

Technology center 2.0

Hanson Tech Center is a great addition to LMC

Lake Michigan College's newest jewel, Hanson Technology Center, will welcome its first students on Sept. 6, and we share in the excitement that college officials have expressed about the new \$12.1 million center.

In a sense the 43,000 square-foot building is the college's tech center 2.0. LMC opened the M-TEC center in 2000, in Benton Harbor, to much fanfare. However, by 2008 the 40,000 square-foot facility was up for sale. It took time but Whirlpool eventually purchased the building in late 2014.

The Hanson center has distinct advantages over the old M-TEC building, number one being that it sits prominently on LMC's main campus on Napier Avenue in Benton Township. LMC Dean of Career and Workforce Education Ken Flowers said M-TEC never attracted as many students as originally hoped for. "People did not think that it was (part of) LMC," he said.

The Hanson center fixes that issue in a big way, and fits in nicely with the college's major push to modernize the main campus. LMC just recently added a dormitory to attract two-year students looking for a more traditional campus experience. Then last year came the big announcement that Lansing is kicking in \$8.5 million toward an ambitious \$17 million renovation of LMC's main building that houses most of its academic facilities. Fifty classrooms and two lecture halls will get needed renovations, and other improvements are planned as part of the massive project.

The Hanson building also fits in well with the goals of a number of prominent area manufacturers that depend on a well-trained workforce to do business. Gone are the days when manufacturers depended largely on unskilled labor, as most domestic manufacturing in the 21st century is a high-tech endeavor. Employers need workers with the kind of skills that will be taught at the Hanson center, which will work in conjunction with those employers in designing training programs. That very well could make Southwest Michigan a more desirable destination for other manufacturers looking for a home.

We are glad to see the public and private sector working well together. Everybody in this region wins when there are good-paying jobs available, and with the addition of the Hanson Technology Center, LMC has improved its status as a vital cog in that machinery.