



CULVER CITY DEMOCRATS UNITED
CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
CULVER CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL BOARD

Deadline to return questionnaire: Friday, July 19, 2024, @ 5:00pm.

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Culver City Democrats United (“CCDU”) endorsement. Candidates seeking the endorsement of CCDU must complete and return the following questionnaire. Please do not make changes to the questions even though the questionnaire is provided to you in WORD format for your convenience in editing. Please send the completed questionnaire to endorsements@culvercitydems.com

Signing and submitting this questionnaire acknowledges that its contents are part of the public record and may be reproduced and distributed by CCDU.

About Culver City Democrats United

CCDU was founded in 2023 in Los Angeles County in an effort to ensure that Democrats of every shade of blue living in and near Culver City have a chartered¹ Democratic Club that they can belong to, and which expresses in its name a geographic relationship to Culver City and its environs.

CCDU believes that Democrats in Culver City have a responsibility to Los Angeles County to make informed decisions about candidates for elected offices throughout the county which have a bearing on our collective life together.

It is our mission to ensure that candidates endorsed by CCDU embody the inclusive values of the Democratic Party and the values of the majority of Democratic voters in our region. CCDU rejects the politics of faction and exclusion that would seek control of the Democratic “brand” for a limited clique or constrained ideological orthodoxy.

We are committed to the Democratic Party.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Candidate Information

- a. Name: Kristen Cruise
- b. Email: cruise4ccusd@gmail.com
- c. Occupation: Corporate Social Responsibility
- d. Employer: Ethos Giving

2. What office are you seeking? - CCUSD School Board

3. Are you registered as a Democrat? For how long have you been a registered Democrat? (You must be a registered Democrat to receive a CCDU endorsement.) Yes, around 20 years

4. Have you ever been registered in another Party? If so, which one and why did you change? Yes, the Green Party during college. I changed when I learned more about the political parties and the impact of my vote.

5. Briefly describe your educational background: I have a Bachelors in Science from Tufts University, and a Masters in Urban Planning and MBA from UCLA. I went to Catholic School as a child.

6. Briefly describe your work/professional background: I work in the operations and strategy side of social impact departments and organizations with the majority of my work focused on kids and communities. I have worked for The Walt Disney Company globally, The Wonderful Company, and the Department of Public Health. I have served on two non-profit boards in Los Angeles (for 6 years each) focused on children's physical and emotional health.

7. Campaign Information

- a. Campaign Committee ID Number: FPPC#1467126
- b. Campaign Address: 226 E. Canon Perdido St #D, Santa Barbara, CA 93101
- c. Campaign Phone: 424-276-0916
- d. Campaign Email Address: Cruise4CCUSD@gmail.com
- e. Campaign Consultant/Manager:
 - i. Name: Danielle Cendejas
 - ii. Contact Information: dcendejas@strategygroup.com
- f. Fundraiser
 - i. Name: n/a
 - ii. Contact Information:

8. Campaign Finance

- a. How much money do you intend to raise? \$10,000
 - b. How much money have you raised so far? \$5525
 - c. How much cash on hand do you have? \$4159.84
9. Are there any specific industries or PACs you will not accept donations from?
Real estate developers, industries for customers over age 18, or any group that excludes a population
10. Who are your five largest contributors?

- a. Denise Renteria
- b. Mary Cappelli
- c. Lindsay Carlson
- d. Ji Young Denick
- e. Dan Milder

11. Who are your top three individual endorsers?

- a. All of my endorsements are community members, and are not ranked
- b.
- c.

12. What are your top three organizational endorsers to date?

- a. n/a
- b.
- c.

