

WSU to Open Education Center in Warren

by Jim Stickford

The addition of a Wayne State education facility on 12 Mile Road in Warren got one step closer to reality when the school's board of governors approved issuing \$12 million in bonds to pay for construction.

Wayne State spokesman Tom Reynolds said the facility will be called the Advanced Technology Education Center (ATEC) and will be located at 14601 East 12 Mile, the site of a former Farmer Jack's supermarket.

"The ATEC project has been in the works for a couple of years," Reynolds said. "We bought the facility back in 2011 and we've been working on getting the project completed since then."

Reynolds said the main driver behind ATEC is Ahmad Ezzeddine, associate vice president for educational outreach and international programs at Wayne State.

Ezzeddine said ATEC is part of the school's efforts to expand into Macomb County.

"This is our third stage," Ezzeddine said. "The first was to expand our programs at the University Center at Macomb Community College."

"The second stage was when we opened Macomb Education Center at the Macomb Library at Hall

and Garfield in Clinton Township." The university is expanding into Macomb County, Ezzeddine said, because Macomb is a growing county and it's a matter of going where the students are.

He added the expansion into Macomb was not at the expense of the main campus in Detroit.

The ATEC facility, when it's complete, will focus on such disciplines as engineering, computer science and business.

"These are the types of classes that we will have there because those are the types of programs that will support the businesses in the area around the facility," Ezzeddine said.

He noted that the site is very close to GM's Tech Center and the Army's Detroit Arsenal. As a result of these two mainstays being where they are, many other businesses associated with them have settled in the area as well.

"We hope to have the ATEC site up and running by the fall of 2014," Ezzeddine said. "Right now, we're in the designing and planning phase of the project, but now that money has been allocated to the construction phase, we will present a construction budget."

Once the construction budget is approved, they can proceed with construction. Ezzeddine ex-

pects that they will make use of some of the present architecture at the site, but he also expects that there will be some changes to the building as well.

"We will also be having some conversations with local businesses to see how we can meet their needs," Ezzeddine said. "MCC has connections with these businesses and we have some connections as well. We are very excited to see this project moving forward and we expect to serve as many students at the site as we can. I think we'll see between 500 and 800 students there within a few years."

Voice Commands Clearer in LaCrosse

It makes sense. The quieter the car, the easier it is to use voice command technology.

So when General Motors speech recognition engineer Robert Sims worked to develop one of the industry's first in-car hands-free calling systems years ago, his goal was to make the call quality clear enough that his wife wouldn't hang up on him.

Buick's IntelliLink system and QuietTuning technologies like those in the LaCrosse luxury sedan make using voice controls easier for owners regardless of marital or relationship status, GM spokespeople said.

QuietTuning is Buick's engineering process to reduce, block and absorb interior noise. For LaCrosse, that means features like laminated window glass, triple door seals and liquid applied sound deadening.

"There's definitely an advantage when we're developing voice controls in a quieter cabin," said Sims. "The system's ability to hear a command relies on SNR, or signal-to-noise ratio. If noise is extremely low like it is in

the LaCrosse, the user's voice, or signal, can be lower. In other words, a LaCrosse driver can easily speak to the IntelliLink system at a normal, conversational volume."

With IntelliLink - standard on every 2013 Buick - drivers can use voice commands to control navigation and audio functions with the push of a button while keeping eyes on the road. With a smartphone paired, IntelliLink's voice commands can even tune to a Pandora internet radio station. It works by using a microphone in the cabin's headliner. The system uses a speech engine to match spoken words to known voice commands.

"We've also designed the system with speaker adaptation, which means the engine is trained for different accents or dialects," Sims said. "It can begin to predict speech patterns based on those models. Your LaCrosse remembers your speech patterns even after the car is turned off and on, but it can also identify another user and predict his or her patterns as well."

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