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3 in running for ESF post

Tuesday, May 18, 2004

By Nancy Buczek
Staff writer

State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry students, faculty and staff had a chance last week to meet three candidates to replace William Tully, the college's provost and vice president for academic affairs for 18 years.

"The college has really been lucky to have his service for the length of time that we've had," SUNY ESF President Cornelius "Neil" Murphy Jr. said.

Students, faculty and staff were invited to meet candidates at open campus forums, according to an e-mail circulated on campus by ESF's office of the vice president for administration. The three forums, one for each candidate, ended Monday.

The candidates, according to the e-mail, are: Michael Gealt, dean of the School of Engineering, Mathematics and Science at Purdue University Calumet in Indiana; W. Hubert Keen, special assistant to the State University of New York system provost in Albany; and William Scouten, vice president for research initiatives at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Gealt and Scouten confirmed they are candidates, and both said they are excited about the prospect of working at ESF. Keen couldn't be reached for comment, and Murphy would not confirm the candidates.

The college provost oversees ESF's academic mission, including instruction and graduate studies, research and nonresident programs such as continuing education and extension.

Murphy said the new provost will be charged with bringing to life the college's

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strategic plan for academics, which focuses on four key areas: applied ecology and conservation biology; renewable materials, energy and biotechnology; environmental and natural resources information systems; and sustainable systems and communities.

The strategic plan also includes having five of the college's programs nationally ranked in the top five of their kind and increasing enrollment to about 3,500 students, up from about 2,150 undergraduate and graduate students.

Tully, who couldn't be reached for comment, has been a member of the ESF faculty since 1966. Murphy said Tully plans to remain active on campus, taking on an administrative research support role.

U.S. News and World Report's 2004 college rankings that came out in August listed ESF as the 78th best national doctorate-granting institution and the 39th best value of any national doctorate-granting institution.

"I think that speaks extraordinarily well of (Tully's) leadership to have these programs as respected as they are," Murphy said. "It's very difficult in those national polls if you're a small institution to really get the attention of people."

Tully will continue as provost until the college hires his replacement. Murphy said he hopes a new provost will be in place by year's end, but he said Tully's willingness to continue as provost until a search committee makes a decision gives ESF flexibility. He wouldn't say how many members are on the committee.

"They're still meeting. They're still having deliberations. They still have a significant way to go," Murphy said.

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