

Tarkio College applies for state certification

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By Brent Barnett



(Tarkio) -- Efforts to reopen Tarkio College as a two-year technical institution took a step forward this week.

At a special presentation Wednesday afternoon inside Thompson Hall on the Tarkio College campus, assistant to the college president John Davis reported that an application for certification has been submitted to the Missouri Department of Higher Education. Davis tells KMA News the decision to open the college's doors now lies in the state's hands.

"We believe it will take anywhere from 45 to 90 days," Davis said on the state's application process. "We will keep the pressure on the state. One of our board members, who actually is kind of our chief engineer when it comes to the buildings, lives right outside of Jefferson City. He'll be going in on a regular basis to visit and make sure they are moving along on that. We're optimistic it will be closer to 45 (days) than the 90."

To finalize certification, the state requires the college to have \$150,000 in escrow. Davis says a "Founder's Fund" campaign was kicked off in June and has raised \$212,000 toward a year-end goal of \$250,000. Those funds will help keep the college open for the first year, and maintain lower costs for students so they don't acquire a large amount of debt.

In the meantime, Davis says work will continue to sure up a few facility needs inside Thompson Hall, which already has an entire floor of classrooms fully equipped for student use.

"We have some classrooms identified on the first floor for some of our technical programs that still need to be outfitted with the equipment to teach those classes," Davis said. "We'll also need to clean them up and paint them. The biggest hurdle right now is that we have a fire alarm system that was built in 1968 that has to be updated."

Davis believes regional businesses need workers with specialized training and skills, which led to the idea for Tarkio College to become a two-year technical institution rather than a four-year college.

"The programs we've identified for our application are plumbing, wind energy, and computer technology," Davis said. "Also, we'll have a series of academic development courses for students that do not have the skills to compete at a two-year or four-year college."

Various businesses and manufacturers throughout the region attended Wednesday's presentation including Kawasaki Motors, Pella Corporation, Lisle Corporation, NSK, Enel Green Power, Wallin Plumbing and Heating, and several more. Davis says it was important to host a wide variety of employers in order to gauge expectations from students entering a technical institution.

"It was really a combination of two groups today," he said. "One group was business and industry, and the other group was different economic development groups. We had the Missouri Department of Economic Development here, Northwest Development, and Atchison County Development Corporation. All of those groups have access to funding for some of the repairs we have to do, and some of the money we need for start up costs."

Pending the state's decision on certification, Davis says the vision is to reopen Tarkio College sometime during 2019, specifically the summer semester. Within five years, the goal is to offer technical and career-oriented certificates in five areas to 200 students a term.