

GREEN PARTY OF ALAMEDA COUNTY, FALL 2014  
PERALTA BOARD CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: David C. Ralston

Phone: 510-452-1211

Email: [dralston@peralta.edu](mailto:dralston@peralta.edu)

Website: RalstonforPeralta.com; Ralstonforperaltabd.org

1. Why did you decide to run for this office? What skills/strengths would you bring to the Board?

I decided to run because there is a need for new effective leadership at the PCCD given that the schools are under performing, suffering from a lack of morale within faculty levels, divisions, and are severely under enrolled given the great need and under-served adults in Oakland. I have the experience and skills, given my role as a 7-year adjunct in environmental management and technology department, as a sometimes adult student, and as a 15-year city of Oakland planner who has actively worked to develop and implement partnership and linked learning projects with the district. My work on community and education projects has enabled me to directly work with community groups, neighborhood residents and stakeholders in Area 5 including the Dimond, Laurel, Redwood Heights areas where I have worked with local schools, libraries and groups such as the Friends of Sausal Creek. I bring in strong capacities in consensus and collaborative partnership building and feel that I can successfully reengage the larger community and other co-educational institutions into this "collaboration of community college education." I bring a particular training in thoughtful/strategic planning and visioning for both the macro level and local issues that affect the role of community education as part of our civic infrastructure: I hold a doctorate in cultural and urban geography (2005, UCLA) where I focused on sustainable water systems in connection to urban development and dual masters in architecture and city planning (UC-Berkeley 1994) in which I did my research on Oakland school partnerships and community development.

2. Describe your relevant employment experience, particularly in community colleges. If employed in community colleges, what length of service?

I have taught seven years at Merritt College in the Environmental Management and Technology Department teaching classes in urban ecology, civilization and the psychology of trashing the earth, healthy cities and sustainable urban and regional development. I also do regular adjunct/lecturing in environmental and community planning at SJSU and UC-Berkeley. I am also a long-standing fellow of the Merritt Institute for Sustainable Policy Studies which has worked extensively with the watershed education group on creek greenway projects in the East Bay in conjunction with several East Oakland neighborhoods and other agencies. This year, I initiated and led the organizing of the annual sustainability conference at PCCD – the Bay Area Resilient and Sustainable Cities Conference. Concurrently to teaching, I also have worked 15-years at the

City of Oakland as a city planner, urban economic analyst and project manager on various complete street projects, bike/ped facilities, open-space zoning/LEED ND, in-fill development and neighborhood planning.

3. What are three major issues in Peralta that need to be addressed? How would you address those issues?

Three major issues that I am focused on are very much linked together:

- Under performance and under enrollment/inability to attract and keep students;
- Lack of morale, coordination and accountability and general institutional trust;
- Lack of effective vision and leadership to truly develop and market programs of distinctions and value for the college despite a strong market demand in many emerging areas (such as in my fields of green infrastructure design, building and conservation, sustainable food systems, and low-impact green building systems)

I would address these three linked major issues with the following:

Improve support and services – support for students and faculty is critical to the issues of performance and student persistence. This will be a key budgeting priority issue. The budgeting discussions also need to be better vetted through engagement in a rigorous and collaborative participatory/shared governance process.

Improve Access to schools – I will directly advocate for the opening of an education learning center in deep east Oakland, eg Eastmont Town Center or the new Coliseum City development. I will also actively seek funding for a shuttle between Laney and Merritt.

Establish focused linked-learning connections to high school feeder schools - improve and better fund these programs in conjunction with our partners (OUSD, City) to get into classrooms and connect to learning by doing and experiential education as part of community service and immersion projects. In addition, increase opportunities and access for adult education as adults over 25 are part of the fastest growing segment in the service area.

Finally, create a hub for green environmental programs at Merritt/Oakland City College (which is specifically very under-enrolled) and link to the burgeoning sustainability/resiliency movement. This hub would be both in terms of learning opportunities but also a model for green infrastructure projects as an applied projects incubator. This hub should also be a major component in defining a 4-year degree program in the district that involves inter-departmental collaboration and offers a BA that is unique and relevant within the East Bay.

4. What would you do as Trustee to ensure that Peralta is accountable to the community in use of public funds, including bond money, and the parcel tax passed in June 2012?

