Distance Education Report 2014

Peralta Community College District
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Introduction

The Rise of Online Education: Trends and Issues

Online education has experienced tremendous growth over the last decade, spurred by a combination of technological innovations, economic drivers, and changing demographics. Today, more than one third of the nation's college students take courses online. According to the latest survey by the College Board and Babson Survey Research Group, *Changing Course: Ten Years of Tracking Online Education in the United States* (2013), over 6.7 million students at four-year institutions in the United States were taking at least one online course during the fall of 2011, and increase of more than half a million, or 9.3 percent, over 2010 (Babson, 2013).

While this trend has slowed somewhat over the last two years due to the recession, online enrollment figures have continued to remain strong in comparison to enrollment in traditional "face-to-face" classes, which has actually declined. For the past decade, online learning has been the predominant source of higher education enrollment increases (ITC, 2013. p. 9). Over 80 percent of U.S. colleges offer some online courses, with more than half offering a significant number of courses online (EDUCAUSE Center for Analysis and Research--ECAR, 2013).

Community colleges are also jumping on the e-learning bandwagon. Enrollment in online courses at two-year institutions is keeping pace with the national average. This is confirmed by the Information Technology Council, an affiliate of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), in its annual report, Trends in eLearning: Tracking the Impact of eLearning at Community Colleges (2013). According to the report, in ITC's 2012 survey of community colleges, most institutions reported a distance education enrollment growth of 8.2 percent in 2011 and 6.52 percent in 2012, which, while lower than in previous years, was still significant given decreased overall enrollment and budget cuts (ITC, 2013, p. 9). As the impacts of the economic downturn gradually subside, online course enrollment is expected to continue to rise.

For community colleges, with their public access mission, expanding online education is a natural next step, as it provides an affordable, flexible, and convenient alternative for two-year students who, typically, are lower-income and are often older and leading highly scheduled lives with multiple responsibilities. As pointed out by EDUCAUSE, a nonprofit that explores the impact of technology on education, "Two-year (AA) institutions have historically been leaders in using distance education courses to attract nontraditional students, and these institutions continue to pave the way in online course offerings to attract 'post-traditional' learners." (ECAR, 2013) The community colleges in the 2012 ITC

survey (ITC, p. 23) that only half (49%) of their online students are traditional (age 18-25), while nearly half (47%) are non-traditional (age 26+).

The rising demand for and growing interest in e-learning is prompting community colleges to look at new ways to deliver their courses online both effectively *and* cost-effectively. While many two-year colleges are already exploring this relatively new field, most are limited in their ability to fully implement their vision for high-quality distance education due to lack of infrastructure and funding. According to the ITC's 2013 report (ITC, p. 25), most of the institutions surveyed reported that student demand for online courses is quickly outpacing supply, leaving cost-strapped colleges scrambling to find ways to expand capacity in this area.

As the field of online education continues to mature, it is generating greater attention from both educators and government policymakers, who are interested not just in increasing access but, also, in improving quality and using e-learning as a tool for enhancing retention and successful college completion. Educational administrators see a pressing need to address course quality and design, faculty training and preparation, accreditation-based course assessment, and improvements in student readiness and retention. Other issues include: ADA compliance, student authentication, financial aid fraud rings, and state policies and regulations regarding distance education delivery (ITC, p. 25). The following chart, from the 2013 ITC report, outlines the "top ten" challenges facing community college administrators today as they look at implementing and expanding online education opportunities on their campus:

Greatest Challenges for Distance Education Programs Administrators

Range for response—1 is the most challenging, 8 is the least challenging

Challenge	Rank 2012	Rank 2011	Rank 2010
Adequate student services for distance education students	1	1	1
Adequate assessment of distance education classes	2	2	2
Support staff needed for training and technical assistance	3	7	1
Operating and equipment budgets	4	4	4
Adequate administrative authority	5	8	5

State authorization regulations	6	11	--
Student authentication	7	10	--
Compliance with new financial aid attendance requirements	8	3	--
Adequate space for training and technical assistance	9	9	6
Faculty acceptance	11	6	8
From Trends in eLearning: Tracking the Impact of eLearning at Community Colleges (ITC, 2013)			

As the chart shows, the issue of student support services for distance education students has ranked as the number one concern among ITC respondents for two years in a row. Over the last few years, virtual student services have declined at community colleges, due to reductions in staff and budgets (ITC, p. 21). Still, given the Obama administration's national agenda to improve college completion rates and pressure from college accrediting bodies, which increasingly expect online student services to be equivalent to face-to-face, on-campus offerings, this is clearly an area marked for growth and improvement over the next few years.

