

LMC board approves budget for 2015-16

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NILES — Lake Michigan College will start its new fiscal year with a budget that won't look much different than last year's figures.

The college anticipates \$31.8 million in revenue and \$31.7 million in expenses for its 2015-16 budget, which LMC board members passed during

Tuesday's meeting at the college's Bertrand Crossing campus.

The college's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.

Those numbers are pretty close to the 2014-15 budget, which showed \$31.5 million in revenue and expenses, "so it's not a big change, year over year," LMC President Bob Harrison said.

There will also be no

change in LMC's operating millage, which the board set at 2 mills in January, he said.

"What we're seeing is a continuation of adults going back to work, so enrollment is dropping a bit. It's consistent with the trends since the (Great) recession technically ended," Harrison said. "All the schools are seeing adult enrollments slide down. So that's all very much expected."

All departments are getting essentially the same amounts as last year, though the 2015-16 budget includes some notable new expenses — such as the start-up costs for its new wine production program, and the first year of running Beckwith Hall, the college's new student housing complex, Harrison said.

The budget includes small salary increases of 2 to 2.5 percent for faculty

and facilities employees, "which is consistent with what our union contracts were," Harrison said.

By contrast, non-bargaining unit employees will receive a small stipend, Harrison said. He didn't recall the exact amount.

The college will get \$73,000 from the state for operations, and \$600,000 to help offset the cost of its retirement contributions, Harrison said.

"It's consistent with what they're (the state Legislature) doing with all the other public schools," Harrison said. "It's an offset of expenses that we could (otherwise) be required to pay. When people say we're not getting any more money from the state operations, that technically is true. But when you look at what they've done to offset

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pension costs, that's a big deal. We're smaller than some of the (local) school districts."

In other business, the board scheduled a special meeting for 8:30 a.m.

Tuesday, July 13, at the Napier Avenue campus, to determine how it will search for a successor to Harrison, who retires on Dec. 31.

Clinton Gabbard, vice president of student services, is the only internal candidate to express interest in the job. The board

could offer it to him or launch a national search.

"Normally, they don't have a July meeting. They'll have some action, or ideas, on how to proceed – by then, they'll have a good idea of where they're headed," Harrison said. "It'll clarify the process."