



# Northern Marianas College

## Office of the President

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Friday, May 31, 2007

Dr. Barbara Beno, President  
Accrediting Commission for Community  
and Junior Colleges  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges  
10 Commercial Blvd. Suite 204  
Novato, CA 94949

Dear Dr. Beno:

It is with pleasure that I submit our update of the March 30, 2007 progress report.

We have made every effort to demonstrate, in this updated report, our continued seriousness in addressing our accreditation status. We have established mechanisms to ensure that critical vacancies are filled in a timely fashion, within the constraints we face regarding recruiting difficulties in the area. All seven Board members, at our May 24 special meeting, have committed to September 25 as their training day for both accreditation standards and boardsmanship. In regards to our Rota and Tinian sites, there is a renewed awareness of the critical service that we provide to those communities that has spawned a unified effort to ensure that we serve them well.

As President of NMC, I assure you of my solid commitment to mobilize all efforts to achieve accreditation reaffirmation. We are blessed with a community of people who strongly support the College and understand its value that stand ready to assist in this effort. On behalf of NMC, un Dangkulo na Si Yu'os ma'ase' (many thanks) for the Commission's guidance and support.

Sincerely,

Carmen Fernandez  
President

Copy: Dr. Ralph Wolff, Executive Director ACSCU  
Dr. Rita Hocog Inos, Chair and Members BOR

### Attachment: March 30, 2007 Progress Report Update

A Land Grant Institution accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
and by the Senior Commission for Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges

**NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE**  
**Update on March 30, 2007 Progress Report**  
**May 31, 2007**

*A. Eligibility Requirement #4 Chief Executive Officer: The institution has a chief executive officer appointed by the governing board, whose full-time responsibility is to the institution, and who possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies.*

On April 26, 2007, the Board of Regents conducted a Special Meeting, during which they selected Dr. Carmen Fernandez as the next President of the Northern Marianas College. President Fernandez reported to work and assumed her duties and responsibilities on May 7, 2007.

*B. Eligibility Requirement #5 Administrative Capacity: The institution has sufficient staff, with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose.*

The College has made substantial progress in addressing this eligibility requirement since the issue was first raised as a material concern of the Commission in its November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2006 letter.

The first challenge the College faced in addressing this concern was the identification and securing of the financial resources necessary to fill the positions the institution deemed necessary to fully address its need for adequate administrative capacity. It accomplished this, as detailed in our March progress report, by realigning its organizational structure to ensure greater efficiency and accountability in light of reduced resources and by seeking supplemental funding from the CNMI Government.

The second challenge the College faces in addressing this concern is the difficulty it has in garnering the interest of qualified candidates to apply for vacancies at the institution.

The College has expended considerable resources to overcome these challenges and in spite of these challenges has made progress toward compliance with Eligibility Requirement #5 as detailed below.

Dean of Academic Programs and Services

Mr. Danny Wyatt, Dean of Academic Programs and Services and the Accreditation Liaison Officer, was appointed Acting President on the departure of former President Antonio V. Deleon Guerrero and subsequently Dr. Debra Cabrera was appointed as Acting Dean of Academic Programs and Services and the Accreditation Liaison Officer. Mr. Danny Wyatt vacated the Acting President position and returned to his position as Dean of Academic Programs and Services effective May 7, 2007.

Accreditation Liaison Officer

Recognizing the importance and magnitude of issues the College faced in addressing various concerns relative to its accreditation and the level of effort such required,



President Fernandez in consultation with the Dean Danny Wyatt and Dr. Debra T. Cabrera, appointed Dr. Debra Cabrera as the College's Accreditation Liaison Officer for the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU) effective May 21, 2007. Dr. Cabrera was the chairperson of the College's Self Study Steering Committee and had been serving as the College's Accreditation Liaison Officer during Dean Danny Wyatt's tenure as the Acting President.

#### Chief Accountant

The recruitment process for Chief Accountant position began immediately on identification of resources to fill the position by the College's Planning, Budget and Evaluation Council (PBEC). The position was announced (vacancy announcement (VA) 07-021) on January 26, 2007 and closed on February 09, 2007. Interviews were conducted during the week of March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Ms. Solita Barnes was selected as the College's Chief Accountant and assumed the related duties and responsibilities on April 2, 2007.

#### Human Resources Manager

The recruitment process for Human Resources Manager Position began immediately on identification of resources to fill the position by the College's Planning, Budget and Evaluation Council (PBEC). The position was announced (VA 07-020) on January 26, 2007 and closed on February 9, 2007. Interviews were conducted during the week of April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007. Ms. Michele Olopai was selected as the College's Human Resources Manager and will be assuming her duties on June 20, 2007.

