

COD opens new \$50 million technical education building

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The College of DuPage's new \$50 million Technical Education Center is being touted as an economic stimulator for future students.

The 173,000-square foot building will host architecture, interior design, horticulture, automotive technology and a host of other industrial-related classes when it opens in the fall.

The college hosted a dedication ceremony Friday, where college officials, elected leaders and industry experts predicted the amenities of the center will better prepare COD students for jobs that are the "backbone" of the nation.

"Middle-skill occupations, which include police officers, firefighters, nurses, electricians and mechanics, to name a few, make up nearly half of the U.S. labor market," said Steve Luetkehans, president of the DuPage Workforce Investment Board. "We commend the College of DuPage for investing in this facility to ensure the work force coming from DuPage has the skills to compete anywhere in the world."

The Z-shaped, three-story structure is the first new building of a \$300 million capital improvement upgrade on the Glen Ellyn campus. When it is complete, the college hopes the design will earn the building official certification. It will accommodate nearly 1,400 students, contains 31 classrooms and 16 sizable laboratories for automotive, heating and air conditioning and welding classes among others. The walls of each floor are color-coded by department.

"The design is really an organizational thing," said architect Avi Lothan. "The building is equal parts classroom and hands-on laboratory experience."

College officials said the new building was a necessity because many of the programs housed at the tech center ran out of space at their old digs. While all the space at the new building will be occupied, there's room to grow.

"They've got breathing room now," said James Koolish, program manager for The Rise Group, which oversees construction for the college.

U.S. Rep Peter Roskam of Wheaton said the college is doing the right thing by upgrading its technical education program.

"There is this sense of joy and awe about this place and space and how it's going to be used," Roskam said. "COD is easy to advocate for because of the breadth and depth of its programs. This is an example of investing wisely so that there are very good things coming out of this."