Finally, there is the issue of technological infrastructure and the problem of finding a cost-effective and technically-effective way to expand online course capacity with limited space, staffing, expertise, and funding. Many colleges have been through several Learning Management Systems in the last 10 years, which is both costly and frustrating, and some institutions are actually reporting "migration fatigue." (ITC, p. 11) According to the Technology Outlook for Community, Technical, and Junior Colleges 2013-2018, a number of Next Generation Learning Management System (LMS) technologies are expected to emerge on the market in the next or three years (NMC, p. 12). As new technological innovations loom, two-year colleges are seeking ways to work collaboratively on a district, regional, and/or state level to achieve new economies of scale and deliver high-quality online education for their students.

Our Challenges

The Peralta Community College District faces many of the same challenges regarding developing distance education programs as two-year colleges nationwide. On an individual and, increasingly, on a state level, California community college administrators, IT staff, and faculty have been grappling with issues such as budget, adequate resources, course quality

and design, technical support for faculty and students, measuring and improving student performance in online courses, student authentication and proctoring, and how to provide student services online.

The Peralta Community College District stands at an important crossroads. Distance education courses are now available at colleges throughout the CCC system and now comprise 10.54 percent of all the educational courses offered. All signs point toward continued growth. The District has to create a sustainable plan and a budget to support its Online Education Initiative (OEI).

Our Online program

Peralta is ideally positioned lead in the area of online education. As an urban community college district and one of the largest community college districts in California, Peralta reaches a large and diverse population through its four separate campuses. As of spring 2013, the four Peralta colleges had a combined headcount of 34,169 students. The district's student body reflects the diversity of the Bay Area: African American (25%); Asian (21%); White non-Hispanic (19%); Hispanic/Latino (14%); Multiple (10%); Unknown (7%); Filipino (2%); and Pacific Islander, Other Non-White, and American Indian/Alaskan (2%). Approximately 30 percent are traditional age students (age 18-24); the remainder are non-traditional age students (age 25+), with 15 percent in the 35-54 age group. Most (70%) are part-time students, juggling school, work, and family. At least half are low-income, judging from the number of students receiving Financial Aid and other support services for economically-disadvantaged individuals, such as CalWORKS and EOPS.

Peralta has been a local leader in the field of distance education, with an established track record of delivering high quality online courses and linked online student support services for more than five years. Today, all four Peralta campuses have a fully-developed distance education component, staffed by a part-time Distance Education Coordinator. In fall 2013, Peralta offered 193 online and hybrid classes, with 6,400 enrollments by 4,800 students, resulting in 740 FTES. The four colleges share a common Learning Management System, Moodle, which is hosted on an external server and fully integrated with Passport/PeopleSoft, Peralta's enterprise software system, for easy registration and tracking of student enrollment and performance. Technical support is provided for students interested in registering for online classes. Professional development training for faculty and staff is available both online, on the Distance Education Program's web page, through trainings, and through Merritt College's Online Education Certificate Program.

Peralta online courses are subject to the same set of approvals and requirements as traditional courses and must be approved by the Academic Senate and district curriculum committee. All must contain written Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), as required by the accreditation commission, and are assessed as part of the ongoing course review process.

Technical Expertise

Peralta's Distance Education Program is overseen by the Vice Chancellor of Educational Services and supported by 4 DE campus coordinators (.25 each) and a District DE coordinator (.5) a full-time Moodle/web programmer and a part-time help-desk/troubleshooting support. There is a District Distance Education Committee consisting of faculty members from each college serving as distance education coordinators for their campus, along with a faculty lead (District DE coordinator), supported by release time. This team provides basic technical support to faculty teaching online courses and pedagogical advice in the area of DE, along with the district's IT Help Desk assisting online students. Together, this team has the technical skills to help put together an infrastructure for a statewide online delivery system, along with the leadership capacity and experience to bring the model to scale.

In addition to technical and Help Desk support, Peralta provides a variety of Moodle training opportunities for instructors. This includes workshops on district-wide faculty development days, online videos and manuals, and a certificate program in using Moodle for online teaching, offered by Merritt College.

Research and Planning Expertise

Peralta has a state-of-the-art institutional research operation and a long-established working relationship with the state's Research and Planning Group (RP), Cal-PASS, and other statewide research groups. The Vice Chancellor of Educational Services, an experienced researcher and statistician, was the former Director of Institutional Research and Planning at Peralta and still oversees this function. The district's background and expertise in this area and its longstanding connections with state research and planning organizations, such as The RP-Group, make it ideally suited to manage this function for the online education project.

