

Santa Monica Democratic Club

2022 College Board Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in the Santa Monica Democratic Club endorsement. Candidates seeking the endorsement of our Club must complete and return the following questionnaire. Note that only registered Democrats are eligible for our consideration.

Please send the completed questionnaire to smdemocrats@gmail.com by 11:59pm on August 26, 2022. Interview appointment times with our Executive Committee will be scheduled on a first come first served basis as the questionnaires are returned.

Submitting this questionnaire constitutes acknowledgment that its contents are now part of the public record and may be reproduced and distributed by the Santa Monica Democratic Club.

General Information

Candidate Name: *Tom Peters*

Email Address: *tom.milton.peters@gmail.com*

Phone Number: *310-980-3505*

Candidate's Current Occupation: *Retired*

Candidate's Employer: *Santa Monica College 2005-2020*

Campaign Contact Person (if other than candidate): *Michelle Moore Sanders 310-817-6753*

What qualifications do you bring to this office? ***Trustees must work together and reach a consensus to ensure the continued operations of the college. I've worked with the incumbent trustees for over 10 years in my position as political director for the Faculty Association. I've attended more the 90% of the trustee meeting in those 10+ years. The work I did with students as a tenured professor, I have campus-wide committee experience, and I've advocated for the college at the state level and volunteered in the community in many capacities. I'm a combat Vietnam era veteran and hold a Doctorate of Business Administration.***

Why are you running? ***Santa Monica College has given me the best working years of my life. The students, faculty, staff, and supportive community lend a drive, energy, and spirit that I've felt on the inside both emotionally and physically. I've served in many capacities with great joy and pride. Since retiring, I've longed to reach the highest peak of service to the college, the Board of Trustees. I would be honored to serve during this challenging period of the college's proud history.***

What are the top issues of your campaign? ***Passage of the college bond, seek creative ways to increase enrollment, strive to balance course offerings between on-campus, online and hybrid classes, bring an honorable contract settlement for our bargaining units, support our counseling department with an emphasis on student mental health, strengthen partnerships in the community to reach common goals, improve the full-time to part-time faculty ratio, and keep our students and staff safe.***

How do you plan to address those issues once elected? ***Reach out and be accessible to the community on the partnerships and college bond. Support the college president and all stakeholders. Stay abreast of inventive enrollment opportunities across the state and country. Work closely with other trustees, our college president and senior staff to settle union contracts in a fair and timely manner. Support distribution of resources to make sure our student services have time it takes to be attentive to the mental wellbeing and safety of returning students and staff.***

Please list all of your individual and/or organizational endorsements.

I'm at the very beginning of the work to be done in seeking endorsements. I've started the

process with the LA Democratic Party, Trade unions, Stonewall Democratic Club, The SM Black Agenda, and SMRR. I plan to reach out to Congressman Ted Lieu, State Senator Ben Allen, State Assembly member Richard Bloom, State Assembly candidate Rick Chavez Zbur (endorsed me recently), and other leaders in our community.

How long have you lived in Santa Monica? **13 years**

Where else have you lived, and why did you live there? **Encino for 3 years while working part-time at SMC. I lived in the Detroit area for 48 years where I worked at a steel mill and a union activist with the United Steelworkers of America, Local 1299.**

Will you pledge to serve on College Board for your entire four-year term? **Yes**

Party / Activism

How long have you been a registered Democrat? **53 years**

Have you ever been registered as a member of another political party, or as Decline To State?

No

If so, which party and why?

What is your experience with political activism? **At the United Steelworkers of America, Local 1299 I ran an unsuccessful bid for the Local 1299 president in 1986. I participated in door-to-door organizing in northern Michigan for 6 months in 1990.**

As the SMC Faculty Association's (FA) political director I marched in picket lines with the FA, California School Employees Association (CSEA), California Nurses Association (CNA), United HERE, Local 11 and local car wash establishments in an effort to build on the victory by the United Steelworkers of America to organize Bonus Car Wash on Lincoln Blvd. (23 other car washes are union in southern CA. I've long been a supporter of Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE) and Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE).

