Progress Report
WASC Senior College and University Commission

Submitted by:

Northern Marianas College
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March 1, 2019

Statement of Report Preparation

Northern Marianas College (NMC) values accreditation and continues to ensure continued accreditation as one of its strategic imperatives.

The College received its annual Interim Report Action Summary from the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) on July 26, 2018. The Interim Report Action Summary highlighted five commendations and five recommendations based on topics covered in the letter dated June 6, 2017, by the Senior Commission.

This March 1, 2019 Progress Report will be the College's first response to the five recommendations.

The College's actions to address the recommendations made in the Interim Report Action Summary were immediate and continue to be priorities for the institution. Much progress has been made with regard to the recommendations, although some challenges have impacted the work involved.

One of the most significant challenges was the extensive destruction caused by Super Typhoon Yutu, which made landfall on the islands of Saipan and Tinian on October 26, 2018. The Category 5 super storm brought catastrophic, 180 mph winds with gusts exceeding 200 mph. The storm is considered the strongest typhoon to ever hit U.S. soil since 1935. The islands of Saipan and Tinian suffered major damages to its infrastructure, losing power and access to running water island-wide. Many houses on Saipan and Tinian were destroyed, leaving residents homeless and seeking shelter at public schools or other government designated locations.

The damage to Northern Marianas College was extensive. There are structural damage to most classrooms, and many equipment like those in the computer labs were damaged by the wind and rain. Out of 27 buildings, 24 were damaged severely. The total damage is estimated well above $15 million.

Despite the damage, the College acted quickly to ensure that classes and instructional activities continued so that students can continue their journey toward their degrees. The College partnered with the CNMI Public School System and secured the use of classroom space at one of the local high schools so that NMC can resume its Fall 2018 afternoon and evening classes, which concluded early February, 2019.

On February 20, 2019, the College welcomed back its students to its main campus where classes are now being conducted in recently-repaired classrooms as well as 24 temporary classroom structures that have been constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's critical infrastructure public assistance program). We are pleased to report that work is now being done toward the construction of new, typhoon-resilient buildings and structures.

Immediately after the super typhoon, WSCUC Liaison Officer Maureen Maloney had reached out to NMC's leadership to discuss the effects of Super Typhoon Yutu on the College and its students. The Commission extended the due date for this Report and also modified other accreditation calendar items to allow the College to focus on its immediate recovery needs.

In addition to the storm, other challenges the institution faced in the past two years include the departure of NMC personnel, including the former Chief Executive Officer, who opted not to seek a renewal for her contract in August 2018. Prior to this, resignations were received in 2017 by the former Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO), who accepted a senior leadership position at another college. A new ALO had been appointed thereafter. The former OIE Program Manager had also accepted a position with the US Customs and Border Patrol, and more recently, the former OIE Dean returned to the mainland U.S. after the storm.

Transitions also occurred to include a realignment of programs and services and a revised organizational structure (See Attachment - NMC Organizational Chart [2017]).

The Board of Regents has since appointed Frankie Eliptico, Vice President for Administration and Advancement, as the NMC Interim President. Eliptico has worked for Northern Marianas College for more than a decade and has been extensively involved in accreditation-related work.

Despite the devastation of the super typhoon, changes in leadership, and other challenges, the work to demonstrate the College's commitment to addressing the five recommendations continued.

This progress report will highlight those actions taken.

This report is the result of collaborative efforts between the Office of the President, the Office of the Vice-President of Learning and Student Success, the Accreditation Liaison Officer, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), the Information Technology Department (IT), the Human Resources Office (HRO), the Project PROA, the Learning and Student Success Division (LSS), and the Academic Council (AC).

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation One
A bias towards actions, i.e. to have a sense of urgency to move from envisioning to implementation of the many plans articulated in the Interim Report.

Actions Taken
NMC believes in quality of teaching and learning as a vital means of preparing individuals for careers and takes its role as the sole provider of higher education in the Commonwealth to heart. NMC also values the pursuit of excellence in education, the recruitment of qualified personnel to fill critical positions, the implementation of retention measures, and the availability of and support for professional growth for its faculty and staff.