The community must be able to hold the institution accountable to its mission and this becomes hard when constituents do not generally know or pay attention to what the CC is doing or provides. Shared governance must extend to our community partners as well. As part of shared governance, stakeholders need to be clearly and consistently linked into decision making and oversight process. While accountability rests with board, the shared entities such as faculty, students as well as a community engagement council need to be part of the process - so in this respect, they can hold the board and staff accountable before and while decisions are being implemented and track deliberations with regular reports. Communication and transparency are key to this build-up of accountability. With accreditation coming up for 2015, this

accountability of all stakeholders will be a key test of the system so the PCCD does not go down the road of the SFCC or the District's prior brushes with losing accreditation. I would also endeavor to put out a regular online newsletter to constituents on performance targets and hold regular input meeting with the proposed community advisory council.

5. What are you prepared to do to advocate for increased state funding?

The State funding increases I will be focusing on the new influx of "green infrastructure funds" and funds to support green job sector connected to, for example: arboriculture, watershed management (water bond), cap an trade, conservation and management and resiliency. These are sources I am already deeply engaged and working on and will help the college pursue these in partnership with our City, County and regional institutions. I have already established a working relationship with the national group SEED on making a model environment and education program at PCCD and would leverage these national funding sources to secure more avenues of State funding and support. Voters need to understand the key role of the community colleges and this in turn will help our lobbying efforts at the state level. I will also work to bring some components of adult education back to the community colleges and increase enrollment and associated funds accordingly.

6. What creative ideas do you have to develop alternative funding sources?

Alternate funding sources include setting up professional certificate programs; establishing a 4-year degree track (described above) and encourage students (many international students) who come in for basic core skills to also engage in these tracks such as a green business and trade program. Increase the role of innovative applied and incubative research with LBNL and others to develop projects that can yield benefits and application revenues possibly (for example demonstration urban agriculture that is a working part of the proposed Oakland Food Hub). Some of these revenues would go directly to supporting programs and lessen the need from the District's general funds. I would also advocate a new bond at some point to build out community education center as state of the art green building project as well as to retrofit Merritt and as a state of the art green platinum building campus.

7. How would you define the role of trustee in relation to the chancellor and administration?

The role of the trustee is oversight, set policy direction, and ultimately serve as the legal level of accountability and authority for the direction of the colleges. This role needs to be balanced and hold the administration accountable without micro managing the administration. Our job will be to seek and push to make sure shared governance occurs and is effective and to communicate with constituents and stakeholders. The Chancellors has a designated role to put into effect the policies and oversee day to day function of the school, presidents and other staff.

8. Describe your understanding of shared governance. What is the role of faculty, classified staff, and students in shared governance?

Shared governance is the idea and policy that there is a balance between accountability and broad inclusive participation in the decision making process with those the board has delegated

power including the faculty senate, the students and even community constituents. The role of these bodies are to deliberate and share responsibility in understanding and proposing ideas, new hires, policies and making recommendations but it is also to be clearly articulated that, as the board has legal accountability, the decisions will be the responsibility of the board with all due consideration of the shared governance bodies. I would seek that a 2/3 vote of the board would be necessary to override key policy decisions supported by shared governance bodies.

9. What is your opinion about selling/leasing college land for commercial development?

Generally I am not in favor of selling of district (public) property for private developments. I would be open to leasing of lands that make sense as a compatible use for a particular site. Really though, this type of action should be judged on a case by case basis per our strategic plans (which itself needs to be updated) and a determination made if a property is truly surplus and if development – e.g., such as a transit village housing or student housing can be built part of a private development but also make sense to support our overall function as long as public access and other green development standards and community benefit agreements are in place. Surplus land decision need to be made in the context of the District's overall strategic and education plans and in partnership with the City and community partners.

10. What is your view on parity for part-time faculty?

Approximately 60% of faculty are part timers and they make up bulk of teaching, do most of the same tasks and expectations but do not have same rights in collective bargaining and many "full time" part-timers are challenged to maintain a satisfactory living in this region. My view is that there should be similar pay for similar work recognizing that full-time faculty do have more expected roles and responsibilities viz. departmental governance and accreditation and so forth. Right now I believe the pay scale is supposed to reflect up to a 75% ratio of part-time to full-time which covers teaching, prep, advising, evaluation. Many part-timers do not get this level and there is a perennial struggle to get the State to allocate more funding to address the continue and widening gap in pay. The District saves substantial amount of money on use of part time also faculty but the gap should be addressed especially for those part-timers who do not have full time jobs. I also recognize that part-timers do not get all the collective bargaining benefits in terms of medical and this gap also would need to be address