Online Student Services

Peralta is developing state-of-the-art online student services. After the successful implementation of a user-friendly, interactive, web-based online orientation program at Laney College, the district is now rolling out this product to all four Peralta colleges, with each campus developing its own customized version. Peralta is also working on offering online counseling activities, as well as other web-based student services, district-wide (note: some student services, such as e-counseling and tutoring, are already offered on a limited basis at Peralta).

Project Goals, Objectives, Activities, and Outcomes

Overview of Project Goals:

Peralta Online Education group has identified three overarching goals for the years 2013-2015:

a) Access: Establish a user-friendly, searchable, online course registry for students that will provide a description of the online course offerings including books used in the class, syllabus, etc.

b) Evaluation: Develop SSSP-type metrics for measuring success rates for online course participants and doing comparison studies with other modes of delivery.

c) Help Desk: Develop of an interactive website portal that provides an indexed, searchable course registry and an interactive synchronous and asynchronous help desk

To achieve these goals, Peralta will implement measurable objectives and related activities in these focus areas:

1. Shared Governance

2. Academic Affairs and Instruction

3. Professional Development and Course Design

4. Student Experience and Support Tools and Services

5. Technical Infrastructure

6. Project Planning and Evaluation

7. Program Structure.

The objectives, procedures/activities, and expected timeline and outcomes for the project are outlined and summarized briefly in the following sections.

Objectives

Governance

1. SHARED GOVERNANCE MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES
Objective: Ensure program success through the creation of and adherence to an effective governance structure consisting of two inter-related shared governance entities, developed in consultation with the Chancellor's Office of the Peralta Community College District (PCCD): 1) the Distance Education Advisory Committee, and 2) the Educational committee of the Peralta Community College District

Summary of Objectives:

The purpose of the objectives for the Governance section is provide a clear governance structure for the PCCD Online initiative and to ensure that the program is operated in accordance with all required state and federal regulations.

Academic Affairs and Instruction

2. ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND INSTRUCTION MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES
Objective 2A: Establish a PCCD Online Institute to assume responsibility for the technical and support component of the operation, and provide a centralized coordinating mechanism for expanding and operating the PCCD online program, in partnership with the campuses.
Objective 2B: Identify and address the needs of Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT), Basic Skills and other credit degree courses (i.e., courses for AA, AS, and workforce development pathways) students and faculty, as well as District's Office and instructional support staff, through an expanded and user-friendly Online Peralta Program website.
Objective 2C: Identify and address the needs of students, faculty, District and instructional support staff who wish to create a system whereby students who can acquire Credit by Exam, as needed.
Objective 2D: Identify multiple strategies and methods to increase student retention and success and incorporate into all online courses and programs offered through the PCCD.
Objective 2E: Ensure that all academic processes and standards will sufficiently adhere to

established distance education guidelines to enable statewide program implementation.

Summary of Objectives:

The objectives under Academic Affairs and Instruction are designed to address the State of California's concern, shared by educational administrators across the nation, about the quality and usefulness of online educational offerings. To ensure that the courses in the PCCD promote student success, transfer, and degree completion, the state is requiring that Districts first focus on offering courses associated with the new Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) degree that has recently been introduced at California's community colleges. Other objectives, and related activities, focus on additional areas for online course expansion and services, such as expanding course offerings outside of ADT tracks, offering basic skills courses online, and offering an online Credit by Exam option. Courses in all categories must adhere to state academic standards, as well as established distance education guidelines.

Professional Development and Course Design

3. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COURSE DESIGN MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES
Objective 3A: All faculty and staff involved with the PCCD Online Program will have access to high quality professional development and receive training and ongoing support.
Objective 3B: Ensure that all faculty teaching courses in the PCCD have either an online teaching certificate from the @ONE Project or online teaching credentials from a comparable program (i.e., any accredited college online teaching certificate program, Sloan Consortium, Quality Matters, etc.) or personal training from the Distance Education coordinators.
Objective 3C: Ensure that all online courses offered through the PCCD are high quality and are approved through the PCCD Advisory Committee (governance structure consisting of two inter-related shared governance entities p 5)

Summary of Objectives:

The objectives in this section focus on two important and interrelated areas: 1) professional development for online instructors, and 2) online course design. This reflects the prevalent concern and skepticism among educational administrators and faculty about

the quality of online courses and the degree of training and support offered for faculty interested in teaching online. The three objectives above are designed to mitigate these fears by ensuring that all faculty and staff involved in the project will have access to effective technical training and professional development in best practices in online pedagogy and ensuring quality control by requiring that all PCCD online instructors hold an online teaching certificate from an accredited institution (or equivalent background and experience) and that all PCCD online courses are approved through the PCCD Advisory Committee (after going through the usual approval processes at each college).

