

Harrison stepping down as LMC president

By HP STAFF

BENTON TOWNSHIP — Lake Michigan College will soon seek its next president with the current one planning to retire Dec. 31.

President Robert Harrison made the announcement Thursday during a meeting with staff and faculty, the college reported Tuesday.

“Dr. Harrison guided the college through a turbulent time and has put us on a

positive path to serve the needs of the region,” board Chairwoman Mary Jo Tomasini said in the press release.

“Under his calm and steady leadership, the college has experienced outstanding growth in communities served, services offered, and programs de-



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veloped. He understands the region’s challenges and strengths and truly cares about the people within it.”

The board hired Harrison in 2009 after it pushed out Randall Miller with a controversial severance package.

In his nearly six years, Harrison has overseen construction of the college’s first on-campus housing, a new student activity center on the Napier Avenue campus, and the renovation of

science and health program classrooms.

In addition, the college launched its first bachelor’s degree program in energy production and added an associate of applied science in enology and viticulture — the science of wine making and the production and study of grapes.

“Lake Michigan College is an important key, maybe the most important key to helping the regional economy grow,” Harrison said in

the press release. “I have complete confidence in the leadership team, the board, the president’s cabinet, faculty, and staff. Each person brings a unique set of skills to the table and as a whole, they function well together.”

During the next ten months, he work will continue on the development of a new technology center, a new facility for the Great Lakes Wine Institute and a forthcoming capital outlav

project to make improvements to the Napier Avenue instructional building.

Mathematics instructor Jim Larson said Harrison put LMC back on track after the Miller years.

“Communication and collaboration has improved tremendously between the faculty, the (administration) cabinet and the community as a whole,” said Larson, who joined LMC in 2001.

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He said Harrison's dedication to an open, team approach led to the creation of a communications committee, "which is a completely

new thing" for LMC.

He further cites Harrison for thinking big about matters like the dorm and the wine program.

"These kind of things don't always work out, but it's nice to see us try for a change," Larson said.

The board will begin the process of recruiting Harrison's successor, starting with an evaluation of potential internal candidates, LMC reported.

Harrison joined the college in 1999 as executive dean of Bertrand Crossing

and Workforce Services.

Harrison said his plans for retirement include volunteering, small business ventures and enjoying his time away from day-to-day work responsibilities.

"I've enjoyed my time at the college. It's been reward-

ing and fulfilling, and I believe we can continue to grow in successfully building the local work force, being the focal point for cultural opportunities in the region, and helping our students achieve their goals and aspirations," he said.