Specific actions taken include the following:

1. The Human Resources Office (HRO) has an improved recruitment rate of almost 50% of all announced vacancies (Please see 2018 LSS Vacancies Filled).
2. NMC has implemented, as a part of its budget process, template forms to allow programs to identify their specific professional development needs.
3. Through the budget allocation process, NMC has allocated revenues for faculty and planned professional development to enhance content-area knowledge, assessment skills, and other relevant areas at the department, division and institution levels (Please see School Of Education Approved Budget).
4. In January 2018, NMC invited Dr. Amy Driscoll and Dr. Carol Huston to lead a two-day professional learning opportunity for all NMC employees. The objectives for the two-day learning opportunity were to gain a clearer understanding of General Education Learning Outcomes, its alignment with Program Learning Outcomes, and its role in program review (Please see Professional Learning Jan 04 to 05 2018).
5. NMC sent a team of faculty and administrators to attend the 2017 ARC in San Francisco. The team, led by former President Carmen Fernandez, returned from the ARC and met several times with groups of faculty and staff to discuss the use of a program review and assessment data management system which, at the time, was LiveText and TaskStream.
6. Other facilitators of learning opportunities for faculty and staff include the Human Resources Office and the administration for the Division of Learning and Student Success (LSS) (Please see NMC HRO Training 2018 and NMC Supervisor's Workshop Presentation)
7. Professional learning plans have been facilitated by the LSS Division in January 2018, August 2018 and planned for June 2019. Due to Super Typhoon Yutu, the professional learning calendar was revised and the next professional learning opportunities will be held in June.
8. Annual Evaluation of all faculty and staff continues to be used to help ensure high quality in teaching and learning. NMC uses tiered evaluation methods to include end-of-the-semester Course and Instructor Evaluations completed by students, Faculty/Staff Evaluation and HRO Annual Evaluations completed by direct supervisors

(Please see [NMC HRO Faculty Evaluation Form](#)). Several academic departments have also implemented peer observations and analyses of student course evaluations. (For further information, please see items 1 & 2 under "Actions Taken" for Recommendation Four (p. 8). These tools are utilized to inform the renewal of contracts and to identify individualized professional learning needs.

9. The Academic Council (AC), an advisory council to the Dean of LSS, began its self-study process in September 2018 to ensure a consistent process for curriculum review. (Please see [Academic Council Meeting Minutes Sep 14, 2018](#)). AC had created its first draft when Super Typhoon Yutu occurred, and recovery efforts interrupted this initial draft (Please see [Academic Council Self Study Working Document Oct 11, 2018](#)). In its meeting, Council members discussed progress to date and the work ahead. The self-study will be completed in Fall 2019.

10. The General Education Committee resumed meetings in Spring 2018 to review the existing General Education Learning Outcomes and began work to make recommendations for the improvement to the learning outcome statements, to create a curriculum map for a staggered assessment cycle for the general education learning outcomes, and to differentiate between two-year and four-year general education learning outcomes (Please see [Staggered Gen Ed Assessment](#)).

11. The School of Education hosted three student focus groups to collect data and information on the PRAXIS I and PRAXIS II requirements within the Bachelor of Science in Education program. Focus groups were combined based on the four concentration areas and were comprised of students from all program levels (Please see [SOE PRAXIS Focus Groups](#)).

Next Steps

NMC's HRO will continue its diligent efforts at personnel recruitment to fill all critical vacant positions. The HRO has also renewed its subscription to HigherEd to support the online posting of job vacancies. Additionally, an HRO ad hoc committee has been appointed and will work with the HRO staff in the review of personnel policies and procedures related to recruitment and personnel classification, for the purpose of making recommendations for improvement.

AC will resume its review of its self-study draft as indicated in its meeting agenda for March 1, 2019 (Please see [Academic Council Meeting Agenda Mar 01, 2019](#)).

As a result of the focus on typhoon recovery efforts, the Academic Calendar was amended and the Professional Learning Opportunities were rescheduled to June 25-27, 2019.

