

Dane County Democratic Party Candidate Questionnaire

Juliana Bennett
District 8 Alder
julianabennettfordistrict8.com

Professional Experience:

Collaborated with the Associated Students of Madison to pass a vote of no confidence in the UW Police Department, holding University administration, including Chancellor Blank, accountable in providing a space to create a unified voice of BIPOC students on campus.

Legislation I have been involved with in ASM: CAHOOTS, creation of task force for grading inclusivity, paying international telecommuting students, pass-fail grading, and vote of no confidence in UWPD

Student advocacy: Covid-19 Student Relief Fund, Moral Restart, and Wisconsin Black Student Union demands (among others)
Secured (for the first time) two meetings/semester with Chancellor Blank

Engaged in forthright mobilization to fight for equitable distribution of our city's time, energy, and resources during meetings, such as the Civilian Oversight Board and the city budget hearings.

Analyzed and developed company strategy for PricewaterhouseCoopers, synthesizing over 50,000 data fields and maximizing efficiency to process data in 3 minutes

Operated a food line at Strada in the Wisconsin Memorial Union, joining with team members to ensure efficient, accurate, and friendly service.

Supported University students in acquiring jobs at the Office of Student Financial Aid, by authorizing 1000+ online listings, receiving the 'Spotlight' Award. I elevated the launch of the University's online job platform, through collaborating with the team and communicating with patrons, which significantly aided in the platform reaching 21,000 users in 1st mo. Selected representative for office, relayed opportunities to 50+ students to encourage academic success.

Managed our family's restaurant Mama Lou's Shrimp and BBQ, supervising our 10 person staff and executing managerial duties to ensure smooth operations. I augmented sales by founding and managing media platforms to gain 800 customers and 4.6/5.0 stars. Additionally, I managed our restaurant's accounting records, through accounting for \$30,000 monthly sales and reconciled daily receipts to understand internal accounting.

Chosen out of a pool of 250 applicants to be 1 of the 30 scholars for the inaugural cohort of the Business Emerging Leaders program, which is a scholarship program that aims to enroll young diverse leaders into the Wisconsin School of Business. I was later directly admitted to the business school as 1 of 60 direct admits of color in a class of 600 direct admits.

Political/Service Experience:

Co-founded the UW-Madison BIPOC Coalition to coalesce the voices of BIPOC students and Multicultural organizations to create a unified voice to streamline actionable initiatives for the

betterment of BIPOC people at UW-Madison and ensure our voice is heard, recognized and respected.

Advocated for the intersectionality of environmental and racial justice, through speaking as a panelist for the University's Office of Sustainability's event "Amplifying BIPOC Voices in Sustainability"

Co-organized numerous protest events, including Gordon's Graveyard, Cops off Campus, and the March on Madison event. For the March on Madison event, I collaborated with fellow University students to mobilize 250+ people in 1 day to march for racial equity gaining 3000 signatures for action initiatives.

Spearheaded Diversity and Inclusion committee in my professional business fraternity Alpha Kappa Psi, which has since recruited and initiated candidates of diverse backgrounds. Additionally I've facilitated numerous diversity and inclusion events to explore topics of identity, privilege, and oppression to build a curriculum that helps members learn/unlearn behaviors to become more inclusive at the Wisconsin School of Business and later in their career.

Coordinated community service events with Alpha Kappa Psi, such as campus clean up and fundraiser's for Freedom Inc to maintain engagement and give back to the community.

Why Are You Running In This Election?

I am running for District 8 Alder to push for real, progressive change in Madison, through prioritizing the needs of historically underserved communities. My involvement with activism and work as co-founder of the UW-Madison BIPOC Coalition has shown me that the movement on the street must be reconciled in the elected office. After participating in nearly every ASM

(Associated Students of Madison, UW student council) meeting and countless City committee and council meetings, it became clear to me that many people in positions of power are not acting upon the needs of Madisonians. The nail in the coffin which kindled my decision to run came after sitting through the 6-hour long budget hearing where 141 people registered in opposition to the Cops Grant. Even after my friends and I shared our trauma, we still did not have the full support of the City Council. Although that experience was extremely frustrating, I was fueled by the desire to do better for the people. We need to change!

