

**Peralta at a Crossroad: The Courage To Take the Road Less Traveled**  
Chancellor Laguerre's Second District Address  
January 20, 2016  
Oakland, California

**I. WELCOME:**

**A. Special Recognitions and Acknowledgements**

- Members of the Board who are present today
- Elected Officials
- Classified Senate Leaders
- Academic Senate Leaders
- Student Leaders
- District Office Staff
- Mrs. Laguerre
- Staff of the Chancellor's Office, Chief of Staff and College Presidents to come on stage

Dr. Crawford provides greetings and introduces the Staff, to include recognition of New Employees in attendance and Professional Development Coordinator.

**B. Recognizing Miriam Zamora Kantor  
(Professional Development Coordinator)**

I know this is only her second professional development event, but I want to praise Professor Zamora Kantor for the work she is doing on your behalf as Professional Development Coordinator. Her support for faculty and staff advancement is tireless. It is clear that she loves her role, which is more than merely convening meetings with her colleagues from the Colleges, and she extends her work to all aspects of College life. She is a true leader and hard worker who wants your professional and personal lives to be more rewarding. Please let us stand to recognize Miriam!

**II. THE ADDRESS:**

**A. Introduction:**

Dear Student leaders, Faculty members, Staff members, Members of the Governing Board and others present and listening online or on tape. I appreciate the opportunity to address you once again.

**B. Thank you**

I have not taken the time to thank you enough for welcoming me to Peralta. Your *accueil*, as we would say in French, or "welcome" in English, has been spectacular. The best of this welcome has been how you have made my wife, our First Lady, feel like a part of a family. Those of you who have met her personally and interacted with her have made her feel special. Many of you ask about her. Tina and I are grateful for all of your love and respect.

You have given me of your time as I visit the Colleges and dropped by your offices and you have sent valuable feedback on the C-DIRECT suggesting how some of our decisions can help Peralta to be a better place. Many of you have made critical comments on the “New Peralta Way,” and have wondered how we are, in fact, moving beyond the “Old Peralta Way.” Believe me that I am most mindful of your thoughtful criticism. Most importantly, you have called out the Old Way and demanded the New Way!

### **C. The Honeymoon**

Overall, my honeymoon period with you has been most encouraging (perhaps you have saved your major shots at me for later)! I hope and pray that the honeymoon may last and goes beyond my tenure with you and even into the tenure of the next Chancellor who will replace me in ten or so years.

### **III. THE HEART OF THE MATTER: The New Peralta Way Pledge**

The poet Robert Frost wrote in his famous poem: “I took the road less traveled and that has made all the difference.” Frost’s point, as I see it, is that at critical times, we must be willing to embark on a path less journeyed, and that in so doing, such a move might make all the difference in our lives.

Since I spoke to you last on August 20<sup>th</sup> and heard your feedback, I’ve felt that as an organization, we are at a crossroad: one direction is the familiar and long-traveled Old Peralta Way and the other direction is the less traveled path, the path I wish to call the “New Peralta Way.”

The question to us this morning is: Is Peralta courageous enough to break from the past? ...Might I even say break from its “ruts” and forge a new path, one beckoning with much promise, but one also fraught with uncertainties and risks? By the way, Peralta is each and every one of us.

Such a recalibration is my quest, and from the results of the Chancellor’s Survey, as well as conversations we have had, I believe we agree we are willing to accept this challenge. Thus, I hope that you all will join me in this journey. My comments this morning are aimed at clarifying our new purpose.

Today I want to remind you of my pledge announced last fall to commence a “New Peralta Way.” In the spirit of Robert Frost’s poem, I am realizing more and more that “the New Peralta Way” will indeed require the navigation of a path “less traveled.” The New Peralta Way is an uncharted path aimed at laying out a new beginning for our District. For YOUR District!

For me, the “New Peralta Way” means that Peralta—represented by all of us combined-- must be willing to break from old habits and to call out others who are stuck in old habits. Today I will review some of the initiatives that I have in mind and call on you to continue the drive away from the Old Peralta way and toward a vibrant future. That future is built with accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, and

competence. Some of these initiatives I will refer to are from initiatives generated from the results of my Survey that I conducted last fall. I ask that you look at what we have accomplished and have patience in achieving all that we desire. I ask that you adopt an intelligently **positive and idealistic** attitude in the pursuit of our “New Peralta Way.” When a faculty member recently thanked me for something we completed after being at it for several months, we acknowledged this work as a “New Peralta Way” accomplishment. I quipped that it still took way too long. She reminded me, however, that it took the Romans many years to build Rome.... We need to remind one another to be patient as long as we are making progress.

