



2024 Candidate Questionnaire: City College Board of Trustees

Please submit the completed questionnaire as a pdf
to contact_us@phdemclub.org no later than Thursday, September 12.

Name: Alan Wong

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1. Please describe your qualifications for this office.

City College has played a pivotal role in my life and family for decades. Now, I am eager to give back to the institution that has given him so much. I am running for the City College Board because I believe in a City College that creates opportunities for all San Franciscans.

I was born and raised in San Francisco and my entire family attended City College. My journey with City College began when my father immigrated to San Francisco. After being laid off from his factory job, he enrolled in English classes at City College to improve his language skills and job prospects. He then joined the culinary program, which led to a successful career as a Local 2 union hotel cook. The wages and healthcare benefits allowed my father to support our family, enabling us to rent modest in-law units in the Sunset District. While a student in the San Francisco Unified School District, I served on the SFUSD Student Advisory Council for two years and as Student Delegate to the San Francisco Board of Education for two terms. As a teenager, I took City College classes through a low-income tuition waiver, earning credits that helped me graduate from U.C. San Diego with a bachelor's degree at just 19 years old.

In 2019, as an education policy advisor at City Hall, I was the principal legislative staffer working on advancing Free City College. I drafted and passed the legislation that currently provides 'Free City College' for all San Franciscans. I also coordinated a partnership between City College, the SFUSD, and local organizations to expand City College classes for high school students, increasing their academic

success and opportunities.

Since my election to the Board of Trustees in 2020, I have focused on fiscal oversight, job training, and improving student success. I worked to achieve a balanced budget with five percent reserves and proposed reforms to the college budget policy, including multi-year planning, mandatory monthly budget updates, and two-thirds trustee approval before using reserve funds. As Co-Chair of the Free City College Oversight Committee, I successfully advocated for City Hall to provide \$2.1 million to eliminate student debt and open City College's doors to 13,000 more students.

In both 2023 and 2024, I was elected as the City College Board President for two consecutive terms. In my current role as policy director for Children's Council of San Francisco, I advocate for child care and to ensure that every child in San Francisco has the opportunity to reach their full potential. With a comprehensive policy background in child care, K-12, and higher education, my aim is to support the success of young San Franciscans from birth to adulthood.

2. If elected, what are your top 3 goals for CCSF? Specifically, how do you plan to accomplish these goals?

1. PROTECT FREE CITY COLLEGE: As a City Hall education policy advisor in 2019, I worked on drafting and passing the current Free City College program. Now the City has plans to downsize Free City College so the program will only provide tuition-free enrollment for some classes, not all. The plans by the City will likely come out later this year and are being proposed for the 25-26 academic year. I will defend the Free City College program and negotiate hard to ensure that all City College classes are tuition free.

2. FINANCIAL STABILITY / ENROLLMENT: As Trustee, I will take practical and actionable steps to ensure City College's long-term financial future is secure while minimizing harm to its current and future students. To that end, I believe that City College must strike a nuanced balance between prioritizing the classes that San Franciscans need for vocational training and transferring to four-year colleges to grow enrollment, using attrition when faculty and employees leave or retire to keep spending flat, and informing potential students about the affordability and rich offerings of City College.

3. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: I will expand partnerships with employers and workforce development programs. In particular, I would like to increase the success of our child care, building trades, public safety, and health care training programs. As Trustee, I serve in an oversight and policy capacity and do not get into the operations of workforce programs, so my most important role in this will be facilitating relationships between stakeholders to create partnerships. I have already been regularly facilitating these relationships in my current four year term and will continue to do so.

3. What allocations in the current budget are higher/lower than needed and why? Please describe your current or previous experience with budgetary oversight.

I'm proud that the Board of Trustees just approved a City College budget with a 16.29% reserve and surplus.

It's true that City College has long had issues with financial stability. In the years before I started serving on the Board in January 2021, the College had drastically spent down reserves and was maintaining the budget and rainy day reserves using temporary financial gimmicks, such as using credit for a prepaid lease to count towards our reserve funds. The independent auditors were not happy.

Once I joined the Board, proposing changes to the budgeting process to structurally increase stability, transparency and oversight was one of my top priorities. As Budget Committee Chair, I successfully proposed changes to our Board budgeting policy to require mandatory budget updates of our actuals at every single Board meeting to ensure transparency to the trustees and public (as opposed to just seeing the numbers during budget season), two-thirds trustee approval before reserves can be redeployed, and multi-year budgeting three to five years out so that we were not only myopically budgeting into the next year.

