

# LMC chooses new president

## Trevor Kubatzke seeks return to Michigan

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KUBATZKE

BENTON HARBOR — Lake Michigan College's new president says he can't wait to reconnect with his Michigan years — and help

lead the institution to a higher level. Trevor A. Kubatzke, vice president of student services at Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC), emerged as the LMC board's top choice Friday when it voted to offer him

a contract. He has served as vice president for student and educational services at Delta College in University Center, Mich., before taking his current job in Wisconsin — and its environment of four campus buildings and 40,000 students. "Before leaving Michigan, we were debating whether I would go back at that point. to be a pres-

ident," Kubatzke said. "With all of my experiences put together, I'm confident that I'm ready to come into Lake Michigan, lead the team, and continue to serve the residents." As an example, Kubatzke cites his experiences with leading a program at MATC that offers free two-year tuition to high school graduates who meet certain criteria, he said.

"We've doubled our direct-from-high-school enrollment in one year. So, throughout my career, I've been looking for innovative ways to make sure the residents know that we're here, and providing real-time, quality education for the work force," he said. That kind of talk — and track record — earned Kubatzke the nod over the other finalist. Jon Man-

drell, vice president of academics and student services at Sauk Valley Community College in Dixon, Ill., LMC Board Chairwoman Debra Johnson said. "Dr. Kubatzke comes with a vast leadership experience," Johnson said. "His work history demonstrates that he's a team builder, he's collaborative — he not only

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talks servant leadership, he walks servant leadership.”

The board will begin contract talks with Kubatzke, who’s expected to start in April, an LMC news release stated.

He will succeed Bob Harrison, who’ll retire after 18 years at LMC.

Harrison returned last May as president emeritus/acting CEO after the board fired his predecessor, Jennifer Spielvogel, after three months on the job. The board alleged unauthorized spending and unprofessional conduct.

Johnson served on the presidential search committee, along with LMC Board President Michael Lindley and Trustee Mary Jo Tomasini.

“For Dr. Kubatzke, he’s coming home – this is a good fit for him, and I know he’s excited and happy to be coming to Lake Michigan College,” she said.

Tomasini served as chair of the search committee. It began work last fall with 92 applicants, which was narrowed to 13 semi-finalists, and then four finalists, including Kubatzke and Mandrell.

Tomasini thanked LMC staff, faculty members and local residents for helping the board through its second search process in less than a year.

“People have been incredibly thoughtful and dedicated to making our candidates feel welcome during their visits, and helping us make the best decision for LMC,” she said.

The board received more than 200 comments during its search.

“It was a difficult choice,” Johnson said, of the final decision-making activities. “Most of the candidates were very strong. As a board, when we looked at our numbers, and where we had them, we all made our way to the same place.”

Kubatzke’s success with helping local students access higher education is comparable to LMC’s work with the Benton Harbor Promise Zone program – and shows that “he understands Michigan,” Johnson said.

“He understands the relationship between the community, the K-12 and business and industry, especially how important that is for us here in Berrien County,” she said.

Lindley seconded those sentiments in his own brief statement.

“Dr. Kubatzke brings a breadth and depth of experience to Lake Michigan College, and he has a sincere passion for student success. He’s knowledgeable about the complexities and culture of a community college like ours, and understands the value of LMC’s interconnectedness with business, K-12 and economic partners. We are confident he is a great fit for our college, and our community,” Lindley said.

When asked how he sees his Wisconsin experiences correlating with those he’ll encounter at LMC, Kubatzke responded: “They’re not sharply contrasting. We all are here to serve our students, make sure our education is relevant to our community, and make sure our residents have access to higher education.”

Kubatzke worked to keep those goals in mind during his tenure at MATC, which coincided with the highly charged political atmosphere under Gov. Scott Walker, he said.

“We took the approach that, no matter what happens outside our walls, college is vital to our community, so it’s important to come together, and work together for the betterment of our students. I’m proud to say, that after a year of working together, we came out stronger,” he said.

Kubatzke began his community college career in 1995 at Upper Iowa University in Fayette, Iowa, LMC stated, in its release.

He then went on to hold a number of key positions at Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, Ill., including associate vice president of enrollment services; interim chief information officer; and executive director of the Eastern Region Education Center.

He’s a board member of Hispanic Professionals of Greater Milwaukee, and is a member of the Milwaukee Power Squadron. He also worked as a police officer in West Union, Iowa.

He holds a doctor of philosophy in education administration in community college leadership from Walden University, a master of science in education administration from Missouri State University, and a bachelor of science in agricultural economics from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.