Based on guiding principles focused on learners and equity, Peralta Community College District's Distance Education Plan outlines goals and related projects to increase a) online student retention and success rates; b) the number and quality of resources and services for student support and learning support; and c) the number of courses that meet guidelines for quality, consistency, and accessibility.

December 11, 2017
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Executive Summary

Building on the district’s strategic planning work, the Peralta CCD Distance Education Committee made drafting a three-year Distance Education Plan its primary goal for 2017-18.

Among the challenges that Peralta Community College District (Peralta CCD) faces, a number of them are common to California's community colleges (e.g., flat enrollment, regional housing issues, equity gaps, and increasing demand for distance education). Learners are more mobile and demand online courses in greater numbers than ever before. Peralta CCD must continue to adapt to these learners' needs.

This Distance Education (DE) Plan is directly aligned with Peralta CCD strategic goals and ACCJC standards, while taking into account the changing educational landscape and the nature of students in Peralta's service area. Among the district's guiding principles and values, this DE Plan and Program will be focused on learners and equity.

The Plan outlines ten projects in support of the following goals:

- DE Goal 1: To close achievement gaps, Peralta CCD will increase online student retention and success rates each year from AY2017-18 to AY2019-20, through research-based success strategies.
- DE Goal 2: To support students in achieving success in distance education courses, Peralta CCD will provide resources, support, and services that are specific to online students, are necessary to close achievement gaps and meet regulatory requirements.
- DE Goal 3: To support both student and faculty success throughout their online course experiences, all Peralta CCD online courses will meet guidelines for quality, consistency, and accessibility in their design and facilitation.
**INTRODUCTION**

In 2015-16, the Peralta Community College District (Peralta CCD) adopted a set of five strategic goals driving toward student success in several core educational areas by encouraging accountability, outcomes assessment, innovation and collaboration while spending within an established budget. Building on this strategic planning work, the Peralta CCD Distance Education Committee made drafting a three-year Distance Education Plan its primary goal for 2017-18. This plan is directly aligned with the District's goals, while taking into account the changing educational landscape and the nature of students in Peralta's service area.

In the broader context, Peralta faces a number of challenges common to California's community colleges—e.g., flat enrollment, regional housing issues, equity gaps, and increasing demand for distance education. At the same time, job growth in the San Francisco Bay Area is expected to increase by thirteen percent (13%) in the next ten years. The demand for more highly skilled workers will increase as well, especially in the healthcare and technology industries. Peralta's faculty, staff and leaders are adapting to meet these challenges head-on. Now, more than ever, knowing our students and their needs better than anyone is crucial to our mutual success.

Within Alameda County, Peralta CCD serves a population that is increasing in diversity (e.g., a notable increase in Latino/a population) and average age (i.e., fewer people of traditional college age). Seeing a shrinking pipeline of high school students from feeder and non-feeder schools, Peralta CCD now enrolls higher numbers of continuing students and first-generation college students. Reacting to the strong regional labor market, students are increasingly enrolling for reasons other than transfer or degree completion. They want to build the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace.
GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Based on the district's goals and background noted above, Peralta's Distance Education Plan and Program will be focused on learners and equity.

LEARNERS

Peralta's learner-centered approach to distance education will encompass:

- Supporting students in their roles and responsibilities in achieving their success by increasing their engagement, motivation, reflection, self-direction, collaboration and development of skills related to online learning; and
- Supporting faculty as learners, too, as they go through professional development related to online course design and facilitation (i.e., in line with CCC Online Education Initiative recommendations), a learning management system transition (Moodle to Canvas), and the use of evidence-based pedagogical strategies and additional technologies to support the teaching and learning process.

This plan aims to increase student success, such as improved online pass rates and grade distribution, or meaningful learning experiences, in addition to and in support of increasing overall enrollment.

EQUITY

To translate those higher pass rates and grades to closing the achievement gaps for online students and disproportionately impacted populations, Peralta's focus on equity will entail:

- Addressing the disparity in student enrollment, retention, grade distribution and success between students in online and face-to-face courses; and
- Addressing achievement gaps that are exacerbated in online environments—specifically involving disproportionately impacted students, such as African-American and Latino/a, first-generation to college, low-income and academically underprepared.

