

**NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE
SHOW CAUSE REPORT**



Submitted to:

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges,
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

October 15, 2013

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Northern Marianas College
2013 Show Cause Report – Certification Page

To: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges,
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

From:

Dr. Sharon Y. Hart, PhD

Northern Marianas College

P.O. Box 501250, Saipan, MP 96950

I certify there was broad participation by the campus community and believe this Report accurately reflects the nature and substance of this institution.

Signatures:



Dr. Sharon Y. Hart, PhD October 15, 2013



Juan Lizama, Chairperson, NMC Board of Regents October 15, 2013



Amanda Allen, Accreditation Liaison Officer *10/15/2013*
October 15, 2013

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Acronym Directory

AACC	American Association of Community College
AC	Academic Council
ACCJC	Accrediting Commission for Community Colleges and Junior Colleges
ACCT	Association of Community College Trustees
ACE	American Council on Education
ACRL	Association of College and Research Libraries
ACSCU	Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities
AGB	Association of Governing Boards
ALA	American Library Association
APS	Academic Programs & Services
ASNMC	Associated Students of the Northern Marianas College
AUOs	Administrative Unit Outcomes
BAFC	Budget and Finance Committee
BOR	Board of Regents
BS	Bachelor of Science
CCLC	Community College League of California
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
CGSS	Comparison Group Selection Services
CMC	Commonwealth Code
CNMI	Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands
DACUM	Developing a Curriculum
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ER	Eligibility Requirements
ERPs	Enterprise Resource Planning
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
FY	Fiscal Year
GRTF	Governance Review Task Force
HEA	Higher Education Act
HR	Human Resources
HRO	Human Resources Office
IDP	Individualized Degree Plan
IEG	Institutional Excellence Guide
IT	Information Technology
L.I.F.E.	Lead Into Future Experiences
LADHS	Los Angeles Department of Health Services
LAUSD	Los Angeles Unified School District

LPS	Library Programs & Services
LSS	Learning Support Services
M.Ed	Masters in Education
MA	Masters in Arts
MBA	Masters in Business Administration
MQ	Minimum Qualification
MT	Management Team
NCHEMS	National Center for Higher Education Management System
NMC	Northern Marianas College
OIE	Office of Institutional Effectiveness
PLO	Program Learning Outcomes
PPEC	Pacific Post-secondary Education Council
PROAC	Planning, Program Review & Assessment Committee
PSS	Public School System
RH	Rehabilitation and Human Services
SCA	Staggered Course Assessment
SIMS	Student Information Management System
SLO	Student Learning Outcome
SLOCIP	Student Learning Outcomes Comprehensive Implementation Program
SPTF	Strategic Planning Task Force
UC Berkley	University of California - Berkley
US	United States
USDOE	United States Department of Education
WICHE	Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education

I. Statement of Preparation of Report

Accreditation has been a continuous focus at Northern Marianas College (NMC), especially since the Reaffirmation Visit in the fall of 2012 and as a result of the subsequent action the Commission at its January 9-11, 2013 meeting, ACCJC took action to order Show Cause and to require that the College complete a Show Cause Report by October 15, 2013. In a February 11, 2013 letter, Commission President Dr. Barbara Beno, informed the College of the Commission's action for being out of compliance with Eligibility Requirement 5 and 13 and significant parts of Standards II.C.2, III.A.1, II.A.2, IV.B.1, and IV.B.2.

Northern Marianas College recognizes that accreditation is indeed a voluntary system of self-regulation developed to evaluate overall educational quality and institutional effectiveness. As such, it has been working hard to address the actions taken by the Commission, specifically in the deficiencies noted and identified in the October 2012 External Evaluation Report, including all areas of improvement. This has resulted in individuals from across the College being continuously engaged in the process of self-evaluation.

Ms. Amanda Allen, the institution's Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) and Director of Distance Learning Education, led the oversight of the process as well as the preparation of this report alongside the Accreditation Reaffirmation Team (ART) and President Sharon Y Hart. As Northern Marianas College has a robust participatory governance process, this report has benefitted from input provided from across the institution—including faculty, staff, students, and the Board of Regents. It includes numerous reports, various institutional research findings from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), as well as meeting notes and agendas from Faculty Senate Meetings, Academic Council, the President's Management Team, and the Board of Regents. The complete list of Resources utilized for this report can be found in the Directory of Evidence. The College is also making all of these resources available via the NMC website.

At various points in the preparation and development of the October 15, 2013 Show Cause Report, members of the internal college community contributed separately and collectively in the preparation of the report. Additionally, through weekly meetings with ART a number of key individuals stepped forward to serve as Standard Team Leaders or Co-Leaders on the various Standards and Eligibility Requirements through the institutional review process. An Ad-Hoc Committee of the Board of Regents was assembled to provide specific input on Standard IV.B1. In addition, the Board of Regents also met to review and provide input on the full Report.

Key individuals who work on the Accreditation Reaffirmation Team and serve as Standard Team Leaders and Co-Leaders for the NMC Campus Community are:

I.A: Mission

Leader: Amanda Allen - Accreditation Liaison Officer/Distance Learning Education Coordinator
Co-Leader: Eileen Babauta – CDI Program Coordinator

I.B: Improving Institutional Effectiveness Leader

Leader: Jacqueline Che – Director, Office of Institutional Effectiveness

Co-Leader: Keane Palacios – Manager, NMC Bookstore

II.A: Instructional Programs

Leader: Barbara Merfalen – Dean, Academic Programs and Services

Co-Leader: Michael Nurmi – Faculty, Languages and Humanities

II.B: Student Support Services

Leader: Leo Pangelinan – Dean, Student Support Services

Co-Leader: Tim Baker – Director, Counseling Programs and Services

II.C: Library and Learning Support Services

Leader: Christopher Todd – Director, Library Programs and Services

Co-Leader: Alex Nikolaychuk – Faculty, Math

III.A: Human Resources

Leader: Christopher Timmons – Director, Human Resources

Co-Leader: Barbara Hunter – Faculty, Business

III.B: Physical Resources

Leader: John Guerrero – Manager, Facilities

Co-Leader: Anita Guerrero – Manager, Procurement and Property

III.C: Technology Resources

Leader: Jonathan Liwag – Director, Information Technology

Co-Leader: Elsie Skang-Ngewakl – Staff, English Learning Institute Lab

III.D: Financial Resources

Leader: Tracy Guerrero – Chief Financial Officer

Co-Leader: Ivyanne Ealy – Staff, Accounts Payable Accountant

IV.A: Decision-Making Roles and Processes

Leader: David Peter Attao – Dean, Administration and Resource Development

Co-Leader: Daniel LaMarche – Faculty, Languages and Humanities

IV.B: Board and Administrative Organization

Leader: Frankie Eliptico – Director, Office of External Relations

Co-Leader: Daisy Manglona-Propst – Director, Financial Aid

The College hereby submits this October 15, 2013 Show Cause Report to demonstrate that the College fully complies with Eligibility Requirements 5 and 13 and fully meets Standards II.C.2, III.A.1, III.A.2, IV.A.2, IV.B.1 and IV.B.2.

We certify that the contents of this report were prepared with considerable input and participation from the College community, including students, faculty, and staff members.

II. ACCJC's Eligibility Requirements

The Commission had asked for evidence of compliance with its Eligibility Requirements 5 and 13. The College believes that much hard work and purpose have brought it into compliance with both Eligibility Requirements 5 and 13. Some markers of progress include the following.

Eligibility Requirement 5- Administrative Capacity

The institution has sufficient staff, with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administration services necessary to support its mission and purpose.

*The Commission is concerned that the College lacks sufficient staff with appropriate preparation and experience to support its operations. This deficiency was identified in the commission's January 2008 action letter, and is still not fully addressed. The Evaluation Team Report states that, having failed to hire a Chief Financial Officer, the College hired a Dean of Administration to perform the duties of fiscal management and oversight (Evaluation Team Report, page 45). The institution has also stated that it has also stated that it has been unsuccessful to date of hiring a Director of Information Technology, and is still involved in search for an individual for this position. The 2012 Evaluation Team Report also notes that these administrative vacancies also affect the institution's ability to meet Standards IV.B.2 and IV.B.2.a (see page 65 of the Evaluation Team Report). **Recommendation 5 of the October 2012 Evaluation Team Report, although listed as a recommendation for improvement, also the need to fill vacancies in administrative support areas.***

February 11, 2013 Action Letter

Descriptive Summary

Eligibility Requirement No. 5 requires the institution to maintain sufficient staff with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission. Meeting this ER has been a previous concern.

Self-Evaluation

At the time of the Evaluation Team's October 2012 visit, the College had vacancies in the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Director of Information Technology, Director of Admissions and Records / Registrar positions, as well as lower level positions within the library and other administrative support areas of the institution. As a result of the difficulty NMC had previously experienced in filling the Chief Financial Officer role, the College had included these responsibilities in the Dean of Administration job duties. The College president had been monitoring, and was generally happy with the results of this restructuring as all prior accreditation standards addressing finance were met and the College's external audits had been considered "best in CNMI government" by its auditors. For this reason, Northern Marianas College was not aggressively recruiting to fill this position, and the president anticipated canceling the CFO vacancy. With respect to the Director of Information Technology and

Director of Admissions and Records positions, the College continuously sought qualified applicants for these positions even in the absence of the Commission's recommendations.

Actions Taken

Chief Financial Officer

Upon receipt of the Commission's February 11, 2013 Action Letter, the College immediately took action to re-advertise the CFO position at a more competitive rate of pay and with revised qualifications. The College initially advertised the position of Director of Financial Services / Chief Financial Officer on Vacancy Announcement 12-035 [\[ER5:1\]](#) on June 20, 2012 at a rate of \$50,000 to \$55,000 and requiring a Master's degree and three years relevant experience or a bachelor's degree and five years relevant experience. This announcement generated 12 interested applicants, but few from applicants who were qualified [\[ER5:2\]](#). Interviews were held and an offer was extended, however the candidate declined the position.

Vacancy Announcement 12-035 was revised on September 18, 2012 and the salary was elevated to \$55,000 to \$60,000 to entice more qualified applicants. Vacancy Announcement No. 13-006 [\[ER5:3\]](#) reflects a further revised salary of \$60,000 to \$70,000 and heightened qualifications commensurate with the higher salary. This position opened on February 20, 2013, mere days after receipt of the Commission's letter and was advertised on NMC's website, local newspapers, the National Association of College and University Business Officers website, and HigherEdJobs.com. On Higher Ed Jobs alone, 16,524 searches during the posting period generated 628 views. These recruitment efforts resulted in seven interested applicants [\[ER5:4\]](#).

The institution approved the hire of Tracy Guerrero as NMC's new Chief Financial Officer on April 1, 2013 [\[ER5:5\]](#). She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from U.C. Berkeley and an MBA with an emphasis in Finance and Entrepreneurship from California State University East Bay. Ms. Guerrero worked as a Senior Analyst for the U.S. Government Accountability Office in San Francisco for seven years and the Administrative Director of the CNMI Judiciary for five years before accepting the position as Chief Financial Officer for the Northern Marianas College in May 2013. She is also the former Chair and current member of the Board of Directors of the Northern Marianas Humanities Council.

Director of Information Technology

The College had experienced difficulty in recruiting a qualified Director of Information Technology (IT Director). NMC began recruitment on October 23, 2012 with Vacancy Announcement No. 12-054 [\[ER5:6\]](#) for a Director, Information Technology. Vacancy Announcement No. 12-054 was advertised at a salary of \$55,000 - \$60,000 and required a bachelor's degree (master's degree preferred) from a U.S. Department of Education recognized accredited institution in Computer Sciences, Business Information Systems, Business Administration, or Information/ Educational Technology, or related discipline; and required three years of experience in a college IT environment, either teaching Information Technology or providing IT support for educational technology programs, plus three years of high level management experience. Additionally, applicants were required to have documented experience

in developing and managing educational technology programs and in the delivery of information technology services in an educational setting; experience with data migration as it pertains to Student Information Management System (SIMS) and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERPs) deployments and maintenance; experience with hybrid legacy systems; and experience in infrastructure trouble shooting, networking, and software and hardware management.

The College was not successful in recruiting an adequate pool of qualified candidates based upon the advertised criteria, and on February 8, 2013 the College revised the vacancy announcement to seek a “Lead, Information Technology” that could be filled as a Network Specialist III, Database Admin. II, or Director III at a salary range of \$28,229.43 - \$49,266.37 [\[ER5:7\]](#). This allowed the College to raise the salary to a more competitive range within its position classification system, while maintaining sufficient minimum qualifications to perform the necessary duties. However, after receipt of the Commission’s February 11, 2013 Action Letter, the president determined it to be in the best interest of the College to cancel Vacancy Announcement No. 12-054 and advertise the position as Administrative Director, Information Technology, making the incumbent report directly to the president at a salary of \$60,000.00.

On February 20, 2013 Vacancy Announcement No. 13-007 [\[ER5:8\]](#) was advertised and on April 2, 2013 the president approved the hire of Jonathan Liwag as NMC’s Administrative Director, Information Technology [\[ER5:9\]](#) . Mr. Liwag received his master’s degree in Leadership and Organizational Studies in 2009 and his Bachelor of Science degree in Management Information Systems in 2007 at the Azusa Pacific University. He also attended college at De La Salle University in the Philippines. Mr. Liwag has received numerous IT and teaching certifications, which include Cisco Certified Network Professional, Praxis II in Technology, General Science, Administration and Supervision, and the CNMI Public School System Teaching Certificate in Secondary Education in General Sciences.

Prior to becoming a Director of Information Technology at NMC, Mr. Liwag was the Network Administrator at the CNMI Public School System for three years. During his time with PSS he also earned his certification in Technology, Administration and Supervision, General Science, and became an online high school Chemistry teacher to meet the needs of the CNMI Public School System. Mr. Liwag conducted numerous training sessions for the staff and faculty of the Public School System.

From 2002 to 2009, Mr. Liwag was a Lead Technical Manager at AT&T Global Services at Hawthorne, California. As a Lead Technical Manager, he was responsible for planning and executing in-house training initiatives to certify and recertify engineers within the AT&T Global Enterprise Network Services organization. He also conducted monthly performance reviews, presentations and weekly incident reports to Los Angeles County representatives and engineers. He managed an implementation team that deployed Cisco Enterprise Network equipment for the Los Angeles Department of Health Services (LADHS) and he planned and managed a 2-year E-Rate warranty maintenance project for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

Director of Admissions

On June 18, 2012 NMC's Director of Admissions transferred to an instructional faculty role within the School of Education. This department was evaluated by the Dean of Student Services who determined it would best serve the institution if this role could be combined with the Registrar position. On September 10, 2012 this position was advertised on Vacancy Announcement No. 12-048 [\[ER5:10\]](#) which required a master's degree in Education or related field plus four years of experience in a post-secondary education institution in the admissions and records area and one year of supervisory experience. With these requirements, the College was not successful in recruiting an adequate pool of qualified candidates. A sample of current vacancy announcements on HigherEdJobs.com was reviewed and the Dean of Student Services determined that peer institutions do not require Master's degrees for this position, and many institutions required only one year of experience in admissions and records. Accordingly, the position description in Vacancy Announcement 12-048 was revised and re-announced on March 13, 2013. Interviews were conducted on April 30, 2013 and the committee recommended appointing Manny Castro as the Director of Admissions/Registrar at NMC [\[ER5:11\]](#).

On May 28, 2013 Manny Castro was transferred from NMC's Financial Aid Office and is now the Director of Admissions/Registrar at Northern Marianas College. Prior to this post, Mr. Castro worked as a Financial Aid Counselor at NMC. In this capacity he helped students obtain federal, CNMI, and private scholarships and grants. He also worked as an Outreach Counselor with the College Access Challenge Grant Program, where he promoted programs that advanced the grant's mission of helping under-represented groups of students enroll and succeed in college. Mr. Castro also worked as Enrollment Manager for the Office of Admissions and Records, where he led the College's enrollment activities. Mr. Castro earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in Business Administration from the Eastern Oregon University's College of Business at Mt. Hood Community College.

Director, School of Education

During the October 2012 accreditation visit, the College was recruiting for the position of Director of its School of Education. This position was announced on June 29, 2012 on Vacancy Announcement 12-036 [\[ER5:12\]](#) at an annual salary of \$50,000 and received applications from 12 interested applicants. First interviews were held on September 13 and 14, 2012 and the top candidates were re-interviewed on September 28, 2012. Dr. Frank Trocki was hired on December 15, 2012. Dr. Trocki's arrival on Saipan was delayed until January 15, 2013 when he assumed his role as Director, School of Education. Unfortunately, Dr. Trocki departed the CNMI for personal reasons on February 9, 2013, and NMC was forced to re-post Vacancy Announcement 12-036. In response to this re-announcement, the College received eight applications [\[ER5:13\]](#). Interviews were held during the period between April 26 and May 1, 2013 and second interviews were held on May 17.

On May 24, 2013 Ms. Charlotte Cepeda was hired as the Director, School of Education. Ms. Cepeda received a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (graduated Magna Cum Laude) from the School of Education, NMC, CNMI and a M.Ed. in Teaching from Framingham University, Boston, MA. Prior to joining the College as full-time faculty member in 2010, Ms.

Cepeda was a classroom teacher in the CNMI Public School System (PSS) for four years. Ms. Cepeda has facilitated institutional and community professional development workshops for PSS and NMC and has gained experience with accreditation matters during her time with NMC's School of Education. Additionally, Ms. Cepeda has ten years of managerial experience in the private sector making her effective and efficient in the delegation and oversight of tasks. Ms. Cepeda's dedication to learners and commitment to the NMC community is evident as a recipient of the Instructional Faculty of the Year Award 2012.

Eligibility Requirement 13- Faculty

The institution has a substantial core of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The core is sufficient in size and experience to support all of the institution's educational programs. A clear statement of faculty responsibilities must include development and review of curriculum as well as assessment of learning.

*The Evaluation Team Report states that the institution has not established in policy the minimum qualifications for persons who are employed as faculty members, has not consistently conducted annual evaluations, and has not provided evaluations that are completed to faculty in a timely manner such that they can use the relevant information to improve their performance in the next semester. Many of the faculty graduate degrees are in teaching or education. Rather than in the discipline to which they are assigned to teach. **The 2012 Evaluation Team Report's Recommendation 3 also states that there needs to be improvement in this area.***

February 11, 2013 Action Letter

Descriptive Summary

The *October 2012 External Evaluation Report*, in relation to Eligibility Requirement # 13 stated, "While the College is in the process of hiring to sustain faculty levels, it has a core of qualified full-time faculty appropriate to the size of its student body. Although the current faculty members have appropriate qualifications, the team has recommended more consistency in the College's criteria for hiring new faculty."

Self-Evaluation

The Mission of the Northern Marianas College states, "Northern Marianas College, through its commitment to student learning, provides high quality, affordable and accessible educational programs and services for the individual and people of the Commonwealth."

The institution ensures that all academic instructional offerings fit the mission of the College and are evaluated through the Program Review Process under the Planning, Program Review Outcomes and Assessment Committee (PROAC) and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness as laid out in the *2013 Institutional Excellence Guide* [\[ER13:1\]](#).

The College offers the following academic degree programs: Bachelor of Science in Education, with concentrations in Early Childhood Education (ECE), Elementary Education, Rehabilitation

and Human Services (RH), and Special Education; Associate in Arts in Business and Liberal Arts; Associate in Science in Natural Resources Management and Nursing; and Associate in Applied Science in Criminal Justice, Hospitality Management, Business Administration with emphasis in Accounting, Business Management, and Computer Applications. [ER13:2] The College also serves the CNMI community through a variety of continuing education short-term training programs. The College Programs facilitate educational opportunities by providing educational services, skills intensive workforce education and adult training opportunities for business and industry, government, and other community organizations. It is the duty of the College to ensure the quality of its instructional programs by establishing and maintaining criteria defining minimum qualifications for its instructional faculty, and to consistently apply these criteria in assigning faculty members to instructional tasks within the institution.

Data demonstrate that the College maintains an adequate number of faculty who are deemed qualified to teach in the specialized areas that they have been assigned to teach. These data, as well as the number of courses offered, are based on student enrollment, student needs according to the Individual Degree Plan (IDP) for program degree completion, and full time faculty workloads [ER13:3]. Established full-time faculty positions are funded through appropriations and the adjunct faculty and full-time faculty overload are funded through the NMC Operational funds.

Actions Taken

In October of 2012, immediately following the exit report to the College by Dr. Gari Browning, the Academic Council of NMC met with Christopher Timmons, the HR Director, to discuss the finding regarding minimum qualifications for faculty. [ER13:4] From this meeting, an Ad Hoc Committee of the Academic Council was recommended, and appointed by the Dean of Academic Programs and Services (APS). The Ad Hoc Committee consisted of four full-time faculty, two department chairs, the HRO Director, and the Dean of APS. Due to schedule conflicts and the semester break, the first meeting of the ad hoc committee was finally held in February of 2013, and the committee continued to meet until May 2013. Unfortunately the efforts of the committee were unsuccessful due to inconsistent attendance, conflicts in meeting times, resistance to the purpose, and low levels of contribution as was necessary. As a result the committee itself was unable to make a recommendation regarding the matter.

Throughout the process, dialogue occurred and feedback was exchanged among the Ad Hoc Committee members and also by way of Standard IIA meetings, APS Leadership Meetings, and Academic Council meetings. The Dean of APS provided updates and directed APS department chairs to give feedback [ER13:5]. Ultimately a proposal was floated which demonstrated the College's commitment to quality instruction and reflected its loyalty to and compassion for existing faculty members who would be impacted. Specifically, the idea was to adopt a robust policy reflective of national practices, but to include a 24-month transition period during which time existing faculty members would continue to teach in their present role while taking graduate coursework to meet the new requirements. This proposal was informally discussed with President Hart, who out of an abundance of caution sought input from Commission staff with respect to its palatability. Much to the institution's dismay, the Commission's response was to

adhere to the External Evaluation Team's Recommendations and to follow the Standards. Following receipt of this information, the president called the Commission staff in the presence of the Director of Human Resources, the Dean of APS, and each of the APS Department Chairs and Directors. Based upon the feedback received during the call, the president instructed the Dean of APS to return to the Committee for further revisions consistent with guidance received, that there would not be a transition period for the Minimum Instructional Faculty Qualifications. This caused significant uproar on campus and affected individuals expressed significant distrust of the administration as a result.

In June of 2013, the Dean of APS, decided to end the Ad Hoc Committee's work, and brought forward a policy in the required format that was authored by the Director of Human Resources and the Dean of APS to fit the needs of NMC. The proposed policy set in motion a meeting of the APS Leadership Team with the help of the Director of Human Resources over several days to produce a set of procedures to accompany the policy. This group researched and reviewed the minimum qualification policies and procedures of community colleges and universities. The College also sought the advice of a regional university vice-president for instruction, a visiting national nursing consultant, with continued guidance of NMC's Director, Human Resources and Legal Counsel (HRO). The proposed policy was presented to College Council for further review and feedback that would eventually be a recommendation to the president.

The faculty representatives in College Council did voice their concerns about the impact that the proposed policy and procedures would have on faculty as presented on June 20, 2013. A recommendation [\[ER13:6\]](#) was forwarded to the president, who reviewed it once again, and determined that the proposed policy was consistent with national norms on minimum qualifications for post-secondary institutions and did fit the requirements for the academic programs at NMC. Furthermore, the college did not have the luxury of time for continued debate given the present Show Cause status. It was noted that there was significant input, discussion and debate by affected constituencies at the Ad Hoc committee stage, and College Council, of their strong opposition (namely that current faculty should be "grandfathered" or that they should be deemed qualified based upon experience notwithstanding any deficiencies in academic credentials which had already been taken into consideration).

The Minimum Instructional Faculty Qualifications BOR Policy No. 5005 [\[ER13:7\]](#) was placed on the agenda of the Board of Regents' July 31, 2013 meeting for a first reading. Present in the meeting along with the president, were the Dean of APS, the HRO Director, and the Faculty Senate Officers and several instructional faculty members to answer any question that might arise. During the 'Public Comment Period' of this meeting a faculty member spoke against the minimum qualifications policy. After much discussion and debate over the duration of the extended meeting (August 6 through August 9), the BOR adopted the BOR Policy 5005 and its implementing Procedure 5005.1 upon the first reading on August 7, 2013. [\[ER13:8\]](#). The president adopted minor revisions to Procedure 5005.1 [\[ER13:9\]](#) based upon feedback received from department chairs and the Dean of APS. Procedure 5005.1 identifies teaching disciplines by catalog category, and specifies the related disciplines in which degrees should be held to satisfy BOR Policy 5005.

It is important to note that the president met with her direct reports and academic department chairs for the better part of a day to identify options for each affected faculty member in other areas of the institution that were consistent with their backgrounds, academic achievements, and areas of academic expertise. All affected faculty members were given options to continue working at the institution with no reduction in salary or benefits.

The minimum qualifications process was difficult for all involved. It was important however to the College that course offerings under the associate and bachelor's degrees are transferable as the students transfer to colleges and universities across all regions of the United States. Keeping this in mind, the president, Management Team, APS Leadership, and Human Resource Office, worked diligently to include a plan for all faculty and in assisting all faculty affected by applying a realignment of specialty areas according to credentials reviewed in their personnel files. The APS Leadership Chairs, Director, and Coordinators, worked together to (1) meet with each faculty member by requesting a scheduled one-on-one meeting prior to returning or during the full-time faculty's official first week back in the fall; (2) identify classes that match current full-time faculty credentials in meeting at a minimum their contractual requirement of 15 credits per semester and, (3) to earmark as needed in the upcoming 2014 budget proposal some funds to assist affected faculty with their 18 graduate credits in the discipline area necessary to qualify to teach in a specialized area. Although, some faculty were not cooperative of these changes, many others were supportive of the shift that commits NMC to specific criteria when determining minimum qualifications for all faculty positions.

The institution has experienced a range of challenges regarding the implementation of the minimum qualifications policy and procedures, including, but not limited to the following:

- Current full-time faculty who were hired to teach specific concentrations were now deemed not qualified. For example, an instructor in Early Childhood Education (ECE), has no graduate credits in ECE, has been relocated to teaching classes in Elementary Education; An instructor in Languages and Humanities, who was teaching English and PE with a graduate degree in history, is now teaching History as an instructor under Social Sciences and Fine Arts; A Fine Arts Instructor, with a Master's degree in Education has received a designation as a Master of Contemporary Visual Arts, by the Northern Marianas Humanities Council, and therefore is able to continue teaching Art classes.
- Because of the minimum qualification requirements, the College postponed the start of 42 classes which are now offered as accelerated classes. This was done so qualified personnel were able to be interviewed and hired to meet the needs of the course schedule for fall 2013.
- Some revenue generating courses in Fine Arts, Health and Athletics that are quite popular with students were cancelled, due to a decreased number of faculty meeting the new minimum qualification standards.
- One full-time faculty chose not to meet with the respective department chairperson as requested in relation to a new and proposed teaching assignment. Ultimately, the faculty refused to teach anything other than what had been previously agreed upon, courses this person was ineligible to teach under the new minimum qualification standards. This particular faculty is no longer at NMC, and has since filed an appeal to the Employee Appeals Committee.

