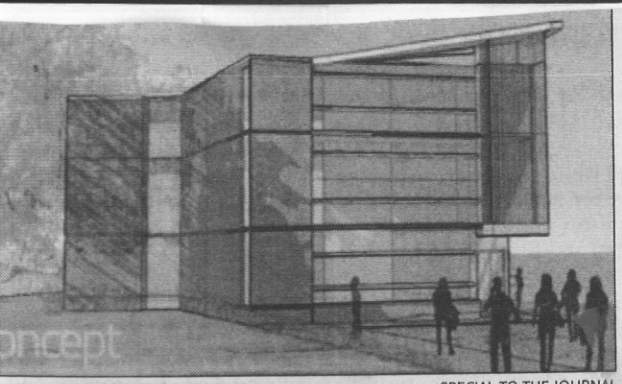


SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

This rendering shows early plans for a new 24,000-square-foot Advanced Technological Education Center off S.C. Highway 93 near the Esso Club in Clemson.

CU to use $2M grant for economic development hub

BY STEVEN BRADLEY
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Clemson University hopes to break ground in November on a 24,000-square-foot Advanced Technological Education Center to serve as an economic development hub for the Upstate.

Dr. Kris Frady, director of operations at Clemson University's Center for Workforce Development, told those in attendance at a business forum in Seneca on Thursday that demolition of the existing building near the Esso Club on S.C. Highway 93 has already begun.

Frady said the new three-story building will feature views of Lake Hartwell over the dam and a terrace on top that will be available for tailgating events and other functions, and will also have various types of meeting space.

The building is being constructed in partnership with the Economic Development Administration under the Make it in America Grant. Clemson received a $2 million grant from the EDA to construct the facility on Clemson's campus.

The center will give economic development offices, state agencies and education institutions access to state-of-the-art digital learning tools, equipment and expertise.

Frady said the center's philosophy is to expose, explore and immerse — that is, expose students to STEM education in elementary school, allow them to explore those areas in middle school and then immerse them in high school through certificates, internships, professional development and other methods.

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"If you want to have a really 'wow' place to bring some of your clients and say, 'Hey, we take education, we take workforce development very seriously,' … this is what that space is for," Frady said.

Frady, the guest speaker at the Oconee Economic Alliance's monthly business forum, also discussed how the center is working to address the gap between job creation and job placement in the state.

She stressed the importance of postsecondary education — anything beyond a high school diploma, from a two-year or four-year degree to various certificates — to South Carolina's economic future.

Frady said postsecondary education makes people more employable and gives them greater earning potential, and she showed figures that 63 percent of jobs in the state will require a postsecondary education by 2018.

There are four primary areas the CUCWD is focusing on for workforce development: digital learning tools, pathway development, P-12 STEM education and research, advocacy and networking.

Digital learning tools refer to things such as online programs and curriculum, as well as technological advances, to make learning easier for the state's workers and teaching easier for those instructing them.

"We don't do any of the teaching of this material," Frady said. "We create educational resources, we do research and then we provide that to the partners that we work with who are the best at doing that teaching, who are the boots-on-the-ground folks."

Frady encouraged those in attendance to visit the website EducateWorkforce.com to learn more about the learning modules that have been created. They are open and freely available, and will continue to be so, Frady said, because they have been federally funded.

Pathway development refers to making postsecondary education and job training more accessible for the state's workers and looking for ways to allow them to retain employability while continuing their education.

Frady said more than 40 percent of manufacturing jobs in the state will require postsecondary education by 2018.

"All of our devices are smarter, so the people making them have to be smarter as well," she said.

Frady also discussed the importance of stackable certificates — an area she said Tri-County Technical College excels in — because they allow for employability at every step along the way of a person's education. Examples of stackable certificates are MSSC or Six Sigma certification.

The third area the center focuses on is P-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education.