

Welding program gets boost at LMC

School fine tunes offering for in-demand profession

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BENTON TOWNSHIP — Students with welding skills could put themselves on the fast track to an in-demand career at Lake Michigan College following program changes, LMC announced.

Those options will include a Level I certificate in welding production technology, which students can obtain after completing 17 credit hours in the subject.

Students can then enter the work force sooner, or pursue an associate's degree in the subject, if they're so inclined, LMC President Bob Harrison said.

"It's just us bringing together the courses that we've been teaching," Harrison said. "Depending on the sequence of classes, they could probably do it in a semester or two."

LMC board members recently approved the certificate, which followed a review of existing courses, said Leslie Kellogg, the college's co-vice president of instruction.

"We already had all the courses on the books. The certificate is a more streamlined program of study that's really just a skills-based learning in welding," she said.

Students would have to

complete courses in blueprint reading and symbols, fabrication and metallurgy to get their certificate.

The college anticipates an enrollment of 100 to 150 in the certificate program over the next three years. The program reflects LMC's continuing efforts to boost levels of skilled workers, according to a memo in the board's Oct. 21 meeting packet.

"Area employers and employees have requested certificate programs that prepare students for entry into the labor market and entry-level employment," the memo states.

While manufacturing jobs continue to decrease, "the outlook for welders in manufacturing is far stronger than for other occupations," the memo said.

Retirements and growth in the construction, manufacturing and utilities industries are expected to spur continuing demand for welders.

"Welding schools report that graduates have little difficulty finding work, and some welding employers report difficulty finding trained welders," the memo said.

Examples of potential opportunities for welders include the need to help rebuild bridges, buildings and highways — as well as the construction of new power facilities and pipelines for transporting natural gas and oil, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