- The adjunct pool has also been affected, and all have been informed by their respective departments as to the new standard and whether they can teach at this time, until they meet the minimum qualifications as determined by the course(s) they want to be considered to teach.

These are but a few of the challenges experienced by the College in implementing NMC's Minimum Instructional Faculty Qualifications in an effort to be in compliance with norms and trends established by other institutions across the country. One recurring question has been, "Why is NMC now being cited for minimum qualifications for faculty when for years it has not been an issue?"

Some faculty members have already begun coursework to meet the newly adopted minimum qualification requirements and will return to their previous post as early as spring 2014. Finally, it should also be noted that the Dean of APS proposed to set aside funding in the APS- 2014 budget request to assist affected faculty members in obtaining the credits needed to satisfy the new minimum qualification requirements. This proposal was approved and resources have been allocated to make this possible.

Additionally, to add consistency to the evaluation of both full-time and adjunct faculty, the scheduling of "Student Appraisal of Course and Instructor" [\[ER13:11\]](#) has been set by Academic Council to be administered three weeks prior to the end of every semester. Results are now made available the day grades are submitted for the semester. These actions provide department and program supervisors time to review and conference with their respective faculty about course and instructional performance. A copy of the questions included on this evaluation are available to all for viewing on the NMC Website.

A second form of evaluation for full-time instructional faculty is administered annually and overseen by the Human Resources Office. The annual evaluation instrument for faculty members is the NMC Instructional Faculty Evaluation Form [\[ER13:12\]](#). This evaluation is required to be administered by department chairs and directors to measure performance. Areas evaluated include: Instruction, Services to Students, Service to College and Community, Professionalism and Personal Growth, and Program Review & Outcomes Assessment. Space is also provided for, and department chairs are encouraged to provide a subjective narrative of performance in this regard.

III. ACCJC Standards

Standard II.C.2

The institution evaluates library and other learning support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

Descriptive Summary

The Department of Library Programs & Services (LPS) and other NMC Learning Support Services (LSS) such as the English Language Lab Tutoring Services, College Access Challenge Grant Tutoring Services, International Student Services, Career Center, Computer Lab Services, Distance Education, Media Services, and Disability Support Services, participate in ongoing program review to ensure that departmental activities coincide with campus educational objectives. This is accomplished through the regular evaluation of Student Learning and Administrative Unit Outcomes and participation in the Program Review Outcomes and Assessment Committee (PROAC). The information gathered from this process is used to improve the quality of services that contribute to student learning success.

As indicated in Recommendation #2 of the Action letter of February 11, the library's Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) were insufficient in assessing information literacy instruction. At the time of the action letter the library had established and assessed a single SLO: "*Students will be able to satisfy their information needs when utilizing library resources.*" While this measures some student learning, it does not specifically address the theme of information literacy. Many of the LSS departments had similarly inadequate SLOs.

Self-Evaluation

The mission of LPS at the Northern Marianas College (NMC) is "to provide resources and an environment that enhances and encourages the college's academic and community-based programs." In addition to this mission, the library promotes information literacy through a variety of programs and workshops.

The library's collection development process supports the college's curriculum and student research. The primary goal of the library is to offer information services to the campus community and maintain a collection of resources reflecting the needs of NMC's instructional programs, student population, and faculty. The library strives to offer increased access to online resources and electronic databases through EBSCO and the Directory of Open Access Journals [\[II.C 1\]](#).

The NMC information literacy program includes ongoing integration with BE 111: College Success, a mandatory course for all new students at NMC. [\[II.C 2\]](#) The library also offers orientation sessions that introduce the fundamentals of information literacy and academic research.

Upon analysis of LPS and LSS SLOs, NMC determined that substantial improvements were needed to fully comply with Standard II.C.2. It was determined that these programs fully assess a minimum of two SLOs at predetermined intervals.

Actions Taken

In response to the February 2013 Action Letter, NMC established a team of representatives from the aforementioned LSS departments to address Standard II.C.2. This group held weekly meetings to develop and assess SLOs [\[II.C 3\]](#). A minimum of two SLOs were established and assessed in each of these areas [\[II.C 4\]](#).

Using NMC's 6-Year Outcomes Assessment document, each LSS department has established a schedule to evaluate a minimum of two SLOs using the Nichols and Nichols 5-Column Model at staggered two-year intervals to ensure sustained compliance with Standard II.C.2 [\[II.C 5\]](#). All LSS programs have gathered evidence indicating the efficacy of their SLOs. This resultant data is used for establishing departmental improvement plans (seen in Column 5 of [\[II.C 4\]](#)).

All members of the Standard II.C team have undergone several SLO and accreditation training sessions with instructional faculty [\[II.C 6\]](#). The LSS SLOs were revisited by the Dean of Academic Programs and Services (APS) on October 4, 2013 [\[II.C 7\]](#). This workshop ensured that all SLOs were fully assessed, using language and techniques similar to those utilized by APS. At the recommendation of the Dean, all LSS SLOs were alphanumerically coded for ease of use and each department has posted its SLOs to ensure that these objectives are clearly communicated to the campus community.

The main objective of the Standard II.C group was to formulate SLOs and utilize them as a meaningful and sustainable means of assessment. The LPS department launched a formal information literacy program, which was integrated with several required courses to ensure uniform delivery to all NMC students. NMC has adopted the American Library Association (ALA) and Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) definition of information literacy: "Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information." *American Library Association. Presidential Committee on Information Literacy. Final Report. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1989.)*

The library has developed an advanced research session focused on evaluating and selecting information resources, a crucial component of the ALA definition of Information Literacy. The efficacy of this training is measured by a quiz and is connected to the Student Learning Outcome LPS.PLO 10: *Students will display the information literacy skill of accurately evaluating an information source* [\[II.C 8\]](#). This Program Learning Outcome (PLO) is one of five Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that are used to evaluate the efficacy of this instruction [\[II.C 9\]](#). Additionally, LPS staff collaborated with local librarians and successfully petitioned the CNMI governor to officially proclaim October as Information Literacy Month [\[II.C 10\]](#).

The LSS programs at NMC initiated assessments of at least two SLOs for their respective programs during the spring 2013 term and completed these assessments by the end of summer.

The results of the assessments are contained in Form 1 [\[II.C 4\]](#) and will be used by each program to strengthen future assessments of these same SLOs in accordance with the institution's program review cycle as well as inform activities and plans for the improvement of student learning. On October 4, 2013, all LSS program representatives participated in an SLO workshop to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Review all SLOs and improvement plans with faculty;
2. Establish a PROAC 6-Year Outcomes and Assessment Plan for each LSS program;
3. Create a simple departmental code for each SLO.

As a result of the SLO workshop and ongoing efforts of the Standard II.C Team to improve assessment of SLOs among LSS programs, the following actions have been completed to address this recommendation:

- All LSS programs have established between 10 and 12 Student Learning and Administrative Unit Outcomes (SLOs and AUOs) to assess the efficacy of student learning, processes, and services provided by each program;
- All LSS programs have committed to measuring each established SLO at least twice over the next six years;
- All LSS program SLOs and AUOs are scheduled for assessment in accordance with the institution's 6-Year Outcomes Assessment Schedule;
- All LSS program SLOs and AUOs are alphanumerically coded to improve identification and mapping of each statement within planning documents (i.e. operational plans);
- All LSS program SLOs and AUOs are posted in public areas within each respective program areas.

Establishing outcomes and reporting a schedule for assessment of these outcomes in accordance with PROAC's 6-Year Outcomes Schedule will now have each program's efforts at assessment tracked, monitored, and evaluated by PROAC. During the cycles established by PROAC for outcomes assessment, all LSS programs will be responsible and held accountable for completing Form 1s detailing their assessment plan and results of assessment during each cycle. The results of each cycle's assessment will be reported into each LSS program's annual program review report in a systematic process on a Form 2 in the second year of the cycle and will contain recommendations for improving the program. Approved recommendations will then be used for planning purposes and to inform resource allocation to programs.

In all nine LSS programs, SLOs have been incorporated into the program review process along with a two-year staggered assessment schedule. The programs at NMC answerable to Standard II.C.2 have demonstrated their commitment to utilizing SLOs to ensure continuous improvement and sustained student learning.

Standard III.A.1

The Institution ensures the integrity and quality of its programs and services by employing personnel who are qualified by appropriate education, training and experience to provide and support these programs and services.

Descriptive Summary

In its Action Letter, the Commission referenced in connection with Eligibility Requirement 13, and in Recommendation No. 3, the need to adopt minimum faculty qualifications, and in connection therewith, the need to fully comply with Standards III.A.1 and III.A.2. The *October 2012 External Evaluation Team Report* stated in part:

“...to meet the Standards and assure the integrity and quality of programs and services, the team recommends that the College develop, and consistently apply, clear criteria in determining qualifications for faculty (Eligibility Requirement 13-Faculty, III.A.1, III.A.2).”

The *October 2012 External Evaluation Report* went on to state:

“There is no mention in the Self Evaluation or materials reviewed during the visit of the College’s minimum educational qualifications for teaching college-level courses. There are currently eight job openings advertised on the College website: five faculty, one librarian, one director and one staff position. The math/physical science position requires a bachelor’s degree. The Nursing position calls for a Bachelor’s in Nursing with a Master’s in Education; a Bachelor’s alone may be considered depending on qualifications and experience. The common standard for teaching college courses is a master’s degree or the equivalent. The other full-time faculty positions advertised require master’s degrees. While the degrees of adjunct faculty are not included in the catalog, the personnel files of part-time faculty show various levels and degrees for specific courses taught. Regulations are not in place for minimum qualifications, nor are clear equivalency guidelines and processes for their assessment. The Position Justification Form does not include a section for establishing minimum qualifications. There is a lack of uniformity in the determination of basic qualifications for faculty.”

Self Evaluation

In evaluating its Policies and Procedures regarding faculty qualifications, the College noted that in general terms, NMC Procedure 4418 required full-time faculty to possess a master’s degree. Specifically this procedure stated “...Any instructor employed by Northern Marianas College who does not possess a master’s degree will have as part of his/her file a three year professional education plan. The instructor’s immediate supervisor will include as part of the individual’s evaluation comments related to progress in meeting the objective of this plan.” The College recognized the need to bolster this requirement through adoption of a board policy establishing minimum qualifications for all instructional faculty, and has taken action in this regard (see Actions Taken below). The new policy on minimum qualifications for faculty works hand in hand with the College’s position classification system for staff [\[IIIA1:1\]](#). All Northern Marianas

College Vacancy Announcements clearly define the minimum qualifications for the position being advertised [IIIA1:2]. These minimum qualifications are derived from the College's position classification system, which aligns classified positions with the requisite education (degree level) and experience [IIIA1:1 and IIIA1:2]. Applications are reviewed in the context of the advertised criteria, and those candidates meeting the minimum education and experience are certified by the reviewer (generally a Personnel Specialist) and the Director of Human Resources before interviews are scheduled [IIIA:3].

Actions Taken

Within days of the October 2012 External Evaluation Team's exit session, the Director of Human Resources met with the College's Academic Council to begin the process to develop a more robust policy on minimum faculty qualifications. At this meeting, the Dean of Academic Programs and Services decided that an ad hoc committee would be formed to research this issue and make a recommendation. The ad hoc committee included both faculty and administrators who reviewed relevant policies from other institutions and in some cases, where established by accrediting standards, the standards of such regional accrediting bodies. The Director of Human Resources proposed that Northern Marianas College pattern its policy along the lines of the Faculty Credentials Guidelines established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. After an approximate six month discussion and debate over the impact this would have on existing faculty, the Dean of Academic Programs and Services disbanded the ad hoc committee and made her recommendation to the president. The recommended policy is consistent with national norms and is substantially similar to that of the Southern Association [IIIA1.4]. On August 7, 2013, the Northern Marianas College Board of Regents (BOR) adopted this policy, and it is now BOR Policy No. 5005. Generally speaking, Policy No. 5005 requires at least a master's degree and 18 graduate level credits in the teaching discipline for bachelor's degree courses, or associate degree courses intended for transfer; and a bachelor's degree in the teaching discipline for associate degree courses not intended for transfer into a Baccalaureate Degree [IIIA1.1].

Based upon an assumption that Policy No. 5005 would be adopted, prior to the beginning of the fall 2013 semester, the Dean of Academic Programs and Services, together with her department chairs, reviewed the credentials of all existing faculty and determined whether they were qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience to teach in their assigned disciplines. It was determined that approximately one third of the College's full-time faculty would need to be reassigned to other fields of instruction if the Policy were to be adopted. As a result of this review, and in anticipation of the board's adoption of BOR Policy No 5005, the College authorized the retention of ten new full-time instructors.

Because of the timing of the board's adoption of BOR Policy No. 5005, hiring of these new faculty members was delayed, and commencement of 42 course sections were delayed until September 16, 2013. With this additional time, the College was able to recruit new qualified instructors as follows: five for Languages and Humanities; one for the School of Education; and two for the Business department. Additional courses were staffed with qualified adjunct instructors.

BOR Policy No. 5005 applies to all instructional faculty (full and part-time). For fall semester 2013, all adjunct faculty members were screened against the new policy prior to assignment to ensure that they too met the minimum qualifications established by the Board of Regents.

Standard III.A.1.a

Criteria, qualifications and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publically stated. Job descriptions accurately reflect position duties, responsibility and authority. Criteria for selection of faculty include knowledge of the subject matter or service to be performed (as determined by individuals with discipline experience), effective teaching, scholarly activities, and potential to contribute to the mission of the institution. Institutional faculty play a significant role in selection of new faculty. Degrees held by faculty and administrators are from institutions accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting agencies. Degrees from non-U.S. institutions are recognized only if equivalence has been established.

Descriptive Summary

The selection process for hiring personnel is public and transparent, including the skill set desired for each potential candidate. Each position posted includes a thorough and accurate summary of the roles, responsibilities and current needs. Candidates are considered based on training and expertise on subject matter or service performed. Criteria also include expectations for contributing to student success and a serious, engaged, and inclusive college community. As required by accreditation standards, degrees held by faculty and administrators are from institutions accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting agencies, and degrees from non-U.S. institutions are recognized only if equivalence has been established.

Self-Evaluation

“Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publically stated.”

The College is required by policy to hire qualified personnel for all positions, and all vacant and newly created positions must be publically announced for 15 days before being filled. Vacancy announcements are posted at the College, on its website, often in the local newspapers and in nationally read publications and websites such as higheredjobs.com. Announcements must contain among other things, a listing of the duties and responsibilities of the position; minimum bona fide occupational qualifications for the position to include general experience, specialized experience, education and other qualitative evaluation elements deemed appropriate and necessary for the position [\[III.A.1:2\]](#). Eligibility for employment at the Northern Marianas College is based upon minimum qualifications and competencies. As an equal opportunity employer, the College seeks to select the most qualified eligible candidates for all positions [\[III.A.1:6\]](#).

“Job descriptions accurately reflect position duties, responsibility and authority.”

College Procedure 5010.4 introduced at College Council on August 30, 2013 and adopted by the president on September 30, 2013 [IIIA.1:7] requires the College to maintain job descriptions for all positions, for which descriptions may be revised by the College from time to time as needs arise. An employee's personnel file contains his or her most current job description. The college is reviewing existing position descriptions for accuracy and aligning positions by Standard Occupational Codes and incorporating descriptions therefrom. Administrative support staff, program managers, and project coordinator positions have recently been evaluated by a third party for accuracy of duties, responsibility and authority and revisions are being made consistent with procedure 5010.4. Additionally, procedure 5010.4 permits any employee to request a job audit and possible reclassification when he or she believes his or her actual duties and responsibilities differ from those stated on his or her job description.

“Criteria for selection of faculty include knowledge of the subject matter or service to be performed (as determined by individuals with discipline experience), effective teaching, scholarly activities, and potential to contribute to the mission of the institution.”

BOR Policy No. 5005 states:

“When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, Northern Marianas College gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline that the faculty member will teach. Additional cumulative factors considered include competence, effectiveness and capacity such as related work experience in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards and other documented evidence of competencies and achievement that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes.” [IIIA.1:5]

College Procedure 5002.2 states in part:

“...the interview committee must turn in interview questions at least forty-eight (48) hours before the scheduled interview. Interview questions that are formulated must be consistent and asked of all candidates... In accordance with ACCJC Standard III.A.1.a, instructional faculty and academic department chairs shall comprise a majority of the members of the interview committee for, and shall play a significant role in the selection of instructional faculty and academic department chair positions. During the interview, all candidates for instructional faculty positions must be able to demonstrate subject matter competency, satisfactory teaching skills, and ability to aid the college in meeting its mission, goals and objectives. The Dean will select an appropriate topic. This topic shall be provided to the candidates at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance prior to the second/final interview. The lesson/presentation may take up to ten (10) minutes.” [IIIA.1:3].”

Examples of interview questions for the most recent faculty hires (since restructuring of policies and procedures) are referenced as evidence [IIIA.1:8].

“Institutional faculty play a significant role in selection of new faculty.”

Procedure 5002.2 requires at least half of each faculty interviewing committee to be comprised of faculty members. Candidates are reviewed based upon responses to the same questions, and

the committee recommends the most qualified candidates for selection by the hiring authority. By participating on this committee, institutional faculty participate in the selection in many ways: they shape the direction the interview will take by submitting proposed questions for the actual interview; they propose presentation topics; and they give feedback on the performance and suitability of each candidate. With this input and feedback, the hiring authority is armed with appropriate data and impressions to make the best hiring recommendation for his or her department.

“Degrees held by faculty and administrators are from institutions accredited by recognized U.S. accrediting agencies. Degrees from non-U.S. institutions are recognized only if equivalence has been established.”

BOR Policy No. 5005 states:

“In addition to the subjective factors described above, instructional faculty members shall at a minimum possess a degree from an institution accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education, or a non-US institution with recognized equivalence in accordance with the following:” and then goes on to define the degree requirements by course type.

Actions Taken

To ensure compliance with this standard, the Dean of Academic Programs and Services and each of her academic department heads in conjunction with the Human Resources Office conducted an audit or review of each personnel file for instructors assigned courses for the fall 2013 semester. Each transcript was reviewed by the employee’s supervisor (department chair or director) to confirm he/she met the proposed minimum degree requirements, and only degrees from accredited US institutions were considered unless a certified credentials evaluation was attached. One existing faculty member was required to obtain and provide a credentials evaluation as a result. [\[IIIA1:9\]](#) Additionally, all vacancy announcements clearly incorporate this requirement. Candidates will not be deemed qualified and allowed to interview unless they have provided an eligible transcript or credentials evaluation, or have committed to providing one before the selection process is complete (in which case certification of qualification will be conditional).

Standard III.A.1.b

The institution assures the effectiveness of its human resources by evaluating all personnel systematically and at stated intervals. The institution establishes written criteria for evaluating all personnel, including performance of assigned duties and participation in institutional responsibilities and other activities appropriate to their expertise. Evaluation processes seek to assess effectiveness of personnel and encourage improvement. Actions taken following evaluations are formal, timely, and documented.

Descriptive Summary

To accurately assess the effectiveness of its personnel, a routine evaluation is needed. The criteria for evaluating all personnel include the responsibilities and activities of the position in

relation to the employee's subject expertise. Any effort to improve assessment is encouraged, and actions related to this work must be complete, timely and documented.

Self-Evaluation

“The institution assures the effectiveness of its human resources by evaluating all personnel systematically and at stated intervals.”

Procedure 5010.7 [\[IIIA1:10\]](#) introduced to College Council on August 30, 2013 and adopted by the president on September 30, 2013 requires that supervisors evaluate the performance of each of their assigned employees annually, at or near the end of each fiscal year using established forms provided by the Human Resources Office. Previously, evaluations were performed at or near the anniversary date of each employee. This recent change has been made in conjunction with a move to adjust contract terms to tie to the College's fiscal year, and to create a focused “evaluation season” as opposed to the previous ad hoc approach that left some evaluations undone. This will enable the College to better tie the evaluation process to the budgetary process and program review, and to allow feedback to be given at or near the beginning of the academic year.

Evaluation teams have noted a lack of consistency and a need to be more systematic and timely with the evaluation process. For fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, the College's completion rate for employee evaluations was 30 percent. For FY ending September 30, 2013, a Presidential Directive was issued on September 9, 2013 requiring all evaluations to be completed and submitted to the Human Resources Office no later than September 30, 2013 [\[IIIA1:11\]](#). Supervisors were notified that their own evaluation would be affected if they failed to comply with this directive. The completion rate as of this deadline (including review and acknowledgement of personnel) was ninety-five percent, and by the date of this report completion was at ninety-nine percent. With this re-alignment the College is poised to consistently meet this requirement going forward.

“The institution establishes written criteria for evaluating all personnel, including performance of assigned duties and participation in institutional responsibilities and other activities appropriate to their expertise. Evaluation processes seek to assess effectiveness of personnel and encourage improvement.”

As described above (and in previous submissions), the College has a system in place for the annual evaluation of its full-time staff, faculty and administrators through a systematic formal written process using established evaluation forms provided by the Human Resources Office. Evaluation forms are tailored to the type of position an employee holds, whether he/she be staff or faculty. Staff and administrators are evaluated on factors including professional competencies, interpersonal skills, service, professionalism and growth, and program review and outcomes assessment. Faculty members are evaluated on these factors as well as instruction and service to students. These forms clearly provide written criteria for evaluations using four rating grades: Excellent, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory on various topics that apply to the duties and responsibilities assigned to each employee [\[IIIA.1:12\]](#). Recommendations are made for professional development and areas needing improvement. Supervisors often provide a

descriptive narrative with more in depth feedback specifically tailored to the individual employee and the achievement of measurable goals and outcomes.

“Actions taken following evaluations are formal, timely, and documented.”

As stated above, a Presidential Directive was issued on September 9, 2013 requiring all evaluations to be complete and submitted to the Human Resources Office no later than September 30, 2013. The completion rate for the current cycle as of this deadline (including review and acknowledgement of personnel) was ninety-five percent. By aligning contract terms, budget cycle and employee evaluations, The College has put a system in place to ensure timely evaluation. By using written evaluation instruments, the Human Resource Office ensures that evaluations are formal and documented. By establishing a procedure requiring evaluations to be complete before the start of a new fiscal year (and the before the supervisor’s first paycheck is cut in the new fiscal year), it is anticipated that evaluations will be timely. The evaluation process is not complete until the evaluation is reviewed with the person being evaluated. This ensures an avenue for feedback, and such feedback is evidenced by the employee’s signature.

Standard III.A.1.c

Faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those outcomes.

Descriptive Summary

Personnel having responsibility for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes are evaluated on effectiveness in producing those outcomes. Instructors and other such faculty are given timely feedback as to this effectiveness, through and annual evaluations.

Self- Evaluation

The Dean of Academic Program & Services hosts professional development days before each semester to educate faculty on student learning outcomes (SLO). The effectiveness of instruction is assured through measurable assessment tools used in the evaluation of full-time and adjunct instructors. The teaching and learning process is a duty of the faculty who are directly responsible for producing student learning outcomes in courses offered at the institution. Instructional full-time and adjunct faculty are tasked to promote student learning and success through instruction that is aligned with the College’s mission and its program review process.

Each faculty member must list the course SLO's in their syllabi, and use them in connection with the assessment of their course(s). Effective instructional techniques and tools such as group projects, hands-on activities, interactive applications, use of audio/visual media, inviting guest speakers, going on field-trips, cooperative groupings, or classroom discussions, are some components that are evaluated by students, faculty-peers, or department supervisors, in measuring instructional ability and alignment to student learning outcomes by instructional faculty. The primary process that looks at application of SLOs by faculty is the 2-year Staggered Course Assessment (SCA) tool used by Academic programs. The SCA tool is determined at the

department level by the Chair and Faculty in deciding which SLOs to assess within a two-year timeline, how achievement will be measured, and what evidence will be collected. The effectiveness of SLOs is then evaluated by the Program and results are reported to the Academic Council. The review helps programs and the Academic Council evaluate the need for changes or improvement of courses, and to make recommendations that will assist faculty in their responsibility for student learning. Finally, the annual evaluation instrument for faculty members requires department chairs and directors to measure performance in achieving student learning outcomes. Space is also provided for, and department chairs are encouraged to provide a subjective narrative of performance in this regard.

Actions Taken

None.

Standard III.A.1.d

The institution upholds a written code of professional ethics for all of its personnel.

Descriptive Summary

To ensure ethical conduct of its Board of Regents and its personnel, the College has established in policy, codes of conduct and ethics for its board and personnel.

Self-Evaluation

Board of Regents Policy Manual Part VII defined the College's expectations with respect to the conduct, rules and expectations of its personnel. Part VII. C provided that with a few exceptions, College personnel must not solicit or accept any gift, gratuity, favor, entertainment, loan or other thing of monetary value from a person seeking business or financial relations with the College; conducts operations that are regulated by the College; or has interests that may be affected by the employee's performance of official duties. Part VII.F described the College's policy with respect to political activities.

As part of its practice of periodic policy review, and in furtherance of the previously identified need to separate policy from procedure, the Board of Regents has adopted new policies that include a formal Employee Code of Conduct; Code of Conduct for the Board of Regents; Integrity and Ethics Policy; and Political Activities Policy. These new policies supersede the aforementioned Board of Regents Policy Manual [\[IIIA1.13\]](#).

It was previously noted by the October 2012 External Evaluation Team that NMC personnel had a pattern and practice of circumventing the chain of command and taking issues of personal concern directly to the Board of Regents, which undermined the authority and office of the president. The *October 2012 External Evaluation Report* noted that the existence of Honorary Regents perpetuated this problem. The College has taken action to remedy this deficiency, and with the actions taken (as described below) it fully meets this standard.

Actions Taken

On August 9, 2013, The Board of Regents adopted new codes of conduct for the Board of Regents (BOR Policy No. 1014) and NMC Personnel (BOR Policy No. 5000); a new policy on political activities (BOR Policy No. 5001); and a new policy on Integrity and Ethics (BOR Policy No. 5003) [\[IIIA1.13\]](#). Prior to adoption of these policies, on June 6, 2013 the Board of Regents took action to remove the honorary regents from the board. With these actions the College fully meets this standard.

