

# OCC's next president — Who will it be?

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

**P**ICK the next president of Oakland Community College:

- a) A managerial professional from a Chicago suburb who stresses economic development and fund-raising.
- b) A sociologist from Oregon who stresses people skills and was once a missionary in Japan.
- c) A former chemistry teacher from Traverse City who believes all faculty members should be conversant with theories of the teaching-learning process.

The articles on this page were written by staff writer Tim Richard.

learning process.

They are the finalists in OCC's search for a replacement for Robert F. Roelofs, the one-time steel industry executive who will retire June 30. Two other finalists dropped out.

The three finalists are Fred Gas-

kin of the Chicago area, R. Stephen Nicholson of Oregon and George T. Miller of Traverse City.

OCC trustees interviewed them in recent weeks at 80-minute special board meetings. All were asked the same 15 questions.

Next step will be for subcommittees from the presidential search committee to visit each of the campuses.

The seven elected OCC trustees will hire the president, perhaps by the end of July. But there is little doubt that interested administrators and faculty members will make their views known first.



## College prexy choice is down to 3

## Illinois CC chief most like Roelofs

**FRED GASKIN**, president of Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Hills, Ill., is the managerial pro, the candidate who appears most like Roelofs. Gaskin constantly used business terms in discussing OCC's four-campus operation.

"Marketing is something I'm keenly interested in — not huckstering, but a research-based approach," Gaskin said in answer to a question on enrollment.

Asked what he would do if a campus department wanted to take over a cable TV station that was paid for from student fees, Gaskin snapped, "We don't bait and switch students."

He added he hoped the department and the students could serve each other's needs, but made it clear the stu-

dent should remain a student activity as long as students want it.

IN HIS OWN comments, Gaskin emphasized his economic development work in the Cook County suburbs and his contacts with congressmen and state legislators. This facet of his career made him appear closest to Roelofs, who has been instrumental in development of the Oakland Technology Park and OCC's vocational-technical programs.

Asked his reaction to the high cost of high-technology equipment, he was blunt: "If the well-paying jobs (for graduates) are there, do it."

Asked what he would do to assure "academic freedom" and academic excellence, Gaskin replied with a strong

endorsement of "staff development" which he would accomplish staff development by programs, courses and reduced teaching loads.

"If this is going to be successful, it can't be used to terminate any faculty," he added.

Twice Gaskin cited his collective bargaining experience.

First, he advocated using a college executive rather than a "hired gun" lawyer as chief bargaining agent.

Second, he said the tough women's issue of "comparable worth" — the pay of a dean's female secretary versus a male custodian — "is exacerbated by having different bargaining groups" and "whipsawing" between unions.

"You should strive toward one master

agreement. You should work toward parity."

**GASKIN APPEARS** to be in his early 40s (none of the candidates listed their ages on their resumes).

After earning a B.A. from the University of West Virginia in 1980, he took his M.Ed. and Ed.D. degrees from the University of Pittsburgh.

From 1980-73 he was director of learning resources at Robert Morris College, Pittsburgh. For nine years (1973-82), he rose through the administrative ranks of Triton College in River Grove, Ill. and has been president of Moraine Valley since April of 1982.

His hobbies: cooking and his '69 Corvair.

## Traverse City educator stresses teaching-learning

**GEORGE T. MILLER**, president of Northwestern Michigan Community College in Traverse City, stirred question from the faculty when he said:

"My standing belief is that faculty members need to know about the teaching-learning process. I'm appalled at the lack of information among professionals."

"You can walk the hallways and ask professionals to name three current theories describing how learning takes place. Then ask how they use them to manage the learning environment. And then ask them to describe a student evaluation device consistent with the teaching."

"One out of 100 can answer." Knowledge of the academic area is first, Miller said, but not everything. The teaching-learning process and evaluation of student learning are essential, too.

ON THE question about expensive high-technology programs, Miller said:

"Three years from now, most of that high-tech stuff is going to be out of date. It's going to be silly before it's over with, it's the craziest cycle."

His solution: Amend state law to give companies a direct credit against taxes for equipment donated to community colleges. "If we depend on local

taxes and the state Legislature (for appropriations), we're in trouble."

A curriculum man, Miller said vocational programs should have a 60 percent liberal arts content. "If you don't watch it, the vocational faculty have a way of loading up" the program with vocational courses.

**HE IS STRONG** on recruiting, telling of bringing four high school valedictorians to his college.

He would put scholarship money in the hands of recruiters, arguing "It's not the total amount of money but the way you allocate it. You have to call on students — personalize — make them know you want them to come."

Miller, who appears to be in his mid-50s, earned a bachelor's degree in biochemistry from St. Edward University in Texas ('61), a master's in chemistry from the College of William & Mary in Virginia ('67) and a doctorate in public policy analysis from the University of Houston ('77).

President of the Traverse City college since 1981, Miller was previously executive vice president and evening college dean for two Texas community colleges.

He plays golf, and his favorite travel spots are Tennessee and Kentucky.

## Oregon hopeful makes proverbial points

**R. STEPHEN NICHOLSON**, president of Mount Hood Community College in Gresham, Ore., is the former missionary who answered several questions with oriental proverbs.

"Persons have faces as trees have bark," he said, quoting a Chinese proverb about what he would do if an employee group protested a campus provost's decision directly to the board of trustees.

Nicholson's translation: Everyone has an ego which, like the bark of a tree, can be stripped away without endangering life. He would try to help everyone save face. He abhors a "no-win" situation.

His theme popped up a second time in a question on advanced placement of students. "We've got a strong campaign of student retention. The reason they

leave is that no one knows or cares, and that if they left they wouldn't be missed."

**NICHOLSON**, who appears to be about 60, wants his subordinates to "check, do and report." He wants them to keep him informed on what they're doing and get his counsel.

"I prefer to be involved — not get a piece of paper on my desk. Then it's too late for a president to be involved," he said. "The work of the president is to bring people together, not to play Solomon and cut the baby in half."

With the discussion in sociology (Michigan State) rather than education, Nicholson stresses academic basics. "We should help people appreciate art and music."

Besides being concerned about functional illiterates, America should be concerned about the "culturally and socially illiterate." He dreads "an explosion of ignorance" in which people "are influenced by two minutes of TV, but don't read newspapers to get their own information." He sees C.P. Snow's "two worlds" — the gulf between science and the arts — as the source of great social tension and anxiety.

A CLEAR favorite among faculty members who heard his interview, Nicholson earned a B.A. in philosophy and history from Marion (Ind.) College, studied Japanese in Tokyo in 1951, served as a missionary there from 1952-58 and received his M.A. in cultural anthropology from Syracuse University in 1958.

Nicholson said he took a keen interest in OCC's formation when he was an instructor and academic dean at Lansing Community College in the mid-1960s, confessing that being president of OCC was "a long-time dream." He was a candidate for the OCC post in 1978.

Nicholson has been president of Mount Hood, a dozen miles west of Portland, since 1976. Previously he was chief executive officer of a community college in Las Vegas (1971-76) and president of a suburban Chicago college (1969-71).

Nicholson's hobbies: playing piano, skiing, writing a bit of free verse, collecting oriental poster art and planting flowers.

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