Recommendation Two
An overarching institutional research strategy that is sustainable.

Actions Taken
The March 2017 Interim Report identified a data pathway plan that discussed data review and analysis necessary to support all decision-making processes at the College. The College's proposed data pathway plan required several factors in order for it to be successful. These factors included 1) acquiring an effective program assessment management system and 2) securing all the staffing needs of the OIE, specifically the positions of Director, Institutional Researcher, Program Manager, and an Assessment Specialist.

The following are actions the College has taken in this matter:
1. The College selected TaskStream, which is now Watermark, and has purchased licenses for AMS & Via (Watermark products). Training on the use of the system began with the former OIE program manager, and will resume immediately after the typhoon related recovery efforts are complete. Recruitment efforts to fill this position are in the final stages of the recruitment process.
2. The recruitment and retention of these critical personnel positions in OIE have been challenging due to the need for specialized credentials and experience in research and program review and assessment. NMC has taken the following actions to overcome these challenges:
   a. The Human Resources Office made an employment offer to an applicant to the Assessment Specialist position and is in the salary negotiation stage.
   b. The job vacancy announcement for the Dean of OIE position is currently being reviewed and will be posted publicly in the next few days.
   c. To better support the personnel needs of OIE, the Program Manager position was restructured to an Institutional Researcher position. The College is in the interview phase for this position.(Please see JVA 18-023 Institutional Researcher_Amendment and JVA 18-029 Assessment Specialist (Amendment II)).
3. The IT Department filled two key positions to support institutional data collection. These positions provide OIE with additional support in exporting data and creating reports that will allow for simplified and streamlined routine reports to be available across the campus.
4. NMC formed a PowerCampus Data Group, an interdivisional committee, that provides support to the collection and management of course and student data. Because of Super Typhoon Yutu, the focus of the team members has been on recovery efforts.

Next Steps
The Human Resources Office continues to work diligently on the recruitment to fill all current vacancies.

The PowerCampus Data Group will resume its work in Spring 2019 to facilitate the ongoing improvements in data quality and use.

Recommendation Three
Data and analysis to substantiate the value-added from the college's various student success initiatives.

Actions Taken

In demonstration of its strong student success initiatives, NMC collects, analyzes, and continues to monitor its data on student success programs and continues to explore ways in which it can better support student learning. Further, the College has engaged in partnerships with various organizations to research and identify student success issues and ways to address them. NMC also received an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) grant that funds the Project Promotion Retention Opportunities Advancement (PROA) program to support student success (see item 4 below). Project PROA is in 4 four of a 5-year grant cycle.

Data and analysis to substantiate the value-added from the College's various student success initiatives include the following:

1. A study by Herman, Scanlan, and Carreon (2016) determined that first-time freshmen students entering NMC between 2008 and 2010, from the Public School System (PSS) entered NMC at the developmental math and English levels and had lower completion rates than those who entered directly into college-level courses. In response, NMC and PSS began collaborating to develop a math pathways project that includes curriculum review, faculty qualification, and course entry criteria with the intent to build a transition course for high school seniors. The course goals are to increase preparation for and success in college-level math. We are excited to pilot this transition course at the Saipan Southern High School campus this coming Fall 2019 semester. (Please see Saipan Tribune Article Feb 11, 2019) Other projects in partnership with REL Pacific may be found on their website under *Partnerships* with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Alliance for College and Career Readiness and Success.

2. To address the need to monitor student attendance and provide a platform by which faculty could report student attendance alerts, the Moodle attendance module was activated, and the StarFish System was purchased. The Moodle attendance module is used by faculty to record student attendance and participation. This information is transmitted to the StarFish system which alerts the Early Intervention (EI) Counselors. The EI Counselors facilitate the communication with students to determine what their specific needs are to improve attendance and participation. The initiative is to improve student retention rates. The Distance Education Coordinator has trained 100% of all faculty on the use of the Moodle Attendance Module but only 70% of faculty use the module consistently.

