ELECTION 2012

Cabrillo candidate focused on budget issues

Susan True seeks to retain Area III seat

By KIMBERLY WHITE
kwhite@santacruzsentinel.com

LIVE OAK — Throwing her hat in the ring for another round, Cabrillo College Trustee Susan True says she has a good handle on the challenges the college faces now and into the future: providing students a quality, affordable education even as revenues needed to do that continue to dwindle.

She was elected to her first term on Cabrillo’s Board of Trustees in 2008, and is now seeking another four-year term for the Area III seat. It covers Live Oak, Capitola and Soquel. She is running unopposed.

On a personal level, True believes one of her greatest strengths is connecting easily with the students and her interest in different people and groups. On a professional level, it’s a detailed understanding of budgets and how to prioritize, an especially important skill set that’s needed at Cabrillo — and community colleges across the state.

The gap between services and revenue is an ever-present conundrum in the world of nonprofits, where True has worked for the past decade. She now heads First Five Santa Cruz County, an organization devoted to ensuring children have the foundation on which to become successful during their school years — namely, good health, early learning and family support.

“We need to know what’s in the budget so we can allocate resources to meet our goals, and that’s something that I really enjoy doing and that’s been a good fit for the board,” said True, a Minneapolis native who arrived in Santa Cruz in 1991 to study at UC Santa Cruz.

The issues at Cabrillo “are financial,” True said, adding residents are used to having a lot of access to classes, and it’s been difficult on everyone to adjust to fewer course offerings.

Overall, the challenge is to figure out how to meet the needs of a diverse student population, when some already are focused on a particular field or goal, while others drift along, less sure of which path to pursue.

“It’s an interesting thing to be a community college, because students come with so many different ideas of what success means to them,” True said. “Whether it’s transferring to a four-year university or obtain a certification to move into a higher-paying field. It’s hard to be all things to all people given the budget constraints we have right now.”

Follow Sentinel reporter Kimberly White on Twitter @kwhite95066