

Uncorking wine school

LMC creating viticulture program

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BENTON TOWNSHIP — Lake Michigan College is taking a serious look at starting a wine making program this fall.

LMC trustees unanimously agreed Tuesday to proceed with the enology and viticulture program, as it will be called, for the fall semester. The new program would include a teaching

winery.

By voting to go ahead, the board recognizes the industry's long-standing role in Southwest Michigan's economy — and its potential for helping students succeed, LMC President Bob Harrison said.

“We’re still in the investigation (stage). There’s clearly some interest, not only in Southwest Michigan, but throughout the rest of the state and the Midwest,” Harrison said. “We think it resonates well with growing the tourism economy in Southwest

Michigan, and the rest of the state.”

As Tuesday’s resolution notes, the college has already done a financial analysis, held discussions with potential industry partners and analyzed labor market conditions before pushing ahead with the new program.

Final approval is required from the Chicago-based Higher Learning Commission, which oversees the accreditation process, Harrison said.

“Ideally, it would probably be (starting) in the fall,

but that’s based on a couple things — finding the right faculty to teach it, as well as going through the accreditation process,” he said.

In other matters, the board split 6-1 on changing its credit for prior learning policy — which will now allow students to claim up to 18 hours of related experience toward their overall academic load.

Board President Dr. David Maysick joined Treasurer Michael Lindley, Secretary Mary Jo Tomasini and Trustees Stephen

Small, Judy Truesdell and Renee Williams in approving the change. Vice Chairman Paul Bergan dissented.

Bergan said he wanted to see more than 18 hours.

“It’s going to give people college credit for their experiential earning. For instance, if you had a license for (being) a plumber, or military service, you can get 18 hours of experience in lieu of credits,” Bergan said. “I didn’t want a limit. That was my only issue. I support the program 100 percent.”