#### Director of Information and Learning Technology

Recruiting qualified candidates for technical positions such as this has proven to be a major challenge for the institution. This position was announced immediately on the departure of the former Director (VA 06-020) on January 05, 2006. It was revised on January 3, 2007 and again on February 21, 2007 to allow for a greater pool of candidates to be eligible to apply for the position. Interviews of three candidates took place in during the week of May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Unfortunately, none of the candidates was recommended by the interview committee for the position and so the recruitment process is ongoing. President Fernandez is also considering the possibility of contracting this service.

#### Director of Library Programs and Services

This position was announced immediately upon the departure of the former Director (VA 07-004) on October 27, 2006. The vacancy announcement was revised on January 3, 2007 and re-announced in an effort to attract more candidates to apply for the position. Unfortunately, in spite of our best efforts only one candidate was certified as qualified for the position and interviews were conducted with the certified candidate during the week of January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007. The interview committee did not recommend this candidate for the position and so the recruitment process is ongoing.

#### Director of Admissions and Records

The College Planning, Budget and Evaluation Council reviewed the need for an Admissions and Records Director and a Registrar for the institution in light of its current financial circumstances and the current organizational structure and ultimately decided that both positions are critical and approved the recruitment of a Director for Admissions and Records. The position was announced (VA 07-029) on May 11, 2007 and recruitment is ongoing.

#### **Action on other critical positions:**

The College has historically experienced a high rate of employee turnover. This was amplified by recent amendments to the CNMI Retirement System, which essentially forced early retirement of certain employees to avoid a reduction in their pension benefits. As a result this and other circumstances, the following positions were vacated. A status report is provided below:

#### Academic Librarian

The position was vacated in October 2006 and such was announced (VA 07-011) on November 27, 2006. Interviews for the position were conducted during the week of March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007. Mr. Van Rider was selected as the Academic Librarian and will be assuming the related duties and responsibilities on June 7, 2007.

#### Librarian (Curriculum Resources Center)

The position was vacated in December 7, 2006 and the recruitment process for this position began (VA 07-007) on November 6, 2006. Interviews were conducted during the week of May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2007. The interview committee recommended a candidate for the position and an offer has been made. The College is awaiting acceptance of the offer from the applicant.

#### Director of Counseling Programs and Services

The position of Director of Counseling Programs and Services was vacated on April 23, 2007. The position was immediately opened on April 26, 2007 (VA 07-025). The vacancy announcement has been closed for application screening. Interviews are being scheduled for the week of May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

#### Registrar

The College's Registrar resigned effective June 10, 2007. The College immediately began the recruitment process with the position being announced on May 17, 2007 (VA 07-030) and will be closing on May 31, 2007. We expect the position to be filled in June 2007.

Please refer to Appendix A for copies of the Vacancy Announcements.

**C. Commission Recommendation 1:** *Northern Marianas College must take appropriate steps to ensure that the delivery system used to provide instruction to Tinian and Rota is completely reliable and works at all times, or discontinue offering classes via telecommunications. The College must also detail how it intends to provide educational*



*services, including instruction and support services that ensure the education obtained on those sites is equivalent of that obtained on the main campus and meets all accreditation requirements.*

- **Distance Education Capacity**

Northern Marianas College's Distance Education (DE) delivery systems to provide classes to Rota and Tinian instructional sites include Video conferencing (VTC), Elluminate Live internet based courseware, and internet communications.

Several pieces of equipment were purchased after consultation with the Program Coordinators from the Rota and Tinian instructional sites on how the quality and delivery of Distance Education classes through VTC can be improved. These purchases have been received and are ready for shipment to the instructional sites after Procurement completes the inventory tagging and transfer of titles. These purchases were made possible by federal funds received for a Rehabilitation and Human Services (RSA) project for NMC capacity building.

The following is a description of purchases for both instructional sites:

1. Two 50" flat screen panel televisions, each to be mounted on the classroom wall, will replace the smaller screen televisions that are currently being used. The small television sets that are being replaced sit on low tables and require the students to sit close to and around the television to see the screen. This practice limits the classroom size on these instructional sites.
2. Shredders and an all-in-one (fax, scanner and copier) machine will be located in each of the DE classrooms for accessibility. The administration offices on Rota and Tinian have this technology but the offices generally close by 5 pm and, therefore, do not allow access to the machines. Having the equipment available in the DE/VTC classroom is an improvement and handy for the instructor(s) and students. The shredder is needed to dispose of pop quizzes designed for "in class use only". The fax can be used to send in completed exams or quizzes to the instructor during classes while the copier can be used to make a small number of copies for handouts that the instructor may need to distribute.
3. Two laptops, each accompanied with laser pointers, have been purchased to facilitate instruction at these sites.

In addition, the ANA federal grant NMC receives is funding microwave transmissions independent of the PTI microwave as well as independent of the (soon to be repaired) ocean floor cable. In total, connectivity between Saipan, Rota and Tinian will have triple redundancy when these projects are completed allowing for seamless delivery of instruction and other services via DE.