Student Experience and Support Tools and Services

4. STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND SUPPORT TOOLS AND SERVICES MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES
Objective 4A: The PCCD Online Education Initiative (OEI) will provide online student support tools and services, including but not limited to advisement, online course orientation, assessment, tutoring, and proctoring.
Objective 4B: The PCCD OEI will adhere to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and provide the accommodations necessary for disabled students to participate in courses hosted through the PCCD OEI, as measured by annually program review.
Objective 4C: Ensure that the student experience with the PCCD OEI is streamlined, consistent, and automated to the greatest extent possible.
Objective 4D: The PCCD OEI will explore new ways to support a geographically diverse student body through the expanded PCCD Online Course Exchange.

Summary of Objectives:

The objectives in this section focus on the number one concern of community college educators regarding online education: the provision of adequate student services for online education students. The objectives are designed to ensure that all students enrolled in online courses and degree programs through the PCCD have access to a full range of online student support services and tools to support their academic success.

The objectives also aim to ensure that the student usage is facilitated through a streamlined automated system with a consistent interface and that the course exchange responds to the needs of students. Finally, another important aim of the project is to ensure that the PCCD

OEI Initiative adheres to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards and is fully integrated with existing state systems for student enrollment data, placement, and financial aid and compliant with all policies and regulations in those areas.

Technical Infrastructure

TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES
Objective 5A: The PCCD OEI will continue developing, launch, and refine a single uniform common Course Management System (CMS), in the form of a Moodle-based Learning Management System (LMS), to effectively deliver and manage online courses.
Objective 5B: The PCCD OEI will establish a user-friendly, integrated, web-based presence for communication, support, and program activities.
Objective 5C: Ensure that our Moodle Learning Management System (LMS) has the capacity, in terms of hardware and bandwidth, to allow for course administration and development and student support at all participating PCCD, regardless of the bandwidth capacity of the individual colleges involved.
Objective 5D: Provide instructional and technical support to students, faculty, and staff, as needed.
Objective 5E: Create a centralized storage solution for the courses and instructional content in the PCCD LMS.

Summary of Objectives:

The objectives in this section respond to the PCCD's mandate to create a centralized platform for the delivery of online courses for our District and offer support to students and instructors.

Project Planning and Evaluation

6. PROJECT PLANNING AND EVALUATION MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES
Objective 6A: The PCCD OEI will develop a project implementation plan and a related project evaluation plan for PCCD OEI, with clearly stated and measurable metrics designed to document and assess the effectiveness of the project in meeting its goals and objectives.

Summary of Objectives:

These objectives are designed to ensure the implementation and creation of a project implementation plan and evaluation plan, to ensure effective deployment and documentation.

Program Structure

7. PROGRAM STRUCTURE MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES
Objective 7A: The PCCD OEI will operate through a clearly defined and effective programmatic structure, with a single district (Peralta Community College District) operating as the lead agency and fiscal agent for the initiative and working closely with the Campuses, and other partners to design and implement the PCCD OEI objectives.

Summary of Objectives:

