NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE
SHOW CAUSE REPORT

October 15, 2010

Northern Marianas College
P. O. Box 501250
Saipan, MP 96950
Tel. (670) 234-5498
www.nmcnet.edu

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I. Statement of Preparation of Report

After receiving the January 31, 2008 Show Cause letter from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (the "Commission"), the Northern Marianas College submitted multiple reports that addressed the deficiencies noted in the letter. These reports included the March 15, 2008 Special Report, the May 13, 2008 Update to the March 15, 2008 Special Report, the October 15, 2008 Show Cause Report, the December 31, 2008 Supplemental Report, the April 1, 2009 Show Cause Report, and the May 29, 2009 Supplemental Report.

At its meeting June 9—11, 2009, the ACCJC reviewed the April 1, 2009 Show Cause Report, the report of the evaluation team which visited the NMC As Terlaje Campus Monday, April 20—Thursday, April 23, 2009, and reviewed information presented by college representatives. The Commission took action at the meeting to accept the report, remove Show Cause, and reaffirm accreditation. The Commission also acted to require a visit by Commission representatives following the submission of the October 15, 2009 Midterm Report.

At its January 2010 meeting, the Commission reviewed the Northern Marianas College Mid-Term Report of October 2009 and the report of the evaluation team that visited the college in October 2009. The commission took action to accept the mid-term report. Due to receipt of information from Northern Marianas College and from Saipan, the Commission also took action to require a Special Visit to determine whether the institution was still in compliance with the following Eligibility Requirements and Standards: ER 3 - Governing Board, ER 4 - Chief Executive Officer, ER 5 - Administrative Capacity, ER 21 -Relations with the Accrediting Commission, and Standards I.A, III.A and IV.A and B.

An evaluation team visit was conducted on April 13-14, 2010. Based on the findings and report of the Special Visit, at its June 2010 meeting, the Commission took action to issue an order of Show Cause against the College for being out of compliance with Eligibility Requirements 3, 4, 5, 17, 18, and 21 and significant parts of Standards I.A, I.B, II.A, II.B, III.A, III.D, and IV.B. The Commission required the College to submit a Show Cause Report by October 15, 2010, to be followed by a visit of Commission representatives.
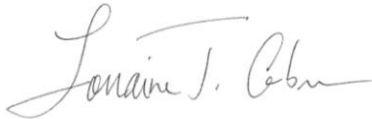
Upon receiving Dr. Barbara Beno's June 30, 2010 Action Letter conveying the decision of the Commission, a College General Assembly was convened on July 7, 2010. At the assembly, it was announced that the College's Management Team would be expanded to form a representative Accreditation Reaffirmation Action Plan (ARAP) Steering Team that would lead the College in addressing the concerns and recommendations of the June 30, 2010 Action Letter. Presidents from NMC's constituent bodies—Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and Associated Students of Northern Marianas College (ASNMC)—were thus added to the Management Team to form the ARAP Steering Team.

The ARAP Steering Team proceeded to treat preparations for the October 15, 2010 Show Cause Report as a scaled-down Self-Study for the Commission and divided into Standard Teams aligned along the Commission Standards cited in the June 30, 2010 Action Letter.   These Standard Teams recruited additional faculty, staff, and students and began meeting on a regular basis, while the ARAP Steering Team also met every week to discuss and review the work of the

Standard Teams. To engage more input from the College community, the ARAP Steering Team followed a timetable that provided two weeks for the College community to review and comment on the Draft ARAP, as well as two weeks to review and comment on the draft October 15, 2010 Show Cause Report.

The College hereby submits this October 15, 2010 Show Cause Report to demonstrate that the College fully meets all of Standards I.A, I.B, II.A, III.A, III.D, and IV.B, fully meets Standard II.A.7.a and Standard II.B.3.f, complies with Eligibility Requirements 3, 4, 5, 17, 18, and 21, and has resolved the specific deficiencies referenced in all the recommendations made by the April 2010 Special Visit Team.

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, as well as representatives of the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College, the Faculty Senate, and the Staff Senate.

Lorraine T. Cabrera,
Interim President

II. Overview

The logo for Northern Marianas College (NMC), the Proa, is the signature sailing canoe of our islands' indigenous Chamorros and Carolinians. At one point in history, the Proa was the fastest, most agile, and therefore, most envied vessel in the Pacific, taking ancient Chamorros and Carolinians far and wide throughout Micronesia. It is fitting that the Proa is our college's logo, for we too hope to take our students far and wide in their dreams, aspirations, and hopes.

But, as with any sailing vessel, it is not always smooth sailing. We sometimes lose our way in storms, currents sometimes lead us awry, and at times, we, in the canoe, row in competing directions until we row our way into a standstill.

Institutional Autonomy from Outside Interference

The College acknowledges that some elected CNMI officials have exerted tremendous political pressure and have attempted to undermine the College's institutional autonomy. Certain officials have criticized both NMC and the Commission with inappropriate, false, and misleading accusations, and several austerity bills have threatened NMC's financial autonomy.

Cognizant of these threats to institutional autonomy, the Board of Regents and the College leadership have met on several occasions with elected officials to advocate for the best interests of the institution, defend the College's autonomy, and help elected leaders to better understand the College and the accreditation process. As a result, the College was spared from a temporary government shutdown, funding for the College remains adequate in a time of fiscal crisis, and discussions are moving forward to develop agreements and policies that will reinforce the institutional autonomy.

Institutional Financial Management and Integrity

Although several austerity bills have threatened the College's financial resources, the Board of Regents and the College leadership have successfully lobbied against budget cuts and austerity measures that would have compromised the College's ability to support student learning, comply with Commission Eligibility Requirements, and meet Commission Standards. The College has supplemented government appropriations with substantial funding in federal grants, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), and State Fiscal Stabilization Funds (SFSF). Moreover, successful marketing and recruitment efforts resulted in a 25% enrollment increase for the Fall 2010 term that has brought in additional funding in the form of tuition and fees.

Mindful of the need to manage its financial resources with integrity, the College has taken effective steps towards strengthening internal financial controls, resolving deficiencies and findings from recent audits, and developing corrective action plans to address those deficiencies and findings.

Institutional Governance and Accountability

Facing political currents and financial storms, the College has also struggled with instability and conflict from within. In response to the instability of leadership, the Board of Regents will soon hire a full-time president as it concludes its 2010 Presidential Search process. Furthermore, the Board is developing policies that will institutionalize training for Regents, implement a systematic process for reviewing Board of Regents policies, and hold Regents accountable to its Code of Ethics.

In response to internal conflicts that have emerged over the past year, the College has taken extra steps to engage more faculty, staff, administrators, and students in shared governance. The Interim President has expanded the membership of Management Team to include representatives from all of the institution's constituent bodies, several college-wide assemblies have been held as forums for institutional dialogue, and the College leadership has proactively engaged the entire College community in the development of this report.

Sailing Forward

As a result of all these efforts, the College is moving forward. Like our mascot, the Proa, Northern Marianas College may stray off course, but we find our way and sail forward.

III. ACCJC Standards

Standard I.A: Mission

"The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning."

Descriptive Summary

Northern Marianas College's mission statement was established in the Constitution of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in 1985 by Amendment 38, which states, "The mission of Northern Marianas College shall be to provide the best quality and meaningful post secondary and adult educational opportunities for the purpose of improving the quality of life for the individual and for the Commonwealth as a whole. The College shall be responsible for providing education in the areas of adult and continuing education, post secondary and adult vocational education and professional development for the people of the Commonwealth."

To effectuate its mission, on September 25, 2008, Northern Marianas College's Board of Regents adopted a five year strategic plan entitled the "PROA Strategic Plan 2008—2012" (Appendix A--PROA Strategic Master Plan 2008-2012). The plan identified four strategic goals:
1. **P**romote student learning and success.
2. **R**espond to the professional development, continuing education, and personal enrichment needs of the Commonwealth.
3. **O**ptimize financial and human resources.
4. **A**ccelerate the upgrade of physical and technology infrastructure.

To further define these goals and reinforce the focus of the plan, several priority initiatives were identified for each strategic goal. For example, Goal 1 is linked to Priority Initiative 1.1 "Improve the literacy and analytical problem-solving skills of students."

The College understands its mission as being two-fold: (1) to provide educational opportunities to students enrolled in its academic programs and services, and (2) to provide educational opportunities to the broader community through its community programs and services. To fulfill the first aspect of its mission, the College offers a Bachelor of Science degree, seven associate degree programs, four certificate programs, and two developmental programs. All programs have complete sets of program learning outcomes (PLOs) that are reviewed on a regular basis as part of the College's ongoing program review and course assessment processes, and all courses have complete sets of student learning outcomes (SLOs).

To fulfill the second part of its mission, the College provides educational opportunities to the broader CNMI community through a variety of continuing and outreach programs under the Division of Community Programs and Services (COMPASS). These programs are offered through the Community Development Institute (CDI), University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and Cooperative Research, Extension and Education Services (CREES). The College also serves the community with its Upward Bound and the Educational Talent Search (ETS) TRIO programs, which serve public school students.

The College also fulfills its mission by supporting students with a wide array of student services such as Counseling Programs and Services (CPS), the College Access Challenge Project (CACP), Career Services and Testing, the Office of Admissions and Records (OAR), the Office of Financial Aid (FAO), the Office of Student Activities and Leadership (OSAL), and TRIO programs. Furthermore, the College's English Language Lab, the Olympio T. Borja Library, the CNMI Archives, the Curriculum Resource Center (CRC), and the Office of Information Technology (IT) support academic programs, community programs, and student services that enhance student learning.

To ensure that the College's programs, services, and resources are aligned with and support the College's mission, virtually all programs at the College participate in a program review process that requires each program to link its program mission with the College's mission using the Nichols and Nichols 5-Column Model for program review. Similarly, the College's annual budget-call requires each program to link budget items to priority initiatives within the "PROA Strategic Plan 2008—2012", as well as program review data. Between the program review and the budgeting process, the College's shared governance model helps ensure that programs, services, and resources uphold the mission.

Self-Evaluation

From August 10 through August 12, 2010, the College focused its bi-annual Professional Development Days (PDD) on evaluating how the College is or is not meeting ACCJC standards. Faculty, staff, students, and administrators met in small groups to discuss their perspectives on the different standards, including ACCJC Standard I.A. A similar discussion was held among Regents at a board training on September 8, 2010. Notes from both the College's PDD discussions (Appendix B--Notes from NMC Fall 2010 Professional Development Day Discussions) and the Board training discussion (Appendix C--Notes from September 8, 2010 BOR Training) revealed the following:

- The mission statement is appropriate and the College's programs and services strive to fulfill that mission.
- The College's shared governance and assessment model helps foster a college-wide commitment to student learning.
- All programs have developed PLOs and administrative unit outcomes (AUOs) that support the mission.

However, notes from those sessions also indicated the following:

- The intended student population identified in the mission statement may be too broad and perhaps should be narrowed and further defined.
- The mission statement, which was established in 1985, may need to be revisited within the context of the current needs of the community.
- A commitment to student learning, although implied in the College's mission and further articulated in the College's Institutional Philosophy, is not explicitly stated in the mission.

Moreover, while programs are required to link their respective missions to the College's mission as part of the program review process, the College has not closely examined and verified these links over the past three cycles of program review. As a result, some programs have missions that are only loosely aligned with the College's mission.

<u>Actions Taken</u>

Changing the mission would require an amendment to the CNMI constitution, a very tedious and arduous task that makes it difficult for the college to revise its mission.

However, it is within the College's means to establish stronger and more meaningful links between programs' missions and the College's mission. The Program Review Outcome and Assessment Committee (PROAC) will thus begin a close examination of each program's mission throughout the fourth cycle of program review as part of its Mission Mapping initiative, which will help programs align their respective mission statements with that of the College.

To better integrate the mission across all departments and programs, the College also recently launched its Learning Communities program. The mission of the Learning Communities was developed "to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that promotes the highest educational, intellectual and social development of students," and parallels NMC's Mission Statement "to provide the best quality and meaningful post secondary and adult educational opportunities for the purpose of improving the quality of life for the individual and for the Commonwealth as a whole." The Learning Communities mission is also aligned with Goal 1 in the PROA Strategic Plan 2008-2012, "Promote student learning and success."