Standard III.A.2

The institution maintains a sufficient number of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The institution has a sufficient number of staff and administrators with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support the institution's mission and purpose.

Descriptive Summary

With respect to staff and administrators, the October 2012 External Evaluation Team found deficiencies with respect to administrative capacity. The College has worked tirelessly to address the evaluation team and Commission's concerns. Specifically, at the time of the external evaluation team's October visit, the College had vacancies in the Chief Financial Officer, Director of Information Technology, Director of Admissions and Records / Registrar, positions as well as lower level positions within the library and other administrative support areas of the institution.

Self-Evaluation

As a result of the difficulty NMC experienced in filling the Chief Financial Officer position, the College had included these responsibilities in the Dean of Administration position. The president monitored and was generally happy with the results of this restructuring. However, upon receipt of the Commission's February 11, 2013 Action Letter, the College immediately took action to re-advertise the CFO position at a more competitive rate of pay and with revised qualifications. The College acknowledged the need to fill the Director of Admissions and Records / Registrar, and Director of IT vacancies as well. With the actions taken (described below) the College has met its needs with respect to key administrative positions, and is well equipped to support the institution's mission and purpose.

Actions Taken

After various amendments and adjustments to requirements and compensation advertised, the institution was able to solicit a sufficient number of qualified applicants and ultimately hired Tracy Guerrero as NMC's new Chief Financial Officer on April 1, 2013. Tracy Guerrero holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from U.C. Berkeley and an MBA with an emphasis in Finance and Entrepreneurship from California State University East Bay. Ms. Guerrero worked as a Senior Analyst for the U.S. Government Accountability Office in San Francisco

for seven years and the Administrative Director of the CNMI Judiciary for five years before accepting the position as Chief Financial Officer for the Northern Marianas College in May 2013. She is also the former Chair and current member of the Board of Directors of the Northern Marianas Humanities Council. [\[IIIA2:1\]](#)

The College experienced difficulty in recruiting a qualified Director of Information Technology. Recruitment began on September 3, 2010 with Vacancy Announcement No. 12-054 for a Director, Office of Information Technology. NMC was not successful in recruiting an adequate pool of qualified candidates and considered other alternatives to ensure the responsibilities and duties of this position could otherwise be fulfilled. However, after receipt of the Commission's February 11, 2013, the president determined it to be in the best interest of the College to advertise the position as Administrative Director, Information Technology, making the position report directly to the president at a higher ungraded salary. On April 2, 2013 the president approved the hire of Jonathan Liwag as NMC's Administrative Director, Information Technology. Mr. Liwag received his Master's degree in Leadership and Organizational Studies in 2009 and his Bachelor of Science degree in Management Information Systems in 2007 at the Azusa Pacific University. He also attended college at De La Salle University in the Philippines. Mr. Liwag has received numerous IT and teaching certifications, which include Cisco Certified Network Professional, Praxis II in Technology, General Science, Administration and Supervision, and the CNMI Public School System Teaching Certificate in Secondary Education in General Sciences [\[IIIA2:2\]](#).

Following the transfer of NMC's Director of Admissions to an instructional faculty role within the School of Education, this department was evaluated by the Dean of Student Services who determined it would best serve the institution if this role be combined with the Registrar position [\[IIIA2:2\]](#). On September 10, 2012 this position was advertised on Vacancy Announcement No. 12-048 which required a master's degree in Education or related field plus four years of experience in a post-secondary education institution in the admissions and records area and one year of supervisory experience. With these requirements, the College was not successful in recruiting an adequate pool of qualified candidates. A sample of current vacancy announcements for similar positions was reviewed, and the Dean of Student Services determined that peer institutions do not require master's degrees and many institutions required only one year of experience in admissions and records. Accordingly, the position description was revised and the vacancy re-announced on March 13, 2013. On May 28, 2013 Manny Castro was transferred from the College's Financial Aid Office to fill the position. Manny T. Castro is the Director of Admissions/Registrar at Northern Marianas College. Prior to this post, Mr. Castro worked as a Financial Aid Counselor at NMC. In this capacity he helped students obtain federal, CNMI, and private scholarships and grants. He also worked as an Outreach Counselor with the College Access Challenge Grant Program, where he promoted programs that advanced the grant's mission of helping underrepresented groups of students enroll and succeed in college. Mr. Castro also worked as Enrollment Manager for the Office of Admissions and Records, where he led the college's enrollment activities [\[IIIA2:3\]](#)

During the October 2012 accreditation visit, the College was recruiting for the position of Director of its School of Education. This position was announced on June 29, 2012 on Vacancy Announcement 12-036 and the College received applications from 12 interested applicants. First

interviews were held on September 13 and 14, 2012 and the top candidates were re-interviewed on September 28, 2012. Dr. Frank Trocki was hired on December 15, 2012. Dr. Troki's arrival on Saipan was delayed until January 15, 2013 when he assumed his role as Director, School of Education.

Unfortunately, Dr. Troki departed the CNMI for personal reasons on February 9, 2013 and NMC was forced to re-post Vacancy Announcement 12-036. In response to this re-announcement, the College received eight applications. Interviews were held during the period between April 26 and May 1, 2013 and second interviews were held on May 17. On May 24, 2013 Ms. Charlotte Cepeda was promoted to fill the role of Director, School of Education [\[IIIA.2:4\]](#).

The evaluation team acknowledged that NMC has aggressively recruited and hired full-time faculty in an effort to assure an appropriate ratio of full-time to adjunct faculty, noting that 19 full-time personnel including 8 instructors were hired from May to October 2012. The *October 2012 External Evaluation Report* stated "With the recruitment of more faculty in progress, it is clear that the College recognizes this issue and is addressing it aggressively." With respect to administrative staff and personnel, the evaluation team noted that in general, the College maintains sufficient administrative staff and personnel with the exception of a couple of key roles (CFO and Director of IT) that have since been filled.

At present, faculty staffing needs are determined collaboratively between the Dean of Academic Programs and Services and the various department chairs and directors and the Dean's Academic Council. Requests for new positions are presented to Management Team and the president for consideration and approval. As full-time teaching positions are vacated, the Human Resources Office aggressively recruits necessary replacements upon receipt of the approved position justification form.

To assist in program review, budgeting and planning, the Standard III.a. team requested that the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, through its Institutional Researcher provide data on full-time to part-time instructor ratios at peer institutions as well as information on national norms in this regard. In response to this request, the office of the Institutional Research and the Office of the Dean of Academic Programs and Services (APS), with feedback from the Human Resources Office (HRO) and Academic Council (AC), determined that a range of 65-70 percent full-time and 25-30 percent adjunct would best meet the needs of the College. This was discussed at the AC, September 4, 2013, meeting [\[IIIA.2:5\]](#) and the AC voting members recommended a ratio of 70-30 after presentation from findings and review of articles, in-house data, and looking at other similar institutions on this matter. The Institutional Researcher worked closely with the office of the Dean of APS in compiling the needed documents to present at Academic Council. The data reviewed and discussed looked at three Academic Years (AY), AY2010-11, AY2011-2012, and AY2012-13, more specifically the weekly student contact hours taught by full-time and part-time faculty. The three-year average is as follows: full-time faculty taught 69 percent at weekly scheduled contract hours, adjunct faculty taught 31 percent. In addition to the ratio recommended, the AC members requested that in one-year, an analysis and review be done once again to determine the sustainability of the 70-30 recommendation. Additionally, the ratio was also presented to the ACCT consultant who confirmed that this ratio was in line with such ratios

at other community colleges. The ratio recommendation was also presented to the president and Management Team (MT) at the September 5, 2013 meeting for review and approval. It was at the MT meeting that a range of 65-70 percent full-time and 25-30 percent adjunct was adopted.

Standard IV.A.2

The institution establishes and implements a written policy providing for faculty, staff, administrator, and student participation in decision-making processes. The policy specifies the manner in which individuals bring forward ideas from their constituencies and work together on appropriate policy, planning, and special-purpose bodies.

Descriptive Summary:

Over the past six years, turnover in presidents and management, and the departure and retirement of key administrators, faculty, and staff led to a leadership drain and changing in directions at the Northern Marianas College (NMC). Within those six years, the College had three full-time presidents and an interim president. Each new president would employ a new decision making and/or governance model to rebuild the College. However, due to the high turnover in college presidents during a short time, changes in the various models for decision-making practices have created confusion, dissention, animosity, and distrust between faculty, staff, students, and the president or new administrator trying to implement them. To add to the confusion as well as to compensate for the lack of consistent leadership and direction, the remaining long-term faculty, staff, students, and administrators empowered themselves to adopt a more liberal and democratic decision-making and governance model as described in the *2008 Institutional Excellence Guide*. However, this model unintentionally removed authority from those who would be responsible for implementing such actions, thus creating a void in accountability for decisions made in the respective governance bodies.

The College continued to evolve in 2011 and Dr. Sharon Hart was hired to lead the College in a new direction. After observing the existing decision-making and governance practices at the time, Dr. Hart, reflecting on her years of experience in management, decision-making and governance practices, recommended and made key changes. As expected, initial confusion as well as disagreement arose when the College transitioned from the decision-making and governance practices identified in the *2008 Institutional Excellence Guide* (IEG) and into a more accountable direction as described in the updated 2013 version of the IEG.

It was recognized in the *October 2012 External Evaluation Report* that “the Northern Marianas College has improved in its inclusion of faculty, students and staff in the governance of the College as well as in development of these processes.” The *October 2012 External Evaluation Report* also pointed out that “despite the changes and improvements to the College’s governance model, some members of the College community have expressed confusion about how decisions are made and how various constituencies participate in that decision-making.”

A complicating factor recognized by the October 2012 External Evaluation Team was the provision for Honorary Regents, which represented their constituent groups directly to the Board of Regents. This practice was seen as a method to bypass the regular means of transmitting

constituent information from the president to the Board of Regents and, thus, created more confusion on who was authorized and in control of a particular action, policy, or procedure.

Also noted in the *October 2012 External Evaluation Report* was that the Governance Review Task Force (GRTF) described the Management Team (MT) as composed mostly of deans, directors and managers who report directly to the president. This group serves primarily as the president's cabinet, advising the president on decisions and procedures executed by the president. In contrast, the College Council, composed of representatives from the faculty, staff, students and administrators has served as the representative voice of governance which deliberates mostly on policy proposals. The GRTF released a June 2012 analysis distinguishing the roles and functions of these two major bodies, the Management Team and the College Council, but the October 2012 External Evaluation Team observed that confusion among College groups about these roles still existed.

Self-Evaluation:

The president and her administration took all of the above information, including additional input from constituent bodies and consultants to develop new Policies (for the board) and Procedures (for the administration) to consider and eventually implement.

The College takes seriously its need to meet and improve upon Standard IV.A.2 and has made much effort to do so. The Board of Regents (BOR) continues to improve its process of reviewing NMC Board Policies, as the College under the president is working to make corrections to its decision-making process while making an appropriate governance structure and the practice a high priority.

Actions Taken:

As a result, the Board of Regent and the president, in their respective roles, with the College as a whole, worked together to take further actions such as the removal of the Honorary Regents from the Board of Regents and the adoption of (1) the policy on Citizen Participation in Board of Regents Meetings and (2) the policy on Institutional Governance which have served to clarify the duties of the president and the BOR, with the campus as a whole shifting from shared to participatory governance. This was also achieved through workshops on Participatory Governance, a workshop on the clarification of the roles of the BOR and president and the review and updating of the *2013 Institutional Excellence Guide* (IEG) by at least one external expert.

Removal of the Honorary Regents from Board of Regents

In its efforts to clarify and distinguish the role of the BOR from that of the College administration, one area of difficulty was that of the Honorary Regents. The October 2012 External Evaluation Team asked the College to reconsider its policy of having Honorary Regents participate in direct discussion of policy issues during board meetings. The Board of Regents and College community went through several discussions with input from faculty, staff, students, and the president on the matter. In the end, as described in the June 6, 2013 Board of Regents

Regular Meeting Minutes [\[IVA2.1\]](#), the BOR decided to rescind Policies 1003, 1004, and 1030 concerning Honorary Student, Faculty, and Staff Members on the Board of Regents respectively. That action removed Honorary Regents (students, faculty, and staff) from the BOR.

This action helped clarify the role of the BOR versus the role of the president and her administration. The elimination of Honorary Regents helped ensure that grievances or initiatives arising at the faculty, staff, or student level would be appropriately channeled through the administration and up to the president. It also clarified how input would be directed from the Administration to the BOR and reaffirmed the jurisdiction of the president over administrative and operational matters.

Policy on Citizen Participation in Board of Regents Meetings

To ensure that members of the College Community and Citizens are still able to share their issues or concerns with the board as described in BOR Policy No. 1021: Citizen Participation in Board of Regent Meetings [\[IVA2.2\]](#), the BOR, on August 8, 2013 formally adopted Policy 1021, which allowed for such input into matters to occur during the Public Comment period of each regular board meeting or in board authorized special meetings.

Policy on Institutional Governance

On August 8, 2013, the Northern Marianas College BOR adopted a revised BOR Policy No. 1020 regarding Institutional Governance [\[IVA2.3\]](#). The Policy clarifies the role of the regents and the administration authorizing the president to set forth the Institutional Governance Structure for the College. BOR Policy No. 1020 states:

“The Northern Marianas College Board of Regents recognizes the importance of participatory governance and acknowledges the following:

The faculty shall be represented by the Faculty Assembly and the Faculty Senate, the staff shall be represented by the Staff Assembly and Staff Senate, and the students shall be represented by the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College and its officers. All procedures relating to the Faculty Assembly and Faculty Senate, the Staff Assembly and Staff Senate, and the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College and its officers shall be included in the constitutions, membership, and structure of these representative bodies.

The president shall develop procedures that specify the general governance role of the administrators, the faculty, the staff, and the students of the College, in terms of policy formulation, decision-making and planning, and problem identification, analysis, and resolution.”

Clarification of the Duties of the President

On September 26, 2013, the BOR adopted Policy No. 1006: Duties of the President [\[IV.A2:4\]](#), which holds the president accountable for the operation of the College and distinguishes between

the role of the board and the role of the president. It also clarified the duties of the president. This policy was then shared with all employees so they could better understand the duties, roles and responsibilities the Board of Regents has outlined for the NMC President.

Shifting from Shared to Participatory Governance

The College is in the process of shifting its institutional governance practice from shared governance to participatory governance as a result of the BOR Policy No. 1020, adopted August 8, 2013. This is focusing on two key areas: accountability and constituency input. Under shared governance, no one particular person had been responsible for the decisions made. Additionally, as NMC has utilized a number of college committees, the president brought to the attention of the College community that committees cannot be held accountable for decisions reached. Accountability must rest with particular individual(s). Under President Hart's leadership, this has been changing and the BOR Policy now makes it much clearer for the entire college campus. Now constituent bodies (faculty, students, and staff) will be better represented through their respective senates with concerns being brought by the respective governance bodies to the president, and when appropriate, relayed by the president to the BOR. Policy decisions made by the BOR encourage participation of all constituent groups through the channels of the participatory governance process. The continued input of all college constituent groups through appropriate channels allows the college to work more effectively toward improvement in student learning, engagement, success, and it begins to break down units working in silos. The ultimate decision-making responsibility is given to the president or her designee for procedural issues, so that accountability for such decisions can now be more formally recognized.

Workshops on Participatory Governance

Dr. Hart and Dr. Pamela Fisher, a consultant hired by the College, delivered a series of workshops on Participatory Governance for NMC Employees. One live session was held on August 30, 2013. This session was recorded on video [\[IV.A2:5\]](#) and was presented in a second session held on September 6, 2013. Ninety-six percent of all NMC employees participated in the workshop. Those who missed the workshops and new employees hired thereafter are directed to the following intranet site: <http://stream.marianas.edu> to view the video. Employees were provided the opportunity to ask questions and participate in the activities.

Workshop on Clarification of the Roles of the BOR and President

On Friday, September 27, 2013 the College held a workshop for all college employees. The purpose of the workshop was to further clarify for the College community the responsibilities of the president and those of the BOR. For those unable to attend the session, employees were directed to the following intranet site: <http://stream.marianas.edu> to view the video. A pre- and post-test were distributed at the workshop. The College will use the findings from the tests to identify areas needing improvement for further professional development training.

2013 Institutional Excellence Guide (IEG)

The president has continued with the efforts to clarify Institutional Governance. The IEG lists the governance bodies, their roles and responsibilities, membership, and other pertinent information. The revision of the IEG took approximately one year as constituent bodies were given ample time for review and input. The College Council formally reviewed the drafts and provided recommendations on the February 2013 draft and the latest most updated version of September 2013. In early October 2013, the president met with the Governance Review Task Force to further clarify existing roles. The *2013 Institutional Effectiveness Guide* [\[IV.A2.6\]](#) was formally distributed to the College community on October 15, 2013 with a training session to be held on October 18. Updates to the Guide will continue throughout the fall semester to realize continuous improvements to NMC's governance processes. Governance bodies, membership, and roles and responsibilities of each governance body can be found in the IEG.

Additional External Review on Governance

Dr. Pamila Fisher of ACCT conducted an external review that revealed that the respective by-laws of the College Council, Staff Senate, and Faculty Senate had areas that needed attention. One observation included the need for clarification of the purposes of each senate. The two senates' purposes were identified as identical and are being redrafted to reflect their new purposes.

Other suggestions regarding the wording of the senate bylaws included specifying that the faculty senate should not address "administrative" matters, while including stronger and clearer language for the specific intention of clarifying the Faculty Senate's role in academic affairs, including curriculum matters. Administrative Affairs and Academic Affairs are listed as the purpose of the Staff Senate and that, too, is not appropriate.

The members of the College Council admitted that their group was dysfunctional and that it was frustrating that they often could not get a quorum. For example, the Council did not meet all summer even though their input was needed for critical accreditation issues. There was discussion about why this was the case. The consultant observed that the Council's by-laws were vague and broad and there was no clear indication of where or how their recommendations were to be conveyed. The consultant noted that these by-laws were approved and signed by the respective staff organizations but not by the president. Dr. Fisher stated that if they wanted to be empowered by the president, the person to whom they forward their recommendations, the Council must work with the president to clearly delineate its purpose.

Other suggestions made by the consultant for improving the College Council's by-laws was the creation of a more functional body including there being a predetermined meeting time so that each participating individual knows the schedule before accepting an appointment to the Council. It also would be useful to have a Member Job Description that outlines duties, responsibilities and expectations, including a process for dealing with extensive absences. Other recommendations included an annual orientation when new members come on board, two-year terms when possible, with members from the same constituent groups having staggered terms.

These reviews and the feedback have been provided to the respective bodies for constituent analysis, comments, and suggested changes. Although these additional changes are forthcoming and will be completed by December 2013, the entities continue to actively fulfill their duties in participatory governance and representation of their respective constituencies.

As the College worked hard to meet the Standard IV.A.2, with continuous quality improvement in mind, NMC has outlined the following steps to continue the actions taken thus far:

- Presentations on the *2013 Intuitional Excellence Guide* will occur in October and mid-December, 2013.
- Evaluation of the 2013 IEG for ongoing improvement is to continue throughout fall semester 2013. The Faculty, Staff and Student Senates, and College Council will complete the review and changes to their bylaws by November 30, 2013. Any other Committee changes and/or additions will be incorporated by this date as well.
- The 2013 IEG will become part of the new employee orientation process.
- A weekly article or professional resource will be distributed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to the campus community focused on institutional governance for updates, educational, and informational purposes.
- Continue to assess, through a pre- and post-test, if NMC overall understands the process of institutional governance, including the roles and responsibilities of each governance body, and especially those of the president and the BOR.
- Conduct a feasibility study regarding merging the College Council and Management Team to create a Management Council.

Standard IV.A.2.a

Faculty and administrators have a substantive and clearly defined role in institutional governance and exercise a substantial voice in institutional policies, planning, and budget that relate to their areas of responsibilities and expertise. Students and staff also have established mechanisms or organizations for providing input into institutional decisions.

Descriptive Summary:

The College is committed to meaningful institutional governance roles for faculty, administrators, staff, and students. As mentioned earlier in section IV.A.2, within six years, the College has had three full time presidents and an interim president. Each new president employed a new decision-making and/or governance model to rebuild the College. However, due to the high turnover in presidents during a short time, changes in the various models for decision-making practices have created confusion, dissention, animosity, and distrust between faculty, staff, students, and the president or new administrator trying to implement them. To add to the confusion as well as to compensate for the lack of consistent leadership and direction, the remaining long term faculty, staff, students, and administrators empowered themselves to adopt a more liberal and democratic decision-making and governance model as described in the *2008 Institutional Excellence Guide* (IEG). However, this model unintentionally removed authority

from those who would be responsible for implementing such actions, thus creating a void in accountability for decisions made in the respective governance bodies.

The College continued to evolve in 2011; Dr. Sharon Hart was hired to lead the College in a new direction. After observing the existing decision-making and governance practices at the time, President Hart, reflecting on her years of experience in management, decision-making and governance practices, recommended and made key changes. As expected, initial confusion arose when the College transitioned from the decision-making and governance practices identified in the 2008 IEG and into a more accountable direction as described in the updated 2013 version of the IEG.

It was recognized in the *October 2012 External Evaluation Report* stated, “the Northern Marianas College has improved in its inclusion of faculty, students and staff in the governance of the College as well as in development of these processes.” The Evaluation Team also pointed out that “despite the changes and improvements to the College’s governance model, some members of the College community have expressed confusion about how decisions are made and how various constituencies participate in the decision-making process.”

A complicating factor recognized by the Evaluation Team was the provision for Honorary Regents, who represented their constituent groups directly to the Board of Regents (BOR). This practice was seen as a method to bypass the regular means of transmitting constituent information from the president to the BOR and, thus, created more confusion about who was authorized and in control of a particular action, policy, or procedure.

Also noted in the *October 2012 External Evaluation Report* was that the Governance Review Task Force (GRTF) described the Management Team as composed mostly of deans, directors and managers who report directly to the president. This group serves primarily as the president’s cabinet, advising the president on decisions and other administrative matters. In contrast, the College Council, composed of representatives from the faculty, staff, students and administrators, has served as the representative voice of governance and deliberates mostly on policy proposals. The GRTF released a June 2012 analysis distinguishing the roles and functions of these two major bodies, the Management Team and the College Council, but the Evaluation Team observed that confusion among College groups about these roles still existed.

Self-Evaluation

The president and her administration used the above information, and additional input from constituent bodies and consultants to develop new Policies (for the board) and Procedures (for the Administration) to consider and implement.

The College takes seriously its need to meet and improve upon Standard IV.A.2.a, and has made much effort to do so. The BOR continues to make corrections to its decision-making process and seeks to make governance and appropriate decision making a high priority.

Actions Taken

As a result, the BOR, president, and College as a whole, worked together to take further actions, listed below and described earlier in Standard IV.A.2.

- Action 1: Removal of the Honorary Regents from Board of Regents
- Action 2: Policy on Citizen Participation in Board of Regents Meetings
- Action 3: Policy on Institutional Governance
- Action 4: Clarification of the Duties of the President
- Action 5: Shifting from Shared to Participatory Governance
- Action 6: Workshops on Participatory Governance
- Action 7: Workshop on Clarification of the Roles of the BOR and President
- Action 8: *2013 Institutional Excellence Guide (IEG)*
- Action 9: Additional External Review on Governance

The individual or combined actions taken paved the way for students, faculty, staff and administrators to have substantive and clearly defined roles in institutional governance and to still be able to exercise a substantial voice in institutional policies, planning, and budget that relate to their areas of responsibilities and expertise. Through Actions three, five, six, seven, and eight, the College has cleared obstacles to effectuate change and bring stability within the decision-making processes, constituent participation, and governance structures.

The key component to meeting this Standard relies heavily on the 2013 IEG [\[IV.A2.A1\]](#). The purpose of the 2013 IEG is to provide clarity to the roles and responsibilities of each governance body, and the participatory governance structure that involves all internal constituents—faculty, staff, administrators, and students. Further, this Guide outlines the processes the College has instituted for planning and assessment.

The following are important factors that can be found in the 2013 IEG and contribute greatly to meeting this Standard.

Description of Participatory Governance

Participatory governance is meant to foster a sense of empowerment, partnership and a vested interest in successful outcomes of institutional policy and implementation decisions.

The Northern Marianas College BOR recognizes the importance of participatory governance and acknowledges the following:

The faculty shall be represented by the Faculty Assembly and the Faculty Senate, the staff shall be represented by the Staff Assembly and Staff Senate,

and the students shall be represented by the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College and its officers. All procedures relating to the Faculty Assembly and Faculty Senate, the Staff Assembly and Staff Senate, and the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College and its officers shall be included in the constitutions, membership, and structure of these representative bodies.

The president shall develop procedures that specify the general governance role of the administrators, the faculty, the staff, and the students of the College, in terms of policy formulation, decision making and planning, and problem identification, analysis, and resolution. (BOR Policy No. 1020)

The College adopted the Collegial Model of decision making. The collegial model proposes a community of stakeholders, with participation in decision making processes involving all constituencies affected by the decisions.

I. Definitions:

- Participating effectively in the College governance is...¹
 - Shared involvement in the decision-making process;
 - It does not imply total agreement;
 - The same level of involvement by all is not required; and
 - Final decisions rest with the Board of Regents or designee, the president.
- Participatory governance is the act of collegial decision making.
- Collegial decision making is the process of consulting with and enabling various constituencies within the College Community to be informed and to provide input that affect decisions made at the Northern Marianas College.
- The role in participatory governance is not to look out for the “best interest” or “self-interest” of a constituency group, but of the institution and its mission.

II. Clarifications:

- Participatory governance does not take away the authority from those vested with decision-making responsibility.
- Participatory governance is a process in which decision makers, whether with primary or delegated authority, are committed to involving affected constituencies in decisions as much as possible.
- Participatory governance is a method of organized and collegial interaction in which individuals have an opportunity to participate in thoughtful deliberation and decision making. Individuals may participate by voicing opinions, voting, making recommendations, investigating, writing reports, evaluating leaders,

¹ Participatory Governance, ASCCC/CCLC, Simpson, Clark, Walton, Lieu, Woodruff, Lay, Viar, 2006

serving as consultants, leading or attending forums, serving on governance councils, committees, senates, constituency groups and task forces. All constituents are encouraged to provide input on issues that affect them.