The purpose of the objective in this section is to clarify for all parties the programmatic structure of the initiative and define the lead agency.
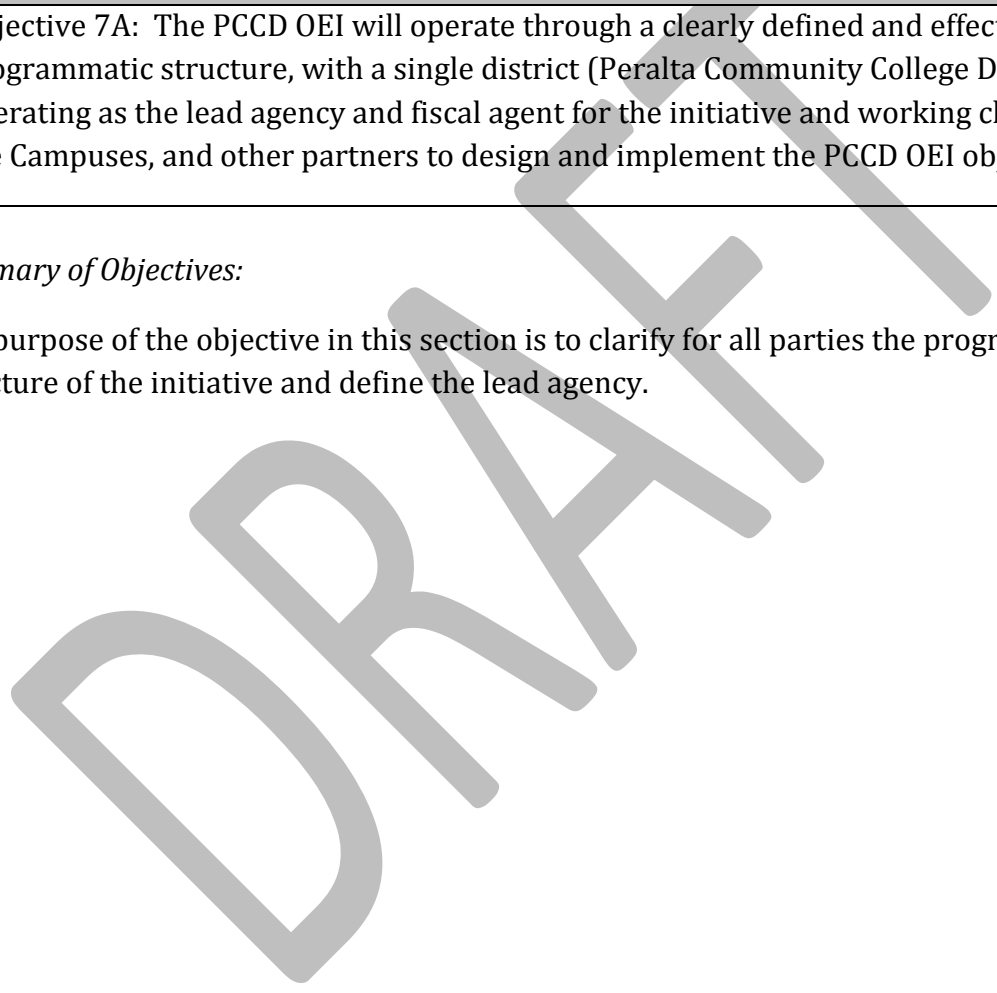
Procedures/Activities

Governance

Summary of Activities:

During 2013-2014, PCCD OEI will work with the all the Planning and Budgeting Integration committees to establish an agreed upon governance structure for the project. The PCCD OEI Advisory Committee will review the governance of the initiative yearly to assure compliance with state and federal regulations (Title V, ADA, accreditation requirements, etc.).

The PCCD-OEI group will be facilitated by a DE coordinator and will have faculty-led advisors in the area of curriculum, basic skills, and student services, who will work with related committees to research and make recommendations to the Advisory Committee about "best practices" and promising solutions in online course design, strategies for online basic skills integration, educational technology, and virtual student services. The committees will also work with the PCCD staff and researchers to identify and make recommendations about new online degree pathways that might be developed in order to respond to new and emerging careers and industry needs regionally and statewide.

Academic Affairs and Instruction

Summary of Activities:

During the first year of the project, Peralta will establish the **PCCD OEI Institute** to provide a centralized resource for the planning and deployment of the PCCD Online Education Initiative. The PCCD OEI Institute staff will work closely with the Chancellor's Office, and the PBI committees, and the project governing bodies to plan and develop high-quality, standards-based online course and degrees for the PCCD OEI.

A primary focus will be on offering PCCD OEI courses to help students enrolled in ADT tracks. The Institute will also focus on expanding online offerings to include a greater variety of AA and AS-applicable courses from a wider range of disciplines. It will also focus on developing effective Basic Skills courses online (note: this will be primarily in Year 2, unless participating colleges already have online Basic Skills courses offered through the existing PCCD OEI that meet the approval of the PCCD OEI Advisory Committee).

Finally, Peralta will lead the way in exploring how to provide more online pathways for students seeking career training and/or concurrent enrollment opportunities. CSU and UC students may also be interested in enrolling in certain degree-applicable courses online

through the PCCD OEI, for reasons of greater affordability or due to limited availability of required courses.

Feasibility of Strategies and Solutions:

Peralta's distance education program already requires that all online courses go through the same approval and review process as traditional face-to-face courses. The district also requires that all online courses meet established Distance Education standards. This approach and related policies can be scaled up to be used on a statewide basis as the district works with the project partners to establish policies and protocols for the PCCD OEI.

