

**Idaho Statesman, Tuesday, June 2, 2009 – by Bill Roberts**

## **CWI candidates see the job as opportunity**

*Presidential hopefuls have come from across the country for a chance to help shape Idaho's newest college.*

CWI candidates see opportunity in president's job. They have come from across the country for a chance to shape Idaho's newest college. The temptation to build a community college nearly from scratch is almost irresistible for the first group of College of Western Idaho presidential candidates, who were in Meridian interviewing for the job Monday. CWI opened in January with buildings in Nampa and a vocational school it will take over from Boise State University this year.

Five candidates are being interviewed this week for the job, which would pay up to \$180,000 a year. The president will replace Dennis Griffin, who retires in August. A new president could be chosen in a few weeks, said Mark Dunham, a trustee who worked with the search committee.

*Linda Simmons*

Why she's here: A chance to build a community college that serves nearby communities and western Idaho; she says she is ready to lead an institution as its president. Challenges for CWI: "I have to be concerned with finding stable funding." State dollars are down and she worries that local property tax revenues may dip, too, because of the faltering economy.

Successful challenges: She helped a group of educators and business people in Eugene, Ore., lay groundwork for clean industry by arranging for the community college to offer training for job skills largely paid by industry. Job 1 at CWI: Get to know the community, get to know the other education institutions. Assemble a strong leadership team.

Linda Simmons, district vice president for academic and student affairs, Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland, Ohio. Former director of student financial aid of Lane Community College in Eugene, Ore.

*Peter Gustaf*

Why he's here: A huge opportunity to build a national model for development of education.

Challenges for CWI: Teach both students who later transfer to bigger schools, and students who want high-tech educations in fields like advance design or robotics. These would make CWI "the school everybody wants to go through and get a good job."

Make it accessible: Businesses work all the time to meet demands. So should a community college, with classes at night and on weekends.

*Candidates 1*

Cover bases: Meet the education demands of the business community first. Then grow in niches that hold promise for development, such as solar energy.

Set the tone: A lot of people don't even know CWI exists. That can be changed by word of mouth and quality, quality, quality.

Peter A. Gustaf, president of Wichita Area Technical College, Wichita, Kan. He has worked to bring together the business and educational communities in his area.

*Paula Gastenveld*

Why she's here: "The opportunity of a lifetime to help you build a 21st century, state-of-the-art community college."

Her vision:

- A paperless campus in records, scheduling, catalogue and human resources.
- A completely sustainable campus with alternative air conditioning and low-water faucets.
- Finding revenue to maintain programs. One idea: Make the parking lot available for events at the nearby Idaho Center. Use the money to pay for scholarships.
- Distance learning: Reach remote parts of Idaho through distance learning and technology: someone in the classroom in Nampa and someone in the public library or even at home.

CWI's edge: Access and cost. Attendance costs about half as much as public universities.

Paula Gastenveld, president of Owensboro Community and Technical College, Owensboro, Ky. She helped start a fundraising office and a "one-stop-shop" for student affairs.