Here are some of the initiatives I want us to push:

1. Instead of pointing out that we have still not eradicated the chronic issue of paying our bills on time, rest assured that whatever it takes, I am willing to act, including removing District authority in areas where the Colleges would do better handing business. But know that we have made substantial progress on this matter. However, the issue is deeply rooted in some of our malfunctioning processes and procedures and it is simply taking time to properly fix this problem. We shall solve this issue.
2. Instead of continuing to complain that many of our technologies are outdated and that the District has not responded, the results of our Technology assessment will be published on January 26<sup>th</sup> at the Governing Board meeting showing that we are on the move in sharpening the efficiency of our IT infrastructures and procedures. The Report will be made available to all and I will elicit College feedback and your ideas for perfecting our IT systems.
3. Instead of the old, uncertain response times for answering inquiries, we have now hired Dr. Yashica Crawford, our new Chief of Staff, who will institutionalize a 48 hour response time system...and make it happen! Furthermore, instead of overextending the Chancellor with administrative details, the Chief of Staff will transform our daily work lives as she streamlines operations and helps to improve accountability. (I have directed her to “kick *derriere* and take names!).
4. Instead of protesting that some administrators and staff could benefit from in-service training, the Chancellor’s Office and the Human Resource Office, working hand-in-hand with SEIU, are now providing resources for staff training, with the end result being to improve overall job performances. Furthermore, members of the Cabinet have been specifically provided enhanced training in their roles and functions as leaders.
5. Instead of “hit and miss” methods of recruiting new personnel, we will now initiate more rigorous procedures for hiring and will make the recruitment process more rapid, friendlier, and possessive of 21<sup>st</sup> century technology, by doing things like allowing candidates to be interviewed by cool thingamajigs like SKYPE. Instead of the old methods for Administrative review, we will now conduct more thorough evaluations as we begin to refine our Staffing Plan.
6. Instead of complaining and moaning about our Accreditation obligations, we must approach the task with patience, discipline, and intelligence. To this

end, we have contracted an Accreditation consultant, Dr. Annette Dambrosio, to assist in Peralta's quest to be sanction-free (I have directed Dr. Dambrosio to encourage you to eat your Accreditation broccoli with gusto for the next nine months. It may not be your favorite, but it will make us all healthy!). We are determined that the DISTRICT DOES NOT cause our Colleges to be on sanction.

7. Instead of remaining in the dark as to why individuals quit the District, we will now conduct exit interviews. Here we must construct useful evaluations that will help us to determine how to improve the work lives of our District employees.
8. Instead of missing opportunities to develop faculty excellence in their respective disciplines, I am pressing for more Sabbatical leaves and other faculty development funding. The Old Peralta Way invested too little in Sabbatical leaves to develop each faculty member's academic growth.

In contrast, the Presidents and I have agreed to invest more resources in that area. Effective with the next season of Sabbaticals, we will allocate two full-year or four semester Sabbatical leaves for Berkeley City College, Merritt College, College of Alameda, and three full-year or six-semester Sabbatical leaves for Laney College. The faculty and the administrators will work jointly to ensure that the New Peralta Way Sabbatical Leaves will make all of us proud of faculty's desires to better their academic worth and to excel, innovate, and create. Here we will also consult with DEC, PBC, and DAS.

Furthermore, the Peralta Colleges' Foundation and our Administration have agreed to make faculty development a priority. Over the next few years, we want to double the current funding. We know that supporting faculty development and innovation is a worthy investment in the improvement of achieving better student outcomes and improving our overall educational character.

9. Instead of expressing vague notions of what constitutes "effective leadership," we are sharpening our understanding of the subject through refined leadership workshops, College forums, and other leadership training efforts. The Chancellor's Survey results were clear in stating that we have issues to resolve with regard to assessing our workplace environment and assessing our leadership performances and we are working to resolve those issues. We have already held a Board Retreat and two Management Retreats in which we have begun to lay out a foundation for leadership excellence. These retreats are based on what Robert Staub\* refers to as the four "chambers in the heart of leadership." I have added "Democratic Values" to this foundation. I already shared this foundation of leadership with you last Fall and we continue to commit ourselves to it. Briefly, I urge each of you to reflect on what I call Peralta's "5 Pillars" of Leadership: **Competence**, including "substantive knowledge" of the heart of leadership, the ability to "think and plan strategically", and "the awareness, sensitivity,

and skills for good interpersonal contact.” Each of our leaders who attended the Management Retreat on January 14<sup>th</sup> made a commitment to be competent administrators. When you see less than a competent attitude or actions from our managers, you can call them on it. As Director Phyllis Carter stated at the Retreat, it is important for us to train ourselves when we know we need to be more competent.

**Passion** or “the drive to make a contribution and to create something meaningful and worthy.” How will we motivate others? As Dean Peter Crabtree stated at the Retreat, we need to ignite the flame of passion for our faculty and staff and support their passion. Each of our leaders who attended the Management Retreat on January 14<sup>th</sup> made a commitment to embrace passion in their work. When you see less than a passionate attitude and/or actions from our managers, you can call them on it.