3. Another support tool used for student retention is the Moodle Personal Learning Designer (PLD) which is utilized for all online and hybrid courses. This allows increased student engagement through direct email reminders. The PLD sends an automated email alert to the EI Counselors when a student does not log in to class regularly.

4. Project PROA offers free academic tutoring and college mentoring to high school juniors and seniors and to all college students. While the target demographic for Project PROA is

indigenous students—Chamorro and Carolinian—as a federal program, Project PROA assists all students with their academic and career endeavors. In addition to providing tutoring and mentoring, Project PROA hosts academic and cultural workshops and activities. Project PROA also offers study space; computer, internet, and printer use; and academic and cultural books and resources. Key Project PROA highlights include:

    a. From Fall 2016 to Fall 2017, there was a 397% increase of students who received services at the PROA Center, where tutoring, student mentoring, and other student services are provided. Prior to Super Typhoon Yutu in October, Project PROA was set to exceed the previous number of student visits. In the spring semesters (2016-2017), the number of student visits increased by 160%. Of the students tutored in Fall 2017, 90% reported being more confident to succeed in their college classes, and 99% of the students said they would recommend their tutor to other students. Of the students tutored in Spring 2018, 100% reported being more confident to succeed in their college classes, while 100% of students surveyed would recommend their tutor to other students.

    b. Project PROA's tutors and mentors work together with the tutors from the college's Learning Support Services to provide academic tutoring services. Project PROA also funds two tutors for the institution's English Language Learning Lab, as one of the goals of the grant is to help students place into college credit-bearing English classes when transitioning from high school. In support of this goal, Project PROA completed the purchase of Achieve 3000 in October 2018 to support the college's developmental English classes. An online literacy program, Achieve 3000 has helped students from the PSS significantly improve their literacy scores. The implementation of the program for Fall 2018 was delayed due to the super typhoon and will begin in Spring 2019. The grant purchased twenty new student computers and a printer to replace the student computers lost as a result of the super typhoon. These student computers will be housed in a temporary classroom and will serve as the English Lab and Project PROA open computer lab.

    c. Project PROA hosts monthly academic and cultural activities. Student Navigators (or tutors and mentors) lead academic workshops such as the "Four P's of a Good Presentation," "Resume Rescue," "Knowing Your Credit Score," and "Preparing for Finals." The Student Navigators also lead cultural demonstrations such as cultural cooking, weaving and beading, and a cultural music jam session. Project PROA collaborates with various community partners such as the Carolinian Affairs Office, the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs, and NMC CREES to host these cultural events (Please see Project PROA Activities).

5. To ensure adequate personnel to support outreach and student success efforts, additional counselors were hired. To date, NMC has hired three Early Intervention and Student Success Counselors and an International Student Services Counselor. The counselors have all received suicide awareness and prevention training and have led training for faculty and staff on the same subject.

6. The Learning Support Services Department conducted a Student Success and Retention Survey (Please see LSS Student Success Survey) on April 28, 2018. The goal of this

survey was to collect information on student utilization of services and to measure student satisfaction with these services (Please see LSS Student Satisfaction Services Survey). Survey information was also used to determine appropriate action steps for the LSS to implement. Some action steps included the following:

   a. Continue to monitor referred students on academic sanction who are expected to graduate; revamped scheduled check-ins and follow-ups to be more consistent and enforced throughout the semester to provide support;
   b. Re-enforce the early intervention referral system by creating an online intervention form (Moodle platform). This allowed faculty and/or staff to refer students to the counseling staff for early intervention services and attendance monitoring; and
   c. Improve communication methods to students by organizing and centralizing the events and workshop announcements as well as information on services and communicating these through email to all students.

7. In response to positive feedback from the students in the above survey, the NMC Learning Support Services Department continues to provide a Student Success Series of theme-based workshops that cover various topics and are open to all NMC Students (Please see Student Success Series Workshops). These topics are aimed at improving educational, personal, and career readiness. To date, some completed workshops are peer editing workshops, "Stress and Self-Care," "Anger Management," "Time Wasters" (time management), and "Financial Aid Opportunities." At the end of each workshop, standard evaluations are conducted to assess the usefulness, helpfulness, and value of the workshop information, conduciveness of format, as well as to receive recommendations for improvement from student participants.

