

**Trisha Tahmasbi**  
**Ohlone Supplemental Questions**  
4-12-07

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

I believe that higher education is at the root of personal empowerment and achievement. It is becoming increasingly difficult to enjoy all avenues of success, and to fully participate in our community if we lack an advanced education. With that in mind, access to higher education is a value we cannot forgo. I truly believe in the value of access. Our community colleges provide an equal opportunity for everyone to pursue their aspirations and develop their unique talents. Whether they seek to move on to a 4 year university, or learn a specialized trade or skill, students see community college as a viable option to begin on their path of excellence.

I am seeking appointment to the Ohlone Board to foster this value, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to succeed. The Board has worked hard to establish Ohlone as an inclusive organization that provides excellent educational opportunities for its students. I hope to further these goals by proposing complementary strategies, working collaboratively with Board members and communicating with students to understand their struggles and challenges.

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

Both my academic and professional careers have afforded me skills that I feel will greatly enhance the success of the Board. If appointed, I will bring extensive experience in fostering community involvement, both locally and region-wide. This experience has provided me with the skills necessary to cultivate relationships with diverse organizations and members of the community, and will prove to be an invaluable asset to the board.

I believe the perspective of frontline persons is invaluable when making sound decisions about allocating resources, setting goals, and enhancing student life. Working with the California Faculty Association for several years, I gained extensive experience working across the board - with students, faculty, and staff - to identify and address campus needs.

Most importantly, I am a team-oriented person that values the opinions of others. I believe in common sense approaches, and have the skills necessary to promote open communication and provoke creative thinking in the problem-solving process.

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

I believe that the role of the trustee is to be an effective advocate for the campus community, setting broad policies and goals that have the best interest of the campus in mind. Trustees develop broad policies and objectives that increase opportunities for student success, add cultural and educational value to the community, and provide direction for the implementation of those policies. A trustee should possess a keen awareness of the issues that all campus stakeholders are facing (that includes students, faculty, staff, administration, and members of the surrounding community) and should be accessible, approachable, and visible to these diverse segments of the community at all times. Finally, I believe a trustee should have the ability to work in a collaborative nature, with respect for his or her fellow board members and their diverse opinions. As a trustee, I would emphasize a collaborative approach by keeping an open mind and proposing complimentary strategies for campus success. I would also consider it my duty to promote a positive image of the College and would work to increase community investment in Ohlone, and vice versa.

#### 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?

This term, as a trustee, I hope to seamlessly integrate with the board on advancing Ohlone College's mission and values. I intend to work closely with the board to promote Ohlone as a viable educational opportunity for all students. As a public representative of the College, I look forward to sparking community interest and investment in both campuses. I hope to gain a greater understanding of the needs of all campus stakeholders and would like to work to gather greater campus feedback on current issues facing the district. I would also like to begin discussing programs that will help Ohlone leverage private industry resources and form mutually beneficial partnerships in the community.

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

If appointed, my top 3 priorities will be:

1. Preserving and protecting core classes and curriculum which ensure transfer to 4 year universities. This will enhance student success and increase transfer rates by allowing students to complete the courses they need in a timely manner.
2. Protecting critical student outreach programs and support systems that recruit and retain disadvantaged students. These programs are crucial to maintaining a diverse student population, a core value which sits at the foundation of Ohlone's success as an inclusive educational institution. I'd also like to explore the development of programs which seek to recruit women, Latinos, and African Americans into technical fields such as engineering, where they are severely underrepresented.

I believe we can achieve both of these objectives, even in the face of budget cuts, by integrating my third priority:

3. Creating creative industry partnerships to increase revenues and strengthen workforce readiness. These partnerships, as I have mentioned before, will align classroom learning with workplace standards, allowing Ohlone to become a leader in the area of workforce development. Collaborative endeavors will also strengthen our ability to tackle statewide occupational deficiencies, such as the nursing shortage.

#### 6. Whom would you feel you are representing if you are appointed to the board of trustees?

As a Board Trustee, I would represent the entire campus community, including students, faculty, staff, and the administration, with the main goal of increasing student success, and adding value to our community. I also believe the board is a representative of the district, and should have the ability to assess community needs and develop practical policies to help address those needs.

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

I believe one of the College's main roles is to **add value to the community**. This is accomplished by:

- ✓ **Providing learning opportunities for all who seek them.** To this end, Ohlone prepares students to be successful participants in the community, and provides an environment for them to achieve their educational goals and to develop

their individual talents. To ensure student success, I would prioritize the protection of core classes and curriculum, and would advocate for the protection of our vocational programs.

√ **Promoting diversity and cultural awareness on and off the campus.** To further this role, I believe it is imperative that we protect critical student outreach programs that recruit and retain disadvantaged students. This will be one of my priorities, if appointed to the board.

### **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 its mission and purpose?**

One of the main missions of the community college system in California is to provide equal and open access to higher education in this State, providing learning opportunities for all who seek them. This is a value which I touched upon in my first response, and it is, perhaps, one of the most important values contained within that mission. Their mission also includes the advancement of California's economic growth "through education, training, and services that contribute to continuous workforce improvement". Ohlone's mission somewhat parallel, aiming to "serve the community by offering instruction for basic skills, career entry, university transfer, economic development, and personal enrichment for all who can benefit from our instruction in an environment where student learning success is highly valued, supported, and continually assessed".

