

# LPoV Candidate Questionnaire Nov 2022

## General Questions

Candidate Name \*

Susan Solomon

Candidate Website

in development

Why are you running for *this* office?

I strongly believe that my many years of experience in public education advocacy, public service, activism, union work, coalition-building with organized labor, community groups, housing rights organizations, environmental justice groups, parent groups, and more have prepared me well for the work of maintaining City College as an educational institution that is a true community college. After a decade of attacks on and downsizing of our beloved community college, starting with the manufactured accreditation crisis, and now this latest round of unnecessary layoffs of staff and faculty, approved by five of the current trustees, it is clear that we need trustees who believe that supporting all students, especially BIPOC, immigrant, and working students, is one of the most important investments we can make in our democracy. This can be done by creating a budget that reflects our values and beliefs, working hard to pass SF WERCS, and assuring that there is robust oversight of the SF WERCS funding, which is meant to be used for workforce development, wraparound services, and equity and social justice.

We need a stronger labor perspective and presence on the Board of Trustees, as layoffs are not only harmful to students, but mean a loss of good union jobs with good pay and benefits.

If elected, do you commit to completing your entire term?

yes

What are your values, and how did you get them?

My values are rooted in a deep belief that we have a moral duty to do whatever we can to make the world a better place for working people. I believe that we must show up for each other, in all ways possible, including voting; recruiting and campaigning for candidates who have our values, and holding them accountable when they are elected; lobbying legislators; developing -- in community with others-- solutions to the many social justice issues; marching in the streets; committing acts of civil disobedience; and literally being present for each other. We can't give up, even when times are hard. In fact, when times are hard, we have to double down.

I was raised with these values by parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and family friends who started taking my sibling and me to rallies, marches, and picket lines when we were babies. The first march for which I have a clear memory was a civil rights march in 1960.

My husband and I raised our two children much like we were raised: in a politically active, pro-union family, attending civil rights and anti-war marches and union picnics, parties, and picket lines from an early age.

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What communities do you represent, and how do they hold you accountable?

I am a CFT delegate to the San Francisco Labor Council, and I am a Vice President of the CFT: A Union of Educators and Classified Professionals. In those specific roles, I officially represent PreK-college educators. They hold me accountable by checking in with me about issues that come before these bodies, and by expecting me to check in with them-- as they should. They want to know that I am advocating and voting in ways that will improve the lives of students and working conditions of educators.

In a less official, but arguably equally significant way, I have been doing the work I do in organized labor and coalitions for so long that I also represent, through my actions and words, the efforts many of us make in the labor movement to stand in solidarity with each other, to find common ground, to take leadership when appropriate, and to guide, mentor, and create space those who are newer to the work. I

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What three endorsements are you most proud of?

San Francisco Labor Council; American Federation of Teachers, Local 2121; United Educators of San Francisco

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What are the top three issues you will work on, and how will you implement solutions in a timely manner?

Reversing downsizing/classes being cut

- Facilitate public forums where student and community voices can be heard about what City College means to them/us, and what is at stake if we lose the City College we know and love.
- Publicize Free City College, and find ways to extend and expand it.
- Highlight the proud history of City College's role in the lives of immigrants and BIPOC students.

Fiscal

- Work for passage of SF WERCS
- Work to change the Student Centered Funding Formula at the state level.
- Ensure that City College's use of funds aligns with its values, as stated in its Mission Statement and Vision. A budget is a moral document that reflects our values.

Implementation of the Facilities Master Plan

- This is a far-reaching plan, financed by an \$845 million bond, that covers the constructing a Performing Arts Center, addressing the climate crisis by adopting sustainable practices, improving public transit and bike accessibility, and building a new childcare center, to name just a few. The Board of Trustees must assure that the oversight mechanisms with this bond are in place, and that reports are timely, frequent, and thorough.

What for-profit or non-profit boards do you serve on, including political organizations?

CFT: A Union of Educators and Classified Professionals (formerly known as the California Federation of Teachers)

What local and state commissions or policy bodies do you serve on?

As mentioned above, I am a VP in CFT, a statewide union, and a delegate to the SFLC, as well as the Law and Legislative Committee chair. These are not governmental bodies, of course, but I was elected to these positions, and we do set policy.

Please describe specific accomplishments in your activism. What did you get done, and what was your role?

Some of this is covered in my responses above. Other examples: While leading and co-leading negotiations for UESF for six years, we won substantive raises for educators. I led educators safely through the first 15 months of the pandemic and unprecedented attacks on public education by helping to bring all 17 unions together to negotiate jointly on health and safety. Obviously, I did not accomplish these things on my own. It is about organizing and showing power through actions taken by hundreds of union members, community members, and allies.