To date, the ANA grant has made possible a study for the feasibility of providing microwave transmissions between Saipan, Tinian and Rota. The college is currently completing an RFP in order to purchase and construct the transmission receivers for shipment and installation on all three islands.

In addition, upon the completion of Spring Semester, eight NMC instructors, as well as one adjunct instructor, had completed semester-long training utilizing Elluminate Live for Distance Education internet based course offerings. Through Elluminate Live, DE capacity to Tinian and Rota has increased through this reliable means of transmission. In addition, the local service provider (PTI) is scheduled to repair the ocean floor cable in June or July 2007. While a year later than what the college's administration had been told in May, 2006, the repairs will offer significant improvement in connectivity. With the redundancy of Internet connectivity by microwave tower connections between the three islands, the college's VTC connectivity is expected to be repaired completely by the beginning of classes in Fall Semester.

- **Policy and Procedures**

Certification of Adjunct Faculty:

1. The Faculty Senate President is implementing the newly adopted *Adjunct Faculty Certification* procedures by interviewing adjunct faculty applicants for Rota instructional site. Interviews for adjunct faculty applicants will also be occurring for applicants applying to teach on Tinian. These efforts are to enable the college to better prepare prior to the adjunct pool diminishing further due to summer break. Instructional sites on Rota and Tinian are more reliant on the Commonwealth's Public School System for providing qualified adjunct instructors; the institution's proactive implementation of its Certification procedures is expected to provide better qualified and better prepared adjunct instructors for Fall Semester. (See Appendix B)
2. The Rota and Tinian NMC site coordinators are scheduled to attend training on Financial Aid, Career Services, Student Government development, academic advising and counseling services on June 12<sup>th</sup>. Prior to Fall Semester, during the NMC "Professional Development Days" (August 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>), the Rota and Tinian Instructional Site Coordinators are expected to participate, as well as attend the Advisor's Workshop scheduled for August 7<sup>th</sup>.

- **Support Services to Students and Faculty**

During her first week in office, President Fernandez visited the Instructional Sites on Rota and Tinian on May 10-12, 2007. While there she found strong support for NMC by both communities. In Rota, she met with college students and staff, including the CREES (land grant) program employees, and the Mayor of Rota. The same meetings were held in Tinian, but also included a meeting with the entire Tinian delegation (Mayor, Senators and House of Representatives and the Tinian Scholarship Board). The Tinian High School was also visited to strengthen relations especially for matriculation. The Instructional Sites provide an invaluable educational service to the islands and we expect an expansion of training and development programs at both sites.

Because of declining enrollment on Rota and Tinian, both Instructional Sites are currently completing aggressive recruitment efforts at each island's public high schools to increase enrollment.



Counseling Services are available for students on Rota as needed. Counselors on the Saipan Campus are contacted via phone for consultation, and if the situation warrants, travel to Rota for any follow up. Every effort is being made to locate community resources to meet the individual student needs. To address the counseling needs on Tinian, the President and the Tinian Health Center Director have signed an MOU that provides services on a regular and urgent basis. (See Appendix C)

During Spring Semester, the Tinian Instructional Site opened its Student Lounge. In addition, the Tinian site student body also elected representatives to the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College (ASNMC).

Northern Marianas College received a \$25,000 donation for library materials from Mobil Oil during Spring Semester. The NMC library services initiated purchasing research and library materials for all three instructional sites; delivery and distribution of those materials will occur once those materials arrive on island. Additionally, through the assistance of the RSA capacity building grant, the current library collection has been expanded to include books and audio-visuals on Disability, Rehabilitation and Human Services to support instruction. The new collection is available to Rota and Tinian sites.

In April, as part of "College Month" activities, the Financial Aid Officer and Rota Instructional Site Coordinator visited Rota High School conducting a Financial Aid Workshop to help prospective students make a smoother transition to college life.

In April, NMC was notified that its Upward Bound Program is a recipient of \$487,000 annually for the next four years to support its TRIO program at all three instructional sites. This grant provides counseling and advising services to disadvantaged youth through all three instructional sites.

The NMC President has received commitment from the NMC Foundation President to refurbish the Tinian Instructional Site classrooms and Student Lounge furniture.

***D. Commission Recommendation 2: The governing board of Northern Marianas College must undergo sufficient training in accreditation requirements of the ACCJC.***

President Fernandez communicated via telephone with Dr. Barbara Beno to schedule accreditation training on Saipan for members of the Board of Regents and the College's management team. This training is tentatively scheduled for the week of September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007. The Board has confirmed that they are all available Tuesday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007. In addition, the Board of Regents has expressed interest in further Boardmanship training to also occur during the same time frame.