

Ohlone College Questionnaire  
Submitted by John Kitta

1. Why are you seeking appointment to the Ohlone Board of Trustees?

As a nearly long-life resident of this community (since 1953), I have a long standing interest and commitment to educational, social and legal advancements in Southern Alameda County.

Over the past 37 years of my adulthood, I have had an ongoing commitment to our community and did what I could do to accomplish what I perceived to be in the best interests of the citizens in this area. Due to my past experiences, I believe I can contribute significantly to the Ohlone Board of Trustees without requiring a long period to ramp up before being able to seriously participate in the Board activities of this institution of higher education.

I have been fortunate enough to have an active and serious involvement with our local cities, County of Alameda and the State of California. I believe I can bring my past experiences into a core unit of knowledge which will enable me to be an active interested participant as a Board member.

2. What special skills do you bring to the job of Ohlone Trustee?

One special skill I believe I can bring to the Board would be that of negotiating reasonable compromises. As a practicing attorney for over 30 years, I deal with conflict resolution on a daily basis. I believe this has perspective application to the Board itself, and to the Board's relationship with staff, students and the community.

I believe my experiences learned while serving on the Alameda County Board of Education for 4 years would assist me in my dealings with the Ohlone budget and other fiscal issues. For over 30 years, I have assisted not only individuals, but developers, brokers, public entities and a major title company in regard to land use issues. I believe these experiences will be very helpful in my dealing all of Ohlone College's present land use issues.

3. What do you believe the role of the trustee is? What areas would you emphasize as a Trustee?

The role of a Trustee is to provide the guiding light in the governance of the affairs of Ohlone College. To effectively fulfill this role, it is necessary for the Trustee to be acutely aware of the needs of its students, faculty and community. When one speaks of emphasis, I believe there is a difference between short and long term emphasis. Presently, I believe strong emphasis has to be placed on getting a newer campus up running and fully 100% operation. Two other issues in which timing plays a great part would be determining exactly what Ohlone will do with its frontage potential commercial/residential acreage a determination of what, when and how the sports field issue will be addressed. There will always be a long term emphasis in maintaining a high standard of academics, being most cognizant of the educational needs of our

students, providing them with appropriate direction if they wish to move forward with their education after Ohlone, and persist with an ongoing assessment of our community's employers in regard to what their present employment needs are and what they will be in the future.

Another long term and ongoing emphasis would be to reach out and find under-served or unserved perspective students who would benefit from their participation as a student at Ohlone College.

4. As a trustee what do you hope to accomplish during this term? How can the board or college help you in achieving those goals?

I believe my goals are in line with those of the other Trustees in that we want to have the new campus 100% up running and successful, completed plan regarding the commercial/residential frontage property and a resolution of all issues related to the poor condition of our sports fields. There is enough horse power and energy on this Board so that I do not have any doubt that we will all be able to work together to resolve these issues in a timely fashion. In addition, I want to elevate the college's high academic standards and maintain excellent communication with the students, staff, faculty and community.

5. What would be your three top priorities if elected to the Ohlone Board?

The three top priorities I have stated above. Newark campus 100% up and running, a final development plan for the commercial/residential frontage property and resolving all issues related to the sports field. Other than project priorities, I would strive to make efforts to maintain a harmonious Board that effectively works together to make the right decisions for Ohlone College, its students, its faculty and our local citizens. A top priority is to maintain an ongoing and consistent good working relationship with staff and faculty.

6. Whom would you feel you are representing if you are appointed to the Board of Trustees?

While being appointed, the appointment is to an elected position, so I certainly would be put in a position to carry out and represent the citizens of the Ohlone College district and carry out all relevant provisions of the Education Code. In addition, I feel I would be representing and be an advocate of the educational needs of each and every student at Ohlone College.

7. What do you see as the College's role in our community? What would you do as a Trustee to further the role?

It is important for the college to maintain an ongoing relationship with the business interests of our community. Having an input of employers can better enable us to assess if Ohlone is adequately contributing to providing our students with opportunities to obtain an education that will easily lead to future employment. We need to be an educational leader in the community and maintain constant relationships with our local high schools to be better able to assess what

particular areas of education graduating seniors are interested in pursuing. As a Trustee, I would assess our intern/externship programs to see if we could get more of our students hands-on involved in employment that involves areas of their career interests. We might be able to develop a formal program (poll) with the Chamber of Commerce members to ascertain business owner's future projected employment needs.