Standard I.B: Improving Institutional Effectiveness

"The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, measures that learning, assesses how well learning is occurring, and makes changes to improve student learning. The institution also organizes its key processes and allocates its resources to effectively support student learning. The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by providing 1) evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes and 2) evidence of institution and program performance. The institution uses ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning."

Descriptive Summary

Board of Regents Policy 1025 (Appendix G--Selected Board of Regents Policies), Section I establishes the framework for the College's use of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation to verify and improve the effectiveness by which the mission is accomplished. The policy states, "Northern Marianas College shall establish and maintain a system to ensure institutional effectiveness and a high standard of quality in academic programming. To enable such effectiveness and quality, institutional research, planning, evaluation, and other activities shall be conducted in a collaborative manner with input from all appropriate sectors of the College and the community it serves."

BOR Policy 1025 has been implemented at the College through a shared governance model and manuals and guides that promote a collegiate culture of data-driven, evidence-based decision-making for continuous quality improvement. As defined in the College's Institutional Excellence Guide (Appendix D--Institutional Excellence Guide), shared governance is "the process of consulting with and enabling various constituencies within the College community to be informed and to provide input that affects decisions made at the Northern Marianas College."

The College Council serves as the umbrella body for all other governance and constituent bodies at the College. As the primary advisory body to the President, the council engages members of the College community in the development of annual budgets, annual strategic plans, new programs and services, and major facilities planning prior to adoption by college officials. Through the council, all members of the college community have access to information regarding ongoing developments and issues. Council meetings allow for full participation in decision-making in all areas defined under the Board policy.

Two standing committees report to the College Council, PROAC and the Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC). PROAC is tasked with building and sustaining a campus-wide culture of evidence and concerns itself with matters relative to accreditation and assessment. PROAC also monitors how well program initiatives and other actions are implemented as recommended through program review, other means of assessment, and as provided in NMC's strategic plan.

BAFC advises the President on all financial matters. It is responsible for reviewing and approving all financial matters and 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 budget and financial reports as needed by the institution.

In addition to the College Council, PROAC, and BAFC, the Academic Council plays a vital role in the College's shared governance model. Charged with assisting the Dean of Academic Programs and Services on all matters related to instructional programs and academic regulations, the Academic Council oversees and discusses all curriculum changes before they are forwarded to the President and the Board for final approval. Curriculum changes include the introduction, revision, or discontinuation of degree or certificate programs and courses. All such curricular changes must comply with and/or follow substantive change policies as set forth by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The council also facilitates assessment of Student Learning Outcomes at the course level, and works closely with PROAC on assessment and program review activities.

Constituent bodies also play an important role in the College's shared governance model. The Faculty Senate is the official representative body and legislative body of the Faculty Assembly of the College, the Staff Senate serves as the official representative body of the Staff Assembly, and the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College (ASNMC) serves as the representative body of all students enrolled at the College. Each of these bodies is represented by voting members on the College Council, PROAC, and BAFC, and by ex-officio, honorary Regents on the Board of Regents.

All the above governance bodies are integrated into the College's shared governance model and are guided by processes and structures outlined in the IE Guide (Appendix D--Institutional Excellence Guide). The IE Guide clarifies the shared governance structure and processes the College has instituted for planning, assessment, and budgeting. The Student Learning Outcomes Comprehensive Implementation Program (SLOCIP) (Appendix E--Student Learning Outcomes Comprehensive Implementation Program) complements the IE Guide.

The College's shared governance model and planning, assessment, and budgeting processes all lead to key planning documents and deliverables. The most obvious of these is the annual operations and appropriations budget prepared by BAFC. In addition to the budget, PROAC's annual Composite Report synthesizes all program review data and recommendations into one document that lists PROAC-approved recommendations for resource allocation and institutional action. The College also produces an annual Operational Plan. The plan translates priority initiatives from the PROA-SP 2008—2012 into action plans that link to the College's mission and identify programs responsible, set criteria and means for assessment, and commit to timelines for completion. This Ops Plan is tied into program review processes via TracDat, an online software system used for documenting, tracking, and reporting institutional assessment information. Ops Plan updates are provided to the Management Team, the College Council, PROAC, BAFC, and the Academic Council.

Self-Evaluation

The College has governance structures and planning, assessment, and budgeting processes that support student learning, assess that learning, and use this assessment data and analysis to refine

its processes to improve student learning. Those structures and processes have served the College well through two cycles of program review from 2007 to 2009, which led to the development and successful implementation of the 2008 Composite Report, the 2008 Ops Plan, and the 2009 Ops Plan. These reports and plans were actualized in budgeting and resource allocation decisions that were linked to program review and assessment data and analysis, such as funding of the Language and Humanities building and English Language Laboratory in 2009; the provision of additional professional development opportunities on and off island; the First Year Experience and Learning Communities programs; and the hiring of additional personnel with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF).

However, towards the end of the second cycle of program review, the College's governance structures and planning, assessment, and budgeting processes started to deteriorate. Participation in program review, as measured by submission rates for program review documents, declined. Two key documents for program review are Form 1, modeled after the Nichols and Nichols 5 Column Model for program review, and Form 2, which lays out a summative narrative for each cycle of program review. As the following chart reveals, submission rates for these documents has steadily declined.

NMC Program Review Document Submission Rates

	Cycle 1 (2007-2008)	Cycle 2 (2008-2009)	Cycle 3 (2009-2010)
Form 1	76%	68%	53%
Form 2	93.48%	78.72%	17%
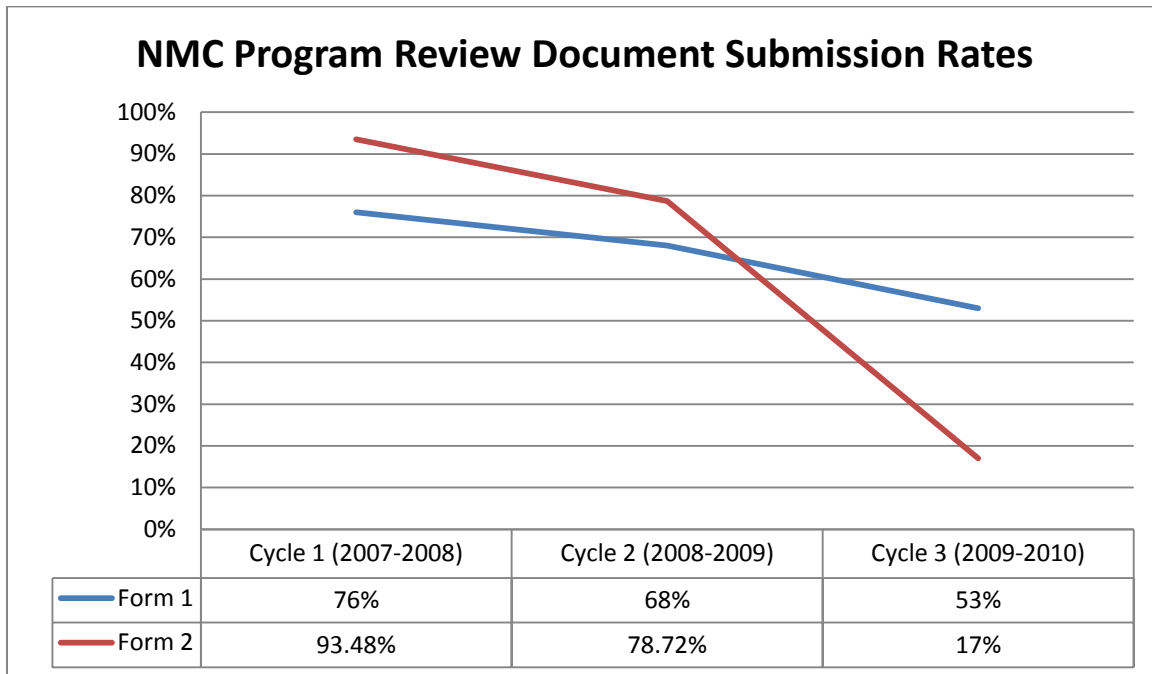
As the chart above demonstrates, in Cycle 1, out of 58 programs required to submit Form 1s, 44 programs, or 76%, submitted their respective Form 1s; out of 46 programs required to submit Form 2s, 43 programs, or 93.48%, submitted their respective Form 2s. In Cycle 2, participation declined as only 37 out of 57 programs required to submit Form 1s, or 68%, submitted their respective Form 1s, while 37 out of 47 programs required to submit Form 2s, or 78.72%, submitted their respective Form 2s. For the current cycle, Cycle 3, participation has declined even more drastically as only 24 out of 45 programs required to submit Form 1s, or 53%,

submitted their respective Form 1s, while only 8 out of 46 programs required to submit Form 2s, or 17%, submitted their respective Form 2s.

The declining rate of participation in program review may be attributed to the following factors:

- The current annual schedule for program review may be too condensed. While there was a motion in PROAC at the beginning of Cycle 3 of program review to stagger program review schedules, that attempt was voted down by PROAC.
- The leadership, membership, and procedures of PROAC have changed each cycle, making it difficult for this body to build on each successive program review cycle and fulfill its role in assessment and program review.
- A comprehensive training program has not been developed to promote a better understanding and appreciation of program review.
- The efforts of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) to promote program review through training and logistical support have been limited by the additional duties and responsibilities that have been assigned to or undertaken by the office.
- NMC and OIE lack the administrative support and assessment expertise necessary to provide more direction and support for program review efforts.

In addition to declining participation in program review, except for Academic Council, the College's governance and constituent bodies have not met on a regular basis. The following table lists the number of times each governance or constituent body has met since the April 13—14, 2010 Special Visit from ACCJC:

Governance/ Constituent Body	Dates of Meetings	Expected Frequency as stipulated in the IE Guide	Number of Meetings held since April 14
College Council	May 14, June 2, August 27, October 8	Monthly or as needed	4
PROAC	May 5, May 19, June 2 (joint meeting with College Council), July 28, August 4, August 18, September 21	Monthly or as needed	7
BAFC	May 14 (joint meeting with College Council), May 28, June 2 (joint meeting with College Council, July 20, August 19, August 27 (joint meeting with College Council)	Monthly or as needed	6
Academic Council	April 15, April 29, May 6, June 3, June 17, June 24, July 1, July 15, July 22, July 29, August 5, August 26, October 4, October 8	Weekly or as needed	15
Faculty Senate	April 19, May 3, May 13, August 27, September 10, September 24	Every Tuesday or as needed	6
Staff Senate	April 27, July 29, August 27	Every Tuesday or as needed	3

The infrequency of these meetings has, to some degree, undermined the shared governance model of the College. As a result, while individual programs are engaged in dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning at the program level, there has been a lack of institution-wide dialogue.

The College attributes the infrequency of these meetings to the overlapping membership of these bodies, which makes it difficult for the bodies to schedule meetings that not only avoid conflicting with each other, but also avoid conflicting with classes and other routine work at the College. For example, some faculty members serve on governance bodies and constituent bodies, on top of teaching regular courses and often taking on course overloads.

Actions Taken

The Fall 2010 Professional Development Days marked an important step towards addressing these deficiencies by promoting collegial, self-reflective dialogue about student learning, institutional processes, and the future of the College. Students, faculty, staff, and administrators were intentionally mixed into different groups in order to encourage cross-department discussions. As notes from the sessions reveal (Appendix B--Notes from NMC Fall 2010 Professional Development Day Discussions), many participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to have such a dialogue, and urged the College's leadership to continue holding similar events for institutional dialogue.

The College continued the dialogue with a series of faculty, staff, and student assemblies on August 27, 2010 to discuss the College's ongoing work to comply with ACCJC ERs, meet ACCJC standards, and improve the quality of the College's programs. As minutes from these assemblies reveal (Appendix F--Minutes from August 27, 2010 Faculty Assembly), there were healthy discussions about a myriad of issues affecting the College, discussions that have continued through the College's governance and constituent bodies.