- Governance councils, committees, senates, constituency groups, and task forces are the primary vehicles in which the opinions of individuals travel to formulate decisions for the whole group. These groups are empowered by participatory governance to make formal recommendations on issues presented to them.

Guiding Principles of Participatory Governance

All governance bodies, committees, and campus constituencies recognize that Northern Marianas College, through its commitment to student learning, provides high quality, affordable and accessible education programs and services for the individual and people of the Commonwealth by ensuring that:

- There is college-wide focus on a team approach to planning and problem-solving.
- There is college-wide understanding of participatory governance is to be achieved through on-going education and the implementation of participatory governance policy.
- The most effective means of developing policies and procedures are to provide opportunities for the involvement of the constituent groups affected by the implementation of these policies and procedures.
- The president will solicit and consider input from the College Community and represented constituencies such as, but not limited to, College Council, Academic Council, Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC) and Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC) before making decisions that have a direct impact on academic policy, academic curriculum, academic procedure, budget requests and resource allocations, the strategic educational master plan, and capital projects.
- The governance council and committee members and constituency representatives, are responsible for keeping their respective groups informed of the proceedings and recommendations of governance groups. This does not mean that committee/council members or constituency representatives must take each and every issue to their constituents for input and comment. Members may exercise “representative voting,” and shall at all times place the best interests of the institution first and foremost over that of their individual constituency group or their personal interest.
- Governance council and committee members and constituency representatives may continue to represent their constituency groups even during semester breaks. Faculty and Staff Senates and ASNMC shall ensure that representatives appointed to governance bodies are willing and able to participate in committee and council work even during such breaks, when not otherwise required to be present on campus.
- The recommendations from major governance bodies such as, but not limited to, College Council, Academic Council, Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC) and Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC) should be considered heavily in all decisions.

All constituents are encouraged to provide input on issues that are important to them in their areas of responsibility or on matters that will directly impact them.

Administrators shall demonstrate a willingness to incorporate students, faculty, and staff input into decision making especially on those matters relating to academic and student services policies and procedures, finance, and budgeting.

The president, administration, campus constituency leaders and representatives shall uphold this participatory governance model at all times.

Description and Roles of Decision-Making Bodies

Involvement in recommendation-making reflects a broad-based movement at Northern Marianas College that includes stakeholders at various levels. It reflects a movement from a hierarchical structure with the campus working in silos to that in which decisions, responsibility, and accountability are distributed to all levels of the organization.

Decision-making bodies and those individuals responsible for decision making have the responsibility for setting a tone of collegiality in providing the College environment with the infrastructure for achieving participation from all constituencies in the decision-making processes appropriate to participatory governance.

The following entities are decision-making bodies of the College.

Board of Regents

The BOR is the governing board of the Northern Marianas College. It derives its powers from and exists under the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). The BOR has the power and responsibility to discharge any duty imposed by law upon it or upon the College, and may execute any powers delegated by law to it or to the College. The BOR shall concern itself with broad questions of policy, rather than with administrative details. The application of policies is an administrative task to be performed and executed by the president.

The BOR is made up of seven members, appointed by the CNMI Governor with the advice and consent of the CNMI Senate. Members represent the interest of the general public within the Commonwealth on matters and policies concerning post-secondary education. Collectively, the members of the Board serve as a unit to set goals for the general direction of the College, and to approve institutional policies that assist the institution in achieving its mandated mission.

President

The president is the chief executive officer of the Northern Marianas College and in this capacity is charged with full administrative authority and responsibility for the College. The BOR judiciously recognizes and supports the president as the major line of communication between the BOR and the internal and external College Community. In this capacity as the BOR's liaison,

the president informs the BOR of such communication, and is guided by the policies, general directions, and financial guidelines established by the BOR.

The president's fundamental responsibility is to develop and maintain an institution that fulfills the mission and achieves the goals of the Northern Marianas College in accordance with the Mission Statement. At the president's discretion, the president may choose to delegate specific responsibilities to the Management Team or individual Deans, and those who report directly to the president for limited durations and purposes. Descriptions of these entities follow:

Management Team

The Management Team consists of Deans and the Directors who report directly to the president (Direct Reports), the Associated Students of the Northern Marianas College President, and the Faculty and Staff Senate Presidents. The role of Management Team (MT) is to address and coordinate issues involving college governance, student learning and success, fiscal strategies and related matters, hiring of personnel, community relations, public information and information systems, policy and procedures, and strategic planning. The team's recommendations may be placed on the agenda of other committees, or they may be forwarded directly to the president for action. At times, the president may task the MT to convene a task force for a specific purpose, such as Strategic Planning Task Force (SPTF).

Dean's and President's Direct Reports

The College carries out its administrative and procedural functions delegated by the president to and through the president's direct reports. Each respective direct report is responsible and accountable for specific units, divisions, departments, and programs throughout the College including the personnel and standard operating procedures necessary for such to function. These individuals and their respective teams also serve as stewards of the Board of Regents' policies that affect their respective areas, and are instrumental in providing necessary recommendations on such policies to the president and to the BOR.

Internal Governance Structure

BOR Policy No. 1020: Institutional Governance [\[IV.A2.A2\]](#) sets the framework for the governance of the College. Pursuant to that policy, authority over institutional governance is delegated to the president who shall develop procedures that specify the general governance role of the administration, the faculty, the staff, and the students of the College.

Description and Roles of Participatory Governance Bodies

Participatory Governance Bodies

Participatory Governance Bodies at NMC are recognized as governance councils, committees, or constituency groups that have the final recommending authority to the president or the resident's administrative designee.

Participatory governance ensures that individuals have an opportunity to participate in decision-making by voicing opinions, providing input and recommendations, serving as consultants, and serving on governance councils, committees, senates, constituency groups, and task forces. All governance bodies are encouraged to provide input on issues that are important to them. The following lists are the various governance bodies and groups at the College.

These bodies are further classified into major participatory governance bodies and minor participatory governance bodies. Major participatory governance bodies are involved in ultimate recommendations to the president or decision-making entity. A minor participatory governance body provides recommendations to a major participatory governance body.

Governance Groups

College Council

The College Council is a major governance body and is the recognized participatory governance body for the College. It serves as an advisory and recommending group to the president for matters pertaining to the development of college operational policies, rules, procedures, institutional governance, and other important issues affecting the operations of the College. It also serves as a forum body for receiving and sharing information from and among the constituencies and the president.

The membership of the College Council is representative of all constituencies of the College. College Council is established under the authority of the president. In keeping with Board Policy No. 1020 “Institutional Governance” shall:

- Ensure that the different constituencies of the College community are given an opportunity to give input into the development of revised and/or new policies for review and action by the BOR.
- Ensure that different constituencies of the College community are given an opportunity to give input into the development of administrative rules and procedures for the president’s action.

The College Council may also review matters within its purview brought to its agenda by the president or any other recognized constituency groups. In addition, the College Council at times may convene a task force for a specific purpose, such as the Governance Review Task Force (GRTF).

Academic Council

The Academic Council is a major governance body which provides recommends to the Dean of Academic Programs and Services on all matters related to instructional programs and academic regulations. It reviews and offers recommendations on the quality of and continued need for various instructional programs and, as appropriate, offers advice on the deletion of academic programs. It facilitates assessment of student learning outcomes at the course level, and works closely with PROAC on all assessment and program review activities.

Committees

Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC)

The Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC) is a major governance body and is an integral advisory body with respect to NMC's ongoing efforts to improve the quality of instruction and support services through a systematic process of planning and assessment. The committee is tasked with building and sustaining a campus-wide culture of evidence and shall concern itself with matters relative to accreditation, assessment, and with monitoring the fidelity of initiatives and other actions being implemented as recommended through program review, other means of assessment, and/or as provided in NMC's strategic plan or other plans generated by the College. Articles and bylaws establish membership and responsibilities of the organization. The PROAC makes recommendations to the Director of Institutional Effectiveness.

Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC)

The Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC) is a major governance body and is responsible for providing recommendations to the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) on all financial operational matters. It is charged with aligning institutional priorities with the allocation of resources, reviewing and adjusting the budget in accordance with present circumstances and future projections, and for producing related reports. A vice chair is elected amongst the membership. The committee ensures that appropriate members of the College community participate in the development of annual operational budgets, annual strategic plans, new programs and services, and major facilities planning prior to adoption by college officials.

Registration Committee

The Registration Committee is a minor governance body that serves to continually improve and enhance the registration process at the College, inform the public about registration periods at the College, and improve the registration process for greater efficiency and effectiveness. This committee provides its recommendations to the Registrar.

Technology in Education Committee

The Technology in Education Committee is a minor governance body which plans and promotes the use of technology in support of the educational mission of the College. Committee members comprise a cross-section of the campus community. This committee also serves as an advisory committee for the College's technology grant projects and provides its recommendations to the Director of Information Technology.

Academic Advising Committee

The Academic Advising Committee is a minor governance body which serves as the collective forum for the review of the NMC academic advisement program to meet the needs of students and the generation of new ideas. The committee serves to build a partnership between faculty

and the administrative offices as it relates to advising. The committee monitors and examines how advising is done at the College and provides recommendations for changes and improvements to the Director of Counseling and the College Access Challenge Grant.

Constituency Groups

Constituency groups act on behalf of their respective faculty, staff, or student constituency.

Associated Students of Northern Marianas College (ASNMC)

The Associated Students of the Northern Marianas College (**ASNMC**) is a major governance body which serves as the representative body of all students enrolled at the College. The ASNMC acts on behalf of and serves as a forum of the student assembly, and is directly involved in participatory governance and participatory decision-making through a voting membership position on the College Council, Management Team, Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC), Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC), Governance Review Task Force (GRTF), and Strategic Planning Task Force (SPTF). Recommendations from the ASNMC go to the Dean of Student Services.

Faculty Senate

The Faculty Senate is a major governance body and the official representative body and legislative body of the Faculty Assembly of NMC. The Faculty Senate acts on behalf of the faculty, and it is accountable to the Faculty Assembly for its actions. The Faculty Senate performs the following functions in the governance process of NMC: (1) initiates, develops, and reviews policies on academic matters of NMC; (2) provides advisory comments on proposed BOR policies on academic matters prior to their adoption by the BOR and (3) participates in maintaining the integrity of the academic processes of NMC.

(Constitution of the Faculty Assembly of Northern Marianas College, Article II—
Purpose)

In participating in the governance process of NMC, the Faculty Senate has voting representation on the College Council, BAFC, PROAC, and the Management Team. This Senate provides recommendations to the president.

Staff Senate

The Staff Senate is a major governance body which serves as the official representative body of the Staff Assembly. The Staff Senate acts on the Assembly's behalf in its relations with the college, and is accountable to the Assembly for its actions. The Senate provides an open forum for the concerns brought to it by the Assembly. The Senate also directly participates in the governance of the College by assisting in determining the need for, initiating and developing, and reviewing policies on administrative matters affecting the welfare of the College.

The Senate also participates in maintaining the integrity of academic processes of the College. Policies concerning matters considered by the Board of Regents are reviewed by the Senate for advisory comment prior to their adoption.

The BOR, ASNMC, Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, president and members of the administration collectively acknowledge and uphold the importance of assessment for accountability and continuous improvement in the delivery of education and educational support services for students.

In participating in the governance process of NMC, the Staff Senate has voting representation on the College Council, BAFC, PROAC, and the Management Team. This Senate provides recommendations to the president.

Participatory Decision-Making

The NMC recognizes the respective leadership organizations that serve to advance institutional priorities that focus upon the improvement of teaching and learning and are representative of the various constituencies of the College that include the Associated Students of the Northern Marianas College, Faculty Senate, and Staff Senate.

The president encourages the continued leadership and contributions of all major decision-making bodies of the College and all constituencies in a participatory decision-making structure. The College Council is recognized by each of the constituencies as being NMC's recognized participatory governance structure that serves as an advisory and recommending body to the president on issues related to the ongoing operations of the college. The College Council serves as the forum for review and information sharing of college policies and procedures affecting the College. The PROAC (planning and assessment) and the Budget and Finance Committee (resource allocation) are major governance bodies whose membership is made up of students, faculty, and staff.

The College Council, PROAC, Budget and Finance Committee, and the Management Team agenda and actions are widely communicated and subject to review. All proceedings are open to internal and external stakeholders. This is done to facilitate open, inclusive, and well-informed decision-making at all levels in order to improve student learning and services, and institutional effectiveness.

The president has the authority to create standing committees, various working groups, advisory councils, ad-hoc committees, etc. for the purpose of empowering students, faculty, and staff to exercise effective leadership and innovation in the improvement of the College. The creation of these groups ensures that information is channeled through a hierarchical structure while preserving the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process at various levels as it flows to the higher governing bodies. (2013 IEG)

Standard IV.A.2.b

The institution relies on faculty, its academic senate or other appropriate faculty structures, the curriculum committee, and academic administrators for recommendations about student learning programs and services.

Descriptive Summary

The Northern Marianas College continues to pursue excellence as an institution to provide successful outcomes. The College encourages all stakeholders to participate and contribute towards its progress and development. Through their respective representative bodies, their recommendations are channeled through the appropriate administrative processes for consideration. Recommendations about student learning programs and services are done through the Academic Programs and Services division mainly through the Dean of Academic Programs and Services, the Academic Council with further input from the Faculty Assembly and Faculty Senate. This however was not always the case, and as with every success, trials and tribulations are inherent, and as recognized in the *October 2012 External Evaluation Report*, although the College made several positive changes to its governance structures and decision-making practices, there was still work to do.

Self-Evaluation

One of the areas that needed improvement was the differentiation between the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Regents and their policies versus that of the president and her administration and the administrative procedures. In reviewing such discrepancy, the College made major strides and took several actions over the past year to ensure a separation of board policies from internal administrative procedures. An example of this was the complicating factor recognized by the evaluation team with respect to the provision for Honorary Regents, which represented their constituent groups directly to the Board of Regents. This practice was seen as a method to bypass the regular means of transmitting constituent information from the president to the Board of Regents and, thus, created more confusion on who was authorized and in control of a particular action, policy, or procedure. The policies governing such actions have been rescinded and moved to administrative procedures.

The Board of Regents, president, administration, and governance bodies took this a step further by reviewing all of the College's Board Policies and Procedures and making much needed changes to them. Recognizing that board policies may have at times stifled progression at NMC, for example with Standard IVA2B, the Board of Regents, through input from the appropriate constituencies and governing bodies, rescinded most of the Educational Policies that were considered administrative in nature. These administrative procedures are now under the auspices of the Dean of Academic Programs and Services and her respective counterparts (Academic Council and Faculty Senate).

Actions Taken

As the College's Board of Regents rescinded most of the Educational Policies and moved them to administrative procedures, the College now meets this Standard through the Academic

Programs and Services Academic Procedures 3100 and 3008 (former BOR Policies No. 3100 and No. 3008). Academic Procedures 3100 and 3008 rely on the faculty assembly as represented on the Faculty Senate and Academic Council for recommendations about student learning programs and services. These procedures are under the direct stewardship of the Dean of Academic Programs and Services who works closely with her respective teams and associated bodies to ensure that recommendations about student learning programs and services go through the appropriate administrative procedures and channels.

Faculty Senate: Academic Procedure 3100

The largest group of faculty representation at the College is the Faculty Senate, which provides routine input regarding policies, planning, curriculum, budget and other related issues. Faculty Senate leaders assign officers or representatives to be members of the Management Team, College Council, Budget and Finance Committee, and the Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee. Each faculty contract contains statements on faculty responsibility, which include the duties to develop and review the curriculum, as well as properly assess learning.

The Faculty Senate is the official representative and legislative body of the Faculty Assembly of NMC [\[IV.A.2b.1\]](#). The Faculty Senate acts on behalf of the faculty and is accountable to the Faculty Assembly for its actions. The Faculty Senate performs the following functions in the governance process of NMC: (1) initiates, develops, and reviews policies on academic matters of NMC; (2) provides advisory comment on proposed Board of Regents policies on academic matters prior to their adoption by the Board of Regents (Repeal of Old Board Policies-Article 3 – Educational Practices) [\[IV.A.2.b.3\]](#); (3) participates in maintaining the integrity of the academic processes of NMC.

(*Constitution of the Faculty Assembly of Northern Marianas College*, Article II— Purpose) [\[IV.A.2.b.4\]](#)

Members through their representatives are directly involved in participatory decision making through a voting membership on the College Council and other governance bodies. See the *2013 Institutional Effectiveness Guide* [\[IV.A.2.b.5\]](#) for full membership of the Faculty Senate and other governance bodies.

Academic Council: Academic Procedure 3008

The Academic Council, composed of the Dean of Academic Programs and Services, Department Chairs or alternates, coordinators, etc. [\[IV.A.2.b.2\]](#) is responsible for overseeing the recommendation of curriculum issues (course guides, syllabi, and course content, objectives, and delivery). The College requires that each faculty member assesses course completion and persistence by analyzing student achievement data.

The Academic Council shall:

1. Review and offer advice on the quality of and continued need for various instructional programs, and, as appropriate, offer advice on the deletion of instructional programs;
2. Review and offer advice on a proposed curriculum for new instructional programs prior to approval by the president;
3. Review and offer advice on requirements for the various degrees and certificates offered by NMC. This review refers specifically to core course requirements, general education requirements, specific courses required or electives considered advisable for a particular degree, course sequencing, and course prerequisites. The review refers to existing as well as to new programs;
4. Review and offer advice on new course offerings before they are listed in the College catalogue, the Class Schedule, or are otherwise publicized;
5. Review and offer advice on revision/deletion of existing courses;
6. Assist in establishing a consistent course numbering system;
7. Assist in the development of academic rules and regulations; and
8. Offer advice on such other academic matters as may be referred to the Council by the president, or the deans.

The Academic Council makes recommendations to the Dean of Academic Programs and Services on all matters related to instructional programs and academic regulations. It reviews and offers recommendations on the quality of and continued need for various instructional programs, and, as appropriate, offers advice on the deletion of academic programs. It facilitates assessment of Student Learning Outcomes at the course level, and works closely with PROAC on all assessment and program review activities.

Other entities that provide recommendations on this matter to the president and respective entities in charge are:

Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC)

The Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC) is an important part of NMC's ongoing efforts to improve the quality of instruction and support services through a systematic process of planning and assessment. This committee is tasked with building and sustaining a campus-wide culture of evidence and shall concern itself with matters relative to accreditation and assessment and with monitoring the fidelity of initiatives and other actions being implemented as recommended through program review, other means of assessment, and as provided in NMC's strategic plan or other plans generated by the College. The PROAC makes recommendations to the Director of Institutional Effectiveness.

Academic Advising Committee

The Committee on Academic Advising serves as a collective forum for the review of the Northern Marianas College academic advisement program to meet the needs of students and the generation of new ideas. The committee serves to build a partnership between faculty and administrative offices as it relates to advising. The committee monitors and examines advising at

the college and provides recommendations for changes and improvements. The Academic Advising Committee makes recommendations to the Director of Counseling and the College Access Challenge Grant.

Clearing the Air

Although the faculty, staff and students were once represented as active non-voting members of the Board of Regents, the recent actions taken by the BOR to remove them from the board as Honorary Regents, helped clarify and distinguish the roles between the board and the administration. The three now represent their respective constituencies on the College Council and other participatory governance bodies, giving voice and input on concerns, and ultimately participate in the decision-making process that will positively affect college policies. This now allows the president to gather stakeholder input before finalizing operational decisions.

Other Related Actions Taken (Standard IVA2) [\[IV.A2B:6\]](#)

- Action 1: Removal of the Honorary Regents from Board of Regents
- Action 2: Policy on Citizen Participation in Board of Regents Meetings
- Action 3: Policy on Institutional Governance
- Action 4: Clarification of the Duties of the President
- Action 5: Shifting from Shared to Participatory Governance
- Action 6: Workshops on Participatory Governance
- Action 7: Workshop on Clarification of the Roles of the BOR and President
- Action 8: *2013 Institutional Excellence Guide (IEG)*
- Action 9: Additional External Review on Governance

Standard IV.B.1a.

The governing board is an independent policy-making body that reflects the public interest in board activities and decisions. Once the board reaches a decision, it acts as a whole. It advocates for and defends the institution and protects it from undue influence or pressure.

Descriptive Summary

The Northern Marianas College Board of Regents is an independent policy making body whose authority and independence is derived from the CNMI Constitution. Section 2(a) of the Article XV of the Commonwealth Constitution [\[IVB.1:1\]](#) states that:

The legislature shall establish by law a Northern Marianas College that shall be headed by a president. The president of the college shall be appointed by a representative board of regents. The board of regents shall be appointed to staggered terms by the governor and shall have autonomy in the administration of its affairs and shall formulate policy relating to the higher education needs of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The composition of the board of regents and other matters pertaining to its operations and duties shall be provided by law. (1985) (emphasis added)

The general duties and authority of the Board of Regents are re-enforced by 3 CMC § 1304(b) [\[IVB.1:2\]](#), which directs that “*the Northern Marianas College is established as a nonprofit public corporation under the general control and direction of a board designated as the Board of Regents of the Northern Marianas College...*” Commonwealth Code also specifically empowers the Board of Regents in 3 CMC § 1316 [\[IVB.1:3\]](#) to perform a number of duties that reassert its autonomy.

The board is required to have a diverse composition in its membership under Commonwealth statutes. Specifically, 3 CMC § 1311 [\[IVB.1:4\]](#) requires that: “*at least one member shall be a resident of Tinian, one member shall be a resident of Rota, at least one member shall be of Carolinian descent, and at least one member shall be a woman,*” and thus reflects a variety of public and constituent interests. The board as a body makes decisions and participates in activities that engage the public interest.

Also, under 3 CMC § 1315 [\[IVB.1:5\]](#), “*all meetings of the board shall be open to the public, except when personal matters affecting the privacy of an individual or other confidential matters are considered.*” The public interest is further advanced as the public is given advanced notice of any board meeting agenda to encourage participation and input. Commonwealth statute, as well as BOR Policy No. 1011 [\[IVB.1:6\]](#), specifies the requirements for the advanced announcements of meetings. BOR Policy No. 1011 [\[IVB.1:6\]](#) also sets out the provisions that allow members of the public to give their comments about agenda items. All board meetings are also subject to the Open Government Act (1 CMC 9901) [\[IVB.1:7\]](#) whose requirements promote the transparency of public meetings.

Not only is the board an independent policy making body under Article XV of the Commonwealth Constitution [\[IVB.1:1\]](#) as stated above, but its diverse composition and open meeting requirements promote the public interest in its activities and decisions. Further to this, the Northern Marianas College Board of Regents acts as a whole when it reaches a decision, even if the decision was not reached unanimously.

The BOR Policy No. 1001 [\[IVB.1:8\]](#) states that “no Board members has individual authority in regard to the College except as part of that unit...The Board member does not represent any factional segment of the community, but is rather a part of the body, which represents and acts for the community as a whole.” Furthermore, the board’s Code of Conduct (BOR Policy No. 1014) [\[IVB.1:9\]](#) requires board members to be committed to effective decision-making, and that “Once a decision has been made, the board will speak with one voice and acts as a whole.” (BOR Policy No. 1014) [\[IVB.1:9\]](#). The same policy asks board members to “Work with fellow Board members in a spirit of harmony and cooperation in spite of differences of opinion that may arise during vigorous debates of points at issue,” and to “abide by and uphold the final majority decision of the Board.” Violations of the policy will require a censure of the offending members.

The Northern Marianas College Board of Regents advocates for and defends the institution and protects it from undue influence or pressure. This is reflected through board actions, in meetings with government leaders, and even during one-to-one conversations with lawmakers and others.

Self -Evaluation

From the provisions in both the Commonwealth Constitution and statutory Commonwealth law, it is clear that the Northern Marianas College Board of Regents is an autonomous, independent policy-making body. In addition to the Commonwealth Constitution and Commonwealth Code, the Commonwealth Supreme Court has also made clear that Northern Marianas College is an autonomous agency, which further supports the authority of the Board of Regents. In *N. Marianas Coll. v. Civil Serv. Comm'n II* [IVB.1:10], the Commonwealth Supreme Court explicitly ruled that “NMC is a fully autonomous agency under the CNMI Constitution.” 2007

Although the independent policy making role of the board is clear, the Board of Regents see the need to sustain and continue its board development activities [IVB.1:11] that enhance the board’s role in this capacity. These professional development activities [IVB.1:11] are discussed in the “Actions Taken” section of this Standard.

Furthermore, in its latest action letter addressed to the Northern Marianas College, ACCJC President Dr. Barbara Beno stated that the Commission was concerned about the Board of Regents’ policy on Honorary Regents [IVB.1:12]. The Honorary Regents, according to Dr. Beno, allow representatives of staff and faculty to sit in during board meetings “and regularly engage in direct discussions related to policy issues...” She further stated, “As these members represent faculty senate, staff senate, and student senate groups, the practice violates Accreditation Standards that require board independence.” The NMC Board of Regents has since acted decisively on its policy on Honorary Regents, and a discussion of this issue is addressed in the “Actions Taken” section of this narrative.

That the governing board is an independent policy-making body that reflects the public interest in board activities and decisions is further evidenced in board policies [IVB.1:13] and board actions. Board meeting minutes reflect that board members speak from the communities and the constituents that they represent.

Once the board reaches a decision, it has acted as a whole. This is especially reflected in some of the more contentious decisions that the board has had to make.

For example, in deciding whether to repeal the board policy on Honorary Regents [IVB.1:12], the members were not unanimous in their decision. However, after the policy vote the board members were united in maintaining the momentum, and their differences of opinion regarding the policy on Honorary Regents [IVB.1:12] did not decelerate their progress in resolving other accreditation recommendations and deficiencies.

Another example can be seen in another contentious issue: the new board policy on minimum qualifications [IVB.1:14]. This discussion about the new policy was sometimes intense and regents did not readily agree on the need to pass it swiftly. However, once the vote was taken, the regents again united around their focus to move forward and to maintain accreditation efforts.

Furthermore, the board members have advocated for and defended the institution and protected it from undue outside influence or pressure. It has continued to engage Commonwealth leaders and

others to assert the autonomy and independence of the College. For instance, in June of 2011, the board passed Resolution 2011-03 [\[IVB.1:15\]](#) in order to dissuade the Governor from passing a bill that the board believed impacted the autonomy of the Northern Marianas College. The resolution referenced the Commonwealth Constitution and the Commonwealth Supreme Court case *N. Marianas College v. Civil Serv. Comm'n II*, 2007 MP 8 [\[IVB.1:10\]](#); both make clear that the College is an independent institution. The resolution further noted the expectations of ACCJC that the College, as an ACCJC accredited institution, must comply with ACCJC Eligibility Requirements and Standards. With these provisions and requirements set forth, the resolution asserted the College's autonomy and stated "that the Board of Regents of the Northern Marianas College, in a duly called meeting, reaffirms the autonomy that it was granted, and still has, under the Constitution of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands[.]"