8. What is your understanding of the mission and purposes of the community colleges in California? What are the mission and purposes of our district? Do you have any suggestions about how Ohlone College can do better at achieving it's mission and purpose?

The mission of California community colleges is set forth by statute California Education Code Sec. 66010.1 through 66010.8.

By law the California Community Colleges shall admit any California resident with a high school diploma or the equivalent and may admit anyone who is capable of profiting from the instruction offered. Primary missions of the Colleges are to offer academic and vocational education at the lower division level for both recent high school graduates and those returning to school. Another primary mission is to advance California's economic growth and global competitiveness through education, training, and services that contribute to continuous workforce improvement. Essential and important functions of the colleges include: basic skills instruction, providing English as a second language, adult non-credit instruction, and providing support services that help students to succeed. Fee-based Community Service education is designated as an authorized function. To the extent funding is provided the Colleges may conduct institutional research concerning student learning and retention as is needed to facilitate their educational missions. The Board of Governors provides leadership and direction in the continuing development of the California Community Colleges as an integral component of public higher education in the state, to fulfill the promise of opportunity for all under California's Master Plan for Higher Education.

As can be seen, the California Mission Statement is far reaching, and now affects 2.5 million community college students in its system.

General, I believe the mission purposes of community colleges in California and that of Ohlone are pretty much one of the same. I believe it is the district's responsibility to serve the educational needs of the individuals in our district which are varied and different. We need to provide an enriched healthy environment where different students can accomplish different goals whether that be economic gain through enhancement of skills, basic fundamental educational skills, preparation to commence a career, to obtain the grades and units to transfer to a university/or personal enhancement and enrichment.

Ohlone College might consider an expansion of their television broadcasting of classes. This would open the door of possibilities for many disadvantaged individuals who have serious problems personally attending the campus. This could include handicap, individuals with no or

limited transportation, elderly, stay at home parents with children and those with variable schedules. As another component of this program, I would suggest that we widely publicize said program through all available media and other outlets.

If possible, maybe develop a "help a friend" program and offer any student who encourages a friend or family member to enroll at Ohlone, and this individual completes their first quarter then this individual will receive some sort of reward. The legality of this would have to be carefully checked out as well as a source of funding. Perhaps, half price on a book or reduced or free parking for a semester. Our present student body would probably be the strongest advocates for seeking out and assisting new perspective participants for the Ohlone program.

9. Please discuss your understanding of the relationship between the trustees on the board and the administrators, faculty, staff, and students of the institution.

The relationship between the Trustees on the Board and the administrators, faculty, staff and students of the institution is very simple and straightforward, the Trustees of the Board must always have open ears and aggressively seek input and responses from each and every one of these elements that make up and create the backbone of Ohlone College. The Trustees in their elected capacity are charged with a duty and responsibility to do what they feel is in the best interest of the students in the institution, the faculty, the staff, the administrators and the community all within the purview of the guidelines set forth in the California Education Code. The Board needs to aggressively seek out input from all available sources including those named herein above; nevertheless, the Board is charged with a duty and responsibility to govern the affairs of Ohlone College. There can be no misconception in regard to the Trustees ultimate responsibility for the governance of Ohlone College and no delegation of their duties.

10. What is your opinion of shared governance? What is the board's role in dealing with decisions made by college staff before being presented to the board for ratification?

In regard to the charge and responsibilities delegated to the Board of Trustees of Ohlone College, there is no shared governance other than what may exist amongst the Trustees of Ohlone's Board. It would be irresponsible to delegate a Board's governing duties and responsibilities. In regard to the Board's role in dealing with decisions made by college staff before being presented to the Board for ratification, I would suggest that the staff be able to investigate and formulate their own opinions before reporting to the Board. I think it is generally inappropriate for the Board to in any way force its input during the investigatory stages on college staff before they are given the opportunity to present their ideas, thoughts and conclusions. If staff requests comment before its presentation to the Board, then I think it is acceptable for the Board members to provide their input before staff makes its final decision.