I have and will continue to be an outspoken advocate for the needs of students, especially: affordable housing, Covid-19 relief and recovery, reimagining public safety, and sustainability. I aim to engage students in all of these platforms through constant outreach to those living in District 8. Finally, I hope to not only represent, but also amplify and include all voices, especially those historically left out of the conversation.

What Are The Three Most Important Issues In Your Race?

The three most important issues in my race are affordable housing, reimagining public safety, and sustainability.

What Are The Largest Environmental Concerns You Aim To Deal With In Office?

Madison prides itself on its beautiful environment and lakes that aren't that fun to swim in. It is our duty to tackle environmental concerns at the local level to ensure we sustain the place we call home. Some specific environmental issues in District 8 and the City of Madison include: protecting our region of the Yahara watershed, reducing emissions with free buses, stopping F-35s from entering Madison, and increasing recycling and community composting.

To protect our region of the Yahara watershed, I will work with developers to stop runoff from entering Lake Mendota, reduce salt usage in the winter, install rain gardens, and utilize surfaces like wood for walkways to absorb rainwater. I will also ensure proper leaf removal to prevent phosphorus from leaking into our lakes.

I will push for free buses in Madison and work with the City and ASM to provide an 80 bus for Southeast campus. I will also work to balance the current Bus Rapid Transit proposals with other equity and sustainability initiatives to best serve our community needs for transportation and lowered emissions.

I know that many District 8 residents are frustrated with the lack of recycling in their apartment buildings. I will work with the city to ensure properties are recycling, especially during move out. Additionally, I will push for a Community Compost Bin system, with compost bins available in every neighborhood, home, and apartment building.

I will collaborate with the Sustainable Madison committee and University Environmental majors and researchers to bring new innovative ideas to the table. Additionally, I will use my position as a platform to push for UW to meet the UW Divestment Coalition's demands for the University to divest from the fossil fuels industry. All in all, in the spirit of making Madison a place everyone can call home, we must work together to protect, honor, and maintain Madison's sustainability.

How Will You Use Your Position To Create More Equitable Opportunities And Help Those Living In Poverty?

Everyone deserves equal opportunity to thrive in Madison. My priority is to amplify, uplift, and include people that have been

historically underserved in Madison, including young people, BIPOC people, the LGBTQ+ community. (1) The first step to this equation is meeting and exceeding the policy points that I have outlined in my platform. Every policy that I have and will bring to the table will look at issues through an intersectionality and equity lens. I encourage feedback from the community to ensure our platform includes all voices. (2) I will work to create more opportunities for economic mobility, such as issuing more 18+ licenses and advocating to rebuild State Street and Downtown Madison to have more diversity in entertainment. Additionally, I seek to collaborate with grassroots organizations, such as Freedom Inc and Urban Triage to ensure those that are closest to the community are involved in the conversation. (3) I will also work to uplift our youth with broadband internet access, investing in our libraries, and collaborating with School Board members to end the school-to-prison pipeline.

Overall, I understand that creating equal opportunity must be a community effort. I intend to use the position as District 8 Alder as a platform to fight for those that are in need of assistance. When elected, I will work with the community to fight for equity and inclusion in Madison.

How Do We Address Racial Inequality?

Racial disparities in Madison and Dane County have always been apparent to me from the moment I first entered UW-Madison. Within hours of moving into my residential hall, Sellery, I experienced multiple acts of racism. First, the University tokenized me, by shuffling myself and my fellow peers of color to the front of our class picture for them to pretend they have diversity. Later in the evening, my White floormates were reluctant to include my friend, because they were “weird” for no other apparent reason other than they were Indian. Madison prides itself on being a

“liberal haven”, when in fact it is the most liberal city in the most racist state. The Black Lives Matter movement has shown us that racism is indoctrinated in our city, county, and culture. I am committed to breaking free and significantly reducing the harm of criminal justice, poverty, and racial disparities, through meeting community needs to reimagine public safety and affordable housing, while tackling issues through an intersectional equity lens and seeking to engage young people, especially those of diverse backgrounds into local government.

To tackle racial inequality, we must 1) identify and accept the problem; 2) engage experts in the matter: community members and grassroots organizations: Freedom Inc, Urban Triage, and the UW-Madison BIPOC Coalition; 3) work collaboratively to solve the problem with legislation and in our Madison culture.