The dialogue of the Fall 2010 Professional Development Days and the August 27, 2010 assemblies were reinforced at the College's Fiscal Year 2011 Planning Summit on October 1, 2010. To underscore the importance of the summit, the Interim President suspended classes and closed all offices for that day to ensure that all College students, faculty, staff, and administrators participated. The summit brought the College community together to review and discuss the proposed Operational Plan for Fiscal Year 2011, which itself was developed by every program at the College. The summit proved to be an effective venue for promoting healthy dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes. Common themes emerged from group and plenary discussions at the summit (Appendix H--Notes from FY 2011 Planning Summit):
- Considering that the College's mission was last amended in 1985, it might be time to revisit and revise it to reflect the current needs of our community.
- The PROA Strategic Plan 2008—2012 is linked to the College's mission.
- Many participates noted that programs' outcomes were linked to many similar priority initiatives listed in the plan.
- Programs' outcomes are, for the most part, aligned with their listed priority initiatives.
- Alignment between programs' outcomes and priority initiatives could be improved.

It should be noted that in all of these institution-wide sessions, students were deliberately included to engage them in the dialogue. Furthermore, at both the Fall 2010 Professional Development Days and the October 1, 2010 summit, faculty, staff, and administrators were assigned to heterogeneous groups to promote dialogue between and across programs.

In a related action, PROAC and OIE modified the Form 1 TracDat template for the fourth cycle of program review (Appendix I--Cycle 4 Form 1 from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness) to enable programs to link priority initiatives from the PROA-SP 2008—2012. This will streamline the link between program review and the operational plan, allowing for program updates in TracDat to feed directly into updates to the FY 2011 Ops Plan. These updates will be provided to governance and constituent bodies as part of their ongoing systemic evaluation and planning.

To improve program review participation, for Cycle 4 of program review, PROAC and OIE are working to simplify the summative aspect of Form 2, and adding a planning component that requires a program to identify exactly how that program's proposed budget will be expended for the fiscal year 2012. Not only will this strengthen the link between program review and planning and budgeting, but it will also make the Form 2 more relevant to each program, particularly when its Form 2 will affect institutional decisions about the program's budget.

PROAC's modification of Form 1 and Form 2 are part of the committee's overall efforts to review, revisit, and revise program review processes as PROAC leads the College into its fourth cycle of program review. Beginning in Cycle 4, PROAC intends to extend the program review cycle into a two-year staggered schedule. PROAC will also work with BAFC to refine the current program review, planning, budgeting, and resource allocation calendar to bring more alignment to these processes. PROAC and BAFC will revisit the College's shared governance structures to explore ways to reduce overlap between the various governance and constituent bodies.

Furthermore, OIE will enhance its work in assessment, data analysis, and reporting to the College's governance and constituent bodies. While the office currently publishes annual institutional reports and provides student achievement data to programs for program review, the office has begun preparing simplified reports and presentations for various stakeholders at the College. For example, OIE has begun delivering short presentations at BOR meetings on institutional assessment data that can inform BOR discussions and decision-making (Appendix J--OIE Student Achievement Data Presentation to BOR October 7, 2010). Furthermore, the College will soon issue a job vacancy announcement (JVA) for an assessment position in OIE that will, once filled, provide more guidance and expertise on assessment work in OIE, PROAC, the Academic Council, and the rest of the College.

Lastly, to secure broader representation and inclusion of all constituencies, the Interim President announced the expansion of the Management Team to include the presidents from NMC's constituent bodies—Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and Associated Students of Northern Marianas College (ASNMC). This expansion provides more access to and opportunities for input from all constituents.

It is expected that these actions cultivate wider and deeper participation and engagement across the institution in an ongoing, collegial, self-reflective dialogue about the continuous improvement of student learning and institutional processes.

Standard II.A: Instructional Programs

"The institution offers high-quality instructional programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs consistent with its mission. Instructional programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered in the name of the institution."

Descriptive Summary

The College offers a Bachelor of Science degree, seven associate degree programs, four certificate programs, and two developmental programs. Degrees offered include a Bachelor of Science degree in Education, Associate in Arts degrees in Liberal Arts and Business, Associate in Science degrees in Nursing and Natural Resource Management, and Associate in Applied Science degrees in Criminal Justice, Business Administration, and Hospitality Management. Certificates of Completion are also offered in Basic Law Enforcement, Fire Science Technology, Early Childhood Education, and Related Service Technician. To ensure that these degree programs meet the needs of the community, degree programs work with Program Advisory Councils (PACs) composed of members of the broader community who provide input on the efficacy and impact of the programs on the community.

The College also provides developmental programs in math and English. Through the Division of Community Programs and Services (COMPASS), the College offers continuing education and outreach programs with the following: the Community Development Institute (CDI), University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and Cooperative Research, Extension and Education Services (CREES).

Membership in the Pacific Post-secondary Education Council (PPEC) provides for the transferability of all credits earned in 100-level courses or higher to other PPEC member institutions such as Guam Community College, the University of Guam, and the College of the Marshall Islands. Credits earned in 100-level courses or higher have also been transferable to other public and private post-secondary institutions such as Chaminade University, Stanford University, Portland State University, and Seattle University.

The quality of academic, outreach, and continuing education programs are monitored and improved through the College's program review processes as laid out in the Institutional Excellence Guide (Appendix D--Institutional Excellence Guide). As the guide states, "Program review 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." Facilitated by PROAC, program review at NMC utilizes the Nichols and Nichols Five-Column Model (Form 1) to identify program learning outcomes (PLOs), student learning outcomes (SLOs), and/or administrative unit outcomes (AUOs) that are consistent with the College's mission. Programs develop specific measures and criteria for

determining success for each outcome. Data are 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.

In addition to program review, the Academic Council and the Dean of Academic Programs and Services also facilitate and oversee annual course assessment and instructor evaluations in all academic programs.   Each department conducts course assessment by analyzing student achievement data such as course completion rates and progression to subsequent courses and then shares the analysis with Academic Council for further discussion and action. For instructor evaluations, BOR Policies 3003 and 3011 (Appendix G--Selected Board of Regents Policies) set forth guidelines for the supervision and evaluation of instructors, including annual performance evaluations and student evaluations at the end of each term.   These evaluations are intended to hold instructors accountable to instructional obligations and professional ethics as set forth in BOR Policies 3001 and 3002 (Appendix G--Selected Board of Regents Policies).

Pursuant to BOR Policies 3008 and 3009 (Appendix G--Selected Board of Regents Policies), the Academic Council also oversees and discusses all curriculum changes before they are forwarded to the President and the Board for final approval. Curriculum changes include the introduction, revision, or discontinuation of degree or certificate programs and courses. All curricular changes must comply with and/or follow substantive change policies as set forth by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

Self-Evaluation

The College's program review processes, begun in Cycle 1 of program review in academic year 2007—2008, led to important developments for instructional programs. With guidance and assistance from PROAC and the Academic Council, after Cycle 1 of program, all programs and courses at the college have developed complete sets of respective PLOs, SLOs, and AUOs, which are found in program review document submissions (PLOs and AUOs) to PROAC and course guides (SLOs). Cycle 1's program review by PROAC and course assessment by the Academic Council also led to programs being placed on inactive status, thereby ensuring the currency of academic programs and freeing up resources for other programs.

As part of program review, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness works with academic programs to compile and study student achievement data, including longitudinal data on course completion rates, graduation rates, licensure passage rates, and job placement rates. As part of program review process, the analysis of such data is part of the College's overall efforts in data-driven, evidence-based decision making for continuous quality improvement.

To build upon these positive developments from program review and course assessment, the College sees areas for improvement.

First, participation in program review, as measured by submission rates for program review documents from instructional programs (degree, certificate, developmental, and COMPASS programs), has declined over the past three cycles of program review.

NMC Program Review Document Submission Rates for Instructional Programs

	Cycle 1 (2007-2008)	Cycle 2 (2008-2009)	Cycle 3 (2009-2010)
Form 1	58%	80%	44%
Form 2	88.00%	76.00%	12%
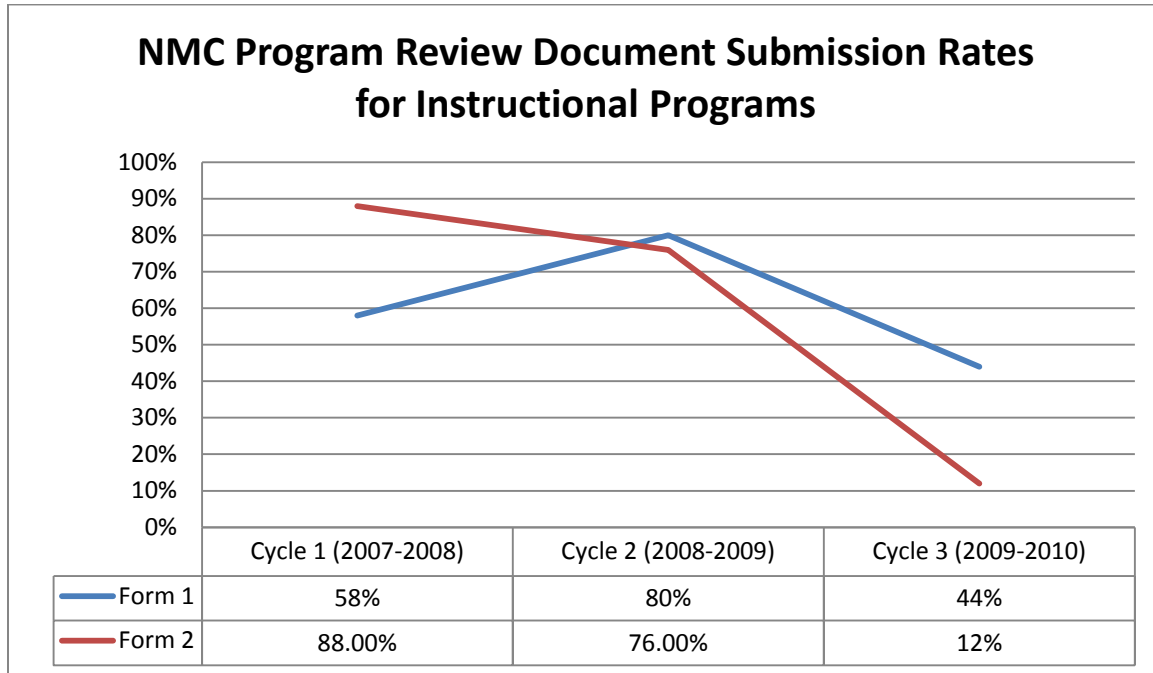
As the chart above demonstrates, in Cycle 1, out of 39 instructional programs required to submit Form 1s, 23 programs, or 58%, submitted their respective Form 1s; out of 26 instructional programs required to submit Form 2s, 23 programs, or 93.48%, submitted their respective Form 2s. In Cycle 2, submission of Form 1s improved, with 20 out of 25 programs, or 80%, submitting their forms. However, submission of Form 2s declined, with 19 out of 25 programs, or 76%, submitting the forms, a decrease of 12% from the previous cycle. For the current cycle, Cycle 3, participation has declined even more drastically as only 11 out of 25 programs required to submit Form 1s, or 44%, submitted their respective Form 1s, while only 3 out of 25 programs required to submit Form 2s, or 12%, submitted their respective Form 2s.

In program review and course assessment, PROAC and the Academic Council have determined that the current schedule of annual program review and course assessment for every program is too cumbersome and may not provide enough time for meaningful longitudinal analysis of data.

Furthermore, while the current instructor evaluation system may work very well at the course or program level, the Academic Council has discussed the need to improve the system so that it is more standardized, coordinated, and holistic at the institutional level.

Actions Taken

To improve program review participation, for Cycle 4 of program review, PROAC and OIE are working to simplify the summative aspect of Form 2, and adding a planning component that requires a program to identify exactly how that program's proposed budget will be expended for

the fiscal year 2012. Not only will this strengthen the link between program review and planning and budgeting, but it will also make the Form 2 more relevant to each program, particularly when its Form 2 will affect institutional decisions about the program's budget.