13. Have you received any campaign contributions from organizations outside Culver City? If so, please list them: No

14. Have you ever sought the endorsement of, or will you accept the endorsement of, political parties other than the Democratic party, including non-registered political parties such as the Reform Party, the Democratic Socialists of America, or the California Working Families Party? No

15. Have you ever been accused of, faced discipline for, or entered into a settlement related to misconduct or sexual harassment? No

16. Have you ever been accused of, faced discipline for, or entered into a settlement related to financial impropriety? No

17. Have you ever been convicted of a felony? If so, please explain. No

18. Do you belong to any organization that openly discriminates on the basis of race, age, disability, religion, nation of origin, against LGBTQ+ persons, or against women? No

II. QUALIFICATIONS AND VIEWS

1. Have you previously run for or held any elective or appointed public offices? If so, please list which office and dates: No
2. List any awards, commendations, or recognitions in your background that you believe should be brought to our attention regarding your candidacy for CCUSD School Board. n/a
3. Why did you decide to run for CCUSD School Board?
The current School Board has been dividing the community more than uniting it. I felt it was important that the School Board consisted of members that prioritized community engagement and values. Additionally, I feel that the School Board should focus more on the operations of the District.
4. If elected, what are the three most important things you would like to accomplish?
 - a. Prioritize operational efficiency across the district
 - b. Execute Measure E successfully
 - c. Rebuild trust and community relations
5. Do you believe CCUSD should offer accelerated, advanced, or “honors” classes for students ready for the material? Why or why not?
Yes, I believe CCUSD should strive to help each student reach their full potential - whether that is in a sport, theater, music, clubs or academics. One of CCUSD’s strengths is its diversity of students, and I believe that CCUSD supports this in many of its actions and should expand this effort. I believe an advanced class is similar to a varsity sport in that it provides the space and instruction to help interested students reach their full potential.

6. What does “equity” mean to you in the context of Culver City public schools, and what concrete steps will you take to achieve it?

Equity is looking at the diverse populations at CCUSD and ensuring that each group is provided the resources, respect and support to reach their full potential. I believe an understanding of how each student group is flourishing or where they need additional support is fundamental to equity. I would encourage enacting both short-term and long-term plans to address needs. I would ask for plans that have multiple options for both short- and long-term recommendations so that board, community and district staff can make a decision that has the highest likelihood of being actionable and sustainable. Additionally, I would ask for performance metrics to be tied to the plans and a schedule for evaluating.

7. CCUSD has failed for at least two years to meet the required 55% minimum spending in the classroom and is also confronting budget shortages. What concrete steps do you believe can be taken to rectify the financial situation and ensure the required minimum classroom spending?

For an immediate resolution, the Board should work with the Superintendent and CBO to understand all expenses, and what can be reassigned to the classrooms. Going forward, CCUSD should evaluate job descriptions and salaries whenever there is an opening to make sure that the role still meets the needs of the District or whether there is an opportunity to reorganize.

8. Describe in detail your level of involvement at CCUSD and its schools, including attendance and participation at school board meetings since the last election in 2022.

My child started in CCUSD in August 2023. I began listening to board meetings virtually or the recorded sessions in December 2023.

I volunteer weekly at lunch at Linwood Howe, and was the room parent. This spring, I began working to bring back Spanish after-school at Linwood Howe.

9. Do you support contracting with non-union organizations to provide services where unionized employees could provide similar services? Explain your answer, being specific to any instances you are aware of at CCUSD.

I believe CCUSD should prioritize hiring unionized employees whenever possible. I also believe that there are always exceptions, and having the flexibility when needed to provide the necessary resources and best learning opportunities is important. As a School Board member, my official responsibility is to support

our students and their needs. My goal will be to find solutions that align with the unions.

10. How can CCUSD successfully compete to retain students who might otherwise leave the district for private schools or charter schools? In your answer, list some concrete steps you believe our schools should take.

From my conversations, I have heard that the most common reasons families are leaving are for academic rigor and safer schools - emotionally and physically.

Some steps I would take to address this are:

- Work to bring back advanced academic classes while simultaneously working with counselors and teachers to identify and nurture more students in elementary schools, 6th and 9th grades to pursue advanced academics.
- There has been a noticeable effort in safety across the campuses thanks to the District and invested parents. I would continue to support this work by encouraging standard protocol at each campus and training of all staff. An example on a smaller scale, I have heard from far too many parents that their child is uncomfortable using the restrooms at CCHS. Figuring out what is needed to ensure clean and safe bathrooms would be my immediate first step.

11. How long have you lived in Culver City? How do you believe your time living in Culver City has prepared you for a leadership role in the city?