In addition, we must find it incumbent upon ourselves to offer aid to BIPOC-owned businesses, homeowners, renters, and the like.

How will you promote restorative justice and address abusive and racist practices by the police force?

Community control of police means reimagining public safety to tackle the root cause issues of community needs for public safety. It also means translating community cries to defund the police into direct budget amendments to reallocate the bloated police budget to other areas within the community. We must translate the movement on the street to defund the police within Madison City Council to reimagine public safety. Public safety is mental health resources. Public safety is employment. Public safety is racial equality. I promise to work to uproot the broken systems we call policing and instill new systems that tackle the root causes of

public safety, while centering historically underserved voices.

To achieve the demands to defund the police, I will focus on the unique public safety needs in District 8. For example, 9 out of 10 calls to UWPD are related to mental health!! Therefore, I will work to expand the city's piloted CAHOOTS program and get the University to opt-in to said program. Furthermore, I will help students get home safe at night, by working with City Traffic Engineering to adjust and add more lighting to the Spring Street residential area and advocate for the University to light the Lakeshore Path. Along with District 8 specific needs, I hope to collaborate with alders on City Council to work on the broader root cause concerns in Madison.

The Police Civilian Oversight Board (PCOB) is an exciting new venture in Madison and it is our duty to ensure its success. Common Council, and the mayor, must take a back seat to allow PCOB to work independently. Hiring the Independent Monitor is a vital next step to ensuring PCOB's success and that process should be up to PCOB and the general community, not elected officials. Now that PCOB is on its feet elected officials can listen in to meetings to hear community concerns, monitor PCOB's progress, and serve as guides if absolutely warranted to ensure the success of PCOB while maintaining the integrity of independent civilian oversight.

Due to the ongoing economic impact of Coronavirus, many local governments are expecting unprecedented budget shortfalls. What would you prioritize in the budget? Where would you make cuts?

We must stop misusing our tax and tuition dollars to fund a broken system that is fixed against people of color. I will work to defund the police and reallocate and refund the community to

address the root cause problems of public safety. The year 2020 was probably one of the most tumultuous years of our lives. As demonstrated in my community at the beginning of the fall semester with the outbreak in Covid cases, the student population must be involved in Covid-19 planning. I will coordinate between University administration and the city to institute a Moral Restart, which makes provisions such as decreasing tuition, increasing safety within residential halls, and maintaining employment continuity. I will also work with the city and landlords to give students more time to sign their lease and advocate for a provisional clause, allowing tenants to withdraw from their lease in the case of extreme emergency, such as Covid-19. As a Finance major, I have an acute understanding of the completely uncharted territory that we are entering with the 2021 budget year. I will partner with the fellow Alders and County Board Supervisors to advocate for any new Federal relief. Plus, I will work to ensure grassroots community organizations are at the frontlines in conversations about rent relief. We can all agree that in terms of Covid, the year 2020 was not at all what we expected it to be. Now that we know what is at stake we must work to create the optimal outcome of this crisis. Young people, specifically college students, must be involved in every step of the Covid-19 recovery process. We must additionally prioritize affordable housing aid, a crisis response team, and other alternatives to violent policing and alternatives to incarceration to correct the systemic injustices that disproportionately impact our most marginalized community members.

How have you elevated diverse voices in government and public discourse? How would you continue to do so if elected to this office?

I will actively work to amplify and include youth, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disabled, and any person from a historically marginalized

background in the city, through increasing the number of students on city committees and make myself readily available to my constituency. I will host quarterly citizens' town-hall forums and host weekly "Alder Hours" to give residents the opportunity to share their opinions and express their voices. Our society benefits from open dialogue of diverse voices, including the unique perspective you have to offer. I promise to not only listen and represent my constituent's interests, but also bring their voices into the conversation.

What Are The Largest Transportation Issues You Wish To Work On And How Will You Address Them?

I believe free bus transportation is an excellent way to provide equity and climate justice. I plan to collaborate with the City and the Associated Students of Madison to provide a free route 80 bus for the South East Campus area. In fact, I will advocate for free buses in Madison as a whole. I am dedicated to work to balance the current Bus Rapid Transit proposals with other equity and sustainability initiatives to best serve our community needs for transportation and lowered emissions.

Any Other Issues/Topics You Wish To Discuss?