Peralta CCD intends to go beyond the current system-wide Course Design Rubric to include equity itself as a factor in effective online course design and facilitation.
DISTANCE EDUCATION – THE BIG PICTURE

TRENDS

Increased Mobile Usage
Students have become untethered learners—they are more mobile and increasingly skilled at using technology to access education anytime and anywhere. Trend watchers (Meeker, 2017; Gutierrez, 2016) have aggregated a number of statistics about mobile usage that imply the need to include mobile learning in distance education plans:

- Millennials—those born between the early 1980s and mid-to late 1990s—will make up 50% of the workforce by the end of 2020, and this demographic has extremely high rates of mobile device use.
- Mobile-only users now outnumber desktop-only users—i.e., more people use a mobile device (27%) than a desktop computer (14%) as their only computing device.
- Between 2010 and 2016, daily mobile Internet usage grew from 0.4 hours to 3.1 hours per day. This now represents over half (53%) of all daily Internet usage for U.S. adults.
- On average, we look at our smartphones more than 20% of our waking time.

This overall increased use of mobile devices combined with optimized user experiences (e.g., Netflix, Amazon) also drives increased expectations for ease of use and speed to complete tasks, as well as decreased tolerance levels that can lead to attrition (Meeker, 2017). Students bring these behaviors and expectations to their distance education experiences. At the same time, students' ownership of and familiarity with mobile technology does not correlate directly to proficiency in using it for learning (Chen, Seilhamer, Bennett & Bauer, 2015). It is also important to note that not all students have or have access to mobile devices, so campus instructors and staff must provide alternative pathways to complete academic, social and administrative activities.
**Online Courses: Increased Demand, but Lower Success Rates**

Trends related to online courses are fractal—that is, local trends resemble state trends that themselves resemble national trends. First, demand for online courses continues to increase. Nationally, "[a] higher percentage of undergraduates took distance education classes in 2011–12 (32 percent) than in 2007–08 (21 percent) or in 2003–04 (16 percent)" (NCES, 2015). "There were 5,750,417 students enrolled in any distance education courses at degree-granting postsecondary institutions" in Fall 2014 alone (NCES, 2016). At the state level, almost one million students enrolled in online courses throughout the California Community Colleges in 2013-14 (Johnson, Cuellar-Mejia & Cook, 2015, p. 4). At Peralta CCD, the increased demand for online classes reflects these national and statewide trends, doubling from 9.1% to 18.2% of total district FTEs in just five years (see Figure 1). This growth trend of online course demand has increased competition among distance education providers, fostering the need to emphasize differentiation, quality and meeting students' needs.

*Figure 1. Peralta CCD On-campus and Online FTEs, AY 2011-12 through 2015-16*
While increasing numbers of students seek distance education opportunities for flexibility and convenience (Allen & Seaman, 2011; Shay & Rees, 2004), they often underestimate the work required to succeed in online courses (Bawa, 2016). This and other factors have contributed to lower retention and pass rates for online students—again at national, state and local levels. For example, the CCC Chancellor's Office (2013, p. 22) reported lower seven-year averages for both retention—7% fewer students completed online classes than traditional classes—and success—10.5% fewer students passed online classes than traditional classes.

To address this disparity at the state level, California has increased its focus on increasing online student success and retention by funding projects like the CCC Online Education Initiative (OEI), "a collaborative effort among California Community Colleges (CCCs) to ensure that significantly more students are able to complete their educational goals by increasing both access to and success in high-quality online courses" (ccconlineed.org). Early results described in the 2015-2016 OEI Enrollment, Demographics, and Outcomes Summary (Nguyen, 2017) hinted at the potential of course design and facilitation practices promoted and supported by OEI:

- Overall, students enrolled in online courses through OEI achieved a higher success rate than the statewide rate.
- Online students in OEI courses between the ages of 30 and 39 had a greater success rate than the statewide rate for this age group.
- The success rate for African-American students taking OEI courses was greater than the statewide rate for this group.

**THE FUTURE**

Some of the trends identified above have led to reimagining approaches to education. For example, educators in India are testing mobile learning experiences that incorporate elements of personalization (Meeker, 2017, p. 269). The focus on student success will continue to intensify—for example, students' academic goals, their diverse life circumstances and the support available to them constitute the first three of seven core commitments in the new CCC Vision for Success (https://foundationccc.org/Vision-for-Success).
OVERVIEW OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AT PERALTA COLLEGES

HISTORICAL CONTEXTS AND RECENT ACTIVITIES

Just as the CCC system has experienced a 19% decrease in overall enrollment headcount since 2009, Peralta CCD has seen sluggish enrollment growth throughout the district. Therefore, Distance Education has become part of Strategic Enrollment Management at Peralta CCD. For example, with flat enrollment from local K-12 feeder schools, the district must look beyond high school students to reach its targets. As a positive reflection of statewide trends, online enrollments are expected to continue increasing so the district plans to add more online sections in targeted areas.

