CABRILLO COLLEGE

Board to appoint new trustee Tuesday

Two vie for open seat

By DONNA JONES
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WATSONVILLE — Two candidates have emerged to represent the Watsonville area on the Cabrillo College board of trustees.

Educator Pedro Castillo and nonprofit leader Margarita Cortez are vying for the seat held by Rebecca Garcia for 20 years before she resigned in January.

The board is scheduled to interview the two candidates and make an appointment Tuesday. The seat will be up for election in November.

Castillo, a UC Santa Cruz history professor, brings a background in higher education and community service to the table.

He is chair of the Watsonville Planning Commission, and previously served on the city Library Board and Parks and Recreation Commission. He also served on the boards of the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, and the Pajaro Valley Community Health Trust. He was provost of Oakes College at UCSC from 2002 to 2006, and on the board of the National Council for the Humanities from 1999 to 2004. He is completing a term on the board of the California Council for the Humanities.

Castillo said his 35 years in higher education, including a stint teaching at the community college level before earning a doctorate, give him unique insight into the issues facing the Cabrillo, from students seeking financial aid to faculty coping with increasing workloads.

“Something right down my alley,” Castillo said.

Cortez, who recently completed her first year as executive director of Pajaro Valley Loaves and Fishes food pantry, also said she has a unique perspective to offer the board.

A 1991 Watsonville High School graduate, Cortez earned a degree in political science at UC Santa Barbara and worked in human resources and as an organizer before returning to her hometown last year.

“Education is really key for me,” said Cortez, who understands firsthand the barriers many local students face and wants to ensure others have the chance to expand their skills and horizons through education.

The youngest of 10 children, she and four of her siblings represented the first generation in their family to go to college. It was the sacrifices of her mother and older brothers and sisters who made it possible, she said.

“I have a mother who doesn’t know how to read or write, who didn’t have the opportunity to go to college. But for her to support us was critical,” Cortez said. “It sounds simple but she’d say, ‘Money would come and go but no one would ever take away our education.’”

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IF YOU GO
CABRILLO COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

WHAT: Board to choose new member to represent Watsonville area
WHERE: Council Chamber, Civic Plaza, 275 Main St., fourth floor
WHEN: 6 p.m. Tuesday