Prior to this resolution, the BOR and the then- Interim President were able to successfully advocate for the College to be exempted from a government shutdown that occurred in late 2010. When it occurred, Senate Bill 17-26 [\[IVB.1:16\]](#) and the Governor's Executive Order 2010-11 [\[IVB.1:17\]](#) both exempted the College from the shutdown. Furthermore, the College has been exempted from the imposition of additional austerity measures that were imposed by the Commonwealth government.

It is evident that the board has recognized the need to continue to advocate for and defend the institution and has been quick to engage and meet with individual legislators and other leaders to help raise their awareness about accreditation requirements and to discourage them from advancing any legislation that may encroach upon the BOR's autonomy.

Actions Taken

The Board of Regents serves as an effective independent policy-making body. It sets policy acting as a unit. In the last 12 months, the board worked assiduously expending a significant amount of time and energy, particularly at the start of spring of 2013, to fully review all board organizational policies [\[IVB.1:13\]](#) to separate board operational policies from college operations. During the Board's August, 2013 meeting [\[IVB.1:19\]](#), the following board operational policies were reviewed and finalized:

Policy 1000:	Constitutional and Statutory Authority
Policy 1001:	Limits of Authority
Policy 1002:	Officers
Policy 1007:	Duties of the Legal Counsel
Policy 1008:	Formulation, Adoption, and Amendment of Policies and Bylaws
Policy 1009:	Formulation, Adoption, and Amendment of Administrative Procedures
Policy 1010:	Suspension of Policies, Bylaws, and Procedures
Policy 1012:	Periodic Review and Evaluation of the President
Policy 1014:	Code of Conduct of the Board
Policy 1015:	Attendance at Meetings, Institutions, and Conventions
Policy 1016:	Board Members Liability Protection
Policy 1017:	Conflict of Interest Code
Policy 1018:	Removal from Office
Policy 1019:	Board of Regents Self Evaluation

Policy 1020:	Institutional Governance
Policy 1021:	Citizen Participation in Board of Regents Meetings
Policy 1022:	Protection from Civil Suit
Policy 1024:	Political Activities

In addition to these listed, the Board has reviewed its other remaining operational policies to update and renumber them based on the new numbering system. Maintaining its momentum and focus on policy, the board has also completed its review and update of all other institutional policies that pertain to human resources, student services, finance, academics, and other areas of the College. The board additionally set a calendar for the review of its operational policies as may be seen in the policy review calendar [\[IVB.1:20\]](#), which was recently updated by the board.

The board has undergone and continues to participate in significant board training and development activities [\[IVB.1:11\]](#) that enhance the board's policy-making role. These sessions have helped the board focus on policy, maintain its pace in reviewing and updating policies, and refraining from being involved in the administrative responsibilities that fall under the purview of the president.

In just the last 12 months the full board has participated in the following board development opportunities [\[IVB.1:11\]](#): a two-day board development retreat on effective boardsmanship, offered by the Pacific Postsecondary Education Council (PPEC); a one-day board retreat focused on the board's self-assessment of its performance as a board, provided by consultant Larry Gamboa; and in a series of three half-day workshops provided by ACCT Executive Vice President Dr. Narcisa Polonio, addressing board roles and responsibility, policy development, governance and management.

In August 2013, the board members also participated in three separate training sessions facilitated by Dr. Pamila Fisher, a former community college president, chancellor, and chair of a visiting accreditation team. Dr. Fisher focused these sessions around best practices for effective governance, accreditation expectations, and achieving consensus on new board policies [\[IVB.1:21\]](#).

Also, all board members have participated in at least one national conference or workshop (e.g. 2013 ACCT Leadership Congress, 2013 ACCT's Community College Legislative Summit, 2013 AACC's Annual Convention, and the 2012 Community College League of California Annual Trustees Conference) [\[IVB.1:11\]](#).

Further, a majority of the members of the Board of Regents had the opportunity to formally meet with Dr. Narcisa Polonio and Dr. Pamila Fisher, consultants from ACCT, while attending the 2013 ACCT Leadership Congress held in Seattle in the first week of October, 2013 [\[IVB.1:22\]](#). The meeting focused on final suggestions and strategies the board can implement to sustain the significant work and accomplishments it has implemented to date as it relates to the roles and responsibilities of the board.

The following table lists some of the training activities and conferences that board members have attended:

Date	Activity Type	Name	Organized By
03/20/12	Webinar	"Safeguarding Your Institution: the Board's role in Navigating Disaster"	ACCT
04/20/12	Workshop	AACC 92nd Convention (Various Topics)	AACC
05/03/12	Workshop	BOR and CEO Assistants Workshop	AACC
05/04/12	Workshop	Board and CEO Assistants Workshop	ACCT
10/09/12	Workshop	ACCT 43rd Annual Leadership Congress in Boston	ACCT
11/14/12	Conference	Community College League of California Annual Convention & Partner Conference in Los Angeles	CCLC
12/5-6/12	Board Training	PPEC Boardmanship Training in Guam	PPEC
12/19/12	Retreat	Board Retreat with Larry Gamboa	
02/10/13	Conference	2013 Community College Summit	ACCT
04/19/13	Conference	93rd AACC Convention	AACC
04/24/13	Training	BOR Retreat via Skype with Dr. Polonio	NMC
08/01/13	Training	1/2 Day BOR Retreat via Skype with Dr. Polonio	NMC
08/26-27/2013	Training Sessions	Best Practices for Effective Governance / Accreditation Expectations / Achieving Consensus	ACCT
10/2-5/13	Workshop	ACCT 44 th Annual Leadership Congress	ACCT

To reemphasize the board's independence, the NMC Board of Regents repealed its policy on Honorary Regents [\[IVB.1:12\]](#) in June, 2013 [\[IVB.1:23\]](#). According to ACCJC's President Dr. Barbara Beno, the Honorary Regents allow representatives of staff and faculty to sit in during

board meetings “and regularly engage in direct discussions related to policy issues...” She further stated, “As these members represent faculty senate, staff senate, and student senate groups, the practice violates Accreditation Standards that require board independence.”

The representatives of students, staff, and faculty continue to be engaged through the College’s participative governance structure. However, no longer do the policy on Honorary Regents [\[IVB.1:12\]](#) and the practice of having members representing faculty senate, staff senate, and student senate groups at board meetings violate Accreditation Standards that require board independence.

To further enhance the reflection of the public interest in board deliberations and actions, the board on August 9, 2013 [\[IVB.1:19\]](#), updated its policy regarding the public’s participation in Regents’ meetings. Board Policy No. 1021 [\[IVB.1:24\]](#) states that “As their appointed representatives, it is desirable that the Board of Regents, as it deliberates and forms policy, be continually aware of the needs, interests, and concerns of the people of the CNMI and that all possible channels of communication be kept open for that purpose.”

The regents continue to have open board meetings that are open to members of the public and that invite direct input from the community on any given agenda item.

The board continues to engage members of the CNMI legislature to help in the understanding of accreditation requirements and standards. This is true in the area of the College’s mission statement [\[IVB.1:25\]](#), where the board successfully advocated that the CNMI Constitution be amended to allow the College the flexibility to establish its own mission statement. The CNMI Legislature consequently paved the way for a legislative initiative [\[IVB.1:26\]](#) that would be voted on by the electors. Prior to the constitutional amendment, which was overwhelmingly passed by the electorate last November, the mission statement of the College was fixed in the CNMI Constitution and thus precluded the College from revisiting or updating it periodically.

The board also continues to advocate for and defend the College during other opportunities: the Board of Regents met with the governor and legislators on several occasions to help them understand the U.S. Department of Education’s (USDOE) recent decision to render students of NMC’s bachelor degree in education program ineligible for federal financial aid. The USDOE had indicated that dual accreditation is not in accordance with its policy, based on its view that the joint accreditation process under two accrediting agencies is inconsistent with the Higher Education Act (HEA) [\[IVB.1:28\]](#). In the case of NMC, the College is accredited by both the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU).

In the meetings with Commonwealth leaders, the regents made clear that the USDOE’s decision was not connected to the College’s show cause accreditation status nor was NMC at fault. And, as a result of these discussions with the members of the executive and legislative branches, the regents and the president were successful in enlisting the assistance of the Governor, who wrote to officials of USDOE on behalf of the College [\[IVB.1:29\]](#).

One of the other key takeaway from these meetings occurred when CNMI Governor Eloy Inos was interviewed by one of the local newspapers and was asked about the College. The essence of the Governor's response, and his deference of NMC's independence, is noted in the excerpt below:

“In a separate interview, Gov. Eloy S. Inos told *Saipan Tribune* that he remains hands-off on the affairs and operation of the college's Board of Regents, despite being its appointing authority.”

‘All I want is for the board to focus on the college and the students. My main goal is to see NMC survive the accreditation, get out of show-cause status, and move up to the next level. I know there are sentiments about personal views and so forth....all I ask is for everyone to set aside their personal differences and work together to ensure that the college maintains its accreditation,’ Inos said.

Inos said he wants to maintain the level of independence of the college in all respects of its operation. He assured his administration's continued support of the institution and its students.” (Saipan Tribune, July 3, 2013)[[IVB.1:30](#)]

The meetings with Commonwealth leaders were also instrumental in helping to convince the members of the 18th Commonwealth Legislature to pass a resolution [[IVB.1:31](#)] that also asked USDOE to reconsider its decision. This resolution was passed by the CNMI House of Representatives as well as the CNMI Senate.

The board also advocated for the College when two regents, whose re-nomination to the board was being considered, were confronted with various questions surrounding the institution. The regents fielded questions and took the opportunity to explain that there was no blame to be placed on NMC as policies shift and the College responds accordingly.

Standard IV.B.1.j

The governing board has the responsibility for selecting and evaluating the district/system chief administrator (most often known as the chancellor) in a multi-college district/system or the college chief administrator (most often known as the president) in the case of a single college. The governing board delegates full responsibility and authority to him/her to implement and administer board policies without board interference and holds him/her accountable for the operation of the district/system or college, respectively. In multi-college districts/systems, the governing board establishes a clearly defined policy for selecting and evaluating the presidents of the colleges.

Descriptive Summary

The Northern Marianas College Board of Regents is charged—constitutionally, statutorily and through board policy—with selecting a president for the college. This responsibility is stated unambiguously in Section 2(a) of Article XV of the Commonwealth Constitution [[IVB.1:1](#)],

which directs that: “[t]he president of the college shall be appointed by a representative board of regents.”

On August 17, 2012 [\[IVB.1:32\]](#), the NMC Board of Regents adopted a policy that governs the manner in which future candidates for president will be selected. BOR Policy No. 203 [\[IVB.1:33\]](#), entitled “President Recruitment and Hiring,” itemizes the steps that need to be taken the next time there is a presidential vacancy at Northern Marianas College and contains provisions for external searches, the composition of the search committee and their appointment, the screening process, the advertising requirements, and interview procedures.

Additionally, on August 8, 2013 [\[IVB.1:19\]](#), the Northern Marianas College Board of Regents set forth a revised and clearly defined mechanism for evaluating the chief administrator’s performance in implementing institutional policies and achieving institutional goals. This is spelled out in the new BOR Policy No. 1012 [\[IVB.1:35\]](#), which states the following in relation to the presidential evaluation:

1. The evaluation of the president’s performance shall be an ongoing and systematic process that culminates in an annual written review of the president by the board.
2. The purpose of evaluation is to assess the president’s performance based on the expectations stated Northern Marianas College Board Of Regents Policy in the president’s job description as well as other goals and objectives developed annually between the president and board.
3. Providing the president with a clear sense of direction, acknowledging good performance, and suggesting areas in which performance may be improved shall be the primary goals of the evaluation; the ultimate goal is to ensure the efficient operation of the college for the benefit of students and employees.
4. Formal evaluation of the president shall occur annually and shall be the responsibility of the board. The process and criteria used shall be understood and mutually acceptable by the board and the president by means of a written assessment tool (e.g. CEO Evaluation Instrument, Handbook on CEO-Board Relations and Responsibilities, George Boggs, AACC, 2006). The formal evaluation shall result in a written record of performance on which the board will base its annual review of the president’s contract. Written evaluations should be sealed and placed in the president’s personnel file for review only by board members or the president.

The Board of Regents delegates full administrative authority for the college to the chief administrator. BOR Policy No. 1006 [\[IVB.1:36\]](#) states that “The president is the chief executive officer of the Northern Marianas College, and in this capacity is charged with full administrative

responsibility for the College...the Board fully supports, without interference, the president's role and responsibilities.”

Additionally, BOR Policy No. 1006 [\[IVB.1:36\]](#) states, “The President recommends policies to the Board, and is authorized by the Board to exercise broad discretionary powers, without interference, according to the policies, goals and general directions established by the Board for the College.”

Furthermore, BOR Policy No. 1009 [\[IVB.1:37\]](#) places administrative control even more firmly in the hands of the president by requiring that:

“[t]he Board [of Regents] does not adopt administrative procedures unless specifically required to do so by law, or unless requested to do so by the president. . . . The Board reserves the right to review and direct revisions of administrative procedures should they, in the Board's judgment, be inconsistent with the policies adopted by the Board.”

To further demonstrate the board's delegation of authority to the president, the Board approved a policy that grants the president authority to suspend board policy in particular circumstances. This is spelled out in BOR Policy No. 1010 [\[IVB.1:38\]](#), “Suspension of Policies, Bylaws, and Procedures,” which states that “The President, in consultation with the Board Chair, is authorized to suspend only that part of a policy, procedure or bylaw that is in conflict when advised by competent legal authority, accreditation body, and government entities that such part of a policy, bylaw, or procedure is wholly or in part in conflict with laws or procedures of a superior governing body.

To hold the president accountable for her actions, the Board of Regents evaluates the president against identified institutional goals, duties and responsibilities, and for her performance in the implementation of board policy. This appraisal of the president's performance occurs twice during each year – during the mid-year evaluation as well as an end-of-the-year evaluation. The Board's assessment of the president's performance is also monitored on a monthly basis: during its regular meetings, the board receives a monthly report [\[IVB.1:39\]](#) from the president that describes activities and progress made in achieving identified goals and priorities.

Self-Evaluation

Prior to the adoption of BOR Policy No. 203 [\[IVB.1:33\]](#) (President Recruitment and Hiring) in August, 2012 [\[IVB.1:32\]](#), the Board of Regents utilized Resolution 2010-03 (Second Amendment) [\[IVB.1:40\]](#), which had prescribed the procedures for how a new president would be selected. The resolution reflected the statutory requirements for the president set forth in 3 CMC § 1322 [\[IVB.1:41\]](#) that “[a]ll candidates for the position of president of the Northern Marianas College shall possess at least a graduate degree from an accredited university in the United States or its territories and such other qualifications as the board may determine” and sets forth a clear written process for the Board of Regents to choose the president of the college.

The board used the process stated in the aforementioned resolution [\[IVB.1:40\]](#) in its most recent search, which concluded in April 2011 with the hiring of Dr. Sharon Y. Hart, who began service in July 2011. This process is now reflected in BOR Policy No. 203, which has recently been renumbered [\[IVB.1:33\]](#).

Furthermore, before approving the updated policy on the evaluation of the president's performance (BOR Policy No. 1012) [\[IVB.1:35\]](#), the Board of Regents was governed BOR Policy No. 1017, "Periodic Review and Evaluation of the President," which included the protocols, procedures, and parameters of the presidential evaluation activities.

The presidential evaluation instrument and its process and procedure were used by the board in the evaluation of NMC President Dr. Sharon Hart during her first year in office. An improved and agreed upon process was utilized in year two.

As demonstrated by the minutes of its meetings, the Board of Regents has been very effective in maintaining its focus on the strategic direction of the College and on updating key policies. In conformance with its policies, it has delegated full responsibility and authority to the president for the management and operations of the College.

To ensure that the board continues to distinguish its policy-making role from that of the president's role of managing the operations of the College, the regents have sustained their participation in training activities [\[IVB.1:11\]](#) that provide guidance in the proper roles and functions of board members and in the separate role and responsibility of the president. In December of 2012, the members of the Board participated in a board training workshop entitled, "Building and Sustaining an Effective Governing Board," which was facilitated by Dr. Sheila Stearns, a senior Fellow at the Association of Governing Boards [\[IVB.1:42\]](#). During this workshop, the regents were engaged in discussion and reflection about board responsibilities for the full board, for the individual board member, and for board chairs. Other topics of the workshop included independence and autonomy, integrating public interest into campus decision-making, and organizing effective board agendas and meetings. The agenda [\[IVB.1:42\]](#) to this workshop is attached in the Appendix Section of this Report.

While the delegation of authority to the president has been re-emphasized in various Board of Regents training and orientation sessions [\[IVB.1:11\]](#), the October 2012 External Evaluation Team noted that the policy on Honorary Regents [\[IVB.1:12\]](#) seemed to encourage board micro-management and diminish the president's responsibility in implementing policies and operating the College. For example, in a board meeting held in April, 2012 [\[IVB.1:43\]](#), the Honorary Regents were disagreeing with the president in relation to a policy regarding governance.

The presence of Honorary Regents in board meetings, according to the evaluation team, allowed them to provide additional information directly to the Board of Regents "outside the decision making path", offering a second avenue for advice to the board. This structure contradicts the policy that states that the president is solely responsible for the operation of the College.

The board holds the president accountable for her actions through periodic and annual evaluations against identified goals, through the receipt of institutional effectiveness monitoring

reports and the president's monthly activity report [\[IVB.1:39\]](#), and through other means that keep the board informed of the president's challenges and accomplishments.

Actions Taken

The Board of Regents has recently conducted the annual evaluation of the president's second year. The process and criteria for evaluation of the president in year one were established by and mutually agreed on by both the board and the president at the onset of the president's tenure at the college as the president is to clearly know what is expected so that problems do not occur. This was accomplished shortly after President Hart arrived to the College (fall of 2012). The board did provide, at the president's request, a mid-year evaluation in the spring of 2012 to ensure the president was meeting the goals and objectives established and agreed upon by the board and president. At that point, the president had been with the College for approximately eight months. The president's formal end of the year fiscal year 2012 evaluation was completed in April, 2013.

Operating in the spirit of continuous improvement, the president and board worked together to outline the process for the president's second annual evaluation. At the conclusion of fiscal year 2013, the president prepared an end-of-year accomplishment report [\[IVB.1:44\]](#), that went to the board in October of 2013. In addition, the president presented to the board the narrative for Standard IV.B.2, which the Board agreed to utilize as an additional evaluation synopsis of the president. The document provided a thorough analysis of the president's primary responsibility for the quality of the institution she leads. The narrative results clearly elaborated on the effective leadership of the president in planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness.

As the president is the only college employee that the board evaluates, the board—through the board chairperson—also has many opportunities to share evaluative comments informally with the president during its regular interactions with the CEO. The board chairperson and president have weekly meetings where a variety of issues are discussed.

Additionally, as indicated earlier in this standard, the NMC Board of Regents has recently adopted a new board policy that updates the evaluation process which will assess the CEO's performance (BOR Policy No. 1012) [\[IVB.1:35\]](#). This new policy will govern the next evaluation of President. The FY 2014 evaluation of the president will utilize a review of the institution's accomplishments for FY 2014 and the utilization of a mutually agreed evaluation instrument/process of which ACCT is presently assisting the Board of Regents and the president with, to be completed by this fall.

Standard IV.B.2

The president has primary responsibility for the quality of the institution he/she leads. He/she provides effective leadership in planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness.

Descriptive Summary

The NMC Board of Regents has delegated all administrative authority to the president, and she has primary responsibility for the quality of the Northern Marianas College. Her authority is specified in both CNMI statute as well as Board of Regents policy. BOR Policy No. 1006 [\[IVB:1\]](#), which recently has been updated, opens with the following passage:

“The President is the chief executive officer of the Northern Marianas College, and in this capacity is charged with full administrative responsibility for the College. As such, the boards hold the president accountable for the operation of the College.”

Additionally, BOR Policy No. 1006 goes on to state that “The President’s fundamental responsibility is to develop and maintain an institution that fulfills the mission and achieves the goals of the Northern Marianas College in accordance with the Purpose Statement set forth in Article XV, Section 2 of the CNMI Constitution [\[IVB.2:2\]](#).” That section of the CNMI Constitution speaks directly to the level of quality that is expected from the institution:

“The purpose of the college shall be to provide the *best quality* and meaningful postsecondary and adult educational opportunities for the purpose of improving the quality of life for the individual and for the Commonwealth as a whole...” CNMI Constitution

Pursuant to these BOR policies and the CNMI Constitution, the president provides effective leadership in planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness and is held accountable for her effectiveness in these areas by the NMC Board of Regents.

To provide effective leadership in planning, at NMC, the president oversees an interconnected planning process that has three distinct components: a) planning; b) assessment; and c) resource allocation. A five-year strategic plan, approved by the NMC Board of Regents, is developed with broad participation from the College as well as with input from the greater CNMI community, including the business sector, the K-12 school system, legislative and executive leaders, and others. From this multi-year plan, the College develops an operational plan, which is tracked regularly and updated as necessary. Results from program review activities also inform the planning process, and ultimately, resource allocation. The College’s institutional planning cycle is described in greater detail in NMC’s *2013 Institutional Excellence Guide* [\[IVB.2:3\]](#), which has been recently revised.

As indicated in the *2013 Institutional Excellence Guide*, program review at NMC is a college-wide activity that presents findings and recommendations unique to each program with the clear intent of facilitating both improvement and accountability as they relate to program

effectiveness. The direct result of the institutional program review process is to meaningfully inform the College's decision-making, planning, and budgeting processes, particularly with regard to making improvements at the course, program, and institutional levels. It is a coordinated systematic process for evaluating program effectiveness as outlined in the Student Learning Outcomes Comprehensive Implementation Program (SLOCIP), adopted in fall 2007.

The Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC) is charged with oversight of the program review process. It receives assessment and program review reports from every academic, student services and administrative programs, and provides constructive feedback to programs to improve the quality of the reports.

The objectives of the process are made clear to all programs and include identification of strengths and weaknesses of the program; analysis of current human, physical, technology and financial resources; analysis of potential areas of needed change or improvement based on data collected around outcomes for the program; and discussion of needed additional resources to either meet the stated outcomes or for improvement to the program in other areas. Program review is designed to guide the improvement of the College's overall planning and resource allocation.

Each academic, student services, and administrative program uses the Five-Column Model (Form 1) to identify program level student learning outcomes (SLOs) and/or administrative unit outcomes (AUOs). Programs develop specific measures and criteria for determining success for each outcome. Data is gathered and analyzed to determine if the outcomes are being met or if curricular/administrative processes need change. A program's Form 1 is incorporated into its program review report (Form 2), which provides a comprehensive analysis of the program's effectiveness and presents recommendations for the program and the institution based on a thorough analysis of data. Results from the program review are then used to inform the planning and budgeting process.

Recently-updated BOR Policy No. 1006 [\[IVB.2:4\]](#) also charges the president with the "responsibility for the organization and administration of the College and for the coordination of its entire instructional program and services." The president has delegated authority within the administrative organization in a manner that meets the needs of the college. The following direct reports each coordinate a specific component area:

1. Academic Programs and Services
2. Student Services
3. Administration and Resource Development
4. Finance
5. Cooperative Research Extension and Education Service

Furthermore, the following direct reports also oversee important functions of the College: the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Director of External Relations, Director of Information Technology, and Director of Human Resources/Legal Counsel. The full range of the administrative and management team positions are outlined in NMC's *2013 Institutional Excellence Guide*.

In addition to providing leadership in the administrative structure of the College, the president effectively controls budget and all expenditures through administrative control procedures and by overseeing the participative governance mechanism designed to monitor and regulate the College's financial activities. The president's responsibilities with respect to controls over budget and expenditures are clearly delineated in the Board of Regents' recent revision of policies on Board Operations and on Finance and Procurement. These policies, as well as the governance structure that the president oversees, are discussed in more detail in the Standard IVB.2.d narrative section of this Report.

Similarly, the president exercises leadership over selecting and developing personnel by empowering members of the College leadership with hiring and professional development decisions. Interview committees are composed of the appointing authority, recruiting department/division head, at least one faculty and one staff representative and one Human Resource Office (HRO) representative. Interview committees for instructional faculty will also include the Dean of Academic Programs and Services and the president. Instructional faculty also comprise half of the committee. The interview committee formulates interview questions, takes notes and voice records of interviews, and evaluates candidates based on the interview. The appointing authority makes the final selection about which individual is ultimately hired, and the president approves the decision.

Training and professional development activities for Northern Marianas College employees occur at three separate levels: institution-wide activities, program-specific activities, and activities designed for individuals. Institution-wide activities include accreditation training, the most recent featuring a discussion about distinguishing the roles of the Board of Regents and the president. Another training exercise also held recently involved a discussion on accreditation standards. This training was offered off-campus to minimize interruptions and to ensure that all employees were focused on the discussion. Program-specific activities include development activities in specific areas, such as the one held recently about Student Learning Outcomes for members of the College's academic and student services employees. Individual training is also encouraged through on-island and off-island training. For instance, several faculty and staff have participated in Developing a Curriculum (DACUM) training [\[IVB.2:5\]](#), the Leadership Academy program, First-Year Experience, and many more.

The president's effective leadership extends to all institutional assessment processes at the College. By overseeing all the governance mechanisms that are in place to drive and monitor program review activities, the president ensures that continuous improvement occurs at all levels of the institution.

Self Evaluation

While it is evident that the president has the primary responsibility for the quality of the institution and provides leadership in planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness, the president has focused on improving the understanding of the board and the College community about the president's role in these areas. Further, both the members of the board and the NMC President continue to enhance their ability

to work as a team. Through its actions, especially over contentious issues like the minimum faculty qualifications policy decision or the recommendation to repeal the policy on Honorary Regents, it is clear that the Board of Regents has demonstrated its support of the president's authority and decisions in fulfilling the mission of the College.

To strengthen the board's understanding of the president's responsibilities, the members of the Board of Regents, together with the president, continue to participate in a number of board development activities that distinguish the role of the board in setting policy from the role of the president in leading the operations of the College.

The roles of the board and president were also extensively discussed during the board's retreat held last December, which was facilitated by the former executive director of the Pacific Post-Secondary Education Council, a group that is composed of all the leaders of the colleges and universities in the Pacific region. The retreat included topics about the relationship between the board and the president and the need to establish clear communication protocols.

