Hancock breaks ground on new industrial technology complex

Hancock College President Betty Miller speaks Tuesday to community members and the college’s board of trustees at the groundbreaking of the new industrial technology complex.

Officials hope new facilities coming to Hancock College in spring 2014 will give industrial technology students the latest, greatest equipment and also help them graduate on time.

Construction of a new $16.7 million Industrial Technology Complex kicked off Tuesday afternoon with a groundbreaking ceremony at building O on the north end of the Santa Maria campus.

“It’s been a long time coming for us,” said Eric Mason, newly appointed industrial technology department chair.

He also noted tough economic times and program cuts recently.

Other community members and college officials, including interim President Betty Miller and board of trustee members, were present with gold shovels and words of praise for voters who passed the Bond Measure I in 2006, which made the project possible.

The project adds two buildings to the industrial technology facility. They will be built where the running track is now, south of building O.

Because of construction, a synthetic track and the baseball and soccer fields will be rebuilt in adjacent locations. The baseball field will move across College Drive near the softball field.

More than 35,000 square feet of labs, classrooms and offices come with construction, including a welding lab to accommodate 40 work stations and two classes.

Campus visitors Tuesday focused attention on the seventh project that will be funded by the $180 million Measure I Bond.

Bond funds are also paying for the ongoing construction of the One-Stop Student Services Center, Childcare Center addition and the Public Safety Training Complex.

Trustee Larry Lahr thanked community members for their support, especially those in industrial technology realm.

“This program has the most direct relationship with the community,” Lahr said. “We see the students here leaving with better skills. With this cooperation, the program is going to move forward. We know that the investment by the community is well founded.”

Students will use cutting-edge equipment in industrial technology disciplines, including architectural drafting, electronics, viticulture, automotive, auto body, engineering, welding and machining and manufacturing technologies.

Retired industrial technology chair Raywell Snowden, who worked at Hancock for 30 years, said the campus was in dire need of the new facility to improve students’ chances of graduating from the two-year program in fewer than three years.

“Things are tight. The needs are growing,” Snowden said, noting the high quality of equipment that will be coming in. “It’s going to be awesome.”