
A smoother transition

LMC bolsters early education program relationship with WMU

By **RALPH HEIBUTZKI**
HP Correspondent

BENTON HARBOR – Lake Michigan College’s elementary and early childhood education students will now have an easier path to continue their education at Western Michigan University.

That path is now smoother and simpler, thanks to transfer agreements that LMC signed with WMU for both programs, President Emeritus/Acting CEO Bob Harrison said.

“It is a big deal. It clears up and provides better direction for students, for the steps they need to take, the classes they need to take. It reduces some uncertainty,” he said.

The agreements cover LMC’s early childhood (K-5), and elementary education (K-8) programs, Harrison said. The LMC board signed them last month.

Both institutions spent a year discussing the agreements, which add new language clarifying how they’ll work together – and spelling out curriculum requirements more clearly, Harrison said.

“It’s updating what we do, to make sure that it lines up well with what they’re (WMU) looking for,” he said.

Erika Milovich, who joined LMC last August as an early childhood instructor, played a key role in helping hammer out the agreements, Harrison said.

“She’s worked on reviewing and updating our early childhood program, as well as our early education program. The signing

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is the result of her hard work over the last year," Harrison said.

Early childhood students will continue their education at LMC's main campus, on Napier Avenue, where WMU's Southwest Campus is also located.

One appealing aspect of that relationship is that the Southwest Campus offers a certification program that the state now requires for new kindergarten teachers, according to Milovich.

"How amazing to have this right here on the Southwest Campus – as well as on the main campus – already built into their program of study," she said.

Elementary education students will have to go to WMU's main campus, in Kalamazoo.

Both options will become available in January 2017.

The Health Sciences Department is also getting new equipment for its Simulation Lab, which sharpens students' skills for the situations they'll face professionally, a June 28 memo states. About 200 students will benefit.

Instructors use simulation exercises in bedside patient care for training nursing students, urgent care assessments for EMT students, and point of care testing for medical assistant students, for example.

LMC will spend \$184,062 to replace the current equipment, which is 10 years old, and no longer eligible for software updates or technical support, the memo states.

The centerpiece of the

upgrade is enhanced audiovisual equipment that will allow students to watch and critique themselves after an exercise, which will "provide a valuable debriefing tool," the memo states.

LMC has also hired a full-time nursing simulation instructor to start this fall, who'll work with other health department faculty to expand the program.

In other business, LMC will move ahead on two grant applications.

The board approved seeking a \$50,000 Big Idea grant from the Berrien County Community Foundation.

If approved, the college would use the funds to help expand its Start 2 Finish program, which aims to eliminate barriers – such as transportation and finance – that prevent students from finishing college.

LMC started the program to ease the academic and personal struggles of students signed up for the Benton Harbor Promise Zone program.

A successful application would ensure up to 30 more places for Promise Zone students, plus up to 20 foster care students, which is another group that the college sees benefiting from Start 2 Finish, Harrison said.

The other grant application, for \$20,000, goes to the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. A \$20,000 match is required.

If successful, LMC would use the money to offset the costs of bringing the Broadway musical, "Pippin," to the Mendel Center on April 1, 2017. The college expects to raise the match from ticket sales, so no extra fundraising is needed, a board memo states.