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Skagit Valley College president hopefuls narrowed to field of four

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M O U N T V E R N O N — Skagit Valley College trustees are considering four candidates to replace outgoing President Gary Tollefson, who is retiring in December.

The college's Board of Trustees narrowed the candidate pool from 40 applicants during an executive session Friday.

Starting Oct. 5, the college will host a series of forums for students, faculty and community members to meet the candidates, who come from Washington and Minnesota. All have experience in Pacific Northwest community colleges.

The candidates are:

n Joseph Dunlap, president of Spokane Community College for the past four years. Dunlap was the founding director of the School of Aviation Sciences at Western Michigan University.

n Thomas Keegan, president of Peninsula College in Port Angeles for the past 10 years. Keegan started a program on the peninsula to promote Native American success at the community college.

n John Langrell III, executive vice president and chief academic officer at Riverland Community College in Austin, Minn. Langrell previously held administrative positions in the Pacific Northwest. Anne Temte, president of Northland Community and Technical College in Minnesota. Temte previously worked at colleges in Wenatchee and Spokane.

Skagit Valley College contracted with Preston Pulliams of North Carolina-based Gold Hill Associates to guide the search for a new president.

"This was a very, very strong pool," Pulliams told the board. "There were applicants from all over the country ... a strong number of very strong candidates."

Board members Margaret Rojas and John Stephens led a search committee of students, faculty and community members to find the candidates.

Rojas said they needed a president who could engage with the community and build programs that reflect the community's landscape.

Stevens said the new president would also need to "lead a complex organization that is in a difficult environment budgetarily."

The candidates will appear at Mount Vernon's campus at 7:30 a.m. on Oct. 5, 6, 10 and 11 in the Gary Knutzen Cardinal Center. Breakfast will be available.

They will also appear at the Whidbey Island campus in room 306 of Oak Hall at noon on Oct. 6, 7, 11 and 12, with lunch available.

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