

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: Ruth Ferguson

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1. Please describe your qualifications for this office.

As the child of working parents who relied on community college to break a cycle of poverty, I know firsthand how important community colleges are in uplifting individuals, families, and communities.

My family has relied on community college for generations. My grandfather utilized it to switch from working as a custodian to a 30-year career as an electrical inspector in city government. My dad broke a cycle of poverty through community college. He was raised by a single mother with a physical disability and worked as a dishwasher and painter to pay his way through Santa Rosa Junior College. 30 years later, he and my mom have supported us through a successful, family-run small business.

I grew up with this understanding of the transformative power of community college. 4 out of 5 people in my own immediate family are community college graduates – including me.

Community college lifted me out of my small, rural hometown and into a four-year university. I relied on local community college classes again while working full-time in the California Legislature to prepare for a Master's in Public Policy at UC Berkeley.

As a community organizer, a policy advocate, and a community college graduate, I will build collaboration on the board to support a thriving City College for everyone.

I've built and led a statewide coalition to advocate for workers' rights after coming forward as a whistleblower in the California Legislature, stabilized working families during the pandemic, and served as a leading organizer on critical social justice issues over the past 15 years. I know how to work collaboratively to achieve real change. As Trustee, I will bridge divides between the administration, board, faculty, and students to increase enrollment, stabilize the school's finances, increase budget accountability, and prioritize student success.

Community college transformed my life and my family for the better. I'm running because I want many more San Franciscans to benefit from City College and, as Trustee, I will work diligently to preserve it for generations to come.

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

accomplish these goals?

1. Increasing Enrollment
2. Addressing the Accreditation Warning
3. Stabilizing the Budget

Increase Enrollment:

- a. Expand dual enrollment programs, including workforce development pipelines, a proven method to improve equity and boost enrollment. Nationally, community colleges have seen a decline in enrollment among those over 18, but a significant increase in enrollment for those 18 and younger. As a student who relied on a dual enrollment program to complete my community college education, I understand the immense benefits of promoting and expanding such programs. Institutes such as the Public Policy Institute of California ([PPIC](#)) [agree](#): dual enrollment is an equity-focused and data-backed intervention to boost California community college enrollment. In Washington, where I attended community college, 88% of high school students take at least one community college course before finishing high school. In contrast, only 12.6% of California students do the same. Expanding dual enrollment in California will not only increase enrollment but also help more students graduate from high school and earn college degrees, as [research shows](#) that students who participate in dual enrollment programs are more likely to graduate from high school and earn a college degree.
- b. Fix the Registration System: The most common complaint I hear from voters is about the difficulty of City College's registration system. Despite promises from candidates to fix these issues, little progress has been made. As Trustee, I will work with the board to target a request for proposal (RFP) that attracts companies with a proven track record of solving registration problems at other community colleges. The benefit of capturing students who currently drop out of the registration process will outweigh the expense of improving the registration system.
- c. Targeted Marketing for Free City: I will collaborate with the administration to effectively market Free City, focusing on high-impact communities. I will request a report identifying student density data across the city, using racial, gender, and socio-economic data, to create a targeted, multilingual marketing and outreach plan. Additionally, the College should hire community organizers and/or educators to present directly in high-density areas, including K-12 classrooms.

Accreditation Warning: The City College Board must address the concerns outlined in the [ACCJC report](#) that identifies the several board-specific governance and budgetary issues that led to the college's current warning status. A community college board must hold its administration accountable while also honoring the administration's authority, as defined by state ed code. The board must address all concerns outlined in the ACCJC report by March 2025, which includes short-term and long-term planning and commitments made by the board.

Stabilizing the Budget: In July 2025, the state will “freeze” the funding allocated to community colleges. The state will continue to provide funding based on the hold harmless provision in the Student-Centered Funding Formula (SCFF), however, other expenses – such as faculty and staff salary increases and promotions – will continue to increase as defined by their contracts (step and column increases). This will result in a funding “cliff” for community colleges if they are not able to increase their enrollment to their 2017-2018 enrollment numbers (22,309 for CCSF). To stabilize the budget, City College must increase its enrollment and the board must hold the administration accountable in improving budget transparency for all stakeholders.

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

While in community college, I served as the student body president on a campus with over 17,000 students. I chaired our Executive Committee and our Bylaws Committee, and I oversaw a \$1.4 million budget. I worked with our Finance Director and Finance Committee to ensure that every recommendation passed through our Executive Committee in accordance with our bylaws and in compliance with laws like Title IX, etc.

Many specific budget items are not itemized in CCSF’s general budget, which makes it difficult for the public to assess budgetary issues at CCSF. For example, CCSF candidates were asked by the SF DCCC to determine whether the campus police department’s budget causes a strain on the overall institution. However, candidates without insider access to the CCSF budget were not able to answer this question as that specific information cannot be found. Increased budget transparency promotes public accountability, and this is something I will champion as Trustee.

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?

Free City is an amazing resource that must continue to be supported and maintained. I will work with the administration to effectively market Free City and target high-impact communities, and promote the uptake of this critical resource. As Trustee, I will request the administration compile a report that identifies student density in geographic locations across the city (racial, gender, and socio-economic data is already available to the public). Based on this data, I would request the administration report to the board on methods to roll out a targeted, multilingual marketing plan and community engagement outreach in regions with the highest density of CCSF students.

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?

Budget transparency is critical to remaining accountable to the public, so I will focus on this as Trustee (more information in question #3).

Additionally, City College can improve its support for working students. For example, the subsidized childcare program still has remaining spots for working parents to enroll their kids in affordable childcare. However, they are not able to fill the program. I would work with SIEU, the administration, and the board to identify the gaps in that resource and ensure working parents know this resource is available to them.

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?

The College needs stable leadership and for the board to improve collaboration with the chancellor and the administration.

My criteria for a permanent chancellor are:

1. Stability – a willingness and enthusiasm to stay at CCSF for the long-term
2. Experience – prior chancellor-level experience is preferred, strong governance experience and/or significant administrative experience
3. Collaboration – a demonstrated commitment to collaboration and consensus-building across difference

7. Please share your personal experience with CCSF.

I've attended CCSF events, visited campuses, and have the support of several faculty and students. As a community college graduate and a former community college student body president, I know what it feels like to be a community college student.

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.

I'm proud to be supported by elected officials and organizations across the San Francisco political spectrum. I'm endorsed by leaders like former Supervisors Jane Kim, John Avalos, and David Campos, Congressman Adam Schiff, state leaders like labor champion Senator Dave Cortese, Senator Scott Wiener, and Assemblymembers Matt Haney and Alex Lee, and many more. I have worked with many of my endorsers for several years, and they are supporting me in this race because they know my commitment and enthusiasm for the community college system.

My endorsements are available at ruthferguson.com/endorsements.

Thank you so much for your consideration!

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.