



**AAUW Naperville Area
Candidate Questionnaire**

**Consolidated Election
April 4, 2023**

**College of DuPage Board of Trustees Candidates
(alphabetical order)
Vote for not more than 2**

1. [Haroon Atcha](#)
2. [Christine M. Fenne](#)
3. [Andrew R. Manno](#)

Methodology

We emailed all candidates and invited them to answer questions relevant to AAUW public policy priorities and the position the candidates are seeking. We sent follow-up reminders and collated all the responses. Candidates' responses have not been edited. Candidates who did not respond are indicated as "No response received."

Haroon Atcha

Website: <https://www.haroonatcha.com/>

Social Media:

<https://facebook.com/people/Haroon-Atcha-for-College-of-DuPage-Trustee/100088150299088/>

1. Do you believe the current paid leave policy for employees at COD is appropriate? What, if any, changes would you implement in the number of weeks of paid leave and the purposes for which it could be used?

Classified, full-time employees hired after 07/01/2012 receive 10, 15 and 20 days of paid leave at their hire date, 5 years and 10 years, respectively. I believe this would include most non-faculty full-time employees. **In my experience, 2 weeks of paid leave at hire is insufficient.**

First, it contributes to high turnover. Having worked at a community college as a researcher, I can say with confidence that people who work in the public sector often make significant sacrifices to do so in large part because they believe in the mission at hand. Wages are usually below market-averages, paid leave is scant – as it is at the College of DuPage – and workloads tend to be high. The college has been struggling with high turnover lately. I would place a portion of the responsibility for that turnover on insufficient paid leave.

Second, without a reasonable amount of paid leave, workers burn out and mental health suffers. This is especially true for people who also have child-rearing and other fundamentally important but often uncompensated labor expectations. A low amount of paid leave disproportionately affects women who regularly do this type of work.

I support returning to the prior, more reasonable paid leave schedule which started at 13 days and reached 25 days for service lengths up to 17 years. This would help retain CoD's excellent classified staff and would help alleviate the mental health difficulties that consistent work without reasonable breaks can cause.

2. What actions would you recommend to encourage the inclusion of female students and underrepresented groups in STEM programs?

The College is home to a number of excellent female STEM faculty members and dedicated staff who are currently working on addressing this very issue. The Women in Stem Program is a small 1-1 mentorship project that connects 1-2 female high school

juniors with female College of DuPage STEM faculty members. These faculty and their paired up students maintain these relationships over a year or two.

I wholeheartedly support this program and will do everything I can as a trustee to ensure it continues and expands to a manageable size. I do believe there is a limit to how many young women can partake in the program given how it's structured but I believe we should do our best to expand the core ideas: early intervention and meaningful relationships. The earlier we can reach young women and under-represented groups and connect them with mentors engaged in STEM and other important programs, the greater impact we can have.

In addition to mentorship programs like the one discussed above, I also believe it's important to address the material difficulties women and other under-represented groups need to overcome to participate in STEM programs. For instance, providing accessible childcare, robust mental health services and transportation are all key in closing these gaps. The college can either provide these services itself – as it does with its counseling department – or it can partner with local governments and non-profits to proactively connect struggling students with the help they need.

It's tough to focus on school when you're hungry, struggling with depression, worried about childcare or can't make it to campus. Solving these problems, in addition to providing good mentorship is how we can help young women and students from other under-represented groups succeed.

Christine M. Fenne

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofChristineFenne>

1. Do you believe the current paid leave policy for employees at COD is appropriate? What, if any, changes would you implement in the number of weeks of paid leave and the purposes for which it could be used?

I believe the current paid leave policy for employees at COD follows all employment guidelines as well as state and federal laws. One statement in the second paragraph may require revision; "The number of Leave Days, the method of accrual of Leave Days, and the measure and extent of compensation for Leave Days shall be approved by the Board."

I believe the approval of Leave Days is determined by the Administration. In addition to this Leave Policy No 4.12, the College of DuPage has other Leave and Sabbatical

opportunities for faculty and those are not covered in this board policy. Upon reviewing this policy, one might question where maternity leave is covered. My understanding is that Family and Medical Leave Act includes maternity leave. Most policy recommendations originate with the administration in order to update the policy with current laws or modernization. I welcome the opportunity to discuss how this or any other board policy may be improved for College of DuPage employees.

2. What actions would you recommend to encourage the inclusion of female students and underrepresented groups in STEM programs?

https://www.cod.edu/academics/academic_opportunities/stem/events/women-in-stem/

I recommend expanding the Women in STEM mentorship program to include more students and those from under served areas of the county. Currently the program accommodates 10 students per academic year. In order to expand the program, I suggest including STEM program alumni who have completed their degree and are working in the field. In addition, providing outreach to middle schools STEM students and teachers is another opportunity to encourage STEM education. But most of all, collaborating with the COD STEM female faculty to determine what opportunities there are to promote and encourage STEM learning for young women today.

Andrew R. Manno

Website: www.Manno4COD.com

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/manno4cod>

1. Do you believe the current paid leave policy for employees at COD is appropriate? What, if any, changes would you implement in the number of weeks of paid leave and the purposes for which it could be used?

The current paid leave policy for employees at COD should be improved. COD does not currently offer any paid family medical leave. COD should offer paid family leave days to supplement FMLA. When COD supports its employees, COD is better for it. Additionally, the changes I would look to implement would be to separate sick leave from other types of leave, such as personal days or bereavement days. The current policy allows for 5 personal days per fiscal year, but they must be subtracted from an employee's sick leave. The current policy also allows for up to 3 bereavement days, but these also are subtracted from an employee's sick leave. In essence, the current paid leave policy forces employees into positions where they may need to choose whether they can afford to use a bereavement day/personal day and hope they don't truly need to use their sick leave when it matters most. Another concern is the current policy does not account for

the mental health of its employees. Employees should not be penalized for taking a day to restore their mental health so that they can provide the best results for the students they serve.

2. What actions would you recommend to encourage the inclusion of female students and underrepresented groups in STEM programs?

Encouragement for the inclusion of female students and underrepresented groups in STEM programs should begin far before they reach COD's doorstep. In order to promote this inclusion, there is a two-step process that must take place. First step is understanding who is delivering the message of encouragement and second is making the effort to encourage on an individual and personal level. The first and most basic fundamental step in encouraging any student in their pursuits is to provide them with the belief that achievement in their pursuit is possible. Belief is bred by example. In other words, encouragement from those who do not look like those who you are trying to encourage is not adequate encouragement. Encouragement from those who have not faced the hardships of those who you are trying to encourage is not adequate encouragement. Encouragement of young women and underrepresented students can best be accomplished by those who have been in their shoes. It has to be as if those young women and underrepresented students are looking into a mirror to begin believing that it is possible and to see for themselves that they are welcome in the environment in which they desire and belong. Lastly, women and underrepresented groups have been constantly overlooked and minimized. Encouragement cannot be done just by words, it must be done by constant action. I would recommend spending resources to continually pursue underrepresented groups and female students to establish a connection to them on a personal level. The message cannot be a boilerplate message or a "one-size-fits-all" type approach. COD needs to extend that hand to tell them not only, "you belong" but more importantly, "we want you here." We need to finish the job and maintain that relationship with them start-to-finish to ensure they cross that finish line.