

Rowan-Cabarrus Community College is still several weeks away from naming a new president, but it's not premature to give trustees high marks for the process they've followed in finding a successor to President Richard Brownell.

After initiating the search with a small group of trustees, the board expanded the committee to include more than two dozen people representing college faculty and administration, community members and business interests. As anyone who's ever served on a committee knows, adding members doesn't necessarily translate into heightened efficiency. It might have been easier to work with a smaller group. But it wouldn't have involved as many elements of the community the college serves, and the search will benefit from having such a range of members evaluating the candidates. Expanding the committee, search chairman Pat Fulcher has said, "was definitely the right thing to do."

Trustees also have done a commendable job in keeping the public informed along the way. We know that the board initially started with 43 "qualified applicants," which was reduced to 12. Late last month, the committee whittled that list down to six finalists who are now undergoing vetting of transcripts and references. Once this portion of the search is complete, the board has promised to release the names of the six finalists, along with biographical information on each. That's expected to happen within the next couple of weeks, and it will give the public a revealing view of the best-qualified applicants who will be invited to visit the college later this month for further interviews before the final selection.

Through its academic degree courses, vocational training and career development programs, RCCC fulfills a vital role for both Rowan and Cabarrus counties. That role will expand as the study body grows and long-range expansion plans take shape. The public has a large stake in the college's choosing a worthy successor to continue the course guided by Brownell during his 30 years at the helm. Through its expanded search committee and regular updates on the committee's progress, the board has demonstrated a commitment to keeping the public engaged and informed, as well as to finding the best person for the job.