In addition, Peralta is widely recognized as a leader in workforce development and was recently selected as a host site for a National Science Foundation ATE Center for the training of green building technicians. All of Peralta's colleges have various career technical and training tracks and many of these courses are already online and can serve as models for the PCCD OEI.

Furthermore, Peralta has established partnerships with high schools throughout its six-city service area and regularly offers options for local high school students to gain college credit, including an Early College High School, career-oriented bridge programs, concurrent enrollment, and CAHESEE preparation classes. Peralta also has established articulation agreements and transfer tracks with the University of California Berkeley, the California State University-East Bay, Mills College and other four-year universities in the Bay Area, and brings to the project extensive experience in creating inter-segmental educational pathways.

Professional Development and Course Design

Summary of Activities:

Peralta will continue make use of the state's already existing @ONE Project and our Certificate Program in Online Teaching at Merritt for orientation and technical training for PCCD OEI instructors, staff, and administrators, as well as introductory, intermediate, and advanced professional development workshops in online pedagogy for PCCD OEI faculty. All professional development activities will be coordinated with our Academic Senate.

The PCCD OEI Help Desk will continue to provide technical support as needed and the @ONE Project will provide professional development training in online pedagogy and related topics.

The PCCD OEI Institute will work with the Peralta Academic Senate to develop policies regarding teaching and background requirements for PCCD OEI online course instructors and to identify a way for such requirements to be adopted statewide by all participating colleges. Interested instructors who do not yet hold a certification in online teaching will be encouraged to pursue their certificate through the @ONE Project, our Certificate Program in Online Teaching at Merritt or a related accredited program. Links to accredited programs will be available on the PCCD OEI web site. Forums and blogs for participating faculty may also be created.

The PCCD OEI Institute will also work with the Chancellor's Office and the PCCD OEI Advisory Committee to officially adopt iNACOL distance education standards for the PCCD OEI Courses and integrate these with the distance education standards recommended by the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges. As stated above, all professional development and course design activities will be coordinated with the Academic Senate to ensure alignment with existing system-wide standards and "buy-in" from faculty.

Feasibility of Strategies and Solutions:

Peralta already requires that its online faculty either have a certificate in online education or equivalent teaching experience and academic background. The district already provides regular training for instructors who want to teach online and offers an Online Teaching Certificate for individuals who want to gain more in-depth training in the field. Peralta's Distance Education Program contains a number of individuals who already do individual and group training in online teaching skills for faculty and staff. In addition to the @ONE Project and Merritt's Certificate Program in Online Teaching, Peralta is in a position to develop virtual orientations and provide advanced and specialized teaching workshops for PCCD OEI instructors, staff, and administrators. It also has experience developing online orientations.

Student Experience and Support Tools and Services

Summary of Activities:

During the first year, the PCCD OEI Advisory Committee will meet and discuss ways to provide various support services to PCCD OEI students to support student success. The provision of online student support services raises many issues that need to be resolved, such what services to provide, which services might be centralized and which services should remain campus-based, how to control the quality of services provided, how to share the costs of providing such services, how to train support staff, accreditation requirements, what is the most cost-effective way to offer Credit by Exam and test proctoring, etc. The

Committee will look at best practices in the field, as well as at what types of Peralta online student services are currently offered, and create an implementation plan.

In the meantime, PCCD OEI is making the following recommendations:

a) that a budget be created and funds be provided to develop District and campus-based virtual student services linked to its PCCD OEI courses offerings;

b) that all PCCD OEI students be required to take a mandatory orientation, to be developed by the PCCD OEI Institute and campuses,

c) that certain services, such as assessment, Credit by Exam procedures, test proctoring, and tutoring be handled by referring students to their home campus until the PCCD OEI can explore the various options available and decide on the most effective form of delivery of these services for colleges in the district.

Other important system delivery issues, such as the streamlining and automating of the student experience, ADA compliance, and integration with state systems will be automatically addressed in the design and installation of the Learning Management System (LMS). The PCCD OEI will work closely with the campuses and governing bodies to build these features into PCCD OEI website and the LMS, for the maximum benefit of all parties.

Feasibility of Strategies and Solutions:

The Learning Management System (LMS) for Peralta's Distance Education Program is integrated with Passport, the district's student enrollment and data system. Each of the four colleges and the district-wide Distance Education Program already offer students a variety of online support services, including online registration, orientation, academic advising, e-counseling, and, for some subjects, online tutoring.

The district and college websites also provide links to additional support services such as Financial Aid, CalWORKS, EOPS, DSPS, Veteran's Services, campus mental health resources, and library resources.