11. What is your experience with collective bargaining? What is your approach to conflict resolution?

As a local union member through the City of Oakland I have been involved and engaged in several union contracts bargaining processes. My approach to conflict resolution is through careful communication, articulating and understanding values and goals, and clearly putting out make or break issues and other issues that can be worked out – it is really a matter of good facilitation, process of listening and being able to discuss delicate issues in a safe and non confrontational way (especially when heated) and finding places to build up trust and mutual understanding. There is usually a solution and mediation that can be found with creative work and willingness but it takes hard work. Trust is a key aspect and developing relationships that

have a basis before conflicts arise to a heated level, having intermediaries who can represent effectively.

12. If you are an incumbent, what are the three most important accomplishments that you achieved during your time on the Peralta Board? If you are a challenger, what are the three most important accomplishments that you have achieved in the last four years that improved the quality of life in your community?

- I developed and implemented a pilot "green workforce development" (GWD) program, involving Merritt and OUSD and City of Oakland which engaged approximately 80-east Oakland youth most of whom were not college bound and connected them with environmental education certificate track and provided on the job training in green job and sustainable community building projects in East Oakland (2009-11). This program, though initiated from the City-side, clearly demonstrated the benefits of active investments in city-school partnership work.

-I initiated and organized the San Leandro Creek Greenway project. This multi-agency effort emerged out of the Merritt program I taught in and as a College research and planning proposal, the project was able to evolve and gain traction by our engagement with community stakeholders and established a specific vision of how greenways can be an important structure for sustainable environmentally-friendly and resilient cities. Cities such as Oakland were hesitant and even resistant to entertain such projects out of competing priorities and maintenance concerns but through our lead and showing how conservation, stewardship and community buy-in can be part of these projects, the inter-agency collaborative team that formed were recently able to secure grants from the National Park service and Caltrans to start master planning and small grants to start implementation such as outdoor environmental classroom along the creek and trail building. (on-going)

-I led and wrote grants for the Laurel Access to Mills, Maxwell Park and Seminary active transportation grant project for a new Class I bike/ped path, lighting/landscaping and traffic reconfigurations to create a crucial link between Mills College and the Laurel District. This project emerged out of an large community visioning process that I was asked to present by the Oakland City Council. As staff, I was the lead in writing for an initial Caltrans planning grant and then following an intensive community design and planning process, I wrote and recently received a \$3.6M grant from Caltrans for implementation of the project.

13. Who has endorsed you so far? What labor support do you have?

Doug Siden, EBRPD

Michael Gregory, Vice Mayor of San Leandro

Tony Daysog, Councilmember, City of Alameda

Margaret Gordon, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, Former Port of Oakland Board Commissioner

Professor Robin Freeman, Chair of the Environmental Management and Technology Department

Sheila Jordan, Alameda County Board of Education

Balfour Area Residents

I have labor support from PFT and IFPTE-Local 21.

14. How much money do you currently have for this race? How much money do you plan to

raise? Where will the money come from?

I have currently have or pledged \$6,500 in addition my own campaign loan of \$10,000 and have an intensive fund-raising plan to get to \$30,000-\$50,000. I have scheduled key fundraising events in Piedmont, Laurel District, Oakland South Hills and the East Lake districts. In addition to campaigning and utilizing a wide social media network, I am conducting direct fund-raising with my network in the green tech fields who are interested in green job pipelines and innovative education environment in Oakland in addition to a strong network of parents/educators who I work with and where my kids go to school in the district.

15. Anything Else? -- Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

I am very active in sustainable development work and understanding the connection between education institutions and community health and livable cities and leading efforts to designate priority conservation areas as part of our the ECAP in Oakland.

I hold various roles in community-based organizations and boards including:

- Treasurer of Kellogg-funded HOPE collaborative and co-chair of the Built Environment Action Team

- Serve as Urban Ag co-chair of the Oakland Food Policy Council

- Appointed by Supervisor Keith Carson to the Alameda County Waste and Recycling Board, environmental educator

- Past elected co-chair to the Northern California Section of the American Planning Association

- Board member of Urban ReLeaf – urban forestry group

Member of the Friends of San Leandro Creek

- Basketball Coach, St. Theresa Middle School