

LMC sets budgets, adds instructors

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BENTON TOWNSHIP — To address specific student needs, Lake Michigan College is adding three new instructors and a writing center coordinator in next year's budget.

The new teaching positions include computer information systems, English As a Second Language and math, LMC President Trevor Kubatzke said after Tuesday's board meeting.

"The positions are the big story," Kubatzke said. "As in any budget, we looked for areas where we

could affect the greatest number of students."

LMC trustees after a brief public hearing unanimously approved a budget of \$33.4 million in revenue and expenses for its 2017-18 fiscal year, which starts Saturday.

Board Chairman Michael Lindley and Trustees John Grover and Mary Jo Tomasini were absent.

The college anticipates \$16.2 million of its revenue to come from property tax collections, or 49 percent, followed by \$11.1 million in tuition and fees (33 percent), \$5.5 million in state appropriations (17 percent).

Labor accounts for 65 percent of next year's projected expenses, or \$21.7 million, followed by depreciation (\$4.5 million), building costs (\$2.3 million), services (\$1.6 million), and supplies (\$1.5 million), according to an outline prepared by Kelli Hahn, vice president of financial services.

Most departments will get by with about the same appropriations as last year, Hahn said.

The college's general operating millage rate will stay the same as last year at 1.7854 mills.

Hahn said the new po-

sitions will cost about \$250,000 for LMC to absorb. However, though state revenue has stayed flat, overall taxable values rose by 2 to 3 percent, she said.

"That gives us the flexibility we need, especially when we're dealing with these positions," Hahn said.

The college is forecasting a 2 percent drop in enrollment, another factor that prompted it to examine its budget and see what academic areas it needed to address, Kubatzke said.

"We need to see where we're spending our dollars,

to make sure that it affects the greatest number of students," he said.

LMC is adding the CIS and math instructors to keep pace with student interest, and demand for those skills in the work place, Hahn said.

"It's one of the hottest fields out there right now, and it's expanding so rapidly," she said.

The ESL instructor's addition reflects the reality of a small, but growing international population of 88 students, representing 17 countries, Kubatzke said.

"We need to keep up with our ESL population

as it continues to grow, and find ways of serving those needs," he said.

The writing center coordinator's position will help fill a need that LMC has sought to address for a long time, Kubatzke said.

The center should work better with a full-time occupant, instead of pulling in other employees to fill that role — as LMC has done, Kubatzke said.

"Writing is something that students really struggle with," Kubatzke said. "We feel that it's time to make some changes, and that includes more permanent staffing (of the center)."