PROAC's modification of Form 1 and Form 2 are part of the committee's overall efforts to review, revisit, and revise program review processes as PROAC leads the College into its fourth cycle of program review. Beginning in Cycle 4, PROAC intends to extend the program review cycle into a two-year staggered schedule. PROAC will also work with BAFC to refine the current program review, planning, budgeting, and resource allocation calendar to bring more alignment to these processes. PROAC and BAFC will revisit the College's shared governance structures to explore ways to reduce overlap between the various governance and constituent bodies.

The Academic Council has decided to revise the College's course assessment processes into a more manageable staggered schedule. Building on the resources and insights gained at the recent September 23—24, 2010 WASC Level I Retreat on Student Learning and Assessment, the Dean of Academic Programs and Services and members of Academic Council have begun expanding the current evaluation practices at the College into a comprehensive instructor evaluation system that will integrate student evaluations, supervisory evaluations, peer evaluations, and course assessment data into instructor portfolios (Appendix CC--NMC Project Information for Level 1 Assessment Retreat 2010).

Standard II.A.7.a
"Faculty distinguish between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline. They present data and information fairly and objectively."

Descriptive Summary

Several Board of Regents policies address academic freedom and academic responsibility, including BOR Policy Nos. 3001, 3004, 4020a, 4069, 4467, and 4620 (Appendix K--Extracts from BOR Policies on Academic Freedom and Responsibility). As a corollary to these statements of expectations and rights, the Board of Regents included language for conditions for employment of faculty in BOR Policy No. 4020a and adopted BOR Policy Nos. 3011, 3033, 4432, 4212, 4352, 4354, and 4355 to specify various mechanisms to ensure adherence to the institution's core values, expectations and conditions of employment. These policies articulate supervisory oversight over faculty, various levels of disciplinary actions, and expectations for the use of evaluation tools to measure the effectiveness of adherence to these policies.   BOR Policy No. 3004 entitled "Academic Freedom and Responsibility" speaks specifically to expectations of faculty and their interaction with students.

Professional development and orientation sessions are also held at the beginning of each term in which faculty are apprised of the College's expectations for professional conduct, including compliance with this standard.

Employee evaluation forms (Appendix L--Employee Evaluation Form Template) for faculty contain a number of items that department chairs or directors (supervisors) use to measure faculty adherence to this standard. Department chairs conduct classroom observations as part of each faculty member's annual evaluation. These evaluations inform professional growth plans that are developed between the evaluated employee and his/her supervisor.

Furthermore, course syllabi include information on procedures for student complaints and grievances, which students can use to bring the College's attention to instructors that violate Commission Standard II.A.7.a.

Departmental meetings, faculty assemblies, including the faculty senate are appropriate forums for which topical discussions related to this standard are reviewed and deliberated. Faculty who demonstrate an inability to adhere to this standard are subject to disciplinary action as provided by BOR Policy Nos. 4020a, 4352, 4354, and 4355. Write-ups, warning letters, incident reports, disciplinary and corrective actions are systematically documented by supervisors and filed in an employee's personnel jacket with the Human Resources Office as a means to enforce institutional standards and protect the College and its employees.

Another instrument that is used to hold instructional faculty to this standard is the Student Appraisal of Course and Instructor Survey (Appendix M--Student Appraisal of Course and Instructor Survey). Each department for which courses are taught compile information collected on this form and the information is presented to the instructor, the department chair/director, and the Dean of Academic Programs & Services. Faculty members use the results for self-reflection and to improve their teaching methods and classroom learning environment.

Lastly, the College has formal complaint/grievance policies and procedures in place for students who believe their rights as students have been violated. BOR Policy Nos. 8002.2 and 8002.10 with accompanying procedures articulate how the College handles complaints and the steps students can take to ensure that their complaints, issues, and concerns are heard. The complaint/grievance procedures for students are outlined in the "Student Appeal" section of the NMC General Catalog. The Student Grievance Form is made available to students who are dissatisfied with their attempts to communicate with the individuals involved. The Dean of Student Services, Counselors, Student Support Staff and Academic Advisors are often the "front line" employees who inform students of the College's complaint/grievance procedures. A brochure entitled "Student Appeal & Grievance Procedures" developed and distributed by the Dean of Student Services provides an easy to read guide for students who seek help to resolve a complaint. The brochure and the Student Grievance Form are available at the Office of the Dean of Student Services, the Office of Admissions & Records, and Counseling Programs & Services.

Self-Evaluation

In practice, completed employee evaluations of instructors and the interpretation of the compiled results are utilized only at the departmental level and in a growing number of cases, as data presented in course and program review. Likewise, while student evaluations assist individual faculty members and departments in addressing inappropriate and/or unprofessional faculty actions, faculty evaluations need to be aggregated and analyzed in order to identify trends or

patterns that may be of interest or concern at the institutional level. If, for instance, the aggregated data reveals a pattern of unprofessional behavior, such information may warrant a systemic response such as policy revisions or focused professional development.

Furthermore, student evaluations do avail students with an opportunity to raise concerns about instructors that do not distinguish between personal conviction and professional opinion. However, a study of the student evaluation forms revealed that the current forms do not provide any quantifiable way to identify such behavior among faculty. For now, the only recourse students have on the evaluation form is the comments section.

Considering that annual employee evaluations and student evaluations will be utilized to address and resolve deficiencies in instructional quality, the time and manner in which such evaluations are processed may not be timely enough to facilitate prompt improvement in instructional quality and/or disciplinary action against the said instructor.   The Human Resources Office currently assigns one individual to notify supervisors of the timeline for evaluating an employee and to disseminate, collect, route for signatures, and file the evaluation tools, a time-consuming process that may be inadequate for the purposes of utilizing the data collected to take meaningful action to improve the quality and performance of employees in a timely manner.

The College has documented evidence of one incident in which the institution received and addressed a student grievance/complaint about one faculty member that violated Standard II.A.7.a.

The College has determined that complaint/grievance policies and procedures may need to be revisited and updated. BOR Procedure Nos. 8.2.2P and 8.2.2.1P (Appendix N--BOR Procedures 8.2.2P and 8.2.2.1P) require an immediate review and revision as each procedure is flawed, inaccurate, inconsistent, and lacking serious relevance to the realities of the College. At least one Grievance and Fairness Committee report (Appendix O--Grievance and Fairness Committee Report) cited challenges in utilizing the currently published procedures to effectively evaluate a student's complaint.

Action Taken

A Faculty Assembly was held on August 27, 2010 to discuss issues and concerns of ACCJC's April 13—14, 2010 Special Visit Team's findings, specifically meeting Standard II.A.7.a. The Dean of Academic Programs and Services and the Faculty Senate President led a discussion about College policies and ACCJC Standard II.A.7.a that require faculty to distinguish between personal conviction and professional views, particularly in the classroom. Copies of the BOR Policy 3004 regarding Academic Freedom and Responsibility (Appendix K--Extracts from BOR Policies on Academic Freedom and Responsibility) were also provided, which the assembly discussed. The Faculty Assembly also discussed additional means of assessing the effectiveness of the College and its faculty in adhering to this Standard. Faculty discussion (Appendix F--Minutes from August 27, 2010 Faculty Assembly) echoed ideas being developed by Academic Council, as well as several other ideas that the council will explore, including administration "walk-abouts", discontinuing the use of online surveys, and sharing feedback and information contained in evaluations with faculty in a timely manner. The Academic Council continues to

review these suggestions, including the inclusion of additional items on the existing course evaluation tool to measure the level at which the College meets this Standard.

Academic Council has begun to revisit the current evaluation system for faculty, focusing on ways to improve compliance with this standard. The Academic Council has decided to revise the College's course assessment processes into a more manageable staggered schedule. Building on the resources and insights gained at the recent September 23—24, 2010 WASC Level I Retreat on Student Learning and Assessment, the Dean of Academic Programs and Services and members of Academic Council have begun expanding the current evaluation practices at the College into a comprehensive instructor evaluation system that will integrate student evaluations, supervisory evaluations, peer evaluations, and course assessment data into instructor portfolios (Appendix CC--NMC Project Information for Level 1 Assessment Retreat 2010).

Lastly, on April 16, 2010, the Dean of Student Services convened a working group to review and make recommendations for revising the College's Student Grievances & Appeal policies and procedures. The group continues its work and intends to submit its recommendations to the Office of the President by the end of the Fall 2010 term.

Standard II.B: Student Support Services

"The institution recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs, consistent with its mission. Student support services address the identified needs of students and enhance a supportive learning environment. The entire student pathway through the institutional experience is characterized by a concern for student access, progress, learning, and success. The institution systematically assesses student support services using student learning outcomes, faculty and staff input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of these services."

Descriptive Summary

Northern Marianas College has an open admission policy, however international students must submit required admission documents and evidence of appropriate immigration status to enroll in NMC courses.

The Recruitment Team leads most efforts to promote access to the College.   Special Admission, Early Admission, and Ability-to-Benefit programs also ensure access to students who have the interest and aptitude to enroll in courses but have yet to complete a high school diploma or its equivalent. Similarly, college-preparatory outreach programs such as the College Access Challenge Project (CACP) and the Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search TRIO programs help prepare students for admission to college, college success, and the rigors and realities of college life. These programs target historically disadvantaged and underrepresented populations identified as low-income, first-generation college students, students with disabilities, and Pacific Islander students. Although service to these groups is the focus of many of the College's educational outreach and recruitment initiatives, the College recruits and admits

students without regard to race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, relationship to the College, its employees, or social-economic status.

The vast majority of students enrolled at the College reflect the broader CNMI community. Resident students are predominantly Pacific Islander, a group classified as underrepresented in higher education according to the low college completion rates among Pacific Islanders as a community in the U.S. The vast majority of the student population, about 75%, receives Federal Pell Grant awards to supplement the cost of their education and a high proportion of these students, about 85%, is eligible to receive the maximum award each term. Working with economically disadvantaged, low-income, underrepresented, and first-generation students, many of whom are not native English speakers, is the norm at NMC and many of the institution's programs, services, and activities are developed to support the needs of these students.

The Division of Student Services provides programs, environments, and comprehensive student services to support each student's needs and create opportunities for students to develop into their full potential. In the division, the Office of Admissions & Records facilitates student access to college programs and services by assisting with recruitment, coordinating admission of eligible students, registering students, articulating transfer credits, and maintaining student's academic records. Another office under the Division of Student Services, the Office of Financial Aid, administers financial aid for students and monitors the institution's and student's compliance with and eligibility for financial aid resources. The Office of Financial Aid works closely with the Office of Institutional Advancement to administer institutional scholarships provided by donors and other funding sources.

Counseling Programs & Services (CPS), also within the Division of Student Services, works to empower students to articulate and achieve educational, personal and career goals. Counselors provide academic advising services and personal counseling to assist students with educational planning, academic and life skills development, crises intervention, and personal issues that may hamper student success. CPS also holds regular Student Success seminars throughout the academic year. In addition, academic tutorial services are coordinated out of Counseling Programs & Services to assist students who struggle with course instruction and material, particularly in developmental English and math courses. Specialized services for students with disabilities and international students are further supported by dedicated counselors who assist the College recruit, retain, and graduate these students.

The Office of the Dean of Student Services oversees and supports the leadership and direction of the aforementioned programs and services, including the following support program/services: Office of Student Activities and Leadership, Student Center, Library Programs & Services, Associated Students of NMC, Service Learning Program, and Testing Program. The Office of the Dean of Student Services plays a key role in ensuring that student complaints, issues, and concerns are addressed. The Dean of Student Services promotes policies and procedures for students to express a grievance or complaint and facilitates action and/or mediation services.

The Office of Student Activities and Leadership (OSAL), the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College (ASNMC) and various student clubs promote student activities that enhance personal, cultural, social, recreational, and leadership skills and help provide a well-rounded

college education. Activities offered include debates, sporting events and tournaments, musical and dance performances, and student workshops and seminars.

The Dean of Student Services is also charged with updating and distributing the College catalog to provide both prospective and current students with clear and accurate information with regard to the College's educational and student support programs, policies and procedures, and other pertinent information to assist the students navigate college resources. The College catalog is traditionally published at least once every two years and any updates or changes are posted on the NMC website to ensure material contained within is current, accurate, and accessible to all students, faculty, and staff.

