hall."

Having the option to live on campus will be a boon to LMC's student athlete population, May-sick said.

"For athletes who come in from out of state, this'll be nice living here, instead of around the neighborhood, somewhere. This'll be their home, and LMC can be a tremendous home," he

said.

Pam McVay, the college's long-time student life director, will also see her own role change dramatically – and she's looking forward to it.

"I've often heard, and used the phrase, 'planning is everything,'" McVay

said. "We're creating a place where students will have a place to meet new people, have quick access to campus facilities, and get involved in campus life – and

truly experience the full college experience."

Tuesday's ceremony caps a lengthy process that began by talking with students, parents and other community colleges around the state, Harrison said.

"As we gathered all that (detail) together, we said, 'This is something that students are interested in, and it's something that will keep students here in Southwest Michigan,'" Harrison said after the ground-breaking. "Without any question, over the last five years, the prospect of student housing has been the most frequent question I've been asked."



McVAY