

# Open for Business: Lee College Corporate Training Center

*New Facility at McNair Center Offers Customizable  
Advanced Programs*



Emerson PLP unit



## Process Control System

For years, Lee College has been offering corporate training to industry partners such as ExxonMobil, LyondellBasell and Worley for their employees, but there's never been a dedicated training space until now.

On Monday, July 24, industry representatives, elected officials and community members gathered at the Lee College McNair Center to cut the ribbon on its newly renovated, state-of-the-art, 11,000-square-foot Corporate Training Center.

Operated by the [Lee College Center for Workforce and Community Development](#), the Corporate Training Center offers hands-on training and leadership development for employees of all levels – from onboarding training for new hires to upskilling and solidifying skills of seasoned employees.

"With this new instructional space, we can deliver advanced technical training like no other college – anytime a company has needs," said Marsha Tuha, executive director, Center for Workforce and Community Development. "The focus is to get employees in and trained for a real-life work setting and with the latest technology. We are not teaching concepts. We are teaching troubleshooting."

Clients who hire Lee College will benefit from working with subject matter experts who have decades of experience in the petrochemical and manufacturing industries. They are retirees who are often Lee College alumni – returning to share their extensive knowledge with the next generation of workers. Students will work with equipment encountered in the field as well as state-of-the-art trainers such as the Emerson Performance Learning Platform units — designed specifically for process control and instrumentation training. Labs are set up in a modular fashion to allow each space

to serve multiple purposes — meaning the training labs and lecture areas can be expanded to accommodate any class size.

"This facility is an investment not just in the community but in jobs," said Baytown Mayor Brandon Capetillo. "Anytime a major employer comes to look for site selection in the Baytown area they are looking for a skilled workforce. This facility is going to meet that need."

Another advantage of the training center is to enhance existing partnerships with employers who hire Lee College graduates.

"How wonderful is it that we can educate our students and then, when they get a job with one of our industry partners, they come right back to Lee College to get trained with their new company," said Dr. Lynda Villanueva, Lee College president. "We are producing employees who are advancing their skills, thinking on their toes and becoming problem solvers."

Zoe Barinaga, process manager for ExxonMobil's Baytown chemical plant says she's seen firsthand how training programs provide life-changing opportunities for students working towards degrees and certifications to become a part of the ExxonMobil family.

"In my five years at ExxonMobil, we have turned over half of our operators at the chemical plant because of retirements and expansions," Barinaga explained. "The only way to keep up with the growth is to have well-trained candidates in the area."

Larry Lester spent nearly four decades as an electrical engineer and maintenance supervisor at ExxonMobil. He is the Workforce Center's technical advisor who customizes training for companies and hires the instructors. Lester says it's one thing to know how to use the equipment, but his trainings delve into the inner workings of the equipment so employees will be well prepared to troubleshoot if a problem arises.

"The biggest thing that I've seen in this program is the 'Aha!' moment when a person understands new technology, new equipment, new ways of looking at stuff and how to use that information to get the job done," Lester said. "These include people who've been doing their jobs for 15-20 years."

Visit the [Lee College Corporate Training Center's website](#) to learn more.

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**Pictured above, from left:** Jacob Powell, Baytown city councilman, District 5; Pete Alfaro, former member of the Lee College Board of Regents; Jason Reynolds, Baytown city manager; Gina Guillory, Lee College Board of Regents; Mark Himsel, secretary, Lee College Board of Regents; Daryl Fontenot, chair, Lee College Board of Regents; Dr. Lynda Villanueva, Lee College president; Dr. Douglas Walcerz, provost and vice president of academic and student affairs, Lee College; Chris Averitt, Lee College HVAC instructor; Judge Lucia Bates, Precinct 3 Place 2 of the Harris County Justices of the Peace; Zoe Barinaga, process manager, ExxonMobil Chemical Plant.