College employee nominated for state award

Nomination follows meritorious award in fall

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APTO S — A physics laboratory technician who received a local meritorious service award six months ago may soon be honored at the state level for his professionalism and commitment to Cabrillo College.

At Monday’s Board of Trustees meeting, members unanimously agreed to nominate John Welch as the California Community College’s Classified Employee of the Year — the first time the college has nominated anyone since the awards were created four years ago.

Brian King, Cabrillo’s president, said Welch, a 15-year veteran, was selected by the members who sit on the meritorious service award committee. The winner is picked in the spring.

In his nomination for the meritorious award, Welch was described as “the inspiration behind the success of the physics program at Cabrillo,” and praised for searching for innovative ways to teach concepts and techniques.

For example, his students participate in “falsification labs” in which students are asked to test reasonable hypotheses that they later find are incorrect. Welch has presented those tests at national meetings of the American Association of Physics Teachers, the nomination said.

In other business, Craig Hayward, who heads Cabrillo’s planning and research department, gave a more detailed presentation on information contained in the newly released 2011 Cabrillo Fact Book. Among other things, the data showed enrollment likely will drop several percentage points in the fall, at the same time administrators are charging higher fees to cope with continued state deficits.

The 2012-13 school year will be the fourth in a row that Cabrillo will barely scrape by, cutting its budget and dipping into reserves to make a dent in a $5.5 million deficit, despite already trimming staff. Stephanie Stainback, representing the classified employees union, questioned the disconnect between the state mandating community colleges graduate more students faster, while at the same time slashing the funding needed to do it.

A plan needs to be developed, she said, “to figure out where to concentrate support staff given the fact that Cabrillo is becoming a smaller college.”

She also questioned the wisdom of renewing Cabrillo’s lease at the Scotts Valley Center on Whispering Pines Drive, especially in light of the fact that only seven courses are taught there each semester. The new lease carries through 2015, and although the landlord agreed to charge less, the new lease amounts to about $450,000 during the next four years. Administrators had been talking to city officials about possibly moving that campus to the planned town center, but those negotiations broke down last spring because of pending budget cuts.

Meanwhile, Cabrillo administrators will accept applications through Friday from anyone interested in filling the seat vacated last month by longtime member Rebecca Garcia. Applications will be accepted through noon Friday, and a provisional appointment will be made during a special board meeting Feb. 21. The next regular election will be held in November.

“The hope would be that whoever the board selects would have the intention of serving the rest of the term,” King said.

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