



Questionnaire for Community College Board candidates

General Election, November 4, 2008

Candidate/Campaign Information:

Candidate name:	Mary Hernandez
Office sought:	Community College Board
Contact person:	Libby Denebeim, Treasurer
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Web address:	
Anticipated Budget:	\$70,000
Funds raised to date:	\$22,000
Percentage of donations under \$50	2-3%

General Questions: Please write a brief response (less than 150 words) to each question. Please return this questionnaire electronically to contactus@phdemclub.org. We will make these questionnaires available to our members before the endorsement meeting.

1. Why are you running? Why should we vote for you?

When Julio Ramos, the only Latino Trustee on the S.F. Community College Board of Trustees, announced that he would not seek another term, I was approached by a number of community leaders who felt that it was important to have the Latino community represented on the Board. I decided to run because I have a passion for public policy, education equity and justice issues and I believe I can make a positive contribution to S.F. City College. I was elected to the San Francisco School Board in 1996 when my children were toddlers and greatly enjoyed making education policy for the K-12 system. While contributing to my community, I also strengthened my ability to guide my children as a mother. Now my children are in middle school and high school and with my children, I too have begun shifting my focus to higher education. Since leaving the San Francisco School Board, I have been working as an education attorney with school districts and community college districts throughout the State. I have devoted my career to education law and advocacy and am proud to have helped establish the largest Latino-owned law firm in California. You should vote for him because I am a highly qualified candidate with proven leadership and coalition building skills who will bring a diverse perspective as a Latina woman to the Community College Board. As a former School Board member, I understand the role of a Trustee; as an education attorney, I understand the issues facing the College District; and as a mother, I understand the urgency of supporting and strengthening the College system.

2. What sets you apart from your opponents?

The Community College Board of Trustees has unfortunately been divided into two separate camps, who have not often been able to work effectively with each other. I am proud to be the *only* candidate with endorsements from both sides of that divided Community College Board. I am the candidate who will be best able to build coalitions and get things done. I will work to unify where possible and insist on an open, inclusive governing process where disagreements are unavoidable in order to build and maintain trust among my colleagues and the public. In addition, other unique qualities include:

- ♣ Neither of my parents finished middle school. As a first generation professional from a working-class family, I understand the importance of access to education. I will ensure an open door for every student with the help they need to succeed.
- ♣ As a former School Board member, I understand the role of a Trustee. I know the value and importance of open and participatory government. I know how to hold administration accountable for results and responsiveness to the community and ensure taxpayer dollars are well-spent.

- ♣ As an education attorney, I understand the issues and responsibilities facing colleges. As part of my job, I advise School and Community College Board members on legal and policy issues.
- ♣ As the only Latino on the ballot for the Community College Board, I will bring diversity of perspective to the Board. With Julio Ramos running for Supervisor, there will be no Latino representation on the Board of Trustees if I am not elected.
- ♣ As a mother, I understand the urgency of strengthening the College. My focus and priority is on students.

3. What are the top three issues facing San Francisco's community college? What will you do about those issues?

- ♣ **Budget Crisis:** I would advocate at the state level to secure our fair share of funds. I have a strong relationship with members of the Latino Legislative Caucus, including Senator Denise Ducheny, who now chairs the critical Education Subcommittee in charge of the Education Budget and who began her political career as a community college trustee. I would use those relationships to advocate for SF City College and for community college funding generally.
- ♣ **Public trust and confidence in City College** is a top issue because community support and engagement is critical to keeping the College strong and viable. I would do this by monitoring expenditures to ensure that tax dollars are well-spent, by holding the administration accountable for results and ensuring an open and transparent decision-making process.
- ♣ **Completion of Chinatown Campus.** I would ensure that the Chinatown Campus project is kept at the forefront of the Board's agenda until it is completed in accordance with the Master Plan.

4. Would you describe yourself as fiscally responsible? Please give an example to support your answer.

Yes, I consider myself fiscally responsible. I have experience as a former Board member adopting budgets and holding administrations accountable. I learned a great deal from living through fiscal challenges at the School Board level and these experiences strengthened my ability to be a fiscally responsible Trustee. I am a successful small business owner who has to review our firm's budget on a monthly basis. I started a law firm with 4 equity partners in August 2006. We had 13 attorneys when we opened our doors. We now have 23 attorneys and offices across California (San Jose, Los Angeles, San Diego) and in

Denver. As a start-up we were in the black within six months and have done an extraordinary job in growing our business.

5. Would you describe yourself as socially progressive? Please give an example to support your answer.

I have spent most of my career focused on education advocacy on behalf of the State's most vulnerable children, low-income, language-minority and incarcerated youth and have received numerous awards over the past decade in recognition of that work. A few examples: I currently sit on the Board of Directors for the Youth Law Center, which works to protect the interests of incarcerated and foster youth. I served as President of the Hispanic National Bar Association in 1994-1995. The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund's awarded me with the Bay Area Legal Service Award in 1995, for my role in focusing nationwide attention during my tenure on the HNBA Board on the rights of immigrant children and organizing opposition to California's Proposition 187. In November 2007, I received a Community Leadership Award from the California Rural Legal Assistance because of my work on behalf of immigrant students.

Issue Questions:

1. Given the very real probability of reduced state funding for CCSF in the coming years, what combination of budget cuts and tax increases would you suggest to address budgetary shortfalls?

I would advocate strongly for paramount importance of supporting our community colleges, especially in economic hard times when the need for job training and vocational programs is often at its peak. Everything has to be on the table in these budget crisis times with emphasis on decreasing waste and increasing revenues, including taxes where needed. Ideally, I would love to revisit Prop 13.

2. While eleven community colleges in California offer student housing, CCSF does not. Given that housing in San Francisco is in high demand and hugely expensive, what would you propose to solve the problem for CCSF students who need housing?

Partnership with city-wide affordable housing efforts.

3. How can CCSF address the needs of disadvantaged students – those with lower grades and educational inadequacies? How would you propose to increase opportunities for them to catch up to the other students?

I would welcome and embrace all students and take them as they come. It is not our job to bemoan their preparation or experience but to help them catch up and fulfill their

potential. I fully support counseling services and remedial courses these students may need to help them catch up and also support a strong partnership with the SFUSD to help them as early in their education as possible.

4. What measures should CCSF take to improve its fiscal responsibility and public financial accountability, especially with its spending of bond money?

I would support an internal auditor position, implementation of all recommendations made by the recent bond investigation report, strong bond committee oversight and more open and transparent governance.

5. Do you support a voluntary system of Clean Elections – full public financing – of candidates for citywide offices? Would you participate in such a system if it were available?

Yes

6. Do you support or oppose the following propositions on the November ballot? Please explain why or why not.

- Declaration of Policy of the people of San Francisco that its elected representatives in the US Senate and House should vote against any further funding for deployment of US Armed Forces in Iraq, except funds specifically earmarked for their safe withdrawal

Support ☒ Oppose ☐ Reason: I oppose the war.

- CA Proposition 4: Amends California Constitution to prohibit abortion for an unemancipated minor until 48 hours after physician notifies minor's parent, legal guardian or, if parental abuse reported, an adult family member

Support ☐ Oppose ☒ Reason: I do not support limits on a woman's right to choose.

- CA Proposition 5: Provides rehabilitation as an alternative to prison for nonviolent drug offenders

Support ☒ Oppose ☐ Reason: I do not believe in criminalizing people who may simply need help or a second chance.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.