

LAKE MICHIGAN COLLEGE

Pearson hired to build wine lab

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BENTON TOWNSHIP — Construction should begin soon for Lake Michigan College's new wine production lab, with Pearson Construction Co. winning the project bid.

LMC board members unanimously awarded the bid Tuesday to the Benton Harbor company for \$215,000. Chairman David Maysick and Secretary Mary Jo Tomasini were absent.

Other bids came from Frederick Construction of Vicksburg (\$244,000), CPM Construction of St. Joseph (\$235,935) and Fiskars Inc. of St. Joseph (\$228,000).

"This was a great set of bids," LMC's vice president of administration, Anne Erdman, said, after the meeting.

Plans call for installing the lab on the Mendel Center's east side, in the

Upton Telecommunications Center, Erdman said. The board voted last fall to renovate that space.

"We should be done by Aug. 1 — then we'll start moving in equipment so it'll be ready for the fall semester. There's room for about 20 (students) at a time to go through the program," Erdman said.

Board members agreed last month to start the enology and vitology program pending approval of the curriculum from the Higher Learning Commission — which isn't expected to be a problem, LMC President Bob Harrison said.

The board capped the total estimated cost at \$540,000. That's because Tuesday's bid award only covers the actual construction — not the equipment students will use, Harrison said.

He expects the college to get bids and leverage

partnerships with local businesses to get the equipment.

"It'd be equipment you'd normally find in a winery. The difference will be that this is a commercial teaching winery," Harrison said. "There will be student learning spaces constructed by Pearson that you would not find in a commercial winery."

A search is underway to find the instructor to teach the course, which will attract five to 10 applications because it's so specialized, Harrison said.

However, the new program should create excitement among students, particularly because of the related fields that overlap with wine production, Harrison said.

"It is exciting. We think that it's got great opportunity to grow jobs in Southwest Michigan, not only in the wine industry, but also, in tourism and culinary arts," he said.