I have been arrested for civil disobedience many times with Unite HERE. My role was to be one of many to get arrested, and these repeated actions over the years have helped siblings from another union negotiate improved working conditions.

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Please list specific ways you have shown up for immigrants at risk of deportation.

I participated in several Bay Resistance trainings after Trump was elected, and was part of a network for showing up to be present if ICE was at someone's door.

I have picketed and participated in demonstrated at ICE several times.

While I was president of UESF, we worked with the Labor Center for Immigrant Justice/ WE RISE SF by bringing them in to provide information and resources for how we could help immigrant families.

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Please list specific ways you have fought against racism and white supremacy.

From 2016-2018, I had the privilege of being a member of the CFT Racial Justice Task Force. The product of our work was a report, Reclaiming the Promise of Racial Equity for Black Males in California. After deep discussion, we decided it was necessary to focus the report on Black males in education work. This is still necessary. I believe that the goals and priorities in this aspirational report provide a very useful roadmap for what we need to do. We can also apply many of the goals to fighting against racism and white supremacy.

In my officer roles in UESF, it was my responsibility and goal to provide leadership opportunities for members from diverse backgrounds, especially BIPOC. I have supported, guided, and stood in solidarity with BIPOC UESF members by recommending their appointment to many committees within UESF, CFT, and SFUSD, and encouraging them to run for the Executive Board. As President, I recommend dozens of members to CFT committees, and most of those whom I recommended (and who were appointed) are BIPOC.

I have marched, rallied, and sat in against racism, including speaking at the anti-Nazi rally in San Francisco when Nazis were threatening to march through our streets.

I have listened when Black and Brown folks told me I was wrong. As an example, when the white male lawyer working with SFUSD negotiators accused UESF negotiators of being racist against Black students, I, as the lead union negotiator, suggested to the UESF team, many of whom were Black, that the Black members in our group address the issue and why the lawyer's statement was offensive. The Black members told me that it should not always be their burden to explain racism to white people. They were right, and I was wrong.

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Please give us some examples of situations you've encountered where gender and LGBTQ inequity was evident and what you did or would do to address it.

In one situation when a LGBTQ UESF member was being harassed on the job, I monitored the representation provided to assure that the member was receiving all needed support.

I have been involved in multiple discussions with co-workers, friends, and relatives about the use of they/them pronouns. Some of my younger relatives and friends have provided wonderful guidance to me so that I have become better equipped to address negative or dismissive reactions to use of non-gendered pronouns.

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Amid a homelessness crisis, how can the City and County of San Francisco improve the effectiveness of our city's homelessness and supportive housing services?

Citywide, we must shift our focus from building housing for all income levels, and focus instead on building 100% affordable housing and supportive housing. In San Francisco, there is no housing crisis for high-income residents, so I do not believe we need policies that include building more housing for the wealthy. The housing crisis is having a serious negative impact on middle- and low-income residents and families. We need supportive housing for people who have been living on the streets and need wraparound services-- job training, medical services, and education opportunities.

Specifically, in regards to my candidacy for a City College Trustee position, City College must continue to provide programs for students facing challenges of homelessness and housing insecurity, often exacerbated by systemic racism. City College programs include the Homeless At-Risk Transitional Students (HARTS) program; Guardian Scholars; and Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) program.

What is your favorite park, and why?

It's hard for me to pick. What I truly appreciate is how many parks and public playgrounds are within walking distance of where I live in the Fillmore. On a regular basis, I take my grandchildren to Alta Plaza, Lafayette, Jefferson Square, Kimbell, Alamo Square, Sgt MacAuley, Hayward, and Hamilton Parks.

Why do you want the League of Pissed Off Voters' endorsement?

I appreciate the way in which the League frames the issues. Many voters use the LoPV voter guide. I have worked on a number of campaigns, including the one to defeat the recall of Chesa Boudin recall, and we were distributing the LoPV along with Boudin's campaign literature.

Is there anything else you want to tell us?

Anita Martinez, Vick Chung, and I are running together, because of our combined, extensive experience with City College, advocacy for public education, work in organized labor, and participation in and solidarity with community organizing. We will work effectively and enthusiastically with each other and stakeholders to preserve and expand the "community" in "community college."

What experience do you have with City College or Community Colleges in general?

In my role as a Vice President of CFT, I work with 26 other education leaders from around California. Since CFT represents faculty and staff at community colleges, many of the issues we address focus on community colleges. Our work includes supporting union organizing and representation at community colleges, and researching and lobbying for legislation that supports programming and funding for community colleges, and for candidates who do the same.

I have been a student at City College. I attended the University of California at Berkeley, where I was a pre-med student. During my last quarter, I took an education class, and that is when I realized that I didn't want to be a doctor; I wanted to be a teacher! I next took a Child Development class at City College, which put me on the path to a career teaching young children. Some years later, when I became active in my union, I took a Labor Studies class.

