

**Potrero Hill Democratic Club
City College Board of Trustees Candidate Questionnaire
for meeting Tuesday, September 13, 2022, 6:30pm
Potrero Hill Neighborhood House
953 De Haro St**

Candidate name: John Rizzo
Contact person: John Rizzo
Email address: john@johnrizzoforcollegeboard.com
Web site: www.johnrizzoforcollegeboard.com

*Please write a brief response (up to 200 words) to each question. **Please email the completed questionnaire to [contact us@phdemclub.org](mailto:contact_us@phdemclub.org) by Monday, September 5.** The questionnaires will be made available online to club members.*

Please describe your qualifications for this office.

I am the currently Vice President of the Board of Trustees. I have served as president and am currently chair of the Facilities Committee and serve on the Budget Committee.

I fought for City College during the accreditation crises, testifying in Washington and lobbying members of Congress and the California Legislature. I have also testified in Sacramento on behalf of City College. Earlier this year, the Board took action to eliminate the College's structural deficit, stabilize the College's finances, and resolve all remaining accreditation issues.

When I was Board president, I lead the effort to craft and put on the ballot the College's first parcel tax, which was only the second community college parcel tax to pass in California.

As Facilities Chair, I have been successful in securing housing for teachers and staff, and have been working on the creation of student housing.

When I first was elected to the Board, I fought corruption at City College when the Chancellor and two administrators were charged with money laundering. I co-chaired the Board's investigatory team, hired an outside investigator, and implemented a dozen or so policy changes to prevent future misuse of funds.

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

Re-accreditation, building classrooms and housing, and growing enrollment are my top three goals.

There is nothing more important than accreditation for a community college. Without it, students can't transfer or get credit for their work. City College is still feeling the effects of the last accreditation crisis 10 years ago. The re-accreditation and process starts this year. That's why the Board and I took action to make sure that accreditation this time is smooth and drama-free.

By eliminating structural deficits and funding items required by accreditation, I and my colleagues have now satisfied all outstanding accreditation issues, including having a 5% reserve fund 2 years in a row, funding building maintenance, professional training for employees, and funding new student computers. We now have budgeted funding for professional development of faculty, another required spending area that results in benefits for students. We must continue to fund these required areas in order to ensure a smooth, drama-free re-accreditation process. Please see this press release:

<https://www.ccsf.edu/news/ccsf-stabilizes-finances-sustainable-2022-23-budget>

The accreditation process takes about a year. During this time we must ensure that we stay on budget and

continue funding the required areas.

Additionally, I have some expertise in accreditation. The ACCJC accrediting agency appointed me to the Standards Review Task Force, which is reviewing and editing the next version of the standards that community colleges will follow. I will use my expertise to help City College stay accredited.

My second issue, building infrastructure for the future, includes building housing and getting the \$845 million in student building projects completed quickly in a time of high construction inflation. As Facilities Chair, I've been overseeing these projects. We now 3 classroom building project that at the state waiting for approval, and which could be approved as soon as this month. A forth project (the theater project) is in the late stages of design. I and the other incumbent board members have the expertise to ensure that these projects come in on time and for the best value for the public dollar.

We have been successful in the getting over 100 units of affordable housing for teachers in the City's Balboa Reservoir housing project. We were able to do this through the negotiations with the Developer. I have also been investigating building student housing on District property, and have asked for a proposal to be developed to look at options for financing, the best locations, and the management.

Growing enrollment is the toughest issue at this point. Since the pandemic began, community colleges in the US have lost 827,000 students, and this has not recovered yet. California has lost 20% of its students. I have been in discussions with other colleges around the country, and have proposed that the college do a targeted recruitment campaign aimed first out students who left during the pandemic. We have some funding in the budget this year for this purpose, and will have more next year.

Should an economic recession take place, the history shows that enrollment will grow as unemployment rises. Unfortunately, the state often reduces funding during recessions. City College is much better positioned now to accept increased enrollment now that we have grown our reserve fund to about 8 percent. (5% is required by the state.)

Why did you choose to run for a 4-year term and not a 2-year term?

My current 4-year term is expiring, and I am running for another. The 2-year term is to fill the rest of Tom Temprano's term, who resigned earlier this year.

If you are an incumbent, please tell us what you are most proud of. If you are the challenger, describe something the incumbent(s) did that you would have done differently

I am most proud of preventing another state takeover and accreditation crises this year by eliminating structural deficits and funding required items. This was at a time of large national declines in enrollment due to the pandemic, and pandemic-related loss of revenue.

COVID reduced community college enrollment nationwide by 827,000 and it has not recovered. (See <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/26/us/college-enrollment.html>) **Pandemic-caused enrollment reduction was 27% in San Francisco. We reduced our fall classes by 11%.** That is 241 classes, though the College has been adding classes back during the past few weeks, so the total reduction is likely to be below 10%. Other community colleges around the state have done the same.