Full-time instructional faculty, department chairs, and CPS staff are charged with providing academic advising to students. These services are coordinated between the Office of Admissions & Records, Counseling Programs & Services, and departmental chairs or assigned coordinators. Academic advising workshops for faculty are organized each term by faculty from Counseling Programs & Services. All students are required to meet with their academic advisors each term and prior to registration. At the minimum, academic advisors are expected to assist students manage the task of arranging their course schedules and assisting students with planning toward degree or certificate completion. Appropriate staff assist students with the transfer admission process. In some cases, academic advisors take on the role of a caring and supportive mentor in with advisees and assist in developing their problem-solving and decision-making skills.

The following student support services participate in the institution's program review process, which includes assessment of student learning and/or administrative unit outcomes: Counseling Programs & Services, Office of Student Activities & Leadership, Office of Admissions & Records, Office of Financial Aid, Library Programs & Services, Career Services, Service Learning, Testing Program, Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services. Each entity has a program author who coordinates program-level dialogue with staff to develop and refine existing program outcomes, analyze data collected, and integrate assessment results with planning, the institution's budgeting process, employee evaluations, and the use of data to make recommendations to the institution or changes to the program for improvement of services or the assessment process.

The Dean of Student Services also serves as a voting member on PROAC and participates in evaluating and providing feedback and guidance to student support services program authors. Student services programs interact with members of PROAC through periodic interventions by PROAC members to record dialogue between program staff and provide guidance for improvement.

Self-Evaluation

While the College posted high enrollment numbers for Fall 2010, many students, faculty, and staff expressed frustration with the registration process for the term. The Fall 2010 Registration Survey, which was administered during the first two weeks of the term to approximately 500 students, is still being compiled and analyzed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE),

but preliminary analysis reveals that students believe that the current process is disorganized, time-consuming, and inefficient.

In addition, since January of this year, the OSAL did not have a full-time manager, which hampered the office's ability to promote student activities, support student services, and provide a venue for student clubs in which to operate.

Despite these challenges, the College succeeded in recruiting the following key faculty and staff over the past year: Disability Support Counselor/Coordinator, International Counselor/Coordinator, Dean of Student Services, Director of Admissions & Records, Director of Library Programs & Services, and an Academic Librarian. These individuals contribute toward the administrative capacity of the College and the provision of direct student services.

In August 2010, the College lost funding for its TRIO Student Support Services program. This program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, provided resources for the College to provide 180 low-income, first-generation college students with individualized academic advising, counseling, and advocacy services, educational and cultural activities, and access to financial and technological resources. The College is monitoring compliance with federal and local regulations to close-out this program and facilitate the transfer-out of students into other support programs and resources to meet the needs of these students. The program is staffed by a director whose position will cease to exist in January 2011.

The loss of the Student Support Services program was offset in August 2010 when the College was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Education for the College Access Challenge Grant Project, which promotes college access and success among low-income, underrepresented students. The award amount through 2014 is valued at $7.5 million. The College is utilizing this grant to disseminate financial aid information and need-based financial aid to low-income students. Most students who met eligibility criteria for the TRIO Student Support Services Program will also qualify for services provided by the College Access Challenge Grant Program.

As a matching grant, the College is leveraging this resource to add and maintain staff to expand the College's educational outreach efforts and increase the number of academic tutors and counselors to work with middle school, high school, and current college students of low-income and Pacific Islander backgrounds. The College Access grant is also used to ensure that student services personnel are provided with opportunities to seek training and professional development activities with national student services associations such as the National Association of Academic Advising Association (NACADA), Association of American College Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). In the past year alone, at least half of the faculty, staff, and administrators from within the Division of Student Services participated in one or more national trainings or conferences to improve their individual capacity and collective efforts to support student learning.

The College also published and disseminated the 2009-2012 NMC General Catalog, an update to the 2008-2009 NMC General Catalog, to students, faculty, and staff during the spring 2010 term. Although the College planned to distribute these updates at the start of the fall 2009 term,

publication delays were attributed to the departure of the former Dean of Student Services and subsequent difficulty coordinating updates and printing with an external vendor. All major sections of the college catalog are now posted online on the College's website and include all sections and information required of this Standard.

<u>Action Taken</u>

The College is poised to expand the provision of student services with the influx of funding made possible by the CACP. In order to leverage this resource with limited and diminishing resources from CNMI appropriations, this grant will be used to sustain a portion of the cost of eight existing student services positions (Director of Financial Aid, Director of Counseling, Enrollment Manager, Recruitment Coordinator, Career Manager, Retention Counselor, Disability Counselor/Coordinator, and Marketing Coordinator) and hire eight new positions (five Outreach Counselors, Program Coordinator, Administrative Manager, and Financial Aid Counselor) to prepare high school and middle school students for college, promote financial literacy among students and parents, and increase number of students who succeed through their first year at NMC.

In February 2010, the Dean of Student Services and a faculty member participated in a series of institutes in Florida sponsored by the National Academic Advising Association focused on administering and assessing academic programs. The two individuals trained have since convened a working group, The Academic Advising Task Force, to bring key College stakeholders to review best practices and participate in designing an academic advising program for the College. Members of the Task Force have met regularly to conceptualize the process of developing this program and have succeeded in developing student learning, process, and delivery outcomes to drive program goals and assessment.

The College has also launched its Learning Communities program "to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that promotes the highest educational, intellectual and social development of students." The goals of Learning Communities are:
- **Success**: Achieve academic success and accomplish their educational goals.
- **Responsibility**: Effectively transition to college level learning by becoming actively involved and taking responsibility for their own learning.
- **Relationships**: Develop closer social and intellectual relationships with Learning Community faculty and students from different cultures and majors.
- **Critical Thinking**: Gain knowledge and develop critical thinking skills by connecting ideas from different disciplines.
- **Personal Experience**: Achieve learning that is deeper and more personally relevant through service learning and experiential activities.
- **Individuality**: Exercise their creativity, develop their identity and discover their voice. Learning becomes a part of who the student is, not just something the student does.

The Learning Communities program recognizes that student learning does not thrive in isolation but should result from the College community working together as a community. The program will thus link academic programs and services with a myriad of student services including advisors, counselors, librarians, registrars, admissions and recruitment staff, financial aid staff,

service-learning staff, student affairs professionals, College Access College Program Ambassadors, and Office of Student Activities and Leadership. Peer mentors and tutors will be assigned to each of the learning communities.

The Learning Communities leadership team meets weekly to further develop the program and aims to launch a pilot Learning Community in the Spring 2011 term.

Standard II.B.3.f
"The institution maintains student records permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files, regardless of the form in which those files are maintained. The institution publishes and follows established policies for release of student records."

Descriptive Summary

Board policies that address the issues of confidentiality of records, student rights, and procedures for the release of information are aligned with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). NMC Board Policy 3021 (1996) (Appendix G--Selected Board of Regents Policies) addresses the privacy rights of students, the prohibition of posting of grades by names or other means that will be personally identifiable to students, and student rights regarding their records. NMC Board Policy 5715.G.1 addresses the maintenance and separation of student disciplinary actions from the student academic records. NMC Board Policy 8002.3 (adopted 2004) (Appendix G--Selected Board of Regents Policies) is an update of Board Policy 3021 and additionally outlines *Access to Student Records* and *Student Rights Regarding their Records*. Furthermore, Board Procedure 8002.4 (2005) (Appendix G--Selected Board of Regents Policies) outlines student educational rights and privacy and details regulations and procedures on *Release of Information.*

These policies are published in the General Catalog and made available to students in the Counseling Office, the Library, the Office of Admissions and Records, the Dean of Student Services Office, the NMC website, and in the advisors' offices. Moreover, College policies pertaining to the maintenance, security, and release of student records are made available to all employees via the network server (N-Drive).

Pursuant to these BOR policies and procedures, the OAR is the custodian of student records for the institution. The Interim President, the Dean of Student Services, and OAR Director are tasked to ensure compliance by all College employees with FERPA regulations and Board of Regents policies that pertain to the maintenance, security, and release of student records.

Additionally, the Office of Admissions and Record (OAR) has Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that outline the requirements and procedures for requesting student record information for faculty, staff, and students. The OAR SOPs also detail the procedures and requirements for the submission of Official Grade Rosters, grade memorandums, and change of grade forms for faculty and other academic department personnel.

The College employs two methods of maintaining student records permanently, securely, and confidentially. Student records prior to 2003 are maintained as both electronic copies in the Champlain student database system and as hard copies that are securely stored in a file room adjacent to the Office of Admissions and Records. Student records from 2003 to the present are maintained in the Power Campus database system and as hard copies stored in the Office of Admissions and Records. Both electronic database systems are backed-up every work day and monthly as well. All backed-up data is stored separately on an external hard-drive. All records data are backed-up annually as well. Back-up files, live electronic files, and hard copy files are retained indefinitely.

The removal of student hard copy files from the cabinet files in OAR is restricted to OAR staff and only for the purposes of providing student or advisor requested information, auditing, and updating of file information. All records removed must be logged out and logged back in as required by OAR file tracking sheets. Access to both electronic files and hard copy files are also restricted to College employees with specific designation within their duties and responsibilities to work with student records.

Authorization for electronic access occurs through the creation of a unique user name by the Information Technology (IT) Department, a password by the employee, and only upon the employee's completion of a "user's training" that is conducted by both the IT Department and OAR. Employees, including limited term appointments and student work-studies, are required to sign a *Confidentiality of Records Agreement* form (Appendix Q--Confidentiality of Records Agreement Form) that is made available at OAR and the Human Resources Office.

With the implementation of Power Campus in 2003, all students and employees of the Northern Marianas College are assigned a Power Campus Identification Number (PC ID). The PC IDs are unique numbers that are used in lieu of the student Social Security Number that was formerly used in the Champlain system. PC IDs are used for student services such as access to Library services and materials, student governance body activities (i.e. elections), and for access to computer and language laboratories.

The College complies with the regulations of the FERPA. Students are informed of their rights, the privacy of their records, and FERPA at the time of their application for admission. Additionally, the FERPA general statement is published on the Directory Information Form, which is provided to students every semester.

Every semester, all current and returning students are required to complete a Directory Information Release form which provides students with the option to either "Release" or "Not Release" institutionally identified directory information. The Directory Information Release form is maintained in the students' hard copy file and the information is also recorded in each student's electronic file each semester by OAR staff.

All student requests for records must be accompanied with valid and verifiable photo identification. Students may also opt to authorize the release of their information to a second party; however, the authorization from the student must include the student's signature and valid and verifiable photo identifications of both the student and the authorized party.

Self-Evaluation

Mindful of its own policies and procedures, as well as FERPA, the College contends that it has established policies for the release of student records and that those records are maintained permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure backup of all files. These policies are published in various media, including referenced manuals, guides, forms, and online content.

However, it appears that there has been at least one occasion in which those policies were not followed. In December of 2009 a member of the Board of Regents received an unmarked envelope from an anonymous source. The envelope contained a copy of a *Change of Grade* (Appendix S--Change of Grade Form) form for a former NMC student. The copy of the *Change of Grade* was surrendered to the Attorney General's Office simultaneously with a request by the Board of Regents for an immediate investigation. All records obtained and recorded from this investigation remain confidential and in the possession of the current Interim President. The College launched an internal investigation to review and detect the details behind the disclosure so as to take corrective actions as necessary. The institution was never able to identify the source or identity of the sender of the envelope.

Action Taken

As a result of these events, the institution developed an amplified requirement for all College employees, including faculty, staff, limited term appointments, and work studies to undergo annual FERPA training as well as training on NMC Board Policies pertaining to the maintenance, security, and release of student records. The FERPA trainings has also been added as an integral part of the Boardmanship training required for all Board of Regents and as required training for all new employees in the New Employee Orientation.

Additionally, the Office of Admissions and Records has expanded its Standard Operating Procedures as guidance for all College employees and also intensified its internal guidelines and procedures to ensure strict adherence to institutional policies and FERPA on the maintenance, security, and release of student records. The OAR has since proposed an *Acknowledgement Form* (Appendix T--Acknowledgement Form for FERPA and NMC Policies on Student Records) to the Human Resource Office that will require all College staff, administrators, full-time and adjunct faculty, limited term appointments, trainees, interns, student work-studies, volunteers, and contractors to sign as acceptance of their responsibility and duty to maintain the confidentiality of records. The *Acknowledgement Form* requires the employee to undergo FERPA training, NMC Policies training, and Power Campus User training. The form also requires the employee's immediate supervisor to ensure that training is provided upon hire.

