

# Weber Workforce Center planned with support of estate gift

May 18 2016 1:30 PM



*A rendering of the Weber Workforce Center, courtesy of AAIC, Inc.*

**GODFREY – Lewis and Clark Community College** will break ground on a new workforce building on the Godfrey Campus later this year, thanks to a nearly \$3.25 million gift from the estate of local resident Ed Weber.

The **Weber Workforce Center** will not only allow the college the opportunity to expand its workforce programming, but also immediately provide much needed space for one of its largest workforce programs – Welding Technology.

“This transformational gift from Mr. Ed Weber will provide Lewis and Clark with the ability to establish a state-of-the-art workforce training facility for the residents of our district,” said Lewis and Clark Community College President Dale Chapman. “This is the largest gift to date received by the college’s Foundation, and we are so thankful for Mr. Weber’s vision to provide the region’s future generations with the latest technology and safest practices.”

The college envisions expanding the Weber Workforce Center in the future as manufacturing and industrial workforce program demands increase and funding becomes available. The first phase of the project will provide sufficient space for the college’s growing Welding Technology program.

“We envision expanding it to keep pace with the demands of an increasingly sophisticated industrial manufacturing workforce,” Chapman said.

Currently operating out of a maintenance building on the north end of the college’s Godfrey Campus, the Welding program will benefit not only from a new and improved facility, but also the ability to double the number of welding stations, and add more openings and courses each semester to train more students. Since 2011, the program has produced 171 graduates with a Certificate of Completion in Welding Principles, 17 with a Certificate of Proficiency in Welding Technology and nine with an Associate in Applied Arts in Welding Technology.

“With the Weber center, we will be able to expand the number of courses that we are able to offer in welding, as well as add additional types of welding instruction and degrees to our curriculum,” said Welding Program Coordinator Travis Jumper. “It is also going to allow us the opportunity to become an Accredited Testing Facility for the American Welding Society, which will permit us to graduate our students with nationally recognized welding certifications and allow us to work with businesses throughout the St. Louis metro area to certify their employees.

I was not able to meet Mr. Weber, but I truly believe that he would be pleased with the direction that we are heading in training the future workforce in safe, smart and efficient ways to work.”

Currently, the college offers 34 workforce programs, including flagships such as Welding Technology, Automotive Technology and Process Operations Technology. Additionally, the college provides ongoing workforce education and contractor safety training to district employers through its Corporate and Community Learning division, which currently operates out of the Bethalto Training Center located at 1136 E. Airline Dr., near the Bethalto Airport.

College architects are completing the final design development phase of the project, with an expected construction start time in the fall of 2016. The center is slated to open by Fall 2017.

The building will occupy space on the northern portion of campus in an area near the current Maintenance Annex.

“The project is truly unique from the building design to the donation that was made for its purpose,” Chapman said.

Chapman added that Weber was an area laborer who, before his passing in July 2015, expressed his wishes to help the next generation of workers in the region.

“Mr. Weber’s gift to the college is one of the most creative and thoughtful gifts, not just to the college, but to this region,” Chapman said. “He was a man who worked hard his entire life, enduring working conditions that wouldn’t be acceptable today. His goal was to create a place where Lewis and Clark students could learn the most advanced and safe practices today providing them with a good salary and providing the region with an advanced workforce. Mr. Weber was a champion for this region, and our students. The college and this region owe him a great deal for the incredible investment he has made.”

Weber’s gift allows the college to match a federal Title III endowment challenge gift that creates a \$500,000 building endowment, which will annually provide interest funds aimed at supporting the ongoing operations and maintenance of the building, keeping the impact of adding this new building off the college’s operating budget and off district taxpayers, Chapman said.

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