In three recent independent audits of City College's unrestricted general fund, parcel tax, and bond dollars, City College received no negative findings for the first time in twenty-five years. Over the last several fiscal years, City College's annual budget has been balanced and we have maintained a healthy five percent rainy day fund.

Enrollment has also been going up. As of May 14, 2024, the spring 2024 semester credit FTES has increased by 509 (or 12%) over the spring 2023 credit FTES at the same point in the semester. As of June 15, 2024, the summer 2024 semester credit FTES has increased by 67 (or 8%) over the summer 2023 credit FTES at the same point in time. Student headcount has increased by 389 unduplicated students (or 7%) and total units taken have increased by 2,115 (or 9%). As of June 15, 2024, the Fall 2024 semester credit FTES has increased by 487 (or 14%) over the Fall 2023 credit FTES at the same point in time in the registration cycle. Student headcount has increased by 1,565 unduplicated students (or 14%) and total units taken have increased by 13,434 (or 13%).

So contrary to public perception, the budget is stable and enrollment is going up. Then what's going on?

In January 2024, although City College received an evaluation from accreditors indicating that it meets all accreditor eligibility requirements, policies, and 116 of 119 standards related to instructional programs, student services, and college operations, the report also warned City College that it must plan for long-range fiscal challenges in future budget years.

The big elephant in the room is that beginning in the 2025-26 fiscal year, City College will no longer receive cost-of-living adjustments, and revenue will be frozen until City College is eligible for more funding under a revised state funding formula enacted in 2017.

To qualify for more state funding, City College must increase enrollment in line with the new formula, freeze expenses for several years or both. Assuming no more enrollment growth, City College might not be eligible to receive increased funding until the 2031-32 fiscal year. However, if City College grows 8% in annual enrollment in the coming years, it could be eligible for increased funding as soon as the 2028-29 fiscal year.

To further grow enrollment, City College has increased its marketing efforts using new digital platforms and traditional methods to communicate its affordability and array of courses for potential transfer students, mid-career professionals and lifelong learners.

The Free City College program, which uses municipal funds to directly pay student tuition, has increased access to education and encourages student enrollment. We have also prioritized scheduling the most in-demand courses supporting job training and transfers to four-year institutions.

Previously, City College tried two measures to address the impending funding freeze, including class cuts and a ballot initiative to increase revenue for the College. Both measures were highly unpopular with San Franciscans, and neither was successful. With this in mind, I have called on the City College administration to review employee attrition scenarios to curtail spending.

City College must take practical and actionable steps to ensure its long-term financial future is secure while minimizing harm to its current and future students.

To that end, I believe that City College must strike a nuanced balance between prioritizing the classes that San Franciscans need for vocational training and transferring to four-year colleges to grow enrollment, using attrition when faculty and employees leave or retire to keep spending flat, and informing potential students about the affordability and rich offerings of City College.

City College is steadfast in its mission to provide an accessible quality education, foster a supportive learning environment for our students, and remain fully accredited and open to serve all San Franciscans.

4. In addition to what you might have cited in your goals, what is CCSF doing well that needs to be supported and maintained? How would you support these strengths as a trustee?

City College is making a life-changing impact for our students and the City of San Francisco every single day. But we have failed to share the good news. Typically, we only hear the bad or sensational news. It's time to support the work of our school by getting the good news into the mainstream media and public consciousness.

5. In addition to what you might have cited in your goals, what is CCSF not doing well and how would you bring about improvement or change as a trustee?

Since joining the Board, my top priority has been structurally increasing stability, transparency and oversight for the budget. I successfully proposed changes to our Board budgeting policy to require mandatory budget updates of our actuals at every single Board meeting to ensure transparency to the trustees and public (as opposed to just seeing the numbers during budget season), two-thirds trustee approval before reserves can be redeployed, and multi-year budgeting three to five years out so that we are not only myopically budgeting into the next year.

As Board President, I have created two ad hoc Board of Trustees committees to review budget and policy issues to ensure that we are working with and meeting all the accreditation standards of the state. The first ad hoc committee focuses on long term budget sustainability and the second ad hoc committee has been reviewing our existing policies, procedures, and practices to ensure compliance with the state's expectations. These committees have been regularly meeting with our accreditation liaison officer and Chancellor to improve processes and plan for the district's long-term fiscal health. In addition, we recently approved another fiscal year (FY 24-25) with a balanced budget and 16.29% reserves. At every single regular Board meeting this year, I have agendaized an item to discuss issues related to accreditation, budget, and policy to ensure ongoing action, discussion and updates at City College.