In August of 2010, all College employees were mandated to attend the Professional Development Days workshops and training sessions. OAR staff also led a presentation on FERPA regulations and NMC policies and facilitated a discussion on improvement plans that addressed the confidentiality of records as well as employee responsibilities to maintaining the confidentiality of records.

The Office of Admissions and Records also facilitated an "update" workshop on FERPA regulations to faculty and staff in August of 2010. In September 2010, the College provided a campus-wide, mandatory FERPA training that was scheduled for six (6) days to allow all employees to attend.

The College is currently reviewing and updating its *Records Management Plan* that will then be forwarded through the governance process for review, approval, inclusion and implementation as a Board Policy for Records Management and Retention. Moreover, the Interim President created a Student Records Policy and Procedure Task Force (Appendix U--Interim President Lorraine Cabrera Memorandum Establishing Student Records Policy and Procedure Task Force) to (1) review existing policies and procedures that pertain to the maintenance and handling of student records, (2) provide recommendations with regard to the changes and/or the implementation of current or proposed College policies and procedures affecting students, and (3) identify resources and an appropriate timeline for implementing the recommendations.

Standard III.A: Human Resources
"The institution employs qualified personnel to support student learning programs and services wherever offered and by whatever means delivered, and to improve institutional effectiveness. Personnel are treated equitably, are evaluated regularly and systematically, and are provided opportunities for professional development. Consistent with its mission, the institution demonstrates its commitment to the significant educational role played by persons of diverse backgrounds by making positive efforts to encourage such diversity. Human resource planning is integrated with institutional planning."

Descriptive Summary

The Human Resources Office (HRO) follows BOR human resource policies and procedures to recruit and hire qualified personnel who have the required education, training and experience to effectively support student learning programs and services. Department chairs, department heads, and directors work closely with their deans and HRO in identifying the positions necessary to meet the institution's needs and mission. Administrators follow the same procedures in recruiting personnel for their departments.

Annual budget requests for needed positions are presented to BAFC for review and deliberation. After discussion and deliberation, personnel budget requests are submitted to the College Council and BOR for approval and adoption. Official approval of personnel budgets is contingent on the availability of funds appropriated by the local government and on grants obtained from federal sources.

Job vacancies for approved and funded positions are widely and publicly announced through local newspapers, the college web site, email, and print advertisements in other higher education publications and off-island media. These announcements specify minimum education and experience requirements for positions and application procedures.

The institution's hiring criteria are outlined in BOR Human Resources Policy 4008 "Recruitment and Hiring Practices" and its respective Administrative Procedure 4008. The institution is committed to seeking and selecting the most qualified candidates for all positions, and ensures consistency in hiring through its strict compliance with hiring policies and procedures. The interview committees consist of administrators, staff and faculty who represent the various divisions in the College. Faculty members play a role in the selection of new instructors. Applicants with degrees from non-U.S. accredited institutions are certified using credential evaluators who are members of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to ensure the validity of transcript records and accreditation status of the institutions granting the degrees. Application packages including only qualified candidates are then provided to each member of the interview committee.

Each of the interview committee members is asked to submit interview questions, which are then reviewed and approved by the entire interview committee. Qualified applicants are asked the same set of questions, and each interview committee member scores each candidate. The candidate with the highest total score is recommended for hiring, followed by the second and third highest scorers as alternate candidates. The top three recommendations are forwarded to the president for final selection and approval.

The College has established policies and procedures that ensure fairness and equity in its employment procedures. BOR Human Resources Policies 4005 "Eligibility for Employment", 4008 "Recruitment and Hiring Practices", 4020a "Conditions of Employment for Faculty, and 4072 "Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action" ensure equity and fairness in its employment procedures, equitable treatment of personnel, employee responsibility for professional development, and commitment to hiring persons of diverse backgrounds.   BOR Policy 4212 and its respective Administrative Procedure 4212 "Annual Evaluation of Employees" assure the effectiveness of the College's human resources through an annual employee evaluation system.

Self-Evaluation

The Human Resources Office works closely with the deans, administrators and department heads in preparing job descriptions and vacancy announcements with detailed minimum qualifications, education, and experience requirements. At times, due to scheduling conflicts, representatives from the hiring departments are not able to serve on the respective interview committees.

Before this year, minimum qualifications for some positions were lowered and the statement "Equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered" was added to all vacancy announcements, which allowed some applicants to become eligible for certain positions in which they might not have otherwise been qualified. At times, candidates were selected who were not among the top three candidates recommended by interview committees, thereby undermining established policies and procedures.

The College is an equal opportunity employer and an HR employee participates in all interviews as an EEO representative. The College employs staff and faculty from extremely diverse backgrounds that reflect the diversity of the College's constituents and student body.

The Human Resources Office has implemented a database for systematically ensuring that all employee evaluations are conducted annually. Professional development opportunities for personnel have increased and all faculty members are now required to submit an annual professional development plan to their respective supervisors.

The College's program review system and shared governance structure effectively integrate human resource planning with overall institutional planning. Recommendations derived through program review are prioritized and these priority initiatives guide resource allocation at the institution. For example, PROAC worked with BAFC to review program review results in order to identify additional personnel to add to the FY 2011 budget request submitted to the Governor (Appendix JJ--Memo 02.10.10--PROAC Chair to BAFC re Institutional Proirities and Prioritized Personnel Requests).

Actions Taken

The College has developed a new set of BOR Human Resources policies and procedures (Appendix P--Proposed Human Resource Policies and Procedures) which are currently being reviewed by all constituent groups. The policies are in final draft form and will be submitted to the Board of Regents for approval and adoption at its next regular meeting in December. The College also plans to revisit and review the recommendations from the 2005 Management Review Desk Audit by San Diego State University with respect to human resource management in improving institutional effectiveness.

To provide employees additional support with current and future human resource policies and procedures, the College is discussing the assignment of in-house ombudsmen to ensure that the institution administers its human resources policies and procedures consistently and equitably.

The Human Resources Office Manager is committed to strict compliance with BOR human resource policies and procedures. The statement "Equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered" has been removed from all vacancy announcements and all applicants are now screened based on actual minimum qualification requirements. To expand the pool of qualified applicants, the College is investigating other cost-effective methods for advertising vacancy announcements outside of the CNMI.

The Human Resources Office is also working with the Academic Council and the Faculty Assembly as part of the institutions efforts to improve its performance evaluation system for instructional faculty.

Lastly, a significant number of professional development opportunities for staff, faculty, and administrators have been made available through funding from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA).

Standard III.D: Financial Resources
"Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. The distribution of resources supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The institution plans and manages its financial affairs with integrity and in a manner that ensures financial stability. The level of financial resources provides a reasonable expectation of both short-term and long-term financial solvency. Financial resources planning is integrated with institutional planning."

Descriptive Summary

Funding for Northern Marianas College comes from four general sources: CNMI government appropriation, tuition and fees, federal grants, and philanthropic contributions to NMC's Foundation. Government appropriations are provided every year through the Governor's budget call and approved appropriations from the CNMI Legislature. To supplement this funding, the College is authorized by CNMI Public law 4-34 to set and collect tuition and fees necessary for the institution's operations. The College also qualifies for and avails of funding for several federal programs including CREES, CACP, ABE, and Upward Bound. Lastly, in 1999, the BOR established the NMC Foundation, a non-profit organization charged with acquiring, managing, and disbursing funds from alternative sources to support the advancement of NMC's educational programs and services. Together, these funding sources help ensure that the College's financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services, and to improve institutional effectiveness.

Budgeting and resource allocation follows processes set forth in the Institutional Excellence Guide (Appendix D--Institutional Excellence Guide). These processes are routed through the College's shared governance structures to link institutional planning, assessment and program review, and budgeting. Decision-making in those processes is guided by goals, priority initiatives, and specific objectives and outcomes identified in the PROA Strategic Plan 2008—2012 (Appendix A--PROA Strategic Master Plan 2008-2012) and each year's Operational Plan.

Budgeting and resource allocation decisions are synthesized into the Annual Budget, which is a consolidation of the CNMI government appropriations, an operation budget that is funded by tuition and fees, and federal funds. The respective deans and directors are responsible for developing program budgets. BAFC is tasked with providing oversight to the budget preparation process by holding departmental hearings for each submission. Throughout the budgeting process, BAFC works with PROAC and the College Council to align budget submissions and decisions with program review results, Institutional Priorities, PROA Strategic Plan 2008—2012, and each year's Operational Plan. Such alignments help ensure that resource allocations support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of the College's programs and services.

After routing the Annual Budget through the governance bodies, the President submits the budget proposal to the Board of Regents Fiscal and Legislative Committee for its review. Upon their review, this committee submits the proposal to the full Board for its review and approval. Upon Board approval, the Appropriations Budget is forwarded to the Governor for inclusion in the budget submission to the Legislature. The Board, the President, and the Management Team

then work with members of the Legislature towards an appropriations allocation that approximates the amount requested in the College's Annual Budget proposal.

To assure the institution's financial stability, BOR Policy 2000 (Appendix G--Selected Board of Regents Policies), requires that the College plan for financial uncertainties by maintaining a reserve fund at all times. As the policy states, "on an annual (financial year) basis 5% of the total Tuition and Fees (Operations) budget shall be deposited into the Reserve Fund."

The College is audited annually by an independent public accounting and auditing firm. Copies of the annual audit reports are disseminated to members of the Board of Regents, the College Council, BAFC, the President, deans and the CFAO. The audit reports are available online through the website of the CNMI Office of the Public Auditor (OPA) at www.opacnmi.com.

Regular financial updates are provided to the Board of Regents as part of the President's report, which is a standing agenda item for every regular board meeting. In addition, the Budget Officer provides expenditure reports to all expenditure authorities on a monthly basis, and upon request from authorized personnel. These reports inform the expenditure authorities on current encumbrances, budget balances, and any reprogramming adjustments that may be needed. In the event that operations funds need to be reprogrammed from one program to another, BAFC reviews and approve reprogramming requests.

Self-Evaluation

As is the case with institutions across the nation, Northern Marianas College has struggled with a fiscal crisis in the CNMI's budget, which recently resulted in the first partial government shutdown in CNMI history. Sensitive to the CNMI's fiscal challenges, the College encourages the Legislature to approve an appropriation level that is at least equal to or greater than the preceding fiscal year to ensure the adequate delivery of instruction and services and meet the necessary level of local funding to ensure the continuation of federally funded programs. Since receiving ARRA and SFSF funding in FY 2010, the College has also worked with the Legislature to ensure adequate funding to meet the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements of ARRA and SFSF.

BAFC's preparation of the College's Fiscal Year 2011 budget drew campus-wide participation at committee meetings and provided each department with the opportunity to discuss short and long-term plans with the BAFC in order to determine how best to allocate anticipated revenue. Each department expenditure authority met one-on-one with the Budget Officer for a detailed discussion on the department's proposed fiscal year spending plan. The Budget Office conducted budget preparation workshops with each program in advance of the actual budget submission due date.

The College also received an unqualified opinion from the auditing firm (Deloitte & Touche LLC) on its financial statements for FY 2009, making it the third consecutive year that this has been accomplished. This is especially significant when one considers that NMC had been receiving qualified opinions in its audits on financial statements since the mid-1990s. Improved control mechanisms that have been implemented contributed to earning the unqualified opinions.

While BAFC is tasked with reviewing and adjusting the budget in accordance with present circumstances and future projections, as well as producing budget and financial reports as needed by the institution, the infrequency of BAFC meetings this calendar year has hampered the committee's ability to provide appropriate financial information throughout the institution. This, in turn, has undermined the ability to provide regular financial updates to the Board of Regents.

