THURSDAY OCTOBER 30, 2008 Last modified: Wednesday, October 29, 2008 4:01 PM PDT

CMC candidates air views at student-sponsored forum

By Stacy Moore / For The Desert Trail

JOSHUA TREE — Candidates vying for three positions as Copper Mountain College trustees discussed their work for the college in the past and their hopes for its future in a forum Monday, Oct. 27.

The forum was sponsored by the Associated Students of CMC, and President Tami Montgomery called the event a success.

"The room was full and they had to bring extra chairs," said Montgomery. "All the candidates answered the questions completely."

Incumbents Phil Fultz and Dick Rogers and appointed director Owen Gillick participated in the forum. Challenger Rita Ramirez-Dean was not present and Montgomery and others at the college said they were not notified before the forum why she would not be there.

In statements provided to Hi-Desert Publishing Co., the candidates shared some of the points they made during the forum.

Each touched on his background in college administration, education and business.

"I know how community colleges operate and the laws that govern them, having been employed there for more than 25 years," stated Rogers.

Gillick said he was introduced to Twentynine Palms in 1954 when, after graduating from the University of Wisconsin Madison, he earned a commission in the U.S. Marine Corps.

When in 1975 he retired from the Corps, his family made its home in Twentynine Palms.

He played a role in the development of the Joshua Tree campus and the 1999 formation of Copper Mountain College as an independent institution.

He was executive director of the Copper Mountain College Foundation and a trustee on the Desert Community College Board.

Fultz concentrated his remarks on his belief that Copper Mountain College must be competitive not only with other community colleges in California, but also with distance learning schools such as the University of Phoenix and Citrus College, which, he said, offers more than 60 percent of its classes online.

"Certainly competition in education has been true since 13th century Europe, but competition now means having available either splendidly excellent or utterly unique courses or both," he stated.

"As a trustee, I shall seek to ensure that such excellence, such uniqueness is available at CMC."

Rogers, a Copper Mountain College trustee for the past five years, said he has worked to build the college into a competitive school.

"During my tenure, the college has developed a successful registered nursing program, the Ernie Reed Bookstore and the groundbreaking for the Bell Center," he stated.

The Bell Center is a large sports complex scheduled for completion in 2009, and Rogers has high hopes for its effect on the college's future.

"I believe that the sports complex will bring students to the campus rather than going to the College of the Desert campus in Palm Desert," he stated.

He committed to future programs such as vocational education and training in the alternative energy industry.

"I envision the college offering a program in Desert Studies," he added, "which would include courses in literature, art anthropology, archeology, history and renewable energy."

Gillick predicted, "The best is yet to come" for the college in spite of the tough times ahead because of problems in the state, national and world economies.

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