The College's planning activities recently yielded the *FY 2014 Operational Plan End Goals* [\[IVB.2:6\]](#) which identified the following end goals that were focused on meeting accreditation requirements and recommendations, including strengthened instruction and services through a systematic evaluation of student learning outcomes and improved services to Rota and Tinian. As these planning goals guide institutional activities for FY 2014, the College is also working on updating its Five-Year Strategic Plan. The NMC mission statement, which was recently revised by the Board of Regents after voters in the CNMI approved a constitutional amendment to give the BOR flexibility in establishing the College's mission statement. This was done through a process that engaged the College community as well as external stakeholders.

Further, the president continues to control the College's budget and expenditures by exercising the authority delegated by the Board of Regents to establish administrative procedures, such as cost control mechanisms, regular financial reporting, and external audit processes, in addition to overseeing the College's participatory governance process for budget and finance.

In fall of 2011, the president wrote and disseminated a White Paper [\[IVB.2:7\]](#) entitled "Critical Budget Decisions for FY 2012 and Beyond" which identified effective controls for budgeting, expenditures, and monitoring both. Drawing from an article published by Dennis Jones in the January/February 2011 issue of Association of Governing Boards (AGB) Trusteeship entitled "Protecting and Building Your Institution's Assets," the president's white paper stressed that the College's "approach to resource allocation must put the long-term capacity and health of the College at the center of the process...[That approach] must be strategic [and must] protect and enhance our College rather than erode its core capacity and ability." Laying out five steps for making intentional decisions about budgeting and resource allocation, the president's white paper has been integrated into the College's ongoing dialogue about planning, budgeting, and resource allocation. Using these five steps, the president has implemented controls such as critical cost saving measures at times when the College's cash flow has been constrained.

In addition, the president monitors the College's budget and expenditures on a regular basis. The College's current fiscal reporting mechanism, overseen by the president, facilitates routine control over budget and finance processes. Under the president's direction, the Finance Office

and the Budget Office provides monthly encumbrance reports and quarterly budget status reports respectively to all expenditure authorities. These reports inform the expenditure authorities on current encumbrances, budget balances, and any reprogramming adjustments that may be needed. These financial reporting mechanisms inform the president's regular financial updates to the Board of Regents and are part of the president's standing report for every regular board meeting.

Additional evidence that the president effectively controls budget and finance can be seen in the results of the most recent external audit. The FY 2012 external audit [\[IVB.2:8\]](#) revealed no audit exceptions and resulted in unqualified auditor's opinions on both the financial statements as well as the report on internal control and compliance for federal programs – for the first time in the College's history. Moreover, the number of audit findings on internal control and compliance has decreased since Dr. Hart began as president of the College. There were only 2 findings in this year's external audit, neither of which was considered a material weakness, down from 13 findings in FY 2011.

Despite this progress in budgeting and financing at the College, during the External Evaluation Team's visit to the Northern Marianas College in October, 2012, there was a concern noted about the staffing level of the College including in the area of finance. Specifically, the Evaluation Team pointed out the vacancies in key positions, including the Chief Financial Officer, the IT Director, and the Admissions Director. The College has since filled all these vacancies with extremely qualified individuals who are committed to the mission of the institution; a more detailed narrative is indicated in the "Actions Taken" section of this Standard as well as under the narrative response for "Eligibility #5."

Furthermore, while the Evaluation Team noted that the "President has delegated the responsibility for all personnel hiring, except for those that report to her directly, to the administrator who oversees the area in which the hire occurs," it urged the president to take a significant role in hiring faculty and administrators to ensure consistent quality across NMC personnel. The response to this is addressed in the "Actions Taken" section of this Standard.

Assessing institutional effectiveness—and making plans for continuous improvement—has consistently been a priority for the president. Programs at the College continue to assess their performance against identified goals and objectives. They use annual program assessment (Form 1) and program review biannual evaluations (Form 2), to perform an extensive review of their history, resources, performance, and other components. The Planning, Program Review, and Outcomes Assessment Committee, recently completed a composite report that highlights assessment activities and recommendations made to programs and to the institution [\[IVB.2:9\]](#).

Actions Taken

Revised Policy on duties of the President

The Board of Regents recently updated its policy on the delegation of administrative responsibility to the president. Board of Regents' updated BOR Policy No. 1006 [\[IVB.2:10\]](#) states that "The president is the chief executive officer of the Northern Marianas College, and in this capacity is charged with full administrative responsibility for the College...the Board fully

supports, without interference, the president's role and responsibilities." Additionally, Policy 1006 states, "The President recommends policies to the Board, and is authorized by the Board to exercise broad discretionary powers, without interference, according to the policies, goals and general directions established by the Board for the College."

These revised policies also clearly delineate the president's responsibilities for control over budget and expenditures. The policies include the following specific duties and responsibilities for the president:

- Recommending to the board new and revised policies and establishing administrative procedures for finance and procurement (among others) [BOR Policy No. 1006 [\[IVB.2:11\]](#)];
- Preparing a budget in line with the needs of the College, and approving expenditure of funds appropriated to the College by the federal or Commonwealth government or donated to the College by any other entity [BOR Policy No. 1006 [\[IVB.2:12\]](#)];
- Adopting and maintaining procedures that clearly outline how employees and certain non-employees will be approved for and reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred on behalf of the College [BOR Policy No. 7004 [\[IVB.2:13\]](#)];
- Developing procedures to ensure that all travel receives proper authorization [BOR Policy No. [\[IVB.2:14\]](#)];
- Developing procedures for the acceptance and receipt of appropriate gifts in accordance with this policy [BOR Policy No. 7008 [\[IVB.2:15\]](#)];
- Adopting procedures to:
 1. Define the College's procurement policies and practices;
 2. Delineate the authority and responsibilities of College personnel involved in the acquisition of goods, services, construction, and cooperative agreements;
 3. Establish standard procedures to effectively manage the College's purchasing and contracting activities;
 4. Ensure compliance with Commonwealth and Federal laws, rules and regulations, as well as Board of Regents' policies;
 5. Ensure fair and equitable treatment of all persons who deal with the procurement system of the College;
 6. Provide increased economy in the College's procurement activities and to maximize the purchasing value of public funds entrusted to it; and
 7. Provide safeguards for the maintenance of a procurement system of quality and integrity [BOR Policy No. 7009].

Continued Professional Development

The NMC Board of Regents and the president continue to participate in training activities that enhance their understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities, particularly that of the board's role in setting policy and the president's role in managing the effective operation of the institution. A list of training activities is included in the narrative for IV.B.1. Recognizing that the greater College community should also better understand the respective roles of the board and the president, the College held a training workshop on September 27, 2013. The workshop

was driven by best practice standards from the Community College League of California on the roles of boards and chief executive officers, delineated the unique roles of the board and the president, and examined the working relationship between the board and the president.

Board & President Retreat

In a board retreat [\[IVB.2:16\]](#) held in December of 2012, the Board of Regents and the president discussed their roles and responsibilities at length. The retreat was facilitated by the former executive director of the Pacific Post Secondary Education Council (PPEC), a group of chief executives of colleges in the Pacific region. The retreat focused on Board Self-Evaluation and developing a productive relationship between the board and the president. In addition, the board and the president revisited priorities and goals for 2013, which lead to recommendations for the board to consider in 2013.

Removal of Honorary Regents

While the delegation of authority to the president has been re-emphasized in various Board of Regents training and orientation sessions, the October 2012 External Evaluation Team noted that the policy on honorary regents seemed to encourage board micro-management and seemed to diminish the president's responsibility in implementing policies and operating the college. The presence of honorary regents in board meetings, according to the evaluation team, allowed them to provide additional information directly to the Board of Regents "outside the decision making path", offering a second avenue for advice to the board. This structure contradicted the policy that states that the president is solely responsible for the operations of the College. Based on this analysis, earlier this year, the board took action to repeal the policy on Honorary Regents. To ensure that students, staff, and faculty are empowered, these stakeholders continue to be engaged in decision making through other avenues of participatory governance. Student, staff, and faculty representatives currently sit on the College's management team, College Council, the Planning, Program Review, and Outcomes Assessment Committee, Budget and Finance Committee, and Academic Council.

Adoption of NMC's FY 2014 Operation Plan End Goals

The NMC Board of Regents approved the revised *FY 2014 Operational Plan End Goals*, which identified the following end goals that were focused on meeting accreditation requirements and recommendations:

1. *Student Success*
 - a. Strengthened instruction and services through a systematic evaluation of student learning outcomes (SLOs). (*Recommendation 2; Standard II.C.2*).
 - b. Improved services to residents of Tinian and Rota. (*Recommendation 1; Eligibility Requirement 1—Mission, Standards II.A.1, II.A.1.a, II.A.1.b, III.C.1.c, III.C.1.d*).
2. *Resource Optimization*

- a. Implemented an effective planning process that emphasized accountability and tied resource allocation and initiatives to the concepts of institutional effectiveness. (*Recommendation 4 and 6; Standard III.B.1.a; Standard III.D.2.g, IV.A.2*).
- b. Provided necessary physical facilities and resources to meet the needs of the College's programs and constituencies. (*Recommendation 4; Standard III.B.1.a*).
- c. Obtained a sufficient number of qualified personnel with full-time responsibility to the institution, and established minimum faculty qualification for all academic instructors. (*Recommendation 3; Eligibility Requirement 13—Faculty, III.A.1, III.A.2*).

3. *Information Technology*

- a. Secured highly qualified IT personnel and service providers to improve technology support system. (*Recommendation 5; III.C.1, III.C.2.a, III.C.1.d, III.C.2*).
- b. Improved IT planning, utility and decision-making processes through systematic evaluation to meet institutional needs. (*Recommendation 5; III.C.1, III.C.2.a, III.C.1.d, III.C.2*).
- c. Integrated technology to enhance student learning. (*Recommendation 2; Standard II.C.2*).

4. *Continuous Quality Improvement*

- a. Secured Reaffirmation of Accreditation.
- b. Revised the governance structure in order to ensure clarity and effective College operations. (*Recommendation 6; Standard III.D.2.g, IV.A.2*).
- c. Obtained adequate resources to pursue Capital Improvement Projects / plans. (*Recommendation 4; Standard III.B.1.a*).
- d. Implemented procedures in support of new and revised Board policies that impact College operations. (*Recommendation 7; Standard IV.B.1.e, IV.B.1.g*).

5. *CNMI Workforce Needs*

Expanded efforts to partner with business, industry, and government to identify their needs for a skilled and trained workforce.

Revised 2013 Institutional Excellence Guide

In August 2013, the Board of Regents amended its policy on institutional governance, shifting the College from a shared governance model to one of participatory governance. Following the board's lead, and drawing from the work of the Governance Review Task Force and input from students, staff, faculty, deans, and administrators, the College recently updated its *2013 Institutional Excellence Guide* [\[IVB.2:17\]](#), which describes in detail the College's shift from shared governance to participative governance structure and processes. The revised document clearly delineates the roles of the governance bodies and constituents. However, since this shift from shared to participatory governance represents a significant paradigm shift for the College,

the guide will continue to undergo changes over the next two months as roles and responsibilities for stakeholder groups and governance bodies are further clarified.

Key Vacancies Filled

During its visit to NMC in October, 2012, the External Evaluation Team noted that vacancies existed in key areas of the College. Since then the College has made tremendous progress in filling these vacancies with highly-qualified individuals (the evidence for the following are referenced in the narrative for Eligibility Requirements #5):

Chief Financial Officer

Upon receipt of the Commission's February 11, 2013 Action Letter, the College immediately took action to re-advertise the Chief Financial Officer position at a more competitive salary and with revised qualifications. The College initially advertised the position of Director of Financial Services/Chief Financial Officer on Vacancy Announcement 12-035 on June 20, 2012 at a rate of \$50,000 to \$55,000 and requiring a Master's degree and three years relevant experience or a Bachelor's degree and five years relevant experience. This announcement generated 12 interested applicants, but few who were qualified. Interviews were held and an offer was extended, however the candidate declined the position. Vacancy Announcement 12-035 was revised on September 18, 2013 and the salary was elevated to \$55,000 to \$60,000 to entice more qualified applicants. Vacancy Announcement No. 13-006 reflects a further revised salary of \$60,000 to \$70,000 and heightened qualifications commensurate with the higher salary. This position opened on February 20, 2013, mere days after receipt of the Commission's letter and was advertised on NMC's website, local newspapers, the National Association of College and University Business Officers website, and HigherEdJobs.com. On Higher Ed Jobs alone, 16,524 searches during the posting period generated 628 views. The College's recruitment efforts resulted in seven interested applicants.

After the above search process, on April 1, 2013, the College hired Tracy Guerrero as NMC's new Chief Financial Officer. Tracy Guerrero holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from U.C. Berkeley and an MBA with an emphasis in Finance and Entrepreneurship from California State University East Bay. Ms. Guerrero worked as a Senior Analyst for the U.S. Government Accountability Office in San Francisco for seven years and as the Administrative Director of the CNMI Judiciary for five years before accepting the position as Chief Financial Officer for the Northern Marianas College in May 2013. She is also the former Chair and current member of the Board of Directors of the Northern Marianas Humanities Council.

Director of Information Technology

The College has experienced difficulty in recruiting a qualified Director of Information Technology. It began recruitment on October 23, 2012 with Vacancy Announcement No. 12-054 for a Director, Information Technology. Vacancy Announcement No. 12-054 was advertised at a salary of \$55,000 - \$60,000 and required a bachelor's degree (master's

degree preferred) from a U.S. Department of Education recognized accredited institution in Computer Sciences, Business Information Systems, Business Administration, or Information/ Educational Technology, or related discipline; and required three years of experience in a college IT environment, either teaching Information Technology or providing IT support for educational technology programs, plus three years of high level management experience. Additionally, applicants were required to have documented experience in developing and managing educational technology programs and in the delivery of information technology services in an educational setting; experience with data migration as it pertains to SIMs and ERPs deployments and maintenance; experience with hybrid legacy systems; and experience in infrastructure trouble shooting, networking, and software and hardware management.

The College was not successful in identifying an adequate pool of qualified candidates based upon the advertised criteria, and on February 8, 2013, NMC revised the vacancy announcement to seek a “Lead, Information Technology” that could be filled as a Network Specialist III, Database Admin. II, or Director III at a salary range of \$28,229.43- \$49,266.37. This allowed the College to raise the salary to a more competitive range within its position classification system, while maintaining what the College believed were sufficient minimum qualifications to perform the necessary duties. However, after receipt of the Commission’s February 11, 2013 Action Letter, the president determined it to be in the best interest of the College to cancel Vacancy Announcement No. 12-054 and advertise the position as Administrative Director, Information Technology, making the position report directly to the president at a salary of \$60,000.00.

On February 20, 2013 Vacancy Announcement No. 13-007 was advertised and after reviewing numerous qualified applicants, on April 2, 2013 the president approved the hire of Jonathan Liwag as NMC’s Administrative Director, Information Technology. Mr. Liwag received his master’s degree in Leadership and Organizational Studies in 2009 and his bachelor of science degree in Management Information Systems in 2007 at the Azusa Pacific University. He also attended college at De La Salle University in the Philippines. Mr. Liwag has received numerous IT and teaching certifications, which include Cisco Certified Network Professional, Praxis II in Technology, General Science, Administration and Supervision, and the CNMI Public School System Teaching Certificate in Secondary Education in General Sciences.

Prior to becoming a Director of Information Technology at Northern Marianas College, Mr. Liwag was the Network Administrator at the CNMI Public School System for three years. During his time with PSS he also earned his certification in Technology, Administration and Supervision, General Science, and became an online high school Chemistry teacher to meet the needs of the CNMI Public School System. Mr. Liwag conducted numerous training sessions for the staff and faculty of the Public School System.

From 2002 to 2009, Mr. Liwag was a Lead Technical Manager at AT&T Global Services

at Hawthorne, California. As a Lead Technical Manager, he was responsible for planning and executing in-house training initiatives to certify and recertify engineers within the AT&T Global Enterprise Network Services organization. He also conducted monthly performance reviews, presentations and weekly incident reports to Los Angeles County representatives and engineers. He managed an implementation team that deployed Cisco Enterprise Network equipment for the Los Angeles Department of Health Services (LADHS) and he planned and managed a two-year E-Rate warranty maintenance project for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

Director of Admissions

On June 18, 2012 NMC's then Director of Admissions transferred to an instructional faculty role within the School of Education. Dean of Student Services then evaluated the position of the Director of Admissions and determined it would best serve the institution if this role could be combined with the Registrar position. On September 10, 2012 this position was advertised on Vacancy Announcement No. 12-048 which required a master's degree in Education or related field plus four years of experience in a post-secondary education institution in the admissions and records area and one year of supervisory experience. With these requirements, the College was not successful in recruiting an adequate pool of qualified candidates. A sample of current vacancy announcements on HigherEdJobs.com was reviewed and the Dean of Student Services determined that peer institutions do not require Master's degrees for this position, and many institutions required only one year of experience in admissions and records. Accordingly, the position description in Vacancy Announcement 12-048 was revised and re-announced on March 13, 2013. Interviews were conducted on April 30, 2013 and the committee recommended appointing Manny Castro as the Director of Admissions / Registrar at Northern Marianas College.

On May 28, 2013 Manny Castro was transferred from NMC's Financial Aid Office and is now the Director of Admissions/Registrar at Northern Marianas College. Prior to this post, Mr. Castro worked as a Financial Aid Counselor at NMC. In this capacity he helped students obtain federal, CNMI, and private scholarships and grants. He also worked as an Outreach Counselor with the College Access Challenge Grant Program, where he promoted programs that advanced the grant's mission of helping underrepresented groups of students enroll and succeed in college. Mr. Castro also worked as Enrollment Manager for the Office of Admissions and Records, where he led the college's enrollment activities. Mr. Castro earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in Business Administration from the Eastern Oregon University's College of Business at Mt. Hood Community College.

School of Education Director

During the October 2012 accreditation visit, the College was recruiting for the position of Director of its School of Education. This position was announced on June 29, 2012 on Vacancy Announcement 12-036 at an annual salary of \$50,000 and received applications from 12 interested applicants. First interviews were held on September 13 and 14, 2012

and the top candidates were re-interviewed on September 28, 2012. Dr. Frank Trocki was hired on December 15, 2012. Dr. Trocki's arrival on Saipan was delayed until January 15, 2013 when he assumed his role as Director, School of Education. Unfortunately, Dr. Trocki departed the CNMI for personal reasons on February 9, 2013, and NMC was forced to re-post Vacancy Announcement 12-036. In response to this re-announcement, the College received eight applications. Interviews were held during the period between April 26 and May 1, 2013 and second interviews were held on May 17.

On May 24, 2013 Ms. Charlotte Cepeda was hired as the Director, School of Education. Charlotte Cepeda received a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (graduated Magna Cum Laude) from the School of Education, NMC, CNMI and a M.Ed. in Teaching from Framingham University, Boston, Massachusetts. Prior to joining the College as full-time faculty member in 2010, Ms. Cepeda was a Classroom Teacher in the CNMI Public School System for four years. Ms. Cepeda has facilitated institutional and community professional development workshops for the PSS and NMC, and has gained experience with accreditation matters during her time with the School of Education. Additionally, Ms. Cepeda has 10 years of managerial experience in the private sector making her effective and efficient in the delegation and oversight of tasks. Ms. Cepeda's dedication to learners and commitment to the NMC community is evident as a recipient of the Instructional Faculty of the Year Award 2012.

Other Personnel Procedural Changes

As recommended by the October 2012 External Evaluation Team, hiring procedures for new instructors have been modified to afford the president a more direct role. The president now participates in the interview process for all new faculty. After reviewing recommendations made by the interview committee, the president consults with the Dean for Academic Programs and Services before making a final hiring decision.

Standard IV.B.2.a

The president plans, oversees, and evaluates an administrative structure organized and staffed to reflect the institution's purposes, size, and complexity. He/she delegates authority to administrators and others consistent with their responsibilities, as appropriate.

Descriptive Summary

The president presides over an institution that has all the relevant structures and systems that a college of this nature should have, similar to institutions that serve as models of best practice across the United States. In this regard, President Hart carries out the functions of leader of the College, planning for, overseeing and evaluating the needs of the institution in the areas of institutional effectiveness, financial management, procurement, relevant and sound academic programs, the conducting of research, outreach, extension and educational services to the constituents of the college on Saipan and neighboring Tinian and Rota. In order to be effective in her duties, she has to ensure that the staff compliment is proportionate in size and nature to meet the needs of the institution.

The president uses a participatory approach to management wherein respective departments and sections provide input into the decision making process before the president makes the final decision and takes action. This role and function are often articulated in the job descriptions [\[IVB.2:18\]](#) of direct reports and reflected in the annual evaluation [\[IVB.2:19\]](#) tool for these managers.

The president meets regularly with all direct reports and maintains an open door philosophy, allowing easy access to the president at all times. Additionally, these members serve on Management Team and regularly update the president and others on progress and actions being taken within their respective units. Each month the president's direct reports provide a monthly update report [\[IVB.2:20\]](#), which is compiled along with the president's accomplishments and disseminated to the Board of Regents and the entire college community.

There is also the opportunity for healthy discussions on broad based matters that impact institutional effectiveness generally through the college governance structure. This includes the Faculty Senate, the Staff Senate, Associated Students of the Northern Marianas College body, the Academic Council, College Council, and the members of the Management Team inclusive of all the Deans.

The delegation of authority is also seen, for example, in how budgetary recommendations are made within the organization. Each entity of the College is given the opportunity to formulate and manage its own budget as is reflected in all BAFC meeting minutes. Proposals are reviewed by the Budget and Finance Committee and Chief Financial Officer, forwarded to the president for review, and then transmitted to the Board of Regents for its final approval.

Self Evaluation

Using information from a peer comparison analysis prepared in partnership with the National Center for Higher Education Management System (NCHEMS) and other relevant data, the president continues to assure that the College's administrative structure is appropriate in size and complexity.

Through the Comparison Group Selection Services (CGSS) of NCHEMS, the College uses peer data from six institutions for peer analysis:

- Chipola College in Marianna, Florida;
- Great Basin College in Elko, Nevada;
- Northern New Mexico College in Espanola New Mexico;
- Edison State Community College in Piqua, Ohio;
- Kent State University Salem Campus in Salem, Ohio; and
- Guam Community College in Mangilao, Guam.

The analysis [\[IVB.2:21\]](#) has helped the College evaluate its administrative structure against that of other comparable peer institutions, helping the president ensure the administrative structure is

organized in accordance with the College's mission statement and purpose. Consequently, the president recognized the need to revise the membership and structure of the Management Team to make leadership and College operations more efficient, responsive, and effective.

President Hart has continued to hold Management Team meetings every week, with each meeting running an average of three to four hours. The restructuring of the Management Team and the expanded frequency and length of its meetings have enabled the president and the Management Team to address college issues in a timely and expeditious manner with input from the respective unit heads. Additionally, it keeps all key managers, including the senate leaders, well informed and involved in all major areas of the organization. As the president delegates authority, the president has also made it a practice to empower all direct reports to rotate into the role of Acting President in her absence [\[IVB.2:22\]](#). This process further helps to develop members of the team into becoming strong leaders within the College.

To empower the College's leadership, the president has worked with the Human Resources Office to modify the process by which employees are hired. Qualified applicants for new positions are interviewed by interview committees that are composed of the appointing authority, recruiting department/division head, at least one faculty and one staff representative and one HR representative. Interview committees for instructional faculty also include the Dean of Academic Programs and Services and the president. Instructional faculty comprise half of the committee. The interview committee formulates interview questions, takes notes and voice records interviews, and evaluates candidates based on the interview. The appointing authority makes the final selection about which individual is ultimately hired, and the president approves the decision.

In addition to organizing general assemblies and sending email correspondence to employees and students, the president continues to work closely with the Management Team to communicate goals, directions and priorities to all stakeholders once agreed upon by the Management Team.

At almost every board meeting, the College, through the president, presents monitoring reports [\[IVB.2:23\]](#) to the board. The purpose of the monitoring reports is to provide the board with up-to-date information that is research focused and explains the progress in achieving various institutional goals. Most often these monitoring reports benchmark NMC against its peer institutions and/or against Regional/National data. This further helps the board to determine how well the college is achieving its goals.

Standard IV.B.2.b

The president guides institutional improvement of the teaching and learning environment by the following:

- *Establishing a collegial process that sets values, goals, and priorities.*
- *Ensuring that evaluation and planning rely on high quality research and analysis on external and internal conditions.*
- *Ensuring that educational planning is integrated with resource planning and distribution to achieve student-learning outcomes.*
- *Establishing procedures to evaluate overall institutional planning and implementation efforts.*

Descriptive Summary

The president guides institutional improvement of the College's teaching and learning environment by cultivating a collaborative atmosphere that helps guide and inform the College community about NMC's values, goals, and priorities. The environment is framed by a participatory governance structure that includes students, staff, and faculty in the integrated processes for planning, program review, budgeting, and resource allocation.

Values, Goals, and Priorities

The president communicates the College's values, goals, and directions at events that include faculty, staff, and student forums, graduation and award ceremonies, recognition events, community meetings, and the annual State of the College Address. She meets regularly with faculty, staff and student leaders and ensures that efforts to promote student success are recognized. The College organizational structure includes a Management Team presided over by the president as well as a participatory governance structure that includes College Council, Academic Council, Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC), and Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC). By fostering a strong sense of their shared responsibility in these committees, the participatory governance process by the president has instilled the values of cooperation, collaboration, and collegiality in the institutional mindset.

This collegial model proposes a community of stakeholders that make recommendations in the decision-making processes involving all constituencies affected by the decisions. It promotes the Mission and Vision of the College and ensures their achievement through policies and procedures, via a structure of governance councils, committees, senates, and constituency groups. Through effective processes of planning, implementation, evaluation, the College is committed to student learning and success, continuous institutional improvement and excellence.

The president works with the College Council on operational policies, rules, and procedures, ensuring that all constituency groups have an opportunity to discuss the options being considered and to bring their input to the appropriate channel before a decision is rendered.

The president also meets weekly with her Management Team to review and address as needed each units' various tasks and responsibilities. To ensure college-wide representation and

feedback to all internal constituents, Management Team is composed of all direct reports to the president, elected representatives from the faculty, staff, and student senates. The chairs of key governance bodies—PROAC, Academic Council, and BAFC—all sit on the president's Management Team and work closely with the president to ensure that educational planning is integrated with resource planning to achieve student learning outcomes, and overall institutional planning and implementation efforts are evaluated.