In line with this plan's guiding principles above, Peralta's Distance Education plan also will focus on increasing student retention and success in online courses. Mirroring national and statewide trends, students at Peralta pass online courses at lower rates than those in traditional courses overall (see Figure 2). Further, specific groups face achievement gaps for student retention (course completion) and student success rates (passing grade). Success rates are lower than the overall average and the achievement gaps are wider for a variety of disproportionately impacted populations, including but not limited to students who identify as African-American or Latino/a (also see Figure 2).
The district's strategic plan for Information Technology includes goals for driving student success and engagement through technology use, and shifting resources to student-facing services and support. Peralta CCD is among 111 of 114 California Community Colleges that have made or are making a transition to Canvas as a common learning management system (LMS), centrally funded by the system. As Peralta CCD is moving to Canvas from a free, open source LMS solution (Moodle), the district will regain only a small amount of funds (roughly $6,000 annually) to reallocate to projects designed to achieve the distance education goals listed below. More importantly, as a part of this transition the district has provided professional development related to both online teaching (pedagogy) and using the Canvas LMS (technology). Peralta CCD has benefited from work done by the statewide OEI, now in its fifth year.
DISTANCE EDUCATION COMMITTEE CHARGE (SEPT. 2017)

The Peralta CCD Distance Education Subcommittee will develop and make recommendations regarding policies, processes, and resources that support effective, innovative, and equitable online and hybrid education at PCCD. Specifically, the Committee focuses on:

- Supporting excellence in online and hybrid teaching
- Expanding support services that help students achieve their goals
- Reducing education gaps in student achievement
- Ensuring that all PCCD online and hybrid classes meet federal, state, and accreditation standards, follow all relevant district policies & procedures, and adhere to Collective Bargaining Agreement requirements

The committee works in collaboration with the District Academic Senate and the Peralta Federation of Teachers to make recommendations to the District Academic Affairs and Student Services Committee, and/or to other entities as requested.
DISTANCE EDUCATION GOALS

DE Goal 1: To close achievement gaps, Peralta CCD will increase online student retention and success rates each year from AY2017-18 to AY2019-20, through research-based success strategies.

- Evaluation metrics for this goal will include but are not limited to: a) the retention and success rate gaps in online courses compared to traditional courses will decrease; b) the retention and success rate gaps in online courses among students in differing disproportionately impacted groups will decrease; c) the number of early interventions and other student supports for online students will increase; and d) the number of colleges and/or DE courses that use early interventions and other student supports geared towards the online student population will increase.

DE Goal 2: To support students in achieving success in distance education courses, Peralta CCD will provide resources, support, and services that are specific to online students, are necessary to close achievement gaps and meet regulatory requirements.

- Evaluation metrics for this goal will include but are not limited to: a) the number and quality of resources, support and services available to online students will increase; and b) the number of students enrolled in an online course who access online support services will increase.

DE Goal 3: To support both student and faculty success throughout their online course experiences, all Peralta CCD online courses will meet guidelines for quality, consistency, and accessibility in their design and facilitation.

- Evaluation metrics for this goal will include but are not limited to a) the number of online courses that meet rigorous standards of quality will increase; b) the number of community college faculty prepared to teach in an online environment will increase; and c) the number of college staff prepared to support faculty with making their course accessible will increase.
PROPOSED DE PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Peralta Distance Education Committee identified the following ten priorities to achieve the Distance Education Goals above:

**In support of DE Goal 1**

DE Project 1.1: Develop recommendations for early interventions and other actions to increase online student retention and success, and to reduce achievement gaps—a) all students in online classes compared to traditional classes, and b) all disproportionately impacted groups in online classes. Example interventions include use of the Early Alert system and an online learner readiness orientation.

DE Project 1.2: Implement recommendations for early interventions and other actions to increase online student retention and success, and to reduce achievement gaps—a) all students in online classes compared to traditional classes, and b) all disproportionately impacted groups in online classes.

**In support of DE Goal 2**

DE Project 2.1: Conduct a district-wide needs assessment of student support and learning support services available to online students across all four campuses and the district to a) document a baseline of existing types and levels, and b) identify goals for desired types and levels. DE Project 2.1 will include academic, technical and organizational support for online students (e.g., counseling, orientations, library services, tutoring, tech help desk, registration, financial aid).

DE Project 2.2: Introduce new and make improvements to existing student support and learning support services for online students.

**In support of DE Goal 3**

DE Project 3.1: (a) Prepare and (b) use course design and facilitation guidelines related to quality, equity, consistency and accessibility.
DE Project 3.2: (a) Develop and (b) implement recommendations related to instructor preparation for and support in online and hybrid teaching.