Have you ever volunteered or worked for a political campaign other than your own, and if so, in what capacity were you involved? **I worked on campaigns in my capacity as the FA's political director and chair of their Political Action Committee (PAC).**

Which political candidates have you endorsed or supported publicly in the past? Please list as many as possible. **Former President Barak Obama, U.S. Congressman Ted Lieu, CA State Senator Ben Allen, Dr. Margaret Quinones-Perez, Dr. Nancy Greenstein, Dennis Frisch, Kevin McKeown, Sue Himmelrich, Anastasia Foster, Caroline Torosis, Steve Duron and Nicole Phillis.**

Have you ever signed for or publicly supported efforts to recall a public official from office? **No**

If so, please list the name(s) of the officials and why you felt they should be recalled.

Please list any organizations with which you are a member, including any leadership position you have held in each organization. **VP of Membership Santa Monica Democratic Club, Served on hotline for SMRR, Political Director - SMC Faculty Association, and City of Santa Monica Disabilities Commission.**

Please confirm that you have read the latest version of the California Democratic Party Platform, as found here: **I have read the CDP Platform and agree on all points**

<https://cadem.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CDP-Platform-2022-FINAL-1-1.pdf>

List any items in the CDP Platform with which you disagree. (This is in no way a litmus test for our endorsement; however, because the party delegates have worked so hard on everword of this platform document, we believe it will be a helpful guide to comprehend the policy differences between each candidate.)

Campaign Finance

Please indicate Yes or No to the following statements:

1. I pledge not to take contributions from oil, gas, and coal industry executives, lobbyists, and PACs. **Yes**
2. I pledge not to take contributions from police or law enforcement unions, lobbyists, and PACs. **Yes**
3. I pledge not to take contributions from development firms, lobbyists, and PACs.

If you answered No to any of the above contribution questions, please explain here:

Yes

SMC

What kind of approach should SMC be taking in regard to COVID safety at this point in the pandemic?

SMC followed the LA County CDC mandates which I believe has been appropriate and this has kept our students, staff, and faculty as safe as possible during the pandemic and even now continues to do so. This has been a controversial issue throughout the country, but I think our college has handled it with caution and care.

What are your top priorities for SMC which you plan to address in this four-year term?

Being part of the vision for student housing aimed towards our students with housing insecurity. If the bond passes; student housing, upgrades of the Veterans Center (I'm a vet myself), mental health/basic needs/redesigning classrooms in the English department to embed tutors (I'd like to see this in Math someday), these and other improvements need to have ALL voices heard. I want to be part of a board that settles fair contracts with our staff and faculty unions. Continually advocate for more full-time faculty hiring and protecting the stability of part-time faculty, as well as workload issues, training, and wage increases for our staff. Advocate for more outreach and communication with local students so they know their benefits. Lastly, I want to be a voice on the board who understands the needs in student services, since I worked in that department.

What can SMC do to reduce the achievement gap and increase completion rates?

I worked in Student services as a full-time tenured professor at the High-Tech Center, part of the Center for Students with Disabilities. The work I did put me in touch with all departments and satellite campuses specifically in the implementation of accessibility when it comes to all students. I won't go into a lot of detail but in the field of accessibility there's a process called Universal Design. Simply put, design classroom and online instructional materials, physical classrooms and virtual space to help ALL students not just students with disabilities. This will help all students become more successful in class and I also believe that even though we have the best ratio of counselors to students in a community college system, it's always

important for the services to be directed to help all students, and especially students identified within the achievement gap and falling behind in completing classes. I will consistently promote inclusion, diversity, and social justice.

What are the most important technological investments that SMC must make in order to keep up with hybrid instruction, if any?

These technologies have been addressed prior to and included more support with the upcoming College Bond. They include but not limited to microphones strategically placed to capture teacher-to-students interaction, cameras to turn and follow the teacher, and special lab/studios to enhance and improve teacher lectures.

What should SMC do to address its unhoused student population? Do you support SMC building affordable housing for unhoused students or students at risk of becoming unhoused? In what ways can SMC better collaborate directly with SMMUSD?

Yes, most definitely, must add however, I'm always leery of implementation of projects and programs and I want to be 'in the room' to influence how this plays out. From what I understand it's going to be something like 275 beds in the dorms type setting.