As I mentioned above, we also added funding to student services required by accreditation, and have satisfied all fiscal requirements of accreditation, the state FCMAT auditing agency, the State Chancellor's Office, and the college's independent auditor.

Had we not taken this action, the college would have been put in an accreditation crisis and the college would have been taken over by the state, and they would have made the layoffs. The last time the state did this they cancelled the Performing Arts Center project, which was delayed 10 years (I have worked to get it back on track). Now, we have not one, but 4 new buildings ready for construction. The cancellation of these projects would have let to the lost of thousands of union construction jobs.

The Board considered the faculty union proposed budget, and I met with them half a dozen times. I asked questions about their numbers at Budget Committee meetings, and Board meetings, and on the phone. In the end, the union's numbers did not agree with those of the Budget Office, our independent auditor (who stated that the Budget Office's numbers were "true and correct"). We also had letters from accreditation, the state FCMAT auditing agency, the State Chancellor's Office, and the college's independent auditor.

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

The budget is now funding items required by accreditation. These items are not optional, and go directly to serve students. (Things like building maintenance and updating of computers in student computer labs.)

Those candidates stating that there is not enough funding for teachers are ignoring the fact of the huge drop in enrollment caused by the pandemic. They also ignore fact that as of last week, there was a 30% availability of seats. While some classes with popular times or teachers were overenrolled, there are empty seats available in classes of the same subject at other times.

Other community colleges around the state, such as Peraulta in Oakland, have also reduced the number of classes in their fall 2022 schedule. City College now has a similar number of students per teacher as other community college. City College now spends 87% of its budget on salaries and benefits, the same as most other community colleges. Before the layoffs, it was 91%.

As for my experience, I am a member of the Budget and Audit Committee, and was once chair. During the pandemic, we had more meetings about the budget than ever before, including many that were special meetings devoted entirely to the budget, including several meetings with our independent auditors. We dove more deeply into the issues than ever before. The most important thing we learned was that one-time budget fixes were not addressing the structural deficit issues, and it was ongoing expenses that were the problem. The revenue had been reduced, and the ongoing expenses also needed to be reduced.

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?

The quality of the education is very good, and the data from the college and the state shows that it has been improving. Completion rates have been improving over the past four years, and the time it takes students to achieve their goals (another success metric) has been steadily dropping. Still, there is much more we can do, and there is much to learn from what we've done.

The achievement gap is one area I have been working on. To help identify and remove implicit institutional biases that can hold back groups of students, the Board of Trustees created the Office Student Equity. This office runs a number of programs. The Board receives regular reports from this office and from Human Resources on the District's efforts to diversify hiring.

In 2017, the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to set aside \$671,367 in funding to provide additional support services to undocumented students. This provided for resources such as new academic counselors, social workers who will provide wrap-around services, and fellowship opportunities. We also created CCSF's Assembly Bill 540 Taskforce, a group of faculty, staff, and administrators that educates the campus community about issues faced by undocumented students. At that we created VIDA (Voices of Immigrants Demonstrating Achievement), a student-run resource center for friends, allies, and students affected by issues of immigration or citizenship status.

A lot of research has been done in student success, and if I am re-elected, I intend to work to bring data-proven techniques to the college.

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?

The City College budget development process could be more transparent. This is an issue that Trustee Alan Wong I have addressed in a draft policy fix that we introduced this summer.

Our policy amendment would increase the transparency of the budget process with a number of changes. First, it would require the administration to complete the June budget document a month earlier, during the month of May. It would also require two readings of the Budget by the Board. This would give the public an extra month to review the full document, including all the details. It would also allow more time for the college's Participatory Governance system to review the budget.

Another new requirement of our proposal is to require the administration to prepare multi-year budgets every year. This can be a useful tool for planning and for learning where the college is budget-wise. In the past, the college has created a multi-year budget, but it has not updated it every year.

Our proposal would also require the college to hire an outside financial auditor/consultant to look at the books in any given current year. Currently, the annual independent audit looks at the previous year's (closed) budget. This new view would give the Board and the public an idea of how spending is tracking before the year is over, providing additional transparency to the operating budget.

Our draft policy revision was heard at the Budget and Audit Committee in June. Shared Governance is now reviewing our proposal. The Board will take it up some time this fall. You can read it here:

[https://go.boarddocs.com/ca/ccsf/Board.nsf/files/CEZQBC63CB27/\\$file/Board Policy 8.01_Draft Edits.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/ca/ccsf/Board.nsf/files/CEZQBC63CB27/$file/Board Policy 8.01_Draft Edits.pdf)

Thank you for taking the time to fill this out, and thanks for running!