*In support of all three DE Goals*

DE Project 4.1: **Delineate college and district roles and responsibilities** related to distance education. DE Project 4.1 will a) focus on a district-wide perspective that supports colleges’ initiatives and b) create an institutional knowledge transfer process to bridge gaps created by committee member and staff changes each academic year.

DE Project 4.2: **Develop recommendations for and/or revisions to policies and procedures to address distance education issues** (e.g., Peralta CCD Administrative Procedure 4105 on Distance Education, contract negotiation at district and college levels).

DE Project 4.3: **Improve information and communication related to distance education across the district.**

DE Project 4.4: **Develop resource recommendations to support the goals and projects above** (e.g. fiscal, human resource, tech, etc.).
## Proposed DE Project Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Projects supporting DE Goal 1</th>
<th>Projects supporting DE Goal 2</th>
<th>Projects supporting DE Goal 3</th>
<th>Projects supporting All DE Goals</th>
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<td>Summer 2019</td>
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| Fall 2019 | Project 1.2  
(with revisions based on evals) | Project 2.2  
(with revisions based on evals) | Project 3.1b  
(with revisions based on evals) | Project 4.2  
(with revisions based on evals) |
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| Summer 2020 |                               |                               |                               |                                  |</p>
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<th>Alignment with ACCJC Standards</th>
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<td>1. To close achievement gaps, Peralta CCD will increase online student retention and success rates each year from AY2017-18 to AY2019-20, through research-based success strategies.</td>
<td>A. Advance Student Access, Equity and Success</td>
<td>A.3 – Student Success A.4 – Student Equity</td>
<td>I.B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness</td>
<td>I.B.1 Dialogue on continuous improvement I.B.2 Set goals I.B.3 Assess progress I.B.7 Review effectiveness of improvements</td>
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<td>2. To support students in achieving success in distance education courses, Peralta CCD will provide resources, support, and services that are specific to online students, are necessary to close achievement gaps and meet regulatory requirements.</td>
<td>D. Strengthen Accountability, Innovation &amp; Collaboration E. Develop and Manage Resources to Advance Mission</td>
<td>D.1 – Service Leadership D.2 – Institutional Leadership &amp; Governance E.2 – Budget to Improve Student Success E.4 – Support Quality Instruction</td>
<td>I.B. Improving Institutional Effectiveness II.B. Student Support Services II.C. Library &amp; Learning Support Services III.C. Technology Resources</td>
<td>I.B.7 Review services II.B.1 Show effectiveness II.B.2 Provide catalog II.B.3 Address support needs II.B.4 Evaluate services II.C.1 Provide services II.C.2 Evaluate services III.C.1 Provide tech support</td>
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<td>3. To support both student and faculty success throughout their online course experiences, all Peralta CCD online courses will meet guidelines for quality, consistency, and accessibility in their design and facilitation.</td>
<td>A. Advance Student Access, Equity and Success C. Build Programs of Distinction D. Strengthen Accountability, Innovation &amp; Collaboration E. Develop and Manage Resources to Advance Mission</td>
<td>A.4 – Student Equity C.2 – Student Success D.1 – Service Leadership D.2 – Institutional Leadership &amp; Governance E.4 – Support Quality Instruction</td>
<td>II.A. Instructional Programs III.A. Human Resources III.C. Technology Resources</td>
<td>II.A.1 Demonstrate addressing PCCD mission II.A.2 Assure quality &amp; improvement III.A.5 Provide opportunities for professional dev III.C.1 Provide tech support</td>
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### SUMMARY OF RESOURCE NEEDS

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<td></td>
<td>Total cost estimate*</td>
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</table>

*Fiscal Year subtotals: $30,000 in FY18; $105,000 in FY19; $70,000 in FY20; $15,000 in FY21
APPENDIX

DEFINITIONS

Correspondence Course (Electronic Code of Federal Regulations, 2017):

• (1) A course provided by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced.
• (2) If a course is part correspondence and part residential training, the Secretary considers the course to be a correspondence course.
• (3) A correspondence course is not distance education.

Distance Education: There are three definitions of Distance Education relevant to this plan:

• ACCJC: "Distance education is defined, for the purpose of accreditation review as a formal interaction which uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and which supports regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously" (ACCJC, 2013, p. 2).
• California Title 5, section 55200: "Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by distance and interact through the assistance of communication technology" (Westlaw, 2017).
• US Code of Federal Regulations Title 35, section 600.2: "Distance education means education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) of this definition to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include:
(1) The internet;
(2) One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;
(3) Audio conferencing; or
(4) Video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3) of this definition" (Electronic Code of Federal Regulations, 2017).

