



Photo by Hannah Boulton

idate, Jim DeVries, stands among several thousand books in his home library.

Ex-professor running for MCCC board

Jim DeVries says he wants to give back

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Former MCCC history professor Jim DeVries is running for the college's Board of Trustees, facing two longtime board members, Michael Meyers and Marjorie Kreps, in the Nov. 6 election.

After 40 years as a professor at MCCC, DeVries said he is looking to give back to the community.

As an educator, DeVries said he hopes to change the dynamic on the board, providing another perspective on issues.

If elected, his agenda includes not only involving the faculty in decision-making, but also taxpayers and students.

"There needs to be input from another source. This is a *community* college," he said, emphasizing the word "community."

Tension between the board and faculty has been an issue, DeVries said, adding that there has not been an educator on the board to voice the opinions of the faculty since 2001.

He said his perspective as an educator will change the dynamic of the board. Despite the tension between board and college employees, he said he does not want to get personal — just to stick to the issues.

"The Board needs to stop saying 'No' and instead figure it out," he said.

With the new \$17 million Career Tech building well under way, the college is tight for money, he said. But that should not keep the college from making decisions that are best for the students and community.

The college is squeezing to save money every way that it can. One way was by changing the way it charged tuition, basing it on billable contact hours.

"Give the students a chance," DeVries said, adding that he would try to remove the billable contact hours provision if elected.

He said another issue on his agenda is the Whitman Center. Easy access to the community college

will no longer be available to residents of southern Monroe next year during the Spring/Summer semester.

The board decided to close the Whitman Center during spring/summer semester as a cost-cutting move. But it has upset many in the Monroe community, including DeVries.

"It's absurd," he said.

DeVries also said his agenda includes bringing the community together by returning sports to MCCC. He said students will be more interested in MCCC if there are sports, while students and the community will have something to be proud of.

He said he would like to see men and women's soccer, basketball and volleyball teams at MCCC.

"Sports can provide a real glue or identity to the community," DeVries said.

He also hopes to get the board focused providing more opportunities for students.

Getting local businesses to take on students as apprentices, DeVries said, will provide students with both experience and valuable connections.

He also said he supports giving veterans the opportunity to be involved in the college and the community.

DeVries said he wants to bring an educator's perspective to the board, but that he does not expect it to go smoothly.

Many tough issues challenge the college, he said, adding that he does not mind conflict.

DeVries said he is confident of his chances of winning one of the two spots on the Board of Trustees, partly because of his 10,000 former students. DeVries has made campaigning business cards and has been passing them out at local events. He was present at MCCC's Welcome Back BBQ, socializing and sharing his agenda.

"Jim DeVries knows how this college works after so much time. I think he will fit right in with the college," said MCCC student Tori Forrester.

To learn more about DeVries and his Board of Trustees agenda, go to his campaign website: www.devriesfortrustee.com.