Action Taken

Despite the fiscal challenges of the CNMI government, the Board of Regents, the Interim President, and Management Team have successfully advocated for the College with the Governor, the Senate, and the House of Representatives. As a result, while many other government agencies and departments have had their budgets drastically cut, the final budget passed by the CNMI government provided the College with adequate funding to meet the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and its State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) based on the initial figures provided. And, more recently, while many government agencies and departments were closed as part of the government shutdown, the Governor exempted all NMC employees from the shutdown (Appendix Y--Governor Fitial's Executive Order 2010-11).

These successful advocacy efforts have been complemented by an infusion of ARRA and SFSF funding and the awarding of a $972,834.00 CACP grant for FY 2011. Successful marketing and recruitment efforts also resulted in an enrollment increase for the Fall 2010 term that has brought in additional funding in tuition and fees. At 1,234, enrollment for the current term is up by 25% from the Fall 2009 term, which had an enrollment of 991, and up by 56% from the Fall 2008 term, which had an enrollment of 792.

In addition, the College is working to ensure that the financial management system has appropriate control mechanisms. The College's revised Procurement Policies and Procedures manual (Appendix FF--Revised Procurement Policies and Procedures Manual), which has been adopted by the Board of Regents and will be reviewed by the Attorney General's Office, will help ensure these control mechanisms.

BAFC has also been tasked to review the Standard Operating Policies and Procedures of the Finance and Budget Department (Appendix R--Standard Operating Policies and Procedures of the Finance and Budget Department). This committee will recommend revisions and modifications that will focus on strengthening control mechanisms to ensure financial integrity. Audit findings that recommend strengthening control procedures provide valuable guidance that will assist the College in its efforts to address this issue.

Over the past year, the College has implemented various practices to ensure that department heads expend funds in accordance with their authorized budgets. For example, in addition to providing budgetary reports on a quarterly and as-requested basis, the Budget Office now provides these reports at the beginning of each month. The monthly reports help the department expenditure authorities monitor their monthly expenses over revenue.

Beginning the second half of FY 2010, the Budget Officer and CFAO met one-on-one with each department expenditure authority and his/her administrative manager to review that expenditure authority's FY 2010 budget. Those one-on-one consultations helped the expenditure authority understand the current status of his/her department budget.

Additionally, in order to provide knowledgeable assistance to the budgeting process, BAFC requested the help of PROAC in creating the Institutional Priorities for FY 2011. PROAC also assisted in the budgeting process by administering a survey of department expenditure authorities, the purpose of which was to prioritize vacant positions so that the college would be prepared for potential budgetary cuts that might impact personnel and vacancies.

During its June 2, 2010 meeting, in preparation of potential budget cuts, BAFC again requested assistance from PROAC, this time to assist in facilitating the process by which departments would prioritize their programs in order to best decide how to manage their departments expenditures in times of budgetary constraints. The process is on-going.

The College continues to work toward strengthening the relationship between program review and budgeting. The Budget Office is currently working to revise and update the College's Budget and Planning Manual in order to streamline processes and ensure that assessment is linked with budgeting. When the manual is finalized and approved, the Budget Office will hold workshops to ensure that faculty, staff, and administrators understand the processes in the updated manual.

In response to audit findings on major federal award programs, the College has implemented corrective action plans (Appendix GG--NMC Corrective Action Plan for Audit Findings) that are addressing noted audit findings. In addition, federal programs have worked closely with their respective grantor agencies to resolve audit findings. For example, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) recently clarified that ABE was in compliance with earmarking requirements of the grant.

Standard IV.B: Board and Administrative Organization
"In addition to the leadership of individuals and constituencies, institutions recognize the designated responsibilities of the governing board for setting policies and of the chief administrator for the effective operation of the institution."

Descriptive Summary

Northern Marianas College has a Board of Regents comprised of seven voting members who are appointed to the Board by the Governor and three non-voting, honorary student, staff and faculty Regents who are elected to the Board by their respective constituent bodies. BOR policies delineate the specific responsibilities, structure, and operating procedures of the Board, as well as the duties and powers of the Board, which are limited primarily to appointing and evaluating the President of the College, reviewing and approving policies for the College, and periodically reviewing the College's organizational structure, its financial management, and its overall operation.

These limited duties and powers of the Board are encapsulated in BOR Policy 1001 (Appendix G--Selected Board of Regents Policies), which states, "The Board shall concern itself primarily with broad questions of policy, rather than with administrative details. The application of policies is an administrative task to be performed by the President and staff, who shall be held responsible for the effective administration and supervision of the College's programs." Furthermore, as stated in BOR Policy 1009, the Board is limited to acting as a whole: "The Board of Regents is the unit of authority, and no Board member has individual authority in regards to the College except as part of that unit." To ensure compliance with these limits to power and authority, the Board is bound by a Board Code of Ethics as stated in BOR Policy 1019.

The Board ensures the quality, integrity, and improvement of student learning programs and services through BOR Policy 1025, which articulates a broad institutional effectiveness program. As the policy states, "To enable such effectiveness and quality, institutional research, planning, evaluation, and other activities shall be conducted in a collaborative manner with input from all appropriate sectors of the College and the community it serves on the islands of Saipan, Rota, and Tinian." This expectation for monitoring and upholding institutional effectiveness is reinforced by the Board's self-evaluation processes, which are laid out in BOR Policy 1024 "Board of Regents Self Evaluation".

The Board delegates to the President the responsibility to develop and maintain an institution that fulfills the College's mission and achieve the goals and priority initiatives of the PROA Strategic Plan 2008—2012. The President recommends policies to the Board, and is authorized by the Board to exercise broad discretionary powers according to the policies, goals, and general directions established by the Board for the College. The duties of the President, which are specified in BOR Policy 1009, include the following:

- being responsible for the organization and administration of the College and for the coordination of its entire instructional program;
- providing direction and leadership in the development and implementation of a research, planning, and evaluation system to assure institutional effectiveness and that the results of such activity will be used for institutional improvement and the establishment of priorities;
- ensuring that various entities of the College have a substantive and clearly-defined role in institutional governance;
- developing an effective program of staff evaluation and improvement;
- 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;
- guiding capital improvement activities and ensuring safe and adequate facilities and grounds in order to maintain a quality learning environment;
- representing the College to the community and maintaining an adequate public information service;
- and maintaining open and adequate channels of communication with the internal and external College community.

Self-Evaluation

Since January of 2010, the suspension and termination of the previous College president and the appointment of an Interim President reflected and reinforced contentious divisions between Regents. As ACCJC's April 13—14, 2010 Special Visit Report noted, "This has either fostered, or exacerbated, what can only be characterized as internecine warfare between faculty and staff factions." Also observed in the report, the Board was "not acting autonomously from the Commonwealth government" and "members of the governing board [were] directly engaged in directing operations" at the College.

In addition, Charles Cepeda resigned from the Board on July 16, 2010, and the term of former Regent Janet King expired on September 23, 2010. As of the date of this report, the Governor has not appointed regents to replace King or Cepeda, leaving the seven member board with five current members, which is still sufficient to meet the Board's quorum requirement of four.

Nonetheless, the Board moved expeditiously to appoint a qualified interim president with over 17 years of administrative and instructional experience at the institution (Appendix II--Resume of Interim President Lorraine T. Cabrera). The Interim President has brought some stability to the College, moving several key initiatives forward such as the Facilities Master Plan (FMP), revisions to the Human Resources Policy, and the 2011 Planning Summit. However, the College acknowledges that with the appointment of the Interim President, the College has had seven acting, interim, or full-time presidents in ten years, which has contributed to an overall instability in leadership at the College.

The College contends that this state of affairs stems, at least in part, from many ambiguities and contradictions in the current BOR policies. These ambiguities and contradictions emerged over the years as policies were amended in an incoherent, haphazard manner, resulting in a hodgepodge patchwork of policies that have never been reconciled by a systematic review of BOR policies. For example, current BOR policies and procedures remain unclear on the appointment of acting and/or interim presidents and on the process for searching and selecting a full-time president. The ambiguities and contradictions in BOR policies have coupled with a lack of a formal and systematic boardsmanship training program for new and current Regents, resulting in Regents who were untrained and unfamiliar with their proper roles and duties as members of the Board.

Actions Taken

Cognizant of the potential for political interference in the appointment process of Regents, the Board has developed a draft policy for a "Vacancies on the NMC Board of Regents" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies), which outlines the actions to be taken by the Board in the event there is a vacancy on the Board. While the Governor would still hold the constitutional authority to appoint Regents and the CNMI Senate would confirm the Governor's appointment to the Board, the proposed policy will empower the Board to proactively participate in the discussion of Regent appointments in a manner that is consistent with the mission, strategic priorities, and needs of the College, which will help buffer the College from political interference.

The Board and the Interim President have also engaged in aggressive advocacy efforts to shield the College from undue political interference.

First, the Board and the Interim President initiated several meetings with members of the 17th CNMI Legislature to help them better understand and appreciate the College and its needs. On February 18, 2010, the former Board Chair, the Interim President, and the Accreditation Liaison Officer met with members of the House of Representatives to discuss accreditation, funding for the College, and issues about the College's leadership. A month later, on March 16, 2010, the former Board Chair, the Interim President, and the ALO held a similar meeting with the Senate, in which they discussed similar issues. At each of these meetings, legislators were provided with printed copies of the College's presentation (Appendix W--NMC Presentation to Legislature) and other pertinent data requested by legislators.

Second, the College has discussed a possible Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the College and the Executive and Legislative branches to uphold and respect the institutional autonomy of the College. The former Board Chair and the Interim President met with the Lieutenant Governor on August 24, 2010 and the Interim President and the CFAO met with members of the Senate on August 30, 2010 to discuss the MOU. Both the Lieutenant Governor and the Senators stated that they were receptive to the MOU in principle and looked forward to working with the College on the particular language of the MOU.

Third, the Board and the Interim President have diligently and consistently lobbied the Governor, the House of Representatives, and the Senate to justify government funding for the College and defend against any potentially drastic cuts to the College's budget. Regents, the Interim President, and College leadership represented the College at numerous budget sessions, including a Senate budget session held on Tinian on September 3, 2010.

More recently, the failure of the 17th Legislature to pass a budget has led to a constitutionally mandated government shutdown. Despite this government shutdown, the Board and the Interim President successfully lobbied the Senate and the Governor (Appendix X--Letters from Interim President Cabrera to Governor Fitial re Government Shutdown) to exempt the College from the shutdown. Both efforts were successful. The Senate included the College in Senate Bill 17-26, which would have exempted the College from a government shutdown. When the shutdown did, in fact take place, Governor's Executive Order 2010—11 (Appendix Y--Governor Fitial's Executive Order 2010-11) exempted the institution from the shutdown.

Fourth and last, the Board and the Interim President have consistently countered and responded to legislative attempts to interfere with the operations of the College and undermine its institutional autonomy. In particular, on August 31, 2010, the Interim President and the former Board Chair, with the support of the other Regents, transmitted a letter (Appendix Z--Interim President Cabrera's August 31, 2010 Letter to 17th Legislature Leadership) to the Senate President and the Speaker of the House that urged them not to support actions by the House of Representatives that would have created the appearance of improper, political interference with the Constitutional autonomy of NMC. The letter referred specifically to three legislative actions.

House Bill 17-59 proposed to raise the minimum educational eligibility requirements for appointment to the NMC Board of Regents, which, if enacted into law, would exclude representation of the interests of the College's adult and continuing education students and undermine the Board of Regents ability to fulfill NMC's mission.

House Bill 17-93 proposed to put all NMC expenditure authority under the purview of the Department of Finance and ultimately the Governor; place control of all NMC legal decisions with the Office of the Attorney General; and allow the legislature and perhaps the Governor to impose sanctions upon NMC and to improperly withhold funding. If enacted into law, this bill would have infringed on the College's autonomy, contradicted several court rulings that have upheld that autonomy, and resurrected concerns ACCJC has expressed in the past about other similar functions of NMC being subjected to the central CNMI government.

House Resolution 17-71 requested "the Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education and the Executive Director of WASC to officially intervene in the...Show Cause Sanction Action against the Northern Marianas College created by the President of ACCJC or the Legislature shall seek legal remedy to support the CNMI's lone public college." As the Interim President and the former Board Chair stated in their letter, the College "is concerned about the inflammatory language used against ACCJC in the resolution, the serious charges it raises against ACCJC, and its attempt to bypass ACCJC procedures and policies by appealing directly to the U. S. Department of Education and the Executive Director of WASC."