I don't think that set-in stone yet but how the program is going to work as far as security, how's it going to be staffed, what will the food situation look like...many questions. The main thing is it needs to be done right. I've had students while I was teaching living in tents or their vehicle. They go through hell and by helping these vulnerable students receive housing from the college and have any of them come back to me someday and say it was just a different type of hell...this.. I would be consider a personal failure and break my heart.

What are some other opportunities for SMC community partnerships that could be expanded upon?

My goal is established productive relationships with the board and greater community to keep my mind open to partnership opportunities that have a mutual benefit quality. One example would be student housing.

Social Justice

In what ways can SMC ensure that, in a real, practical sense, Black Lives Matter in our college community?

Expand the programs already in place like 'Black Collegians', the SMC Vets Center and do community outreach to 'The Black Agenda of Santa Monica' and other county-wide organization like 'The Los Angeles County African American Employees Association', 'Black Women for Wellness', and 'The California Black Census and Redistricting Hub' to act as a feeder to these programs and supply enough resources for these programs to thrive and reach a sustainable presence.

In what ways can SMC best protect the undocumented residents of Santa Monica?

Encouraged our undocumented Santa Monica residents to look into all the services available on the SMC website: <https://www.smc.edu/student-support/dream/>

The Dream Program web page has a link to 'Immigration Legal Services', 'Workshops and Events', 'California Dream Act', and 'Ally Resources'.

How would you use your position on the College Board to assist BIPOC and other

disadvantaged residents of Santa Monica?

I'm 100% in support of the BIPOC, the 'Black Lives Matter' movement nation-wide as well as our own Black Agenda in Santa Monica and any future partnerships that would advance the power of these organizations. I plan to make my support known on the board if elected and in public.

How do you plan to (in the moment) counteract any and all observed possible acts of microaggressions towards Women, African Americans, Hispanics, LGBTQ and others of marginalized communities from your fellow Board members or members of the public?

JoAn, my wife, a proud black woman has raised my awareness of microaggressions and our teenage daughter, Ellie and her friends talk of these acts of microaggression all the time. All three of us belong to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Santa Monica, a church that flies the 'Black Lives Matter' banner and gives workshops and listening groups on this subject. If folks aren't called out on all microaggressions they'll just keep using offensive acts, language, and body posture, which is unacceptable.

What is your experience in dealing with these situations?

My wife and I walk around Sunset Park where we live and downtown Santa Monica enough to feel, hear, and see microaggressions aimed us. Which seems odd given the relatively large number of bi-racial partnerships in our city. There is open aggressive behavior that can be very difficult to deal. When microaggressive behavior pops up in private conversation it provides an opportunity to start a conversation that educates the offender.

Ballot Measures

Do you support California Proposition 1? **YES**

Do you support the citizens initiative ballot measure which would tax real estate transactions over \$8M and provide revenue for affordable housing, rent subsidy, and SMMUSD? Why/why not? **Yes, critically needed in our city. Too many of our faculty and staff have a long commute to SMC.**

Do you support the competing council-approved ballot measure which would tax real estate transactions over \$8M and provide revenue into the general fund? Why/why not? **No because it goes to the general fund. No sure way to know where the funds go.**

Do you support the rent control ballot measure which would permanently lower the rent control General Adjustment cap from 6% down to 3%? **YES**

Do you support the SMC bond measure? **YES**

Do you support the 1% transient occupancy tax ballot measure?
YES

Do you support the cannabis business tax ballot measure? **Yes**

Additional Questions

What role do you believe the Santa Monica Democratic Club should have in our City?

I've always been proud to be a member and attended many meetings for a long time. The Dem Club has always shined around election time (the length and thoroughness of this questionnaire is proof). It's nice to see younger members taking leadership roles which in turn will strengthen the club's presence in our fine city.

If elected, how would you attempt to interact with the Santa Monica Democratic Club and other political organizations to ensure community buy-in on new proposals?

Yes, definitely. I hope to be invited to Dem Club meetings and events. I'll be accessible to all members of the Dem Club.