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Candidates for SVC job have similar ideas

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Staff Writer

Two candidates who seek to replace outgoing Skagit Valley College President Gary Tollefson had different qualifications but similar plans for securing funding for Skagit Valley College after years of budget cuts.

Dr. Joseph Dunlap and Dr. Thomas Keegan said they would encourage community and business partnerships in Skagit County if they are hired by the college.

Keegan, president of Peninsula College in Port Angeles; and Dunlap, president of Spokane Community College, met with community members, students, faculty and college staff Wednesday and Thursday at the Mount Vernon and Oak Harbor campuses.

Dunlap will hold a lunch forum in Oak Harbor today at noon. A third candidate, Dr. Ton Langrell, will appear at a breakfast forum in Mount Vernon at 7:30 a.m. Monday, and a lunch forum in Oak Harbor at noon on Tuesday.

Those attending the forums Thursday probed the two candidates on their ability to finance education for the multi-campus college.

Dunlap, a military veteran and Western Washington native, said business partnerships with airline companies helped him turn around an ailing flight program at the School of Aviation Sciences at Western Michigan University.

He grew the program from 100 students to almost 1,000, and 16 aircraft to 65, through partnerships with companies such as British Airways.

Keegan — who attended Skagit Valley College as a student — garnered \$15 million in grants over six years by partnering with local industry, including manufacturing companies, to build a new composites program at Peninsula College.

He said his approach was to look at the college's needs instead of going for the easy money.

"It all lines up with our strategic plan, as opposed to, 'What grants are out there?'" Keegan said.

Asked why the college should hire him, Dunlap cited his success securing funding in difficult financial times.

"I have in my job created significant partnerships and brought a tremendous amount of financial resources," Dunlap said.

Keegan said he has the skills to lead the college, but it's the values he shares with the college that set him apart. He said he and Skagit Valley College emphasize students first and foster an environment of respect.

"I think the most important thing is the match," Keegan said. "The match in style, the match in values."

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Dunlap



Keegan