I have lived in Culver City for almost 7 years, and have loved it. I find it to be a small community in a giant city. I swam at the Plunge throughout my pregnancies, the fire department saved my husband from flooding our house with a broken pipe, my dog loved the Boneyard as a puppy. I have been to every playground more times than I can count with my young kids - as well any baby - toddler activities in town. I know my neighbors and bike to many of our destinations. Overall, I would say I *actively* use Culver City, and understand what makes it special. I feel my esteem for our community and my gratitude are at the heart of why I am running for School Board. I care about our kids and believe that I have a responsibility as a community member to be part of the Culver City village protecting and raising them. As an active user of our city, I care about how it is perceived and how our leadership reflects the community. To me, being a leader starts with the right core values and priorities. Living here has ingrained a dedication to the well-being of CC residents that guides my decisions.

12. Explain the challenges that CCUSD faces with gender equity. Explain what concrete steps you will take to ensure gender equity in CCUSD.

In all of my conversations, gender equity has yet to come up in the context of CCUSD. I will seek out more information to better understand how to move toward a better balance, whether this refers to students or staff, Title IX or more intentional design and encouragement for genders to pursue opportunities.

13. What will your process be in deciding how to spend the first tranche of school bond, Measure E, money? What are your first 3 priorities in spending, ranked in order?

The community was promised that the funding would be spent across all campuses so I believe it is important to honor this without necessarily making it equal spending.

- a. I would prioritize spending funds to evaluate the high-needs buildings to determine if it is fiscally more responsible to rebuild versus make repairs.
- b. I would address the flooding and mold as our campuses were not designed to handle the amount of rainfall we now get.
- c. Lastly, as much as reasonable after addressing the immediate needs of the other campuses, I would prioritize CCHS. This is based on my current understanding of CCHS's needs without seeing the recommendations from each site committee.

14. Suppose a School Board Member is making numerous social media posts that are in contravention of the values of Culver City Democrats United. What would be your response as a fellow School Board Member?

My initial response would always be to speak directly with my fellow Board Member, reminding them of the role and expectations of an elected official. If the posts impact students and their families, I would additionally publicly address the issue and express disagreement. I am still learning what is appropriate as a board member in terms of speaking on behalf of the Board but my goal would always be to stop the inappropriate or offensive behavior and rebuild the damaged relationships.

15.According to both CCFT and ACE, morale is low among teachers and staff. What concrete steps will you take to restore the morale of teachers, staff, and administrators in the district?

I understand that morale is low because of a lack of trust and communication. I also learned that morale is low due to uncertainty of how to navigate the system, meaning how to address issues when they arise or get things done.

To address trust and communication, I feel the Board and Administration can be more forthcoming about how and why decisions are made. They can also build times to speak with teachers and staff into the decision-making process. This might look like “office hours”, invitations to meetings or surveys. When teachers speak up, as I have seen at Board Meetings, there should be a more timely response, even if it is simply updates about the process of addressing the concern.

In general, I would make *how* the schools are operating my priority for the next several years. This includes providing teachers and staff with consistent procedures and access to information. This is not a task the Board can complete but it can be elevated by asking the right questions and setting the expectation for Administration that this is a focus.

III. FINAL SECTION

Is there anything else you would like Culver City Democrats United to know about you, or anything else you wish to tell us?

I am running for School Board at this moment in time because I believe that there needs to be a shift in focus to the operations of our District. There are areas to save money, improve workflow, alleviate frustrations and build the foundation for continued success. We are in the business of educating students and helping them reach their potential. In order for that to happen now and in ten years from now, we need to make sure CCUSD is performing to the best of its abilities. As we saw with Measure E, and the inattention to maintenance and work orders over the past years, it is costly in terms of dollars and trust to overlook how the District operates. I bring an operational background that will complement the backgrounds of the existing School Board members. I might not be what CCUSD needs in the future but I believe I can help with the needs that CCUSD has today.

I CERTIFY THAT THESE ANSWERS ACCURATELY REPRESENT MY VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES.

Candidate
Signature: KRISTEN CRUISE

Date: 7/19/24

Received By: _____

Date Received: _____

Please submit by email to: endorsements@culvercitydems.com