Student success: for purposes of this DE Plan, student success is defined as completion of a course with a passing grade (A, B or C). This Plan recognizes that students and faculty may have broader definitions of success, i.e., meaningful learning experiences and value not reflected on transcripts.
Student retention: for purposes of this DE Plan, student retention is defined as completion of a course without drop or withdrawal.

Course format definitions

Online Course: An online course in the Peralta Community College District is defined as a course where all instruction and activities are 100% online —i.e., it requires no face-to-face meetings. Instructors provide instructional support and students complete course requirements through a variety of modalities that are unrestricted by physical place.

Hybrid Course: A hybrid course in the Peralta Community College District is defined as a course where instruction is provided both online and face-to-face, and class activities may be both online and face-to-face. Instructors provide instructional support and students must complete course requirements through a mixture of a) online class sessions or activities, and b) face-to-face class sessions or activities. Face-to-face class sessions are scheduled and listed in the class schedule.

Technology-Enhanced Course: A technology-enhanced course in the Peralta Community College District is defined as a course where instruction is 100% face-to-face, but requires participation in some online and/or technology-based activities.

Course activity definitions

Attendance: "Title 5 sections 58000 and 58030 … require detailed tabulations of all course enrollment and attendance and appropriate support records. …Distance Education courses can apply any attendance procedure that they are eligible to use based on the criteria applicable to each procedure" (CCCCO, 2008, pp. 12-14):

- Weekly student contact hour procedure (weekly census)
- Daily student contact hours procedure (daily census)
- Actual hours of attendance procedure (positive attendance)
- Alternative attendance accounting procedure:
  - For credit courses: one weekly student contact hour counted for each unit of credit
  - For noncredit course sections: weekly student contact hours derived by counting total hours of instruction, or programming received by students, plus instructor contact, plus outside-of-class work; then dividing total sum by 54

Regular and substantive interaction / Regular effective contact: ACCJC and Title 5 list, but do not adequately define, requirements for instructor-student interaction that must be "regular and substantive" (ACCJC) and/or "regular and effective" (Title 5):
Based on analysis of accreditation audits, WCET identified four criteria for what constitutes "regular and substantive interaction" (Poulin & Davis, 2016):

- **Interaction must be initiated by the instructor.** While this is not in the definition, it was highlighted in college audits by the Office of Inspector General.

- **Interaction must be "regular" and ...somewhat frequent.** This is interpreted as repeated instances at specific intervals (e.g., once a week, twice a month) or conducted in the same way (via email, LMS announcements, LMS forums).

- **Interaction must be "substantive" or of an academic nature.** This is interpreted as activities that "further learning or assessment of learning" (Poulin & Davis, 2016, para. 22).

- **Interaction must be with an instructor that meets accrediting agency standards.**

"Title 5, section 55204. Instructor Contact. In addition to the requirements of section 55002 and any locally established requirements applicable to all courses, district governing boards shall ensure that:

- (a) Any portion of a course conducted through distance education includes regular effective contact between instructor and students, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, correspondence, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities. Regular effective contact is an academic and professional matter pursuant to sections 53200 et seq.

- (b) Any portion of a course provided through distance education is conducted consistent with guidelines issued by the Chancellor pursuant to section 409 of the Procedures and Standing Orders of the Board of Governors" (Westlaw, 2017).

**Examples of instructor-initiated contact**

- Announcements (e.g., via discussion or email);
- Individual interaction with students (e.g., via email, phone or videoconference);
- Virtual office hours (e.g., via email, phone or videoconference);
- Facilitating threaded discussions (without dominating them);
- Facilitating student-to-student contact (synchronous or asynchronous) through tools or activities such as discussions, chats, blogs and videoconferences; and
- Creating and moderating virtual groups
PARAMETERS

ACCJC

California Code of Regulations – Title 5
Code of Federal Regulations – Title 34
California Community College System

DISTANCE EDUCATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Distance Education Plan Development Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/23/2017</td>
<td>Development and Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/23/2017 through 12/11/2017</td>
<td>District DE Committee members developed and reviewed DE Plan drafts</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/11/2017</td>
<td>Draft revision submitted to DE Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/11/2017</td>
<td>DE Committee approves and makes public Draft Peralta Community College Distance Education Plan</td>
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<td>Community Engagement, Shared Governance, and Approval</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring semester 2018</td>
<td>Peralta CCD Distance Education Committee shares Draft DE Plan virtually and at college campuses via town hall meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2018</td>
<td>Submitted to District Academic Senate and Peralta District Academic Affairs and Student Services Committee for approval</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2018</td>
<td>Submitted to Planning and Budget Committee for approval</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2018</td>
<td>Submitted to Participatory Governance Council for approval</td>
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REFERENCES