The president ensures that the work of her direct reports who oversee critical components of the institution: Academic Programs and Services, Student Services, Program Review, Budgeting, Strategic Planning, and Accreditation is clearly communicated to the Board of Regents and the entire campus through the President's Monthly Update Report [\[IVB2:24\]](#). This report highlights activities that have taken place across the College and also reflect the ongoing work and accomplishments that directly relate to the *FY 2014 Operational Plan End Goals* [\[IVB2:25\]](#). These updates impart valuable information while instilling a common purpose and direction toward meeting the College-wide goals and priorities.

Further, the president supports and strengthens the participatory-governance process by ensuring that the work of the College Council, Academic Council, Management Team, Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC), and Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC) is accessible and minutes are uploaded on the College website.

The president addresses the College community formally at least once a semester and typically at each and every College Hour.

The president meets every semester with students; this includes the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College (ASNMC) officers. The president meets with the Chairman of the Board of Regents on a weekly basis, to discuss matters that pertain to policies and matters for information purpose. All of these meetings help the president stay abreast of current issues and concerns as well as keeping the Board Chair focused on NMC policy and key strategies.

The president's approach to establishing a collegial process that sets values, goals, and priorities is especially evidenced by the process by which the College developed its new Mission Statement, a historical milestone that required legislative backing and voter support.

The College Mission Statement [\[IVB2:26\]](#) was updated and involved the entire campus and governance bodies through the entire 2012-2013 academic year, and was approved by the Board of Regents on September 26, 2013. The Mission Statement is widely distributed and available on the College website. The Mission informs the goals and priorities set by the president and also sets the foundation for the Strategic Plan.

High Quality Research and Analysis on External and Internal Conditions

The president led the College to engage in a data-driven culture using accurate data and comparative analysis to evaluate and plan college operation on all levels. The president ensures that evaluation and planning rely on high quality research through the efforts of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), the office primarily responsible for gathering, evaluating, and

monitoring institutional data. The OIE also supports the data and research needs of all other departments on campus and leads the campus's planning, program review, and evaluation activities.

The PROAC, with support from OIE, continues to lead and facilitate the College's annual assessment and biannual program review processes, particularly with the Nichols and Nichols 5 Column Model for annual assessment (Form 1) and the biannual program review process (Form 2) for program review [\[IVB2:27\]](#). Through these assessment and program review processes, the College and its programs track various student achievement data, including enrollment trends and retention rates, in order to inform decisions and plans to improve those rates.

With the support OIE provides to PROAC, the College has been able to conduct program reviews, strategic planning, and budget and allocation of resources. In addition, the president's support in administering the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory survey [\[IVB2:28\]](#) contributed to the College's teaching and learning environment. The survey was executed during the spring 2012 term and focused on student experiences and satisfaction and areas known to impact student retention [\[IVB2:29\]](#). In fall 2012, a National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) consultant was hired to provide external data as part of the College's Mission Statement revision and five-year Strategic Plan. Through the results from various surveys, the work of PROAC, NCHEMS roundtable meetings and analysis, the College acquired data focusing on what the institution can do to improve so as to better support student success and achieve its mission.

Educational Planning/Resource Allocation/Student Learning Outcomes

The College has been working to closely link its budget, planning, and evaluation processes. Under the umbrella of the resource allocation and planning framework handbook, Student Learning Outcomes Comprehensive Implementation Program (SLOCIP), budget processes reference documents, and the *2013 Institutional Excellence Guide*, the College utilizes an integrated allocation process for faculty and staff requests in addition to technology equipment resource requests. These requests are connected with program review, which serves as the basis for such requests. The president supports these processes with all relevant and appropriate participatory-governance committees.

The president, along with faculty, staff, and students, supports the College's program review and master planning cycle. The College has three distinct planning activities: planning, assessment, and budgeting/resource allocation. The Master Calendar, as detailed in the *2013 Institutional Excellence Guide*, provides sequential detail to explain how the results of program review and assessment in addition to operations and fiscal affairs tie into the overall strategic direction of the College.

Through this process, education planning is integrated with planning and resource allocation. The College has a fully implemented program review cycle that includes student learning outcomes and administrative unit outcomes for each course, program, and service department.

The president also works to ensure that resource allocation (budget) is driven by educational planning processes that are designed to support student success and learning outcomes.

By incorporating the participatory governance structure into the planning, assessment, and budgeting processes, the College is facilitating an inclusive and well-informed dialogue centered on the continuous improvement of student learning, teaching, and institutional effectiveness.

Academic Council (AC) is an advisory body chaired by the Dean of Academic Programs and Services (APS). The AC facilitates assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) at the course level, utilizing the Academic Council's adopted Staggered Course Assessment Schedule as a guide. The Staggered Course Assessment Schedule is part of the assessment tool created collaboratively in fall 2010 with ACCJC, the Dean of APS, and APS Leadership Team. The course assessment uses a measuring tool created by AC, which is similar to the Nichols and Nichols 5 Column model already used by NMC. AC continues to work closely with PROAC on assessment and program review activities that include the Form 1, Form 2, and the Record of Dialogue. Additionally, the AC and Dean of APS facilitate and oversee the bi-annual course and instructor evaluations at the end of each semester for all academic programs.

Research-based information and program reviews help shape instructional and student service programs, and form the foundation of educational planning, which in turn drives the budget. All preparatory planning and data analysis culminates in the development of the college's Strategic Plan.

Procedures for Overall Evaluation

The president relies on annual plans and data to identify the educational needs and structural improvements that support student success and learning. It is from these tools that the president is able to continue to move the institution forward toward increasing its effectiveness in supporting student learning.

The president also ensures that processes to evaluate the outcomes of institutional policy and implementation efforts are conducted on an annual basis.

Self-Evaluation

The president takes seriously her need to meet and improve upon Standard IV.B.2b.

Through appropriate planning and evaluation, the president guides and supports institutional improvement of the teaching and learning environment. The president and constituency groups at the College share a commitment to collaboratively working together to set values, goals and priorities, and the strategic plan.

The president works with her direct reports and ensures their units' annual goals tie back to the Strategic Plan and *FY 2014 Operational Plan End Goals* through the Operational Plan Template [\[IVB2:30\]](#). Progress toward these goals is measured through review of quantitative and qualitative data which results in evaluative dialogue and revision in strategies when needed.

Through the leadership of the president, the College has worked diligently to develop an integrated planning model that considers all aspects of the College's operations and its impact on student learning.

All College evaluation and planning efforts rely on survey findings, studies and reports conducted and published by the OIE and other units' respective offices. Additionally, the president submits a Monthly Update Report [\[IVB2:31\]](#) at every monthly board meeting, which apprises the board on the College's financial, educational, institutional and operational status in relation to the College's institutional goals. This Monthly Report, which is also disseminated to the campus, keeps everyone informed of the various aspects and progress of the College in achieving its identified goals.

The Director of Institutional Effectiveness reports directly to the president and provides regular reports to the Board of Regents, in the board's role of monitoring institutional effectiveness according to BOR Policy No. 2002 [\[IVB2:32\]](#). The OIE is tasked to provide relevant and current-monitoring reports that are research based and include comparative analysis, both regional and national, to the BOR.

The president communicates the importance of a culture of evidence and a focus on student learning through the College's incorporation of program review requirements into every employee's job description [\[IVB2:33\]](#). Every employee may be required to participate in program review activities.

With the Board of Regents passing the new Vision and Mission Statements for NMC at the September 2013 Regular Board Meeting, the College is now moving forward with the development and completion of its next long-term strategic plan. The plan is expected to be going to the Board of Regents at its November 2013 Regular Board Meeting for review and adoption. Upon adoption, the College will work at developing the FY 2015 plan, as it will be incorporated into the NMC Budget Request Report going to the Governor and subsequently the Legislature in early 2014. The FY 2015 plan will go to the board to review/approve at their December 2013 Regular Board Meeting.

The College is on target in completing these tasks, ensuring a smooth road ahead for the implementation of the next annual plan for FY 2015, and the long-term strategic plan for the institution.

Actions Taken

- Public Initiative 17-12 Campaign to give NMC the authority to revise its mission statement, when necessary. Passed with more than 10,000 "Yes" votes (almost 90 percent of all votes cast).
- "Strategic Planning Summit" led by Mr. Dennis Jones, President, of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) October 2-3, 2012. The summit focused on long-term planning for the College and its role in the economic growth of the Commonwealth.

- College Hour open forums (bi-weekly), workshops (monthly), values survey (November 2012), mission statement survey (February 2013).
- On September 27, 2013, second reading and *approval* of the Mission and Vision Statements by the Board of Regents.
- OIE has shared the results of the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory with the College Community and recommended the formation of a Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Task Force. The Task Force will oversee the dissemination of this survey on a bi-annual basis. Budget request to administer the survey on a bi-annual basis was recently approved.
- Rota Community Needs Assessment completed. Analysis and Action Plan underway.
- The development and completion of the upcoming long-term Strategic Plan is underway.

Standard IV.B.2.c.

The president assures the implementation of statutes, regulations, and governing board policies and assures that institutional practices are consistent with institutional mission and policies.

Descriptive Summary

As the chief executive officer of Northern Marianas College, the president, is charged with implementing statutes, regulations, and governing Board policies at the institution as well as ensuring that institutional practices are consistent with the college's mission and policies. These powers and duties are explicitly set forth in BOR Policy No. 1006: Duties of the President [\[IVB.2:34\]](#).

The president implements statutes, regulations, and governing board policies with the support from managers that report directly to the president. The president delegates responsibility for carrying out various aspects of the college's operations, in compliance with statutes, regulations, and policies, to individuals with the requisite expertise and appropriate positional authority. For example, the Director of Human Resources ensures that all national and local employment statutes are followed; the Chief Financial Officer establishes and monitors internal controls for the procurement of goods and services in conformance with procurement laws and regulations and; the Deans of Academic Programs and Student Services to promote awareness and compliance with the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA).

To make certain that the college's practices are consistent with board policy and its mission, the president oversees an organizational structure [\[IVB.2:35\]](#) focused on implementing institutional plans and activities that support the mission of the institution. Institutional practices are also reviewed by an internal governance structure that encourages broad participation in discussions concerning policy development, assessment, planning, and resource allocation.

Presidential Directives promulgated by the president carry the full force and effect of an institutional regulation and are issued to assure implementation of statutes, regulations, and college policies. Administrative procedures are adopted by the president to implement college policies and identify key individuals, programs, and processes involved.

Self Evaluation

In a review of 25 presidential directives issued since 2008, the following have the effect of implementing statutes, regulations, or directing employees to perform in a manner consistent with the college’s mission and policies:

Directive No.	Example Presidential Directive Subject	Date
3	Travel Clearances	8.24.2008
4	Audit Finding – Check Clearing	11.2.2008
5	Audit Finding – Federal Program Spending	11.2.2008
6	Purchase Orders	11.7.2008
7	Limited Term Appointment	11.23.2008
10	Dean AP&S: Instructor Materials	5.24.2009
11	Temporary Reporting of Enrollment Manager	7.28.2009
12	ACCUPLACER, SENSE, and CCLA Assessment Tools	9.1.2009
13	Temporary Reporting for Financial Aid Office	9.8.2009
14	NMC Media Protocol	10.19.2009
15	Require Chief Accountant’s Initials	9.21.2009
16	Campus Security and Training	10.17.2009
17	Overtime and Comp Time	11.7.2009
18	Overtime Compensation	5.10.2010
19	Bad Debt Write Offs for Northern Marianas College	2.23.2012
20	Restructuring of College Council	6.1.2012
21	Security of Public Funds	6.15.2012
22	Travel Clearance	8.3.2012
25	Completing Personnel Performance Evaluations	9.10.2013

Presidential Directive No. 21 [\[IVB.2:36\]](#) presents a clear example of the president articulating procedures for the College to follow in order to comply with Public Law 9-13, the “Government Deposit Safety Act”. Furthermore, the president’s effectiveness in implementing statutes was noted by the External Evaluation Team that visited the Northern Marianas College in October, 2012. In its *October 2012 External Evaluation Report*, the team noted that “With the exception of the implementation of Board policies in relation to the distinction of the Board and College roles in decision making, the president has ensured that the College followed external statutes and regulations as required.”

The president appoints policy stewards to assist with the process of recommending new or revised policy statements for the board’s review. These policy stewards are also responsible for developing procedures to implement Board policies that have some measure of impact on their respective areas. Proposed revisions to the student grievance procedure, for example, were introduced by the Dean of Student Services on October 24, 2012 at College Council and adopted by the president on February 1, 2013 as College Procedure No. 410: Student Grievance Procedure to implement BOR Policy No. 8201 Student Grievances/Complaint. [\[IVB.2:37\]](#)

Actions Taken

The president continues to utilize Presidential Directives to implement statutes, regulations, and college policies or for the purposes of directing employees or programs to perform in a manner consistent with the college's mission and policies. During her tenure as college president, President Hart issued seven presidential directives to ensure the college's compliance with local public laws and Board policies on institutional governance, financial affairs, and the duties of the president. The most recent directive, Presidential Directive No. 25 [\[IVB.2:38\]](#), was issued on September 25, 2013 to mandate the completion of employee evaluations in compliance with newly adopted College Procedure No. 5010.7 Employee Evaluations to implement BOR Policy No. 5010. [\[IVB.2:39\]](#)

To help continue clarifying the board's role in its specific areas of responsibility, the president has worked closely with the Board Chair to develop board meeting agendas that steer the board towards topics focused on its policy-making role. At its July 31, 2013 meeting, for example, the board reviewed and took action on 16 Board Policies [\[IVB.2:40\]](#). The board's agenda has since included the review of whole series of Board Policies (i.e. Personnel) for the primary purpose of removing procedural language from Board Policies. As a result, the board has completed its process in removing language within board policies that encroach on the president's responsibility for the operations of the College.

The board members and president, as well as the college community, have all undergone additional training to understand this distinction. To help the board focus on its policy-making role and refrain from being involved in the administrative responsibilities that fall under the purview of the president, members of the board have participated in a number of training activities that are listed in narrative for Standard IV.B.1 of this Report.

The College community has also undergone recent training to increase understanding of participatory governance and the distinction between the Board's and President's role in decision making. As part of her work assisting the College with its Show Cause status, Dr. Pamela Fisher of the Association of Community College Trustees facilitated a workshop for college employees on participatory governance on August 30, 2013. According to Dr. Fisher, "the participants came up with the components of a good definition of participatory governance and the characteristics or signs of an effective process. Distinctions between shared governance and participatory governance were made." On September 27, 2013, former NMC Accreditation Liaison Officer Galvin Deleon Guerrero facilitated a three-hour mandatory professional development training entitled, *The Roles and Responsibility of the Board of Regents and the President* [\[IVB.2:41\]](#). The training included an interactive session where upon groups of participants discussed the different roles and responsibilities of the CEOs and boards in the context of the distinctions made by the Community College League of California in their publication entitled, *Board and CEO Roles: Different Jobs, Different Tasks*.

The president continues to oversee all college operations and governance processes to ensure compliance with all national and state laws and board policy, and as illustrated in the

descriptive summary noted above, to make certain that the college's practices are consistent with board policy and its mission.

Standard IV.B.2.d

The president effectively controls budget and expenditures.

Descriptive Summary

In its revised policies, the Board of Regents has clearly outlined the president's responsibilities regarding control over the College's budget and expenditures [IVB.2:42]. The president exercises effective controls over budget and expenditures by continued implementation of administrative control procedures and by overseeing the participatory governance mechanism [IVB.2:43] designed to monitor and regulate the College's financial activities. With her vast experience (13+ years) as a college president, Dr. Hart has been pivotal in ensuring high financial integrity of the college.

The president's responsibilities with respect to controls over budget and expenditures are clearly delineated in the Board of Regents' recent revision of policies on Board Operations and on Finance and Procurement. These revised policies authorize the president to establish administrative procedures for budget and financial control. Administrative procedures such as cost control mechanisms, regular financial reporting, and external auditing continue to be in place.

In addition, the president oversees the participatory governance mechanisms designed to monitor and regulate the College's budget and financial activities, including the Budget and Finance Committee, the Strategic Planning Task Force, and Management Team. Central to these mechanisms is the Budget and Finance Committee, which is responsible for providing recommendations to the Chief Financial Officer and ultimately to the president on operational financial matters. It is charged with aligning institutional priorities with the allocation of resources; reviewing and adjusting the budget in accordance with present circumstances and future projections; and for producing reports. The Committee, chaired by the Chief Financial Officer, ensures that appropriate members of the College Community participate in the development of annual operational budgets, annual strategic plans, new programs and services, and major facilities planning prior to adoption by college officials. The Strategic Planning Task Force is advisory in nature and charged to develop a proposed three to five year strategic plan for submission to the president and ultimately to the board as well as the annual operational goals and priorities for the institution, which drives the budget allocation process. Management Team consists of Deans and the Directors who report directly to the president (Direct Reports), the Associated Students of the Northern Marianas College President, and the Faculty and Staff Senate Presidents. The role of Management Team (MT) is to address and coordinate issues involving college governance, student learning and success, fiscal strategies and related matters, hiring of personnel, community relations, public information and information systems, policy and procedures, and strategic planning.

Self Evaluation

The president continues to demonstrate her ability to effectively control the College's budget and expenditures by exercising the authority provided to her by the Board of Regents to establish administrative procedures, such as cost control mechanisms, regular financial reporting, and external audit processes, in addition to overseeing the College's participatory governance process for budget and finance.

In fall of 2011, the President Hart wrote and disseminated a White Paper entitled "Critical Budget Decisions for FY 2012 and Beyond" [\[IVB.2:44\]](#) which outlined the thought process by which effective controls over budget and monitoring can be achieved. Drawing from an article published by Dennis Jones in the January/February 2011 issue of Association of Governing Boards (AGB) Trusteeship entitled "Protecting and Building Your Institution's Assets," president White Paper emphasizes that the College's "approach to resource allocation must put the long-term capacity and health of the College at the center of the process...[That approach] must be strategic [and must] protect and enhance our College rather than erode its core capacity and ability." Laying out five steps for making intentional decisions about budgeting and resource allocation, the president's White Paper has been integrated into the College's ongoing dialogue about planning, budgeting, and resource allocation. Using these five steps, the president has implemented controls such as critical cost saving measures when the College's cash flow has been constrained. These measures have been identified with thoughtful involvement by the College's governance bodies and at college-wide assemblies.

Often the College has had to be creative and arrive at new ways of cutting costs while at the same time maintaining its high financial integrity. Because of these cost saving initiatives – including reducing electricity usage to save on utility expense [\[IVB.2:45\]](#), expanding classroom sizes to increase caps for in-demand classes, and leveraging other resources like federal grants to fund construction and renovation work – savings to the College in FY 2013 were passed on to all College employees in the form of an incentive award, at the conclusion of FY 2013.

In addition, President Hart monitors the College's budget and expenditures on a regular basis. The College's current fiscal reporting mechanism, overseen by the president, continues to be thorough and timely to facilitate effective control over budget and finance. Under the president's direction, the Finance Office and the Budget Office provide monthly encumbrance reports [\[IVB.2:46\]](#) and quarterly budget status reports [\[IVB.2:47\]](#) respectively to all expenditure authorities. These reports inform the expenditure authorities on current encumbrances, budget balances, and any reprogramming adjustments that may be needed. These financial reporting mechanisms inform the president's regular financial updates to the Board of Regents and are part of her standing report for every regular Board meeting [\[IVB.2:48\]](#).

Additional evidence that the president effectively controls budget and finance are the results of the most recent external audit. The FY 2012 external audit [\[IVB.2:49\]](#) revealed no audit exceptions and resulted in unqualified auditor's opinions on both the financial statements as well as the report on internal control and compliance for federal programs – for the first time in the College's history. Moreover, the number of audit findings on internal control and compliance has decreased since Dr. Hart began as president of the College. There were only two findings in this

year's external audit, neither of which was considered a material weakness, down from 13 findings in FY 2011 [\[IVB.2:50\]](#).

The president further demonstrates budget and expenditure controls by overseeing the College's relevant governance bodies. In preparing the annual operations budget, the Budget and Finance Committee conducts budget hearings where departmental representatives justify their budget requests using the results of their program review. The Committee provides its recommendations to the president, who makes the final call on the budget before it is transmitted to the board for its review and approval. Without the president's endorsement, the budget would be sent back to the Budget and Finance Committee for further review and adjustments. In that sense, the president effectively controls budget and all expenditures.

The president has also provided oversight and guidance to the Strategic Planning Task Force and the Management Team in the efforts to develop a set of planning goals and priorities for FY 2014 [\[IVB.2:51\]](#). These institution-wide goals and priorities provided the Budget and Finance Committee with the plan by which resources would be prioritized and allocated to each department. The FY 2014 budget process went smoothly and efficiently; the Board of Regents approved the budget submission as presented.

The president similarly controls budget and expenditures over personnel matters through the governance process. By the adoption of the president's White Paper, recommendation-making on filling of all vacant and/or new positions was shifted to NMC's Management Team (MT). The MT is now the clearinghouse for all strategic personnel needs of the institution. All requests for positions begin at the department and then division level, and must address institutional goals/priorities, funding sources (if any), and a comparative analysis against peer institutions. However, new and/or replacement personnel come forward to the MT for review and approval, as the key hiring authorities in the college serve on MT.

Actions Taken

Hiring of Key Staff

To improve upon the effective control of budget and expenditures, the president hired a Chief Financial Officer to assist with ensuring effective control of the College's budget and expenditures. Tracy M. Guerrero began her role as the College's new CFO on May 13, 2013. Ms. Guerrero holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of California at Berkeley and an MBA with an emphasis in Finance and Entrepreneurship from the California State University East Bay. Ms. Guerrero worked as a Senior Analyst for the U.S. Government Accountability Office for seven years and as the Administrative Director of the CNMI Judiciary for five years before accepting the position as the College's CFO.

Revised Policy on Duties of the President

In addition, the Board of Regents adopted revised policies on the Duties of the President as well as on Finance and Procurement at the September 2013 Board Meeting. These revised policies

clearly delineate the president's responsibilities for control over budget and expenditures. The policies includes the following specific duties and responsibility for the president:

- Recommending to the Board new and revised policies and establishing administrative procedures for finance and procurement (among others) [BOR Policy No. 1006, [\[IVB.2:52\]](#)];
- Preparing a budget in line with the needs of the College, and approving expenditure of funds appropriated to the College by the federal or Commonwealth government or donated to the College by any other entity [BOR Policy No. 1006, [\[IVB.2:53\]](#)];
- Adopting and maintaining procedures that clearly outline how employees are reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred on behalf of the College [BOR Policy No. 7004]; [\[IVB.2:54\]](#)
- Developing procedures to ensure that all travel receives proper authorization [BOR Policy No. 7006]; [\[IVB.2:55\]](#)
- Developing procedures for the acceptance and receipt of appropriate gifts in accordance with this policy [BOR Policy No. 7008]; [\[IVB.2:56\]](#)
- Adopting procedures to:
 1. Define the College's procurement policies and practices;
 2. Delineate the authority and responsibilities of College personnel involved in the acquisition of goods, services, construction, and cooperative agreements;
 3. Establish standard procedures to effectively manage the College's purchasing and contracting activities;
 4. Ensure compliance with Commonwealth and Federal laws, rules and regulations, as well as Board of Regents' policies;
 5. Ensure fair and equitable treatment of all persons who deal with the procurement system of the College;
 6. Provide increased economy in the College's procurement activities and to maximize the purchasing value of public funds entrusted to it; and
 7. Provide safeguards for the maintenance of a procurement system of quality and integrity [BOR Policy No. 7009]. [\[IVB.2:57\]](#)

Standard IV.B.2.e

The president works and communicates effectively with the communities served by the institution.

Descriptive Summary

The Northern Marianas College is the only regionally-accredited institution of higher learning in the CNMI, and the newly revised BOR Policy No. 1006 [\[IVB.2:58\]](#) recognizes the role that the College President plays in the community, stating, "The President is an educational leader of the Commonwealth, and as such represents the College in the Community." Providing the framework by which the president communicates with the communities served by the institution, BOR Policy No. 1006 lists the president's duties and responsibilities which include "Representing the College to the community and maintaining adequate public information

service,” and “Maintaining open and adequate channels of communication with the internal and external College community.”

Since the start of her presidency, NMC President Dr. Hart has been working extensively with CNMI communities on Saipan, Rota, and Tinian, and communicating effectively with internal and external stakeholders through a variety of channels, college outreach activities, community memberships, and community functions and events.

The president is expected to be active in the community and to ensure strong college-community relations and connections. Her community relations roles and tasks are to be primarily in the areas of college advocacy, community involvement, marketing and media relations, and foundation support.

Self Evaluation

The president has continued to communicate effectively with the numerous communities served by the institution. Through her outreach activities, the president advances the image and the reach of the institution through leadership and involvement. President Hart continues to maintain a presence in the community on a regular basis, whether serving as the chief advocate for NMC, attending key community functions, addressing the local media, or working with the NMC Foundation. And with her goal of keeping the Board of Regents informed on her community involvements, Dr. Hart reports these to the board via verbal and written communications. Being that the CNMI is relatively small, community events or activities often intersect in which Dr. Hart encourages and or delegates members of her Management Team to accompany or represent her out in the community. This provides members of her team the opportunity to shadow the president and to further build their own leadership skills. At the same time, Dr. Hart’s team comes to her assistance by opening doors within a community that is often steeped in deep cultural, social, and local traditions and values.

As president, Dr. Hart serves as the college’s chief advocate. She is the spokesperson who is most often engaged in addressing local policy makers. Within the college she works with staff to brief the regents on legislative issues that may have college impact. As such, she works with the Management Team to develop legislative and communications advocacy plans so that all parties know their respective roles and responsibilities in order to achieve maximum output for the college.

Also, Dr. Hart has worked effectively, and when necessary, to inform local elected leaders on legislative agendas, topics, and of course the NMC appropriated budget. She has helped in crafting legislative support on many key issues that have had direct impact on higher education in the CNMI. For example, through Dr. Hart’s leadership, she was successful in having the CNMI House, Senate and Governor all go on record for supporting the Commonwealth in its pursuit of joining the Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education (WICHE). In November of 2012, WICHE supported expanding its reach to the far Pacific and voted in support of the CNMI to join as its first consortium member from the far Pacific [\[IVB.2:59\]](#).

In recognition of Dr. Hart's efforts, the Governor appointed her to serve as one of three commissioners to WICHE [\[IVB.2:60\]](#). Dr. Hart attended her first commission meeting in May of 2013 as a commissioner and serves as a member of the Executive Committee of WICHE.