8. The LSS Early Intervention *At-Risk* task group was created to monitor students identified as being "at risk of not completing program requirements for graduation in Spring 2018." The group started working with thirty-seven (37) students identified by faculty as "at risk" of not passing courses required for graduation in Spring 2018. As a result, several students received assistance and support from the counseling programs, tutoring programs, and Project PROA, and were also made aware of the options of retaking courses and the impact on financial aid. The group concluded this phase of the work with only eight (8) students who remained on the "at risk" list in the week of final exams, resulting in a 78% success rate.

9. Learning and Support Services Department has also provided, among other programs, Question Persuade Refer (QPR) suicide prevention training to faculty and staff (Please see LSS List of Student Success Series Workshops).

10. Proa Café underwent and completed extensive renovations in Fall 2017. The completed renovations included kitchen improvements, an increase in seating, and the installation of a charging center. Starting in May 2018, Proa Café increased the variety of food being offered, to include healthier alternatives such as a salad bar. Unfortunately, Super Typhoon Yutu destroyed the cafe; however, a temporary site has been established, and the cafe continues to provide food service.

Next Steps
NMC will continue to be active participants in collaboration with PSS teachers in creating the high school math transition course. NMC faculty and PSS high school math teachers will be trained by REL Pacific and WestEd in the Carnegie Math Pathways curriculum. The course will be piloted in Fall 2019 at the Saipan Southern High School, with plans to extend to other PSS high schools.

The Moodle attendance module will be expanded to include technology that will allow students to use their cellular devices as a means of confirming attendance. The Office of Distance Education will continue training faculty to make further use of the Moodle platform.

The Learning Support Services Department will complete its next five scheduled presentations: "Hidden Traps: How to Create a Schedule for Next Semester," "Life After College," "Peer Editing Workshop," "ABCs of Credit," and "Basics of Banking."

Recommendation Four
Evidence of how departments use data they say they need to improve the quality of education.

Actions Taken
For many years, NMC has experienced challenges with the acquisition of and training in various platforms that would support and streamline data collection, including Watermark and PowerCampus. These challenges are driven both by the software and by the lack of key personnel. The issues surrounding Watermark are addressed in this report under "Actions Taken" for Recommendation Two. Regarding PowerCampus, NMC has established the PowerCampus Data Group, which has identified several data issues and is in the process of addressing them.

Apart from any data that is gathered via the above platforms, academic departments within NMC have taken the following actions in gathering, evaluating, and responding to data:

1. NMC continues to administer student end-of-semester course evaluations, which are then provided to the instructors as data for the review of their pedagogical practices. The Department of Languages and Humanities has implemented a plan of compiling instructor data by year and analyzing trends in student response to formulate goals in professional and pedagogical development. The Dean of Learning and Student Success is reviewing the resulting template for wider use (Please see Student Evaluation Summary Template and Student Evaluation Summary Example).
2. The Languages and Humanities Department and the Sciences, Math, Health, and Athletics Department have implemented peer observations among instructional faculty for the sharing of teaching methods. The Dean of Learning and Student Success is reviewing these departments' forms and practices for wider use (Please see NMC Faculty Peer Evaluation Form and NMC Faculty Peer Observation Form Samples).
3. A Town Hall Meeting was hosted by the NMC Office of Student Activities and Leadership (OSAL) on May 2, 2018 (Please see NMC Town Hall Meeting Presentation and NMC Town Hall Meeting Minutes May 02, 2018). The Town Hall Meeting allowed

students to openly discuss areas of concerns. The OSAL Coordinator presented these results to NMC faculty in its Professional Learning Opportunity in August 2018. Some of the improvements which stemmed from this presentation include:

    a. The Nursing and Business Departments implemented an appointment system to schedule and accommodate all students.

    b. The Nursing Program has been using the online registration system as a tool to access and provide advising to students electronically.

    c. The Nursing Program hired a new instructional faculty member.

    d. The Criminal Justice Program hired an administrative assistant and student work-study to help maintain communication with students and ensure that students' needs are addressed efficiently.

    e. The Hospitality Program has been working with the human resources departments at local hotels and resorts to enhance industry relationships.