Technical Infrastructure

Summary of Activities:

The primary focus of the PCCD OEI, in terms of technical activity, is:

a) the development of an interactive website portal that provides an indexed, searchable course registry and a help desk to enable students to register for online courses offered by colleges throughout the PCCD; and,

b) the implementation of a comprehensive Learning Management System (LMS) based on Moodle, that can serve as a common platform for the PCCD and that has the capacity to support a large-scale, multi-campus project. These two activities, once accomplished, will transform the existing PCCD OEI into a state-of-the-art online course delivery system for students.

LMS Features

The LMS provides a standardized system and interface for users while, at the same time, accommodating the individual needs of colleges. The capacity of individual PCCD colleges is not an issue as the LMS will be scaled to handle the initial course development and delivery and registration needs of the system. In addition to bandwidth, Peralta has already identified certain other functionalities that are essential to the successful operation of the system, including unlimited outbound and inbound transfer and the ability to automatically connect dedicated and cloud servers on an internal network for an integrated, scalable system. The LMS has to feature a robust data transfer capacity, allowing the project to compile and track data about student enrollment patterns and performance in the online courses offered. The LMS has to be built under a Virtual Private Network—VPN (site to site and Firewall). LMS will use external servers with automatic external backup, including incremental backups. The LMS will also use a Moodle protocol to back up the course shells within the system; regular course shell back up will be an integral part of the common platform.

Help Desk

Students, faculty, staff, and administrators will have access to technical support from the PCCD OEI Help Desk, staffed by experienced IT professionals. The Help Desk will use an open source platform that will allow for customer interaction by phone, by e-mail, or by chat function. The desk will employ ticket system, which is now the industry standard for customer service helplines, whereby the customer is issued a number for their case, for future reference. The Help Desk will be hosted through a separate external vendor-hosted server.

Accessibility

The PCCD OEI project will also be accessible to disabled students, as required by federal law. The LMS and future LMS installations will be developed in accordance with Section 508, the federally-mandated accessibility code for educational institutions. The PCCD OEI is proposing to continue working with Design Consultant, Jennifer Burke (www.industrious.com), who is an expert in accessibility design. Peralta also has an

established District Office of Alternative Media, as well as Accessibility Directors at each college, who can work with the project to make sure the project's online offerings, are accessible. In addition, Peralta will work with statewide partners recommended by the CCCO, such as Distance Education Captioning and Transcription (DECT).

WordPress

The existing PCCD OEI (www.PCCD OEI.edu) is a WordPress site, which can be integrated with the functionality of certain Learning Management Systems, such as Moodle. WordPress is the platform that will be used to create the main web site and could easily be used to enhance a Moodle-based LMS with blogging technology. Instructors could also use these technologies to create their own web page, to promote their class, list resources, and connect with current and prospective students.

Feasibility of Strategies and Solutions:

Moodle meets that criteria and offers a number of other benefits that bring added value. The PCCD OEI recommends to continue using with a Moodle-based LMS for the following reasons:

a) Moodle is an open source system (other potential vendors, such as Blackboard, are not).

b) Moodle is free with some initial set up charges (other vendors can be quite expensive).

c) Moodle is easily customizable, allowing maximum control of delivery and content for institutions and individual users (commercial MOOC platforms, such as Coursera and Udacity, maintain external control of system).

d) Moodle is flexible, allowing for accessibility features and tiered access for multiple users.

e) Moodle can be used on multiple media (i-Phones, Androids, tablets, computers), increasing usability, which may be appealing particularly to tech-savvy younger students.

f) Moodle is a modular LMS.

g) Moodle promotes collaboration and communication not only by students but by developers of applications and content.

h) Moodle is used globally, affording the chance to learn from other projects worldwide.

i) Most importantly, Moodle can be easily used by colleges with different LMS systems (i.e., it is easy to import content from other LMSs), addressing a major concern for some colleges that may have already invested in online course in a different LMS system

Peralta's technical team already has extensive experience using Moodle in a four college district. Peralta is already using Moodle with successful results for its district-wide Distance and Education Program and has strong ties with Moodle developers.

Peralta's decision to use Moodle for its own district-level programs was based on an in-depth comparison of LMS vendors, conducted by IT staff and the distance education coordinators from Berkeley City College (BCC) in 2007. After reviewing the merits of various vendors, such as Blackboard, Angel (absorbed by Blackboard in 2009), and others, BCC recommended Moodle due to low start-up costs required and the fact that it allowed for maximum institutional control and flexibility—an important consideration as Peralta ramped up its Distance Education Program from one college to four colleges, each with its own online learning needs and agenda.