11. What is your understanding of the primary responsibilities of the board? What would be your responsibility to the board as a trustee?

My understanding of the primary responsibility of the Board would be to carry out its vision statement, mission statement and core values, and college goals as adopted and set forth on your internet website. Additionally, another primary responsibility would be that the Board stay in compliance with all criteria set forth in the Education Code concerning what the legislature has decided should be our mission and approach to community college education in the State of California. It appears that the present mission statement, core values, and college goals for Ohlone are well articulated, well thought through and well respected. My responsibility to the Board will be to carry out these directives to the best of my ability and attempt to be creative and develop new tactics, strategies or timing that may somehow enhance our ability to accomplish these directives.

12. If a board member feels strongly about a matter, but his or her position is not supported by the board, how should this trustee conduct him or herself?

Always in an honorable and professional manner. This is easily accomplished by treating others as you wish them to treat you. If I felt this was a very important matter for the college, I would graciously beg for additional time to provide new and additional evidence to support my position at a future meeting. If this was not acceptable, I would accept the consensus opinion of the Board members and graciously move on. The burden would rest with me to find new and additional facts to later put this matter on the agenda for further review.

13. What is your connection to Ohlone College? Have you ever taken classes or attended events at or sponsored by the college?

I believe my connection to Ohlone College goes back to the age of 12 years old. I believe one of the original owners of the property purchased by Ohlone College was Kit Catlin, my former employer who had a private park on part of the property which I believe was acquired by Ohlone. One thing I learned from Kit was teamwork. Whether I worked in the snack bar or cleaning the dance floor or as a lifeguard, at the end of the day all the workers there would pitch in and clean up the entire park. It was a pretty big deal. IBM would come and rent the park for the day. In terms of teamwork, we were all paid for the day, not by the hour and we couldn't leave Linda Vista Park until we all entirely cleaned the park after the party/picnic had ended. While I had a full time scholarship to University of Santa Clara, I enlisted in the Naval Air Reserves and by virtue of the way the schedule was, I was able to take courses at Ohlone for a quarter that would make up for the time I was going to miss from Santa Clara in 1970. While in boot camp I completed the courses and also completed boot camp and went back to Santa Clara

on my scholarship. Over the years I have been to annual dinners put on by Ohlone honoring its best supporters. I have also attended dance and music performances. I have also taken my son up there where we admired the pond, the wildlife, and he chases the squirrels and lizards around. I have also attended baseball clinics for my son at Ohlone.

14. What do you see as the major issues facing the community college(s) in the next decade?

Projection for a decade is a difficult task. My number one concern would be adequate financing from the state. This is a political issue that we have little control over. I believe we have to keep our thinking caps on in regard to changing population patterns, specific needs of our local society and where the jobs and interests of prospective students will be. Will there be issues regarding declining population based on a lower percentage of younger people in the community? Historically, have we had programs that have been unable to fill the needs of the community? In past years, it was always difficult for an individual to get into a nursing program. Is it still a problem? Are there new specialty hi-tech areas where Ohlone needs to better prepare our local students to have the ability to participate? If local business industry forces have sincere interest in specific programs, can we joint venture with them and get them to participate in the expense? I believe Ohlone has set up a huge foundational base from which we can only build from provided we employ the appropriate tactics, strategy and timing. We need to pay attention to what is going on and make adjustments. Let's be cognizant of the facts and make appropriate adjustments as time goes on. It is impossible to set one rigid plan that's going to last for a decade in Silicon Valley, California.

15. What is your general impression of Ohlone College?

My general impression of Ohlone College is excellent. In hind sight we can back bite anyone's performance without effort. The truer reality of it all is that we've had quite a number of very committed individuals over a long period of time who have sacrificed their time, energy and probably other personal commitments to make this college work at a very high level. I do not believe I can make any radical changes in the progress of Ohlone College; nevertheless, I believe with some of my specific past experiences I can fine tune some elements of the program and contribute to mediating disputes and helping work through all issues to a reasonable consensus of opinion.