I was a tutor at the Writing Center at LaGuardia Community College in Queens. It was there that I learned firsthand of the use of high-stake metrics that ultimately harm struggling students.

UESF has stood in solidarity with the American Federation of Teachers, Local 2121 in its decade-long fight to maintain City College as a true community college. I have participated in many of their actions and have spoken at their rallies and press conferences.

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## What do you see as City College's greatest strengths and challenges?

Strengths: City College provides education services and support to all students: students who plan to matriculate; students who plan to go on to a four-year college; those seeking technical/industry certifications; those who need to take a class or classes to learn or hone skills that will help them in their jobs or in their search for jobs; dual-enrolled high school students; and lifelong learners, who love learning, and can enrich their lives and/or the lives of those around them by sharing new knowledge and skills. A significant percentage of City College students are immigrants and BIPOC. In addition, Adult Education programs that are provided by K-12 school districts in other California counties are provided by City College in San Francisco.

City College faces fiscal challenges. The State Student Centered Funding Formula (SSCFF) is inherently harmful to CCSF's current mission and model because the formula rewards colleges with a higher percentage of full time students, and matriculating students, and students who transfer to four-year colleges. The college's Equity Report details continuing equity gaps, but also demonstrates significant efforts at the college to close them. The SSCFF metrics do not appear to support the success of Black and Brown students, disabled students, part-time and so many other students who do not always meet the SSCFF criteria.

Downsizing is also a challenge. From the manufactured accreditation crisis of ten years ago, found to be unjustified, to this past spring's layoffs of staff and faculty, forcing the elimination of classes from this fall's class schedule, we have seen City College's enrollment decline. Additionally, community colleges around the country have experienced a drop in enrollment due to the Covid pandemic.

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## Do you support the City College Parcel Tax slated for the November 2022 ballot?

☒ Yes

☐ No



Given that many of the policy and funding decisions for SFUSD are made by other entities, what is your vision for fully funding City College, and what actions can the Board of Trustees take to that end?

As noted above, the SSCFF has resulted in a change in state funding that is not beneficial to City College. The Board of Trustees can advocate with community college boards around the state, as well as with community-based organizations and unions, to amend the SSCFF.

We all need to work to pass the City College Parcel Tax in November 2022, and then the Board of Trustees must assure the required oversight is instituted.

All of us, including the Board of Trustees, can work together again to amend 1978's Proposition 13 in order to create a split-roll tax so that large corporations pay their fair share.

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How do you plan to close the opportunity gap for students of color?

We must focus on the recruitment and retention of Black and Brown faculty. This is vital to students of color. Coalition-building with education advocacy organizations and unions is essential for this work to succeed.

More can be done to publicize Free City College. A re-energized outreach effort needs the participation of union and community groups, CCSF trustees, and college administration. We need to make sure that there is specific outreach into Bayview/Hunters Point, the Fillmore District, the Mission District, and Chinatown, through neighborhood centers and community organizations.

Student debt disproportionately impacts students of color. We must focus on financial aid assistance.

City College must continue to provide, a number of programs for students facing challenges of food insecurity, housing insecurity, and income inequalities and disparity, often exacerbated by systemic racism. City College programs include the Homeless At-Risk Transitional Students (HARTS) program; Guardian Scholars; Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) program, including food card services; a food pantry (though extension beyond the Ocean Campus would be good); and information about available resources in the Bay Area.

City College has a significant role in providing opportunities for acquiring skills that lead to jobs that pay enough to keep people in San Francisco. The workforce training courses and wraparound services at City College must be maintained.

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What specific qualities would you look for in a new chancellor?

Criteria should include:

Years of previous experience as an educator

Experience working for a college, especially one with a mission of support and betterment of its communities

Evidence of training and experience in understanding and addressing systemic racism in order to eradicate it

To make the process transparent, there must be:

Input from all stakeholders – students, staff, faculty (including the opportunity for input from staff and faculty unions), administrators, and trustees – about the goals for City College and the necessary qualifications of a chancellor. This should happen before the hiring process begins.

An interview committee, comprised of representatives selected by their own stakeholder groups, who are able to view information (CVs, for example) about applicants before interviews take place.

A search for candidates beyond the usual California community college networks.

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What metrics would you use to determine your success as Board Trustee?

-- There is an increase in student enrollment.

-- We can provide evidence that City College is implementing its mission to provide educational programs and services that promote student achievement and life-long learning to meet the needs of our diverse community.

-- The fiscal situation is stabilized without doing harm to CCSF staff and faculty through layoffs and takebacks.

-- The opportunity gap has narrowed.

--The Facilities Master Plan is implemented, as determined by the voters of San Francisco when they passed a bond of \$845 million in 2020.

-- Satellite campuses are maintained.

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