

Potrero Hill Democratic Club
Questionnaire for Trustee, San Francisco Community College Board

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- Why are you running for office?

I am running because I have a great deal of experience working with (or around)the Community College; because I know what a tremendous community resource it can be and must be, and because I know, even before the Accreditation Report came out, that it was a troubled and endangered institution. I am running because I believe in public education, I am a product of public education, and because I believe my experiences, including a career concerned with cooperative and equitable settlements, equip me to make a real contribution to the improved functioning of this life-changing institution. In addition to the crucial importance of City College training and re-training in the lives of my clients, City College ESL classes are important to the lives of my clients and of the members of the immigrant community I serve.

I believe in City College – I have seen it transform lives.

- What are your qualifications for this position? If you are in incumbent, describe your major accomplishments while in office.

I am not an incumbent and definitely not a politician. I am deeply involved in non-profit work for the underserved communities.

I am a Worker’s Compensation Attorney, daughter of two teachers, mother of two students, and a product of public schools and colleges. I have practiced law in San Francisco since 1986, and been involved with City College my whole career: my clients are all injured workers, depending on re-training at City College to return to productive employment. An immigrant, I have been an active volunteer in immigrant-related activities and organizations. City College ESL classes are important to the lives of my clients and of the members of the immigrant community I serve. For over 25 years , I have also hosted a public affairs Chinese language TV show , currently on KTSF 26 and World Channel KMTP-TV32.

I am General Counsel and Executive Board Member, Community Youth Center, and former Board Chair of the Chinese Newcomers Service Center. I have been married for 20 years to former public defender Bruce Chan.

- The Accrediting Commission has detailed the following concerns for San Francisco City College: deficit spending; too much of budget going to salaries and benefits; too few administrators for size of school; failure to conduct financial audits. If elected, what solutions to these problems would you as Trustee pursue?

Obviously, the most important issue facing City College is satisfactorily responding to the Accreditation Report and staying out of receivership (aka “Special Trustee”). The College would lose its autonomy once a Special Trustee is installed, therefore we must explore ways to obtain expert opinion to solve the problems yet short of turning over complete control. The first step is to seek out administrators who are of “Special Trustee” quality well known to the State Board and retain them as consultants.

Simultaneously we must find ways to increase revenues and decrease expenditures. I think we are going to have to make some serious, if temporary, cuts, and the question is whether we can do that with intelligence and compassion. We need to have flexibility in the budget cutting process and allow the Board to try out different ways to trim the budget over time. The danger of making hasty decisions at critical times is that we may be short sighted in our thinking. There may be unintended consequences that we fail to foresee. The problems at City College evolved over a long period of time, and it is not prudent to think that we can solve all the problems overnight.

On revenue generation side, I am working with the Department of Disabled Student Programs and Services to provide job training to injured workers through funding from Workers’ Compensation insurance. A number of other revenue sources are also available – increasing the number of foreign students, community partnership with private enterprises and investment immigration program (currently investigated by the City of Seattle). We must explore all possibilities.

Beyond that, the Report identified a number of real problems areas. The Board is now, and has been for some time, dysfunctional, and one of the clear problems with the dysfunctional Board, is that it is impossible to address and solve problems. Workers Compensation Attorneys are in the business of conflict resolution and reaching agreement. I believe I can make a significant contribution to making the Board more representative and less dysfunctional.

- Do you support or oppose the following Propositions on the November ballot?

Proposition 30 Support

Reasons: We support all tax increases, and particularly tax increases for education. We also support prop 38

Proposition 31 Oppose

Reasons: It is a Republican measure designed to limit state spending no matter what the needs of society might be

Proposition 32 Oppose

Reasons: It is a simple union-busting measure with no redeeming social value