Ultimately, the big elephant in the room is that beginning in the 2025-26 fiscal year, City College will no longer receive cost-of-living adjustments, and revenue will be frozen until City College is eligible for more funding under a revised state funding formula enacted in 2017. See my prior answer to your question on how we can have a realistic plan to reach long-term fiscal sustainability.

6. CCSF has had 10 chancellors in 12 years and is now searching for an eleventh. What in your

view has caused such frequent turnover and what would you do to mitigate it?

City College is a tough place to work. It has its own civic and political ecosystem that is reflective of the complexities in San Francisco politics. Being Chancellor is not your typical administrator job. It resembles being a public or elected official. The Chancellor needs to effectively work with many City College stakeholder groups and build consensus or buy-in to get things done.

As Board President, I collectively oversee our new Interim Chancellor Bailey along with the rest of the Board of Trustees. Since he has come aboard, I have heard from staff that morale, direction, and initiative has increased among staff and City College as a whole. He is promoting the mantra "CityForward," which includes five key buckets:

1. Facilitating the process to hire the new Chancellor
2. Resolve accreditation issues and strengthen internal processes
3. Facilitate processes that provide sound financial planning and fiscal stability
4. Keep things going with student success, increasing enrollment, filling key administrator vacancies, capital projects.
5. Preparing to onboard and transition the new Chancellor

He has committed to ensuring that the Board, Chancellor, and City College community are collectively moving in the same direction in terms of budget and policy decisions. This avoids public rifts that become fodder for external parties. Moreover, he is focused on day-to-day work and improving processes for future success, including finally implementing multi-year budget planning and other budget accountability reforms I put into our budget policy in 2022.

With our Interim Chancellor doing a good job, it will set the tone for a positive search for a long-term permanent Chancellor. Here's what I believe are the attributes of a good Chancellor that will stay with City College for the long term.

The new Chancellor needs to have the following:

Commitment to making collective decisions instead of unilateral. Our longest tenured Chancellor in City College history was Chancellor Phil Day. He was successful at City College because he could navigate budget crises by working cooperatively with all of our stakeholder groups to make difficult decisions. For example, in the past our collective bargaining groups voluntarily took pay concessions to avoid program cuts - nobody liked it but it was a collective effort to protect City College. On the flip side, when City College made unilateral cuts in 2022, it upended and divided the institution.

Commitment to sound financial planning and fiscal stability. Looking at the needs of the entire institution, proposing a balanced budget, and maintaining a five percent reserves will always be one of the most important jobs that the Chancellor plays.

Commitment to student success. City College has an important role in providing opportunities for all San Franciscans, closing opportunity and achievement gaps, getting students jobs, and transferring students to four-year institutions. We need to be steadfast in offering the best quality public higher education available for San Franciscans.

Be a public figure. The City College Chancellor is not just an administrator, the Chancellor is a public figure in a highly complex and political city. Interest groups will often go to a higher authority or media when they don't get what they want and the Chancellor must be ready to be agile and responsive. The next Chancellor must be able to competently navigate and balance between different interest groups and stakeholders.

7. Please share your personal experience with CCSF.

I serve as the President of the City College of San Francisco Board of Trustees and Co-Chair of the Free City College Oversight Committee.

My journey with City College began when my father immigrated to San Francisco. After being laid off from his factory job, he enrolled in English classes at City College to improve his language skills and job prospects. He then joined the culinary program, which led to a successful career as a Local 2 union hotel cook. The wages and healthcare benefits allowed my father to support our family, enabling us to rent modest in-law units in the Sunset District. As a teenager, I took free City College classes through a low-income tuition waiver, earning credits that helped me graduate from U.C. San Diego with a bachelor's degree at just 19 years old.

In 2019, as an education policy advisor at City Hall, I drafted legislation that provides a decade of 'Free City College' for all San Franciscans. I also coordinated a partnership between City College, the SFUSD, and local organizations to expand City College classes for high school students, increasing their academic success and opportunities.

8. What else would you like Potrero Hill Democratic Club to know about you? Please include any aspects of your background and experience that have not already been touched upon, or endorsements you are proud to share.

