Panel names Laurel Jones as top pick to head college

Mission College leader would be school’s first female president

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APTOS — The Cabrillo College Presidential Search Committee named Laurel Jones on Wednesday as its top pick for the new head of the community college.

Jones, president of Santa Clara’s Mission College, would become the first female president in Cabrillo’s 54-year history.

The board will vote on Jones’ contract on Monday at a meeting held at the Cabrillo College Scotts Valley Center. She is slated to start mid-July.

Jones, 55, would replace interim president John Hendrickson, who has served since Feb. 1. Hendrickson stepped in for Brian King, the college’s president of nine years.

King took over as chancellor of Los Rios Community College District in Sacramento on Feb. 1.

“I’m very appreciative for the fact that as a female, I have an opportunity to work with the college,” said Jones, who has two children and two grandchildren. “I’m probably as excited as any person can be.”

Jones was born in Santa Ana and has served as Mission College’s president since 2010. Mission has an enrollment of about 10,000 students, according to the school’s website. Cabrillo’s enrollment is about 14,000, according to the school’s website.

Jones was unanimously selected by the search committee, said chair Alan Smith.

“She was the best selection of the group in our opinion,” Smith said.

“She is a proven leader at Mission College, a good communicator, entrepreneur and very focused on student success,”

Jones also served as vice president of academic services at Las Positas College in Livermore, vice president of academic affairs at Solano College, dean of instruction at Mount San Jacinto College in Riverside County and an instructor at Mount San Antonio College in Walnut.

Jones earned a bachelor’s degree in English from Taylor University in Upland, Ind., a master’s degree in English from Cal State Fullerton and a doctorate in educational leadership from the University of LaVerne.

She’s also a graduate of the Advanced Future Leader’s Institute offered through the American Association of Community Colleges.

While one woman, Claire M. Bianculli, served as interim president in 2003 between King and John Hurd, Jones would be the first female head to serve the college.

The committee started its search after King announced his resignation in November. The group accepted applications from all over the nation, interviewing their top choices in May and whit- ing down the list to five final candidates. The top picks hosted discussion forums at Cabrillo’s Apts and Watsonville campuses in May.

Jones’s salary will be decided in the final contract negotiation process, according to Cabrillo spokesman Kristin Fabos.

King earned $233,465 base pay yearly plus $45,889 in accrued vacation payout from 2011 to 2012, according to the Cabrillo salary database.

Hendrickson currently earns a salary of about $177,000 per month.

Jones was chosen out of four other finalists: Tod Burnett, president of Saddleback College in Mission Viejo; Marie-Blaine Burns, vice president of student services at San Jose City College; Farley Herzek, interim president at East Los Angeles College; and Pamela Walker, vice president of student services at American River College in Sacramento.

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CABRILLO

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AT A GLANCE

CABRILLO COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

BRIAN KING: 2004 to 2013
JOHN HURD: 1991 to 2003
ROBERT AGORELLA: 1985 to 1990
JOHN PETERSEN: 1977 to 1985
ROBERT SWENSON: 1959 to 1977

Source: Sentinel archives