Within the community, the president is quite visible. She serves on the CNMI Governor's Energy Task Force, CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities, CNMI State Rehabilitation Council, CNMI Works – Target 2014 Committee Member, and the Saipan Chamber of Commerce.

Within any given week her calendar includes her attendance and/or participation in numerous community activities, as well as internal and/or external communications. In just an eight day time period, starting March 16, 2012, this is what she participated in and reported to the Board of Regents:

“The Board Chairman and I met with Mr. Juan Demapan, Mr. Jay Hirata, Former Governor Froilan Tenorio, Mr. Manases Borja and Mr. Mike Imai on the development of a Pilot Training School in the CNMI; attended the NMC Student Leadership Conference; represented the College at the Reception to Commemorate the First Year Anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake Towards Open Reconstruction, Consul General of Japan to the CNMI; attended the Regional Workforce Investment Meeting and submitted a report on behalf of NMC; participated in the 2012 Charter Day at the University of Guam; attended the Pacific Postsecondary Education Council Meeting in Guam and arranged for the SKYPE conference call with Dr. Dave Longanecker, CEO of WICHE to address the presidents; meeting with Senator Jovita Taimanao; FY 13 Budget Submission Meeting with Lt. Governor Inos and OMB; Presentation and Remarks at the First Hawaiian Bank to present the Business Woman of the Year Scholarship; Coffee Connection with NMC Students and BOR; Meeting with the USDA Area Director, Joe Diego; and a BOR Budget and Finance Committee Meeting, BOR Program Committee Meeting, and BOR Board Meeting.”

President Hart has also reached out to regional partners in meetings with the Pacific Post-Secondary Education Council (PPEC), University of Guam President Dr. Robert Underwood, and representatives from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. In addition, she spearheaded the CNMI's membership into the Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education (WICHE) and the inclusion of all Pacific Territories and Free Standing States.

The president also recognizes the importance of community involvement in long-term planning for the College. As such, the College conducted a major long-term strategic planning summit held October 1-3, 2012 [\[IVB.2:61\]](#), facilitated by Dennis Jones, president of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. Information gathered from community stakeholders served as a key input into the development of NMC's new mission and vision statements.

With the business community's emphasis on preparing a workforce that will replace the contract workers presently employed in the CNMI, the president has worked diligently with her team to set up a US apprenticeship program, which includes an advisory council consisting of

community members and leaders. Also, with the fact that the College does not offer credit programs on the islands of both Tinian and Rota (except via online), the president has visited these islands and their community leaders to emphasize both the apprenticeship program, Ed2Go offerings available through NMC, and opportunities available to students via WICHE.

Actions Taken

Since taking office and beginning service at the College in July of 2011, President Hart has met often with members of the CNMI community. This includes key members of the CNMI Legislature, the Governor and members of his Cabinet, key community organizations on which she serves, the NMC Foundation, key private and public leaders, international visitors, other educational providers, students, and many other stakeholders. On a regular basis, Dr. Hart keeps the Board of Regents informed on her weekly or bi-weekly activities, especially providing them with a list of these community stakeholders.

For her ongoing efforts to inform members of the college community, the president disseminates a campus wide monthly report [\[IVB.2:62\]](#). In it, she shares information about accomplishments, future plans, and ongoing improvement activities that address key institutional goals of NMC. And, on a weekly basis, she uses the college hour [\[IVB.2:63\]](#) to share information, listen to students' concerns, and engages in constructive dialogues with participants.

President Hart works hard at responding to or providing adequate recommendations to community requests within NMC's authority and ability or to appropriate partner institutions. Dr. Hart continues to advocate for and support the college. Additionally, Dr. Hart maintains links with business, government and community leaders. She ensures strong college and community connections. One example of linking business, government and community leaders to the College was done through NMC's outreach initiatives that address the workforce needs of the CNMI community is the Workforce and Apprenticeship Program Lead Into Future Experiences (L.I.F.E.) [\[IVB.2:64\]](#). The L.I.F.E. program focused on four tracts identified by the private, government, and community sectors as a need for the CNMI: Leadership Development, Personal/Life Development, Customer Service/Pre-Workforce Development, and Computer Literacy Skill Tracts.

An example of tying federal regulations to the College was displayed in July of this year when the institution was informed by WASC that the U.S. Department of Education was prepared to render a policy decision that would make NMC's bachelor's program in education ineligible for Title IV funding. The USDOE does not allow for joint accreditation, according to the Higher Education Act of 1965. Additionally, the College was informed it was at risk of repaying all prior Title IV funding back to the year of 2001—the year the College's baccalaureate degree program was accredited by ACSCU. Since 2001, NMC has been accredited by both the Junior and the Senior Commissions. As a result of this expected ruling by the USDOE, which would have had serious implications on current financial aid disbursements (over 25 percent of all enrolled students at the College) as well as the anticipated repayment by NMC on all federal financial aid disseminated to students enrolled in the baccalaureate degree program back to the year of 2001, of approximately \$8 million dollars, the president went into immediate action. That same day that she was informed by the Senior Commission of WASC, she wrote to Dr.

Martha Kanter, Under Secretary of Education [\[IVB.2:65\]](#) urging that this decision be reconsidered. She then channeled the assistance of the CNMI Congressional Office and the American Council on Education (ACE) to assist her in arranging a meeting with the Under Secretary. The meeting was successfully arranged, with the assistance of the CNMI Representative to U.S. Congress Sablan's office and ACE.

During this time period, Dr. Hart worked with key NMC board members to immediately address the CNMI Legislative leaders and the Governor on the expected ruling from the USDOE, and to outline their assistance on this matter. She also called an urgent meeting of the NMC Foundation, to garner their support. As a result of these actions, the Governor provided a letter to Dr. Martha Kanter [\[IVB.2:66\]](#) and the CNMI Senate and House submitted a Senate Joint Resolution [\[IVB.2:67\]](#) urging the USDOE to reconsider its policy decision to render NMC's baccalaureate program ineligible for federal financial aid. Hart also joined her staff to meet with all students enrolled in the baccalaureate degree program at the College and with all faculty teaching in the School of Education.

At the meeting in Washington, D.C. with Dr. Kanter, the president was extremely strategic and sought the support, assistance and presence of key and influential national higher education leaders – Dr. Walter Bumphus, CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges; Dr. Dave Longanecker, CEO of the Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education and prior Assistant Secretary of the USDOE; and, Mr. Neil Horikoshi, CEO of the Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund (APIASF). Additionally, she was joined by the following NMC employees: Mr. Chris Timmons, HR/Legal Counsel; Mr. Leo Pangelinan, Dean of Student Services; and, Ms. Charlotte Cepeda, Director of the School of Education. Also accompanying the president were staff leaders of U.S. Congressman Sablan's Office, and representatives from American Samoa Community College and their U.S. Congressional Office. A total of 14 individuals accompanied the president to meet with Dr. Kantor. As a result of Hart's efforts, the USDOE contacted Dr. Barbara Beno of ACCJC and Dr. Ralph Wolff of ACSCU on August 13, 2013, informing these leaders that NMC would be granted 18 months to come under one accrediting agency, which was the recommendation provided to the USDOE by Dr. Hart, and in the interim would continue to receive Title IV funding for its baccalaureate degree students and that no liabilities would be assessed (back to 2001).

When it comes to presidential evaluation, the president is annually and routinely evaluated by the Board of Regents [\[IVB.2:69\]](#). Her community relationships are assessed on the following :

- Has gained the respect and support of the community as an educational leader.
- Has developed a friendly and cooperative relationship with the news media.
- Participates actively in community life and affairs.
- Works effectively with public and private agencies.
- Attends to the concerns and opinions of all groups and individuals.

Within her Management Team she has established a culture that fosters responsiveness to community needs and positive relations with the public and community. Dr. Hart is very active in seeking and fostering professional relationships with education, government, business and other community leaders. She actively participates in community events and attends service

organizations when asked (e.g. Rotary). Dr. Hart encourages partnership programs with the CNMI K-12 institutions and with other higher education institutions in the Region and through the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). She has worked with staff and monitors procedures for public use of and participation in college activities and events (e.g. Charter Day in May). The president continues to work with the NMC Foundation as it prepares to support and raise monies on behalf of the College. And lastly, the president continues to engage the members of the media by regularly participating in interviews to discuss College matters and by distributing press releases (that highlight College events, news, announcements, etc.) through the External Relations Office.

IV. Responses to Recommendations

Recommendation #2

To meet the Standards, the team recommends that the library build on its successful student survey efforts by implementing strategies to directly measure Student Learning Outcomes concerning information literacy. (Standard II.C.2)

An information literacy component has become a requirement of all NMC degree programs. However, limited work has been done on establishing and assessing meaningful student learning outcomes (SLOs) in library and other learning support services. The student survey data used to assess learning, while helpful, does not capture or adequately assess student learning.

February 11, 2013 Action Letter

Descriptive Summary

Recommendation #2 requires the NMC library to utilize Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) to measure information literacy instruction. Additionally, all Learning Support Services (LSS) at NMC should similarly use SLOs to assess student learning.

Self-Evaluation

As indicated in Recommendation #2 of the Action letter of February 11, the library's SLOs were insufficient in assessing information literacy instruction. At the time of the action letter the library had established and assessed a single SLO: "*Students will be able to satisfy their information needs when utilizing library resources.*" While this measures some student learning, it does not specifically address the theme of information literacy. Many of the LSS departments had similarly inadequate SLOs.

Upon analysis of Library Programs and Services (LPS) and LSS SLOs, NMC determined that substantial improvements were needed to fully comply with Standard II.C.2. It was determined that these programs should establish a minimum of two SLOs and assess them at predetermined intervals.

Actions Taken

In order to address this Recommendation and further Northern Marianas College's compliance with Standard II.C.2, a team was formed to create Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), gather evidence, and to evaluate results for departments identified as Learning Support Services (LSS). As stated in the Recommendation, a particular emphasis was placed on LPS and its information literacy instruction program.

In response to Recommendation #2, LPS has greatly expanded its information literacy instruction program. In addition to LPS, eight other LSS programs have successfully established SLOs, Means of Assessment, and Success Criteria following the Nichols and Nichols 5-column method of program review. Each of these departments (identified in the Self-Evaluation section) has implemented strategies to ensure sustainable SLO assessment and long-term impacts on student learning.

In December of 2008, NMC successfully established SLOs for all Academic Programs and Services (APS). The goal for the areas affected by Recommendation #2 was to mirror this process for their non-instructional programs. Since the WASC action letter in February of 2013, all LSS departments have successfully established and assessed a minimum of two SLOs, created data-driven improvement plans, and implemented a 6-Year Outcomes and Assessment Schedule (utilizing a two-year staggered assessment strategy) to fully meet all components of Recommendation #2.

After receipt of the WASC action letter in February 2013, NMC administration thoroughly analyzed the areas affected by Recommendation #2. The Dean of Student Services identified nine departments and programs as "Learning Support Services". These include: English Language Lab Tutoring Services, College Access Challenge Grant Tutoring Services, International Student Services, Career Center, Computer Lab, Distance Education, Media Services, Disability Support Services, and Library Programs and Services.

Representatives of all nine LSS departments and programs participated in weekly team meetings to collaborate on SLO creation, establishment of Success Criteria and Means of Assessment, and gathering supporting evidence. [\[R2:1\]](#) Team members collaborated with interdepartmental faculty to establish and fully assess a minimum of two SLOs per LSS department. These SLOs have been submitted to the Program Review Outcomes and Assessment Committee (PROAC) via a 6-year Outcomes and Assessment Schedule, utilizing the two-year staggered assessment strategy developed by APS. [\[R2:2\]](#)

All members of the Standard II.C team have undergone several SLO and accreditation training sessions with instructional faculty. [\[R2:3\]](#) The LSS SLOs were revisited by the Dean of Academic Program and Services (APS) on October 4, 2013. [\[R2:4\]](#) This workshop ensured that all SLOs were fully assessed, using language and techniques similar to those utilized by APS. At the recommendation of the Dean, all LSS SLOs were alphanumerically coded for ease of use and each department has posted their SLOs to ensure that these objectives are clearly communicated to the campus community.

The NMC has taken decisive action in response to Recommendation #2 of the February 11 Action Letter. The main focus of Recommendation #2 is on the Library Programs and Services (LPS) department and its efforts to measure student learning and information literacy. The LPS department has established and assessed five SLOs since April 2013. [\[R2:5\]](#)

Since the action letter, NMC has adopted the definition of information literacy developed by the American Library Association (ALA) and Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) as: “a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.” *American Library Association. Presidential Committee on Information Literacy. Final Report. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1989.)*

The LPS has concentrated on creating SLOs based on the three components of this information literacy definition:

1. The ability to locate information.
2. The ability to evaluate information.
3. The ability to effectively use information.

The following five LPS SLOs were established according to the aforementioned criteria:

1. The ability to locate information.
 - a. LPS.PLO 9: Students will demonstrate effective use of the Library of Congress System of Classification. (SLO)
 - b. LPS.PLO 11: Students will demonstrate effective use of the library’s Online Public Access Catalog. (SLO)
2. The ability to evaluate information.
 - a. LPS.PLO 10: Students will display the information literacy skill of accurately evaluating an information source. (SLO)
3. The ability to effectually use information.
 - a. LPS.PLO 7: Based on a research topic, students will be able to cite a variety of print resources from the library collection. (SLO) [\[R2:5\]](#)

The LPS department offers a library orientation session to all students enrolled in BE 111: College Success, a required course recommended for students early in their programs. The objective of this session is to familiarize students with library resources, to introduce library policies, and to provide an understanding of academic research and information literacy. Integration with BE 111 is ideal for information literacy instruction since it ensures uniform delivery to all students at NMC. [\[R2:6\]](#)

Through cross-campus collaboration with, but not limited to, the English and School of Education departments, the library has initiated advanced in-class workshops on information literacy skills. These skills are measured using quizzes, participatory exercises, analysis of Works Cited pages, and academic periodical identification and citation. Since receiving the Action Letter, the LPS department established five SLOs and assessed them over a four-month period.

In order to extend this information literacy instruction effort to the greater Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI) community, the Director of LPS partnered with the National Forum on Information Literacy and local librarians and successfully petitioned the CNMI governor to officially proclaim October as Information Literacy Month. [\[R2.7\]](#) This effort was commended by Dr. Lana W. Jackman, President of the National Forum on Information Literacy. [\[R2.8\]](#)

Identical efforts have been made by all nine LSS programs, which established and assessed SLOs, while linking them to supporting evidence and a specific improvement plan. In 93 percent of the 31 SLOs assessed, the stated student learning goal was successfully achieved. [\[R2.9\]](#) One hundred percent of all established outcomes have been linked to a specific improvement plan (Column 5 of [\[R2.9\]](#)) to ensure long-term student success and learning.

In all nine LSS programs, SLOs have been incorporated into the program review process along with a two-year staggered assessment schedule. The programs at NMC impacted by Recommendation #2 have demonstrated their commitment to utilizing SLOs to ensure continuous improvement and sustained student learning.

Recommendation #3

To meet the Standards and assure the integrity and quality of programs and services, the team recommends that the College develop, and consistently apply, clear criteria in determining qualifications for faculty (Eligibility Requirement 13--Faculty, III.A.1, III.A.2).

February 11, 2013 Action Letter

Descriptive Summary

The *October 2012 External Evaluation Report* reflects that regulations were not in place for minimum qualifications, nor are clear equivalency guidelines and processes for the assessment in place; and further that there is a lack of uniformity in determination of basic qualifications for faculty. In its findings, the evaluation team stated that the College must develop clear criteria for minimum qualifications for faculty and apply them consistently to all hiring of faculty, full-time and adjunct.

Self-Evaluation

The institution has several systematic processes of reviewing its program and services. Through the NMC program review, all programs are evaluated by the Planning Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC) [\[R3:11\]](#). Furthermore, all employees are required to carry out these processes as they are explicitly embedded in all employee contracts and employee evaluations. The Human Resources Office has a critical role in ensuring that all instructional faculty members are qualified beginning with the application process. Only qualified candidates are interviewed. Human Resources Office utilizes the “Qualification Evaluation Worksheet Form” to aid the Personnel Specialist in determining eligibility for a vacant position. Adjunct

faculty members' eligibility is further certified by the appropriate Department Chair of the Program and the Dean of Academic Programs and Services. Overall, qualifications are measured with reference to degrees held and the level of experience, training, specialization, and other credentials. Reference checks are made for all employees. Moreover, personnel are given electronic access to all policies and procedures and are oriented on where to find them. Also, Academic Council adopted a regularly scheduled Adjunct Orientation session required for all faculty certified to teach as an adjunct at NMC.

Employee evaluations are administered annually by employee supervisors and is overseen by the Human Resource Office. For instructional faculty, this process includes the "Student Appraisal of Course and Instructor" [\[R3:2\]](#) that is routinely administered at the end of every semester for all classes. Faculty are provided professional development each semester at NMC. This professional development helps to ensure that the quality of the degree programs is truly in the hands of faculty and is linked to competencies in keeping with institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes of all Programs.

Actions Taken

In response to the Commission's Action Letter, NMC's Academic Council, together with its Human Resources Office has worked closely and collaboratively to propose, develop and define a policy on minimum qualifications for faculty. Specifically, following the evaluation team's exit interview and even before receipt of the Commission's February 11 Action Letter, the Director of Human Resources attended the next scheduled Academic Council meeting to present the findings of the evaluation team (as gathered from discussions with the team members and those presented at the Oct 2012 Exit Session) and request Academic Council's assistance and collaboration on establishing the criteria. It was decided then that a Minimum Qualifications Ad Hoc Committee would be established to undertake this critical project. This committee met during the spring 2013 semester to review the minimum qualification criteria in place at other institutions and imposed by other accrediting bodies, and various proposals were entertained. The ad hoc committee ended on June 24, 2013 [\[R3:4\]](#) and the recommendation was made to the president. See also narrative on Eligibility Requirement # 13 in Section II.

In its simplest form, the recommended policy on establishment of minimum faculty qualifications required that instructors hired to teach credit courses intended for transfer must have a master's degree in their teaching discipline, or a master's degree in another field and a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the teaching discipline. The proposed Policy 5005 [\[R3:3\]](#) was introduced to the BOR for first reading and after much debate, it was adopted on August 7, 2013 [\[R3:7\]](#). To ensure consistent application of Policy 5005, HR Procedure 5005.1 [\[R3:5\]](#) was also adopted. Procedure 5005.1 identifies teaching disciplines by catalog category, and specifies the related disciplines in which degrees should be held to satisfy BOR Policy No. 5005.

Since this action eight new instructors have been hired following the adoption of the Minimum Faculty Qualifications requirement. This brings the fall 2013 full-time faculty number to 33, 18 of whom are men, and 15 of whom are women.

Recommendation #8

To meet the Standards, the team recommends that the Board and the president assure that Board policies consistently distinguish between their roles, of the Board as a policy-making body and the president as responsible for the operation of the College, and improve the understanding of the College community regarding the responsibility of the president in advising the Board. Specifically, the team urges the College and Board to reconsider its policy of having Honorary Regents, who are elected to represent some College constituent groups, participate in direct discussion of policy issues during Board meetings (Standards IV.A.2, IV.B.1.a, IV.B.1.j).

February 11, 2013 Action Letter

Descriptive Summary

While the External Evaluation Team found that the NMC President had taken steps to inform the board of its role as a policy making body and to distinguish that function from that of the president's responsibility of managing the operations of the College, it found that many at the college—including board members—still did not have a clear understanding of this distinction. The team cited the board policy on Honorary Regents [\[IVB.1:12\]](#), which allowed the heads of constituent groups to engage directly with the regents about policy issues despite board policy stating that the president is responsible for the operation of the college. Because it offers a second avenue for honorary staff and faculty to provide direct advice to the regents, the External Evaluation Team noted, the policy on Honorary Regents [\[IVB.1:12\]](#) had the “potential to undermine” the ability of the president to meet the responsibilities for which she is held responsible.

Self-Evaluation

To distinguish its policy making role and the NMC President's role in managing the operations of the College, the Board of Regents has undergone continued boardmanship training [\[IVB.1:11\]](#) that has helped it to focus on policy, maintain its pace in reviewing and updating policies, and helped it refrain from being involved in the administrative responsibilities that fall under the purview of the president.

The board has continued its professional development activities by participating in a number of training sessions [\[IVB.1:11\]](#) that specifically deal with their role as trustees. The most recent training activities involved three separate training sessions facilitated by Dr. Pamela Fisher, a former community college president, chancellor, and chair of a visiting accreditation team. Dr. Fisher focused these sessions around best practices for effective governance, accreditation expectations, and achieving consensus on new board policies. In October 2013, board members also participated in the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) Leadership Congress which featured discussions on a variety of topics.

Further, a majority of the members of the Board of Regents had the opportunity to formally meet with Dr. Narcisa Polonio and Dr. Pamela Fisher, consultants from ACCT, while attending the

2013 ACCT Leadership Congress held in Seattle the first week of October, 2013 [\[IVB.1:22\]](#). The meeting focused on final suggestions and strategies the board can implement to sustain the significant work and accomplishments it has implemented to date as it relates to the roles and responsibilities of the board.

The following table lists some of the training activities that were attended by the regents:

Date	Activity Type	Name	Organized By
03/20/12	Webinar	"Safeguarding Your Institution: the Board's role in Navigating Disaster"	ACCT
04/20/12	Workshop	AACC 92nd Convention (Various Topics)	AACC
05/03/12	Workshop	BOR and CEO Assistants Workshop	AACC
05/04/12	Workshop	Board and CEO Assistants Workshop	ACCT
10/09/12	Workshop	ACCT 43rd Annual Leadership Congress in Boston	ACCT
11/14/12	Conference	Community College League of California Annual Convention & Partner Conference in Los Angeles	CCLC
12/5-6/12	Training	PPEC Boardmanship Training in Guam	PPEC
12/19/12	Retreat	Board Retreat with Larry Gamboa	
02/10/13	Conference	2013 Community College Summit	ACCT
04/19/13	Conference	93rd AACC Convention	AACC
04/24/13	Training	BOR Retreat via Skype with Dr. Polonio	NMC
08/01/13	Training	1/2 Day BOR Retreat via Skype with Dr. Polonio	NMC
08/26-27/2013	Training Sessions	Best Practices for Effective Governance / Accreditation Expectations / Achieving Consensus	ACCT
10/2-5/13	Workshop	ACCT 44 th Annual Leadership Congress	ACCT

At the Northern Marianas College, board members set policy acting as a unit. New policies have been brought to the board by the president where she has made recommendations on proposed policy additions/changes in every case. Board members are made aware that these policies requiring action usually have been researched and reviewed thoroughly by the president and the

college's professional staff. Additionally, the board members have been working with Dr. Narcisa Polonio of the Association of Community College Trustees to sustain this heightened concentration on policy. In working with Dr. Polonio, the board has approved the update of all of its operational policies [\[IVB.1:13\]](#), and is now in the final stages of separating policy from procedures in all operational areas of the College, including Personnel, Student Services, Finances, and Academics. The Board Chair has also participated in additional training activities [\[IVB.1:11\]](#) since the last visit of the WASC team. The board also recently updated its 5-year Policy Review Calendar [\[IVB.1:20\]](#) which determines the schedule of when policies will be reviewed.

Furthermore, the board will be continuing its training through a Board Subscription to the ACCT Trustee Education Webinar Series. This will help the board to sustain its development efforts and ongoing responsibility to build its competencies and to practice effective governance. As sustainability of an effective board is so important to NMC, it requires that the board not only understands its roles and responsibilities, but also develops the vision to ensure long-term success for the College. As such, the board will be participating in live and virtual education events over the next 12 months through ACCT. The following are some examples of the seminars in which they will be participating:

- The Trustee's Role in Fundraising: From Arm's Length to Knee Deep.
- Safeguarding your institution: The Board's role in navigating disaster
- What Boards Need to Know about Institutional Accreditation
- What trustees Need to Know about Financial Oversight
- Keeping Order: Robert's Rules for Trustees
- The Role of the Chair of the Board
- How the Board can Organize and Effective Meeting: Basic Board Procedure

Actions Taken

To strengthen the delegation of the management of college operations to the president and recognizing that constituent groups have other opportunities to participate in participative decision making at the College, in June of 2013 [\[IVB.1:23\]](#) the board repealed its policy on Honorary Regents [\[IVB.1:12\]](#). Representatives of students, staff, and faculty continue to be engaged in decision making through other vehicles of participatory governance: they currently sit on the College's management team, College Council, the Planning, Program Review, and Outcomes Assessment Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee and the weekly College Hour meetings with all staff. No longer do these individuals undermine the role of the president as referenced by the October 2012 External Evaluation Team. The newly revised *2013 Institutional Excellence Guide* provides additional details about how different constituencies at the College are engaged through participatory governance.

Additionally, the Board of Regents has recently reviewed and adopted board policies [\[IVB.1:13\]](#) that better define the role and responsibility of the president and that of the board (BOR Policy No. 1006) [\[IVB.1:36\]](#) along with the evaluation process which will assess the CEO's as well as the board's performance (BOR Policy No. 1012) [\[IVB.1:35\]](#). As a major part of the president's evaluation is to focus on the accomplishment of institutional goals and objectives [\[IVB.1:47\]](#), the

president provides to the board on a monthly basis, an ongoing review and analysis of the progress the institution is making toward accomplishing the identified initiatives. Thus, the board is able to continually monitor and review the progress the president and the institution is making in achieving its priorities. The board completes an evaluation of itself at the end of each board meeting [\[IVB.1:48\]](#). Thus both the president and the board are continuously assessing their performance.

The president continues to help improve the understanding of the College community regarding the responsibility of the president in advising the board in the following ways: regular campus-wide “college hour” meetings [\[IVB.1:49\]](#) allow the president to give the campus community updates about her interaction with the board; the update of NMC’s *2013 Institutional Excellence Guide* (IEG) further defines the governance structure of the College and the president’s responsibility in advising the board; and through regular updates via email or other communication.

Further, a recent professional development activity [\[IVB.1:21\]](#) presented by Dr. Pam Fisher, a former community college president, chancellor, and chair of a visiting accreditation team, was recently conducted for all College employees. Dr. Fisher discussed participative governance in the context of decision-making. She also urged the college community to honor the new board policies that clarify the distinction in roles of the president and the governing board. This training activity was augmented by another professional development session [\[IVB.1:50\]](#) presented by former Regent and former Accreditation Liaison Officer Galvin Deleon Guerrero. This activity specifically discussed the distinction of the roles of the board from that of the president. The session was attended by NMC employees, the president and members of the board.

V. Appendix

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