I believe Ohlone College and the board have worked diligently to achieve these goals. As I've mentioned previously, I believe engaging regional stakeholders will present the College with increased opportunities to achieve these goals, especially in relation to workforce improvement and curriculum development.

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

It is important to mention here that no one trustee has authority; rather, the board works as a cohesive unit to develop and propose broad policies and goals to help the College achieve its mission. The administrators and staff are responsible for the management and implementation of those policies, with guidance and direction coming from the board of trustees. The board has a direct responsibility to craft policies and objectives based on the best interest of the students, and should always be open to feedback, input, and suggestions from students, faculty, and staff.

**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?**

Shared governance is an important value which should be central to the College's decision-making process. It increases student, faculty, and staff involvement in this process, to ensure that the board's policies reflect the ideals of the greater campus community. Most importantly, it ensures that the needs of the greater campus community are recognized, so they may then be appropriately addressed.

Shared governance is the basis of what this country is built on, and it is very important in the college environment.

Again, the board's responsibility is to develop broad policies and objectives. Management and implementation are left to the administration and staff. The board should possess an understanding of the issue being dealt with by the staff, and should address questions or concerns prior to their final proposal for ratification. The board should set clear guidelines and direction, and should offer guidance when needed.

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

As I've previously mentioned, the board should act as an effective advocate for the campus community, setting broad policies and goals that have the best interest of the campus in mind. Proposed goals and objectives by the board should run parallel with the College's mission, and should be a reflection of the campus community's values and principles. Working with the President, the board should provide leadership and vision, to guarantee the College's success. I believe it is the board's responsibility to protect Ohlone's long-term interests, and to consistently promote a positive image of the College. To achieve this mission, I would work closely with all members of the board to foster a continued collaborative approach to our policy-making process. I would also consider it my duty to understand and learn more about the changing needs of the campus community, to present a knowledgeable and up-to-date perspective on the issues before the board. My principal responsibility to the board as a trustee would be to consistently operate with the best interest of the college in mind at all times.

**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 her self?**

I believe that it is every trustee's duty and obligation to weigh all sides of the issue at hand. This means taking into consideration all perspectives that have been offered on the issue. Each trustee has the obligation to vote his or her conscience, with the best interest of the campus community and its future in mind.

With that said - The final decision of the board should be respected, and upheld, to minimize disruption, and to allow the board to move forward as a cohesive unit (in an expeditious manner) once the final decision or policy is made.

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

I've had the opportunity to work with the faculty and students at Ohlone's campus on numerous occasions. I served as the lead staff on a joint effort between Assemblymember Torrico's office and Ohlone College at the 2005 "Cash for College" workshop. Working with Ohlone's Financial Aid department, I was able to assist with outreach efforts to help raise awareness of financial resources for high school students applying to college. Additionally, as the Legislative Internship Program director, I have actively recruited students from Ohlone's campus. Most recently, I was able to facilitate a meeting with high-tech and biotech industry leaders along with representatives from Ohlone College, to discuss the opportunity of forming mutually beneficial partnerships with Ohlone's Newark campus.

I've also attended several other special and cultural arts events that the campus has hosted. If appointed, I will continue to support events sponsored at the College, and will remain visible and accessible to the greater campus community.

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

One of the biggest challenges that the community college system will face is the need for greater resources as operational costs rise and enrollment grows.

I believe there is great potential for increasing private support for Ohlone College. I've talked before about creative partnerships and support from private industry. These partnerships will provide mutually beneficial returns, and will prove to be critical when developing advanced curriculum that maintains its value and relevance in rapidly changing technical fields.

Preparing our students for careers of the future should be a top priority at Ohlone. Unfortunately, this objective will come with a price tag. To ensure the ongoing success of our students and support programs, even in the face of budget cuts and economic downturns, we must develop innovative ways to increase revenues. Engaging regional stakeholders will be essential to capitalizing on the resources that Silicon Valley has to offer. Private industry holds a big stake in issues such as workforce development, and industry leaders are willing to work collaboratively with institutions like Ohlone to tackle those challenges. I look forward to developing such collaborative efforts, and nurturing the relationships that Ohlone and its Foundation have already established.

**15. What is your general impression of Ohlone College?**

The Board has worked hard to establish Ohlone as an inclusive organization that provides excellent educational opportunities for its students. Through advanced curriculum, broad recruiting programs, and a strong presence, Ohlone has increased the cultural and educational values of the community. Enrollment numbers are up, and I believe Ohlone will continue to grow. The new planned campus offers exciting opportunities to become a nationally recognized educational institution – setting models of excellence in conservation and innovation, to be replicated by other institutions in the coming years. The staff and faculty at Ohlone have proven to be extremely helpful, and the diverse student body has the qualities indicative of future leadership and success. I look forward to being a part of such an exciting dynamic, and will be committed to carrying out Ohlone's mission.