4. The OIE administered the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) in Spring 2017 (Please see Noel Levitz Survey 2017). The SSI was completed by students in all programs and levels, from first-time students to seniors. The results provided comparative data between programs within the institution. An example of the use of these results and subsequent improvements is in the School of Education (SOE). SOE was able to evaluate and assess its portion of the survey to initiate changes in areas ranging from the advising process to safety and security. The College also provided support in response to this by installing additional lights in its parking area.

Next Steps

The PowerCampus Data Group will address issues of quality and structure of data in the system as seen in recommendation two. One particular item of action is in the development of Argos reports to produce routine audits for the Office of Admissions and Records for the purpose of data-quality reviews of problematic areas. Additional Argos reports are being developed to provide routine push-of-a-button report of various student achievement data for use by all programs.

The Ruffalo Noel Levitz SSI results will be more widely distributed for further evaluation and use in the upcoming program review cycle. Additional supports needed by the College will be compiled, and an action plan will be presented to the Administration.

For further next steps, please see "Next Steps" of Recommendation Two.

Recommendation Five

Articulation of lesson learned from the program review audit and description of the status of the transition from this comprehensive report annual effort to a staggered program review schedule

Actions Taken

The Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC) began dialogue on the restructuring of the program review cycle. Feedback from programs and PROAC discussions indicated that comprehensive annual reports do not allow programs sufficient time to accomplish

program and institutional goals. To address this, PROAC began research on assessment cycles used by regional institutions. PROAC discussed the benefits and drawbacks between three- and five-year assessment cycles in consideration of NMC's needs. PROAC decided that the three-year cycle (Please see PROAC Three (3) Year Cycle Program Review) would work best, given the pace of change at the college and in the Commonwealth, while also allowing programs sufficient time to meet goals and objectives. PROAC also expanded program reviews to include internal and external reviewers. The expansion to include external reviewers was permissible due to additional funding at the time. All programs were asked to submit a list of preferred external reviewers. OIE would work with these reviewers to finalize availability and cost for these reviews. The College will revisit this plan to ensure resource availability.

PROAC continued to meet and discuss Cycle 10 as well as ideas for future cycles, including an alternating schedule of review for academic and non-academic programs, possible changes to the PROAC Form Two (now referred to as the Self-Study document), and the inclusion of the General Education Program in the current cycle of review. PROAC members were active participants in college-wide discussions regarding the implementation of TaskStream (now Watermark).

The acting director completed training in the Watermark solution, Accountability Management System (AMS) and was set to begin training in the VIA Portfolio Solution at the the time he resigned. This training will resume after recovery efforts are complete.

The College has identified the Dean of LSS to serve as the Acting Chair for PROAC to facilitate program review efforts. A PROAC meeting was held on February 6, 2019 (Please see PROAC Presentation and Agenda, February 06, 2019). The first order of business was to confirm committee membership and commitment to the purposes of PROAC. PROAC members were also asked to review the 2017 Self-Study documents, Cycle 10, prior to the next PROAC meeting scheduled for March 6, 2019.

Next Steps
PROAC will complete a thorough evaluation and assessment of program review to include the previously recommended three-year program review cycle. PROAC members will divide committee work among teams of two to provide feedback to programs on their submissions and will take the lead in the discussions of those programs at PROAC meetings (Please see PROAC Meeting Notes, February 06, 2019).

The job vacancy announcement for the Director of OIE is currently under review and will be announced soon. When filled, the Acting Chair for PROAC will orient the OIE Director. After a transition period, the Director will assume the position of PROAC Chair.

Closing Statement
The Northern Marianas College is committed to ensuring that the recommendations of the Commission are fully addressed. The College is appreciative of the opportunity to grow as it strives to accomplish its mission and goals.