

LAKE MICHIGAN COLLEGE

Gearing up at Hanson

LMC staff/student
team design
key equipment

By **RALPH HEIBUTZKI**
HP Correspondent

BENTON HARBOR — Thanks to a federal education grant, the last piece of the Hanson Technology Center's equipment puzzle is now in place at Lake Michigan College.

The programmable logic controls equipment that arrived last month at Hanson will be used by students in LMC's mechatronics courses, said Leslie Kellogg, vice president of academic services.

"The thing that's cool is our faculty and dean partnered with Kendall Electric and Eagle Technologies to design and custom build this equipment ... so that it's not only state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment, but it allows us to effective-

ly use it as a teaching tool," she said.

Mechatronics is a specialized field of science that combines electronics and mechanical engineering.

PLC equipment, on the other hand, is used to run basic manufacturing processes, such as assembly lines or robotic devices.

Eagle and Kendall worked with Ken Flowers, LMC's dean of career and work force education, and instructional maintenance instructor Kevin Kreitner to design and build the equipment, Kellogg said.

"Tim Eichler, who's a student in our apprenticeship program, actually served as the lead machine builder on the project. That was Tim's first time serving as a project leader," she said.

LMC funded the equipment through a \$1.2 million Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career

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Ralph Heibutzki / HP correspondent

It looks impenetrable to the uninitiated, but mechatronics students at Lake Michigan College will find their way around the logic control equipment seen here. Staff and students designed and installed the gear, supported by a federal grant.

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Training, or TAACCCT grant.

“The grant that we got was specific to our manufacturing program,” Kellogg said.

The U.S. Department of Labor is offering TAACCCT funds through September 2018, according to a summary posted on its website.

TAACCCT funding has helped community colleges develop or redesign 2,600 programs of study nationwide – as well as “help adults learn skills that lead to family-supporting jobs,” the department’s summary states.

Each state received four years of funding from 256 grants that totaled \$1.9 billion, according to the summary.

The PLC equipment purchase gives LMC a shot at developing an advanced PLC course, Kellogg said, in a written report to the board.

“The new trainers will create a better student experience and increase hands-on programming opportunities for students. The new equipment will complement our robotics

and motors controls courses,” she said.

The equipment purchase reflects a commitment to stay on top of what the college’s local business partners need while helping them figure out where tomorrow’s jobs are coming from, LMC President Trevor Kubatzke said.

“The (presidential) cabinet and I will be working over the next couple weeks to really start addressing what areas we want to focus on,” Kubatzke said.

Kubatzke, who took office in mid-April, said he looks forward to fleshing out those efforts with local employers shortly.

“We’re going to be having some forums with manufacturers, (and also in) health care, to ask them, ‘What do you need now, five years from now, 10 years now?’ And then, we’ll just plan our actions on how to move those things forward, that we need to move forward,” he said.

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