

It's simply fabulous at new LMC offering

College to show off Fab Lab on Saturday

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HP Correspondent

BENTON HARBOR — Lake Michigan College is celebrating the grand opening of its cutting edge

Fab Lab this weekend, and the public is invited to see what that vision looks like.

That opportunity comes from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the lab, which is in the Hanson Technology Center at LMC's Napier Avenue campus.

Fab Lab Manager Andrea Oleniczak and Ken

Flowers, dean of career and work force education, will join faculty and staff in welcoming visitors — whether they're interested in learning how to cre-



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ate and design something or simply curious about LMC's latest venture.

In keeping with those ideals, no formal tour or program has been laid out, Oleniczak said.

"We'll have several different pieces of equipment, and we're going to have stations, where things are

going on — so you can just kind of observe, or say, "Hey, I'd like to cut something for myself, and get involved," she said.

Variety won't be a problem for those ready to take the hands-on plunge, either.

"We're going to be doing balsa wood-style airplanes, and have a station

to paint and decorate your airplanes," Oleniczak said.

"Then, we'll have two electronic stations — and then, another station, where we'll have a robotic arm, that you can interact with."

Also, forgoing a set agenda gives people "the same

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experience at 10:05 (a.m.), as they come in at 1:05 (p.m.)," Flowers said.

"That's the whole process of a fab lab, anyway. It's not on a scheduled agenda. It's about learning at your own pace, and feeling comfortable, being around this equipment, if you've never seen it before," he said.

Light snacks will be provided.

To register, or learn more about class or membership opportunities, visit lakemichigancollege.edu/fablab.

The Fab Lab, as its name implies, is an open access

digital fabrication studio and collaborative workshop that provides information, software and tools for that purpose.

Available resources will include laser cutters, 3-D printers and vinyl cutters, as well as a wood shop, CNC router, hand tools and design software, such as the Adobe Creative Suite.

When asked what she wants the public to take home when they leave, Oleniczak responded: "Being able to have the opportunity to come in, and have a sense for what the workshop is. Because the Fab Lab is a community, open-based workshop, there's a lot of freedom, but I think people don't know exactly

where they might fit in that mix."

That experience will continue after Saturday's event with a series of short, low-cost workshops aimed at those "who know exactly what they want to create, but aren't sure how to do it," a summary posted on LMC's website states.

"You can be a member, come back and take a class, or take a workshop, and be hands-on. There's all these different ways that you can interact with the space," Oleniczak said. "Beyond the equipment, we have this beautiful space for people to come together, in a sense, whether they're using the tools, or brewing a pot of coffee, and sharing what everyone's working

on."

Flowers said he sees the Fab Lab's long-term uses extending beyond the Hanson Tech Center, which opened last August as part of LMC's effort to put all its manufacturing technology programs in one place.

"We look at our whole building as a Fab Lab," Flowers said. "It's all about drawing people into this space, doing these things – young people are coming in (for example), learning how to do things with their hands. That's a skill set that's not happening like it used to, so we're trying to build that back in the community, and letting people say, 'I want to do this,' whether it be here, or whether at home."