The most recent ITC survey affirms this choice and shows that Moodle is gradually emerging as a favored LMS among community colleges nationwide. Over the last six years, usage of Blackboard by two-year colleges surveyed has steadily declined, from 39 percent in 2007 to 35 percent in 2012. During the same period, usage of Moodle has steadily grown, from 10 percent in 2007 to 14 percent in 2012, indicating that more and more two-year colleges are choosing Moodle as their designated Learning Management System (ITC, p. 12).

For the PCCD OEI, Moodle's flexibility is an asset and means that it will be easily adjustable as the project refines the system to meet the needs of multiple users with varying levels of technical ability (for individuals) and technical infrastructure (for colleges). Moodle's already-established instructional videos, available through their website and on YouTube, make training very easy and allow users with different levels of ability to select brief tutorials according to their needs and interest. Peralta's online instructors have used these videos as part of their training and have found them useful.

Moodle's architecture also allows for a certain amount of adaptability, in terms of adjusting to Next Generation LMS and other technological innovations that may emerge in the near future. Its adaptability, low start-up costs, and lack of fees for individual add-on feature (a source of expense with other LMS options) make it an ideal investment for a large-scale system, which wants to minimize cost while maximizing impact. By using Moodle, the

PCCD OEI can create an immediate response to the increased demand for online courses and the limited infrastructure and budgetary challenges of its individual colleges. At the same time, it can develop an interim system with minimal investment, positioning it to take advantage of new technologies as they emerge rather than stay with an outdate system simply to justify the money already expended in migrating systems.

Based on its experience with Moodle, Peralta has been able to identify a list of essential system requirements and functionalities. Peralta currently uses an external cloud-based server for its Distance Education Program, hosted by a local provider, Rackspace.

The attached budget includes details on the technical costs and specifications for the project, based in part on estimates from Rackspace, Peralta's current LMS installation vendor.

Project Planning and Evaluation

Summary of Activities:

The PCCD OEI is proposing to work with the PCCD OEI Advisory Committee to develop an implementation plan for the project, using the attached Work Plan as a foundation and adjusting project objectives and activities according to new data and mutually agreed-upon goals.

The project will work with an evaluation committee to design and conduct a thorough evaluation for the PCCD OEI project. As part of this process, metrics will be developed to access student performance outcomes and track other related student data. Milestones for all project areas will be developed and the plan will be monitored on a regular basis by the PCCD OEI Institute and appropriate governing bodies.

Program Structure

Summary of Activities:

During the academic year 2013-2014, Peralta will work with the Chancellor's Office to officially establish the PCCD OEI Institute, to provide centralized coordination and planning for the project. Located on-site at the Peralta Community College District offices, in Oakland, California, the Institute will both provide a physical site and serve as the main organizing hub for the District initiative. The PCCD will clarify roles and expectations for the Institute and for key project partners.

Institutional Commitment

Alignment with District Vision

The PCCD OEI is in alignment with the Peralta Community College District's mission to provide educational leadership by providing "diverse students and communities with equitable access to the educational resources, experiences, and life-long opportunities to meet and exceed their goals." The initiative also supports all five of the district's overarching goals: 1) Advance student access, equity, and success; 2) Engage our communities and partners; 3) Build programs of distinction; 4) Create a culture of innovation and collaboration; and 5) Develop resources to advance and sustain our mission. In addition, the project meets the following institutional outcome, listed under Strategic Goal D: Create a Culture of Innovation and Collaboration:

Institutional Outcome D.2: *Use Technology in Redesign of Educational Experiences:*

Enable more efficient and deeper student learning and student success through the creative use of technology, particularly through the increased use of online resources and online learning, and document effective practices used at colleges."

Budget Summary

Budget is allocated to cover staff positions and consultant and vendor fees related to carrying out the project goals and objectives. A portion of the budget has also been set aside for technical costs related to the development and installation of the Learning Management System (LMS); a detailed estimate of technical costs, provided by an installation vendor, has been included to show the types of expenses that may be required. (See Budget Summary and Budget Detail attached.)

Object of Expenditure	Classification	Requested Funds
1400	DE Coordinators for 4 campuses (25% each / .25)	$42,000
1400	District DE coordinator (50% / .5)	$21,000
2000	System Programmer (100%)	$104,200
5100	Help Desk support (Tim)	$50,000

5100	Servers and Cloud hosting for LMS, campus and district websites and online applications and Moodle support as needed. (approximate estimation)	$100,000
	Total	$317,200

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