There is a City proposal to downsize Free City College and only provide Free City College for some classes, not all.

I am leading the fight to protect Free City. As a City Hall education policy advisor for Supervisor Gordon Mar in 2019, I was the principal legislative staffer that worked on drafting and passing the current Free

City College program, guaranteeing a decade of Free City College for all San Franciscans.

Now the City has reneged on that ten-year agreement, taken Free City College reserve funds meant for students, and plans to further downsize Free City College starting in the 2025-26 academic year so the program will only provide tuition-free enrollment for some classes, not all. The plans to further downsize by the City will likely come out later this year and are being proposed for the 2025-26 academic year.

San Franciscans voted for Prop. W in 2016 to support and provide funding for Free City College. Turning back on the 2019 agreement would undermine student access to higher education and destabilize City College, particularly as it faces impending financial hurdles and is counting on stable enrollment growth.

For a small fraction of the City's \$16 billion budget that should have already been set aside for Free City College per the ten-year agreement, San Francisco can uphold its promise of free community college tuition, and even expand support for student debt relief, basic needs, and public transit.

City College is San Francisco's only lifelong learning institution where all residents — age, income or background — can enroll for free. Free enrollment is essential to our mission of removing barriers for low-income students, historically marginalized communities, working students and parents who need childcare to attend classes. regardless of

I will defend the Free City College program and negotiate hard to ensure that all City College classes are tuition free. I will organize the community to lobby and put pressure on City Hall to protect Free City College funding meant for students. Here are my bargaining priorities in order of priority. #1: Maintaining tuition free enrollment for all students and classes.

#2: Honoring the ten-year funding agreement to maintain past funding levels and changing the MOU to allow City College to use surplus/ reserve funds for student basic needs such as public transit, childcare, food, books, and increasing the stipend for low-income students.

I am endorsed by:

American Federation of Teachers Local 2121 - City College Faculty

Operating Engineers Local 39 - City College Stationary

Engineers California Faculty Association

United Educators of San Francisco

Faculty Association of the California Community Colleges

S.F. Building & Construction Trades Council

Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club

San Francisco Fire Fighters Local 798

Rose Pak Democratic Club

Carpenters Local

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UNITE HERE Local 2

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 6

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1245

LIUNA! Laborers Local 261

Teamsters Joint Council 7

Teamsters Local 350

Teamsters Local 665

SEIU United Healthcare Workers

National Union of Healthcare Workers

Vote Vets

Brownie Mary Democratic Club

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 16

Sprinkler Fitters Local 483

International Union of Elevator Constructors Local 8

Engineers and Scientists of California IFPTE Local 20

United Food & Commercial Workers Local 648

UA Local 38, Plumbers, Steamfitters, & HVAC/R

Chinese American Citizens Alliance - San Francisco

Transport Workers Union Local 250A

Operating Engineers Local

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Moms Demand Action - Gun Sense Candidate Distinction

Richmond District Democratic Club

S.F. Home Sharers Democratic Club

S.F. Bernierats

S.F. League of Pissed Off Voters

S.F. Women's Political Committee

S.F. Green Party

S.F. Latinx Democratic Club

S.F. Rising Action Fund

S.F. Eastern Neighborhoods Democratic Club

S.F. Young Democrats

Central City Democrats

S.F. District 11 Democratic Club

Evolve California

Chinese American Democratic Club

**Congressmember Kevin
Mullin**

State Treasurer Fiona Ma State

Senator Scott Wiener

Former State Senator Mark Leno

**State Assemblymember Matt
Haney State Assemblymember
Evan Low**

State Assemblymember Alex Lee

Former State Assemblymember Tom Ammiano

Assessor-Recorder Joaquín Torres

Sheriff Paul Miyamoto

Public Defender Mano Raju

Board of Supervisors President Aaron Peskin

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Supervisor Hillary

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BART Board President Bevan Dufty

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Chung Former Supervisor Sophie Maxwell Former
Supervisor Matt Gonzalez Former Supervisor Jake
McGoldrick

Former Supervisor Eric Mar

Former Supervisor Gordon Mar

Former Supervisor John Avalos

Former School Board Member Eddie Chin

Thank you for answering our questions, and thank you for running for office! Please submit the completed questionnaire as a pdf to contact_us@phdemclub.org no later than Thursday, September 10.