

Lee to reveal major expansion of McNair Center at Feb. 4 grand opening

BAYTOWN, TX — Lee College will celebrate next week the opening of the 50,000-square-foot expansion of the McNair Center, where students will receive hands-on technical and industrial training for well-paying careers in the booming petrochemical and construction industries.

The grand opening ceremony will be held from 5-7 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 4, at the McNair Center, which is located along Interstate 10 and easily accessible from all points of the Lee College service area. The event is free, and members of the public are welcome to attend.

Nearly 200 community members, education and business leaders and other supporters joined Lee College in December 2014 to break ground on the \$12 million McNair Center expansion, which will house existing programs in machining, millwrighting, pipefitting and welding. Students will train with the latest tools of the trade in a state-of-the-art industrial environment closely modeled after what they will find upon entering the workforce. Welders, pipefitters, millwrights, and machinists earn a median salary of \$18-24 per hour, and have the potential to earn as much as \$75,000 annually with a two-year degree.

Lee College has earned national recognition for its high-value curriculum that prepares students for high-paying positions in the petrochemical industry and related sectors. Brookings Institution ranked the college second in the nation for contributing to the economic success of its graduates, finding that Lee College alumni earn an average salary of \$69,000 by the time they reach the midpoint of their careers.

Lee College is also the lead institution in the Community College Petrochemical Initiative (CCPI), an ExxonMobil-funded collaboration between the nine Texas Gulf Coast community colleges to help recruit and train new generations of skilled workers needed in the region.

The McNair Center first opened in 2008 and quickly outgrew the available space, prompting an initial renovation that was completed in 2011. The latest expansion project was funded through a bond issue approved in 2013 by 72 percent of voters.