

BENTON TWP.

LMC dorm project interest builds

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BENTON TOWNSHIP — Construction of Lake Michigan College's three-story, 200-unit dormitory is about eight months away from completion, but inquiries from students are already coming in at a steady clip.

"We're pleased with the level of interest being exhibited by students, not just from the immediate area, but also northern Indiana, Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids," President Bob Harrison said.

So far, roughly 500 students have shown some interest in the complex. The college broke ground on the



Don Campbell / HP staff

Construction continues Tuesday on the dorms at Lake Michigan College in Benton Township. LMC expects to have occupants moved in by the fall semester.

dorm last summer.

LMC staff members are helping to build interest, as well.

"It gives us something else to offer," Harrison said.

"Our coaches will tell you that adding housing has been a definite 'value-add' for their recruitment activities."

The next few months should tell the tale, as students

choose colleges and start planning for that experience, Harrison said.

"We're not going to declare victory. It's a little early for that," he said.

LMC is developing the project with Student Suites of Independence, Mo. The estimated cost is \$8 million, which the college is financing through bonds that will be repaid from student housing fees over 30 years. Students will get private rooms in two- or four-person suites, plus an in-suite bathroom, kitchen and laundry facilities, and all the latest technological resources.

To illustrate how the future looks, the college has opened a model dorm room in its main campus building.

"It's really not like dorms, but more like an apartment building where you'd rent space," Harrison said.

See **LMC DORM**, page A8

LMC DORM

► From page A1

On the construction side, Harrison expects a low-key year, once the college wraps up the housing complex by July or August, in time for its fall opening.

LMC has applied for a \$16 million state grant that could fund several projects at its Napier Avenue campus, led by an overhaul of its 40-year-old heating, ventilation and air conditioning system.

Funding wouldn't be available until the 2015-16 fiscal year, but the state has pledged to pick up half the cost if the grant comes through.

Other projects for 2014 include a new veteran's meeting room

and resource center at the Napier Avenue campus, which should be ready when students return for classes Jan. 13, Harrison said.

The college will upgrade the science labs at its South Haven campus, which is now 10 years old.

That's the next logical step after a similar upgrade completed last summer at the Bertrand Crossing campus in Niles, Harrison said.

"All that builds up to how we make students be successful, finish what they start," Harrison said.

"That's been a major focus over the last five years. We're seeing some good returns, and we're pleased with that. But we always feel that there's more that we could do."