**Integrity** or honest and principled behavior wherein all leaders must engage in honest self-appraisal and obtain the trust of others. Each of our leaders who attended the management retreat on January 14<sup>th</sup> made a commitment to demonstrate and uphold integrity. When you see less than integrity from our managers, you can call them on it.

**Intimacy**: Staub refers to intimacy as “deep knowledge of the people engaged in the work at hand, of the task and purpose of the work, of one’s self.” Intimacy has to do with “the dimension of relating with the capacity to forge and develop strong relationships.” Each of our leaders who attended the Management Retreat on January 14<sup>th</sup> made a commitment to show and uphold intimacy: Treating people with dignity and respect. When you see less than legal workplace intimacy from our managers, you can call them on it.

**Democratic Values**: In the workshops we have held, we have defined democratic values as those values of equality, equity, inclusivity, cultural fluency, respect, and diversity. Each of our leaders who attended the Management Retreat on January 14<sup>th</sup> made a commitment to show and uphold democratic values. When you see less than democratic values from our managers, you can call them on it.

I urge each of you to reflect on these pillars or virtues as inherent aspects of good leadership.

In addition to ongoing leadership training, this June we will pilot a Peralta Leadership Academy with our administrators and selected faculty and staff leaders. Here the intent will be to more formalize leadership training throughout the District and to put in place a legacy of accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness.

11. Instead of settling for uneven student achievement, we will work to sharpen our conceptual grasp of “success” and “equity” and work to ensure

- that our student achievement can be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. We must focus on recruiting students with the utmost caring and dignity. We must conduct orientations in an effort to teach students what it is like to be a model student and to understand the scholarly and professional community they are joining. We must provide genuine opportunities for students to develop and to expand their personal growth.
12. Instead of each College handling student recruitment independently, our Coordinator of Marketing, Dr. Herbert Kitchen, will convene all the recruiters from each of the Colleges and work with them to achieve a well-coordinated effort. In this “team approach” to recruitment, we believe we will increase enrollments overall for all FOUR Colleges.
  13. Instead of grumbling about inequities throughout the District, I pledge to lead the District to treating “similar performances similarly” across the board! This approach applies not only to evaluating student performances, but also to ensuring an equitable distribution of resources, to include finances and student services. Instead of inhibiting creativity regarding equity at each of our Colleges, we will seek greater College autonomy, to include the strengthening of the authority of our Presidents and our Business Officers, where justified.
  14. Instead of choosing to be “stuck” and frustrated in our worries over Peralta’s student problems, we might present solutions as did Peter Brown, Machine Technology professor, when he suggested in a letter to me and others that we have to remove barriers for our students—barriers that include everything from finding enough classrooms to examining the hard facts that many of our students have “family and work life pressures, housing insecurity or outright homelessness.” Here I challenge all of us to come up with creative solutions to remove as many barriers as we can in assisting our students to earn a college education.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION:**

Since I began my tenure as your Chancellor, we have accomplished some deeds, but have great strides ahead of us. We are building a leadership structure that is anchored in accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, and responsibility. At the same time, we must display those virtues of competence, passion, integrity, intimacy, and democratic values. We are working to be more responsive to the needs of our students, our faculty, administrators, and our community. We have embarked on the real work of transformation and we strive to empower our faculty to dream and plan a new day for Peralta.

As Robert Frost advised, taking the road less traveled will “make a difference.” I believe that if we accomplish some of our aforementioned initiatives, such will make all the difference in our professional lives at Peralta and in the educational fortunes of our students! As I said in my remarks on August 20, “We must concede that superior leadership is the best means by which the Peralta District will overcome its shortcomings...I reiterate that leadership is characterized by five pillars: competence, passion, democratic values, integrity, and intimacy. Their exercise

seeks to elevate each of us to our highest potential to best serve our students and our communities: the New Peralta Way.”

I am asking us all to engage in this task of working diligently to improve on our existing system to meet the needs of our students and our community, to inspire faculty, staff, and administration to dream, and to give what it takes to firmly establish AND PRACTICE our “New Peralta Way.” Soon we will just know The Peralta Way as synonymous to high achievement, effectiveness, efficiency, and great service ---or as another College claims-- “Simply the best.” This road less traveled will require patience, discipline, and resolve, but will, indeed, make all the “difference.” **LET’S GO FOR IT!**

I thank you again for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Chancellor.

**MAY THE FORCE BE WITH US!    HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

Reference:

*\*The Heart of Leadership: 12 Practices of Courageous Leaders*, Robert E. Staub, II (2002) pp. 21-27.