Although the House passed House Bills 17-59 and 17-93 and approved House Resolution 17-71, as a result of the August 31, 2010 letter from the Interim President and the former Board Chair, the Senate has stalled any action on the bills and has maintained its support for the College on several occasions.

In addition to these advocacy efforts, the Board is also mindful of the need for long-term leadership at the College. The Board thus initiated a Presidential Search Process to select a new president for the College with BOR Resolution 2010-03 (Appendix HH--BOR Resolution 2010-03) which launched the 2010 NMC Presidential Search process and will soon conclude with the Board's selection of a qualified president for the College. The basic elements of Resolution 2010-03 will be incorporated into Board policy in order to institutionalize the search process.

To ensure that the President has full-time responsibility to the institution with the authority to administer board polices, the Board is drafting a policy on "Limits of Authority" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies) which reinforces BOR Policy 1002, which limits Board authority by delegating all administrative duties to the NMC President.

Regents have also engaged in training on a number of topics and issues, including the proper role of regents, board leadership and practice, and accreditation. On February 19, 2010, the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) conducted a training session with the Board entitled "Accreditation 101" in which Regents were provided a digital packet of accreditation material that included information from and about ACCJC, the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU) under WASC, and College reports prepared for both commissions.

The Pacific Post-secondary Education Council (PPEC) Boardsmanship Training (June 14—18, 2010, Honolulu, HI) provided an in-depth study of the proper role of board members at a community college. The PPEC training was followed soon after by the New Trustee Governance Leadership Institute sponsored by the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), which focused on the fundamentals of governance, pertinent community college issues, and understanding the leadership and fiduciary responsibility of the board.

The lessons and insights gained at the PPEC and ACCT trainings are being reinforced by a series of bi-weekly BOR Lunch Training Sessions. Two sessions have already been held. One was held on September 8, 2010 that focused on the role of a governing board at a community college and the nature of board leadership within the context of the college's mission. Regent reflections from that session (Appendix C--Notes from September 8, 2010 BOR Training) demonstrate that Regents are developing a clearer distinction between the policy-making role of Regents as opposed to the administrative role of the President. Another Lunch Training Session was held on September 29, 2010 that focused on FERPA regulations.

These BOR trainings have had a noticeable impact on Regents who have since approached their work on the Board with a more cohesive focus on policy and planning matters that advance the mission of the institution. Furthermore, to ensure that Regents continue to deepen their understanding of the proper role of board members, the Board is also reviewing a draft policy on "Board Member Training and Development" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies) which would set forth the training and development requirements that each individual Board member must undergo upon becoming a Regent.

The Board has also recognized that ambiguities and contradictions in current Board of Regents policies have made Regent roles unclear. These ambiguities and contradictions emerged over the years as policies were amended in an incoherent, haphazard manner, resulting in a hodgepodge patchwork of policies that have never been reconciled in a holistic manner. The Board has thus embarked on a systematic review of all BOR policies and is reviewing a draft "BOR Policy Development and Review" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies) which would set forth how policies shall be reviewed on a periodic basis and specify the steps involved in the adoption of new policies or the revision of existing ones.

To hold itself accountable to the proper role and conduct of board members, the Board is reviewing a draft policy for "Disciplinary Action for Board Member Misconduct" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies) which details progressive discipline procedures to be followed if and when a Regent violates the Board's Code of Ethics.

II. Responses to ACCJC June 30, 2010 Show Cause Action Letter Recommendations

Recommendation #1: To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standards the governing board should exercise its authority to govern the college and protect the college from undue influence by the Commonwealth government including the government's ability to line-item dictate the college budget. The governing board should act autonomously to govern the college free from indirect interference by the Commonwealth governor or members of the legislature; this will defend the college from the vagaries of changes in political power. (ER 3, Standard IV.B.1.a, IV.B.1.c)

Internally, the Board of Regents has developed a draft policy for a "Vacancies on the NMC Board of Regents" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies), which outlines the actions to be taken by the Board in the event there is a vacancy on the Board. While the Governor of the CNMI would still hold the constitutional authority to appoint Regents and the CNMI Senate would confirm the Governor's appointment to the Board, the proposed policy will empower the Board to proactively participate in the discussion of Regent appointments in a manner that is consistent with the mission, strategic priorities, and needs of the College, which will help buffer the College from political interference.

Externally, the Board of Regents has worked very closely with the Interim President as advocates for the best interests of the College, particularly at a time of extreme fiscal crisis in the CNMI.

The Board and the Interim President initiated several meetings with members of the 17th CNMI Legislature to help them better understand and appreciate the College and its needs. The College also diligently and consistently lobbied the Governor, the House of Representatives, and the Senate to justify government funding for the College and defend against any potentially drastic cuts to the College's budget. Regents and the Interim President or her designee have represented the College at numerous budget sessions, including a Senate budget session held on Tinian on September 3, 2010. As a result, despite the recent government shutdown, Senate Bill 17-26 and the Governor's Executive Order 2010—11 (Appendix Y--Governor Fitial's Executive Order 2010-11) both exempted the College from the government shutdown.

The Board and the Interim President have consistently countered and responded to legislative attempts to interfere with the operations of the College and undermine its institutional autonomy. For example, on August 31, 2010, the Interim President and the former Board Chair, with the support of the other Regents, transmitted a letter (Appendix Z--Interim President Cabrera's August 31, 2010 Letter to 17th Legislature Leadership) to the Senate President and the Speaker of the House that urged them not to support actions by the House of Representatives that would have created the appearance of improper, political interference with the Constitutional autonomy of NMC.

Recommendation #2: To meet the Eligibility Requirement, the team recommends that the college ensure that Commission policies are followed at all times and that the institution respond to Commission requests truthfully and accurately. (ER 21)

In order to cultivate a better understanding and deeper appreciation of the accreditation processes, particularly with ACCJC, the College has engaged faculty, staff, administrators, and the Board of Regents in a number of training sessions on accreditation. Building off of material from ACCJC, on February 19, 2010, the ALO conducted a training session with the Board entitled "Accreditation 101" in which Regents were provided a digital packet of accreditation material that included information from and about ACCJC, the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU) under WASC, and College reports prepared for both commissions. Written reflections from that training (Appendix AA--BOR Training Presentation February 19, 2010) reveal a Board that is developing more awareness of and commitment to the need for honest, self-reflective dialogue with WASC throughout the accreditation process.

Faculty, staff, administrators, and Regents have also participated in a number of WASC sponsored or supported professional development and training sessions, including the following:
- PPEC Training and Workshop: "Building Capacity for Regional Assessment: Tools and Lessons for Successful Accreditation Visits" (November 11—13, 2009, Tumon, GU)
- WASC Outcomes-Based Program Review Workshop (February 25-26, 2010, Long Beach, CA)
- ACCJC Self-Study Training Workshop (February 26-27, 2010, Tumon, GU)
- WASC Academic Resource Conference (ARC) (April 21-23, 2010, Long Beach, CA)
- WASC Level 1 Retreat on Student Learning and Assessment (September 23—24, 2010, Anaheim, CA)
- Strengthening Student Success Conference (October 6—8, 2010, Costa Mesa, CA)

Insights and resources gained at these professional development and training sessions have been complemented by a concerted effort by Management Team to promote inclusive, open and honest dialogue across the institution about accreditation matters, particularly the College's accreditation reports.

Upon receiving ACCJC's June 30, 2010 Action Letter placing the College on Show Cause, the Interim President expanded Management Team's membership to include the presidents from constituent bodies—Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and ASNMC—in order to form a representative Accreditation Reaffirmation Action Plan (ARAP) Steering Team. This ARAP Steering Team proceeded to treat preparations for the October 15, 2010 Show Cause Report as a mini "self-study" and subsequently divided into ARAP Standard Teams aligned along the ACCJC Standards cited in the June 30th Show Cause letter (Appendix BB--Compilation of NMC Accreditation Reaffirmation Action Plan Updates). These ARAP Standard Teams recruited additional faculty, staff, and students and have been meeting on a regular basis to propose action items and prepare their respective parts of NMC's October 15, 2010 Show Cause Report. Likewise, the ARAP Steering Team also meets every week to discuss, synthesize, and effectuate the work of the ARAP Standard Teams.

The inclusive dialogue of these ARAP Standard Teams was reinforced by accreditation discussions facilitated at the Fall 2010 Professional Development Days from August 10 through August 12, 2010, at Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and ASNMC assemblies held on August 27, 2010, and the FY 2011 Planning Summit on October 1, 2010.

Such dialogue has been enriched by providing more time and resources for meaningful input from students, faculty, staff, and administrators. The ALO has provided, by email messages to the entire College community, regular ARAP updates (Appendix BB--Compilation of NMC Accreditation Reaffirmation Action Plan Updates) that include the names and contacts of ARAP Standard Team leaders. Draft ARAP reports have also been routed through governance bodies for feedback and input from various constituencies, and different iterations of the ARAP schedule have provided, on average, two weeks for input for various accreditation reports, including the October 15, 2010 Show Cause Report.

The extensive and intensive degree to which dialogue on accreditation matters has been promoted and ensured at the College has stemmed from a conscious and deliberate attempt to demystify the accreditation process and promote more honest and accurate discussions about accreditation. The end result is that while disagreements may emerge from healthy dialogue, the College community will be literally on the same honest, accurate page when communicating with the Commission.

Recommendation #3: To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standard, the team recommends that the college integrate financial planning with institutional planning and ensure that fiscal resources are adequate to support student learning programs and institutional effectiveness so that financial stability is maintained. (ER 17, Standard III.D.1.a)

The Board of Regents, the Interim President, and Management Team have successfully advocated for the College with the Governor, the Senate, and the House of Representatives. As a result, while many other government agencies and departments have had their budgets drastically cut, the final budget passed by the CNMI government provided the College with adequate funding to meet the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and its State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) based on the initial figures provided. And, more recently, while many government agencies and departments were closed as part of the government shutdown, the Governor exempted all NMC employees from the shutdown (Appendix Y--Governor Fitial's Executive Order 2010-11).

These successful advocacy efforts have been complemented by an infusion of ARRA and SFSF funding and the awarding of a $972,834.00 CACP grant for FY 2011. Successful marketing and recruitment efforts also resulted in an enrollment increase for the Fall 2010 term that has brought in additional funding in tuition and fees. At 1,234, enrollment for the current term is up by 25% from the Fall 2009 term, which had an enrollment of 991, and up by 56% from the Fall 2008 term, which had an enrollment of 792.

To integrate financial planning with institutional planning to support student learning, BAFC has continued working with PROAC to ensure that program review data and assessment guides decision-making about budgeting and resource allocation. Not only will PROAC's 2010 Composite Report inform BAFC's work for the FY 2012 budget cycle, but the College Council and BAFC tasked PROAC with facilitating a budget prioritizing process (Appendix DD-- Minutes from College Council & BAFC Joint Meeting on June 2 2010) that will help the College absorb potential budget cuts in a manner that is consistent with and informed by data and assessment from program review.

Recommendation #4: To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standards, the team recommends that the college assure the financial integrity and responsible use of its financial resources and ensure that the financial management system has appropriate control mechanisms and widely disseminates dependable and timely information for sound financial decision-making. The College must also correct noted audit findings. (ER 18, Standard III.D.2, III.D.2.a, III.D.2.d, III.D.2.e)

Assuring the College's financial integrity and responsible use of financial resources is demonstrated in the FY 2009 Audit Report on Financial Statements conducted by an independent auditing firm (Appendix EE--FY 2009 Audit Report on Financial Statements). In FY 2009, the College increased its overall net assets by $1,540,556, which includes an increase of $1,158,900 in unrestricted net assets. The results confirm the continuing upward trend of these balances since FY 2007. The College continued to be prudent in its expenditure patterns and management of cash flows in FY 2009 and as a result, achieved an overall appreciation of approximately $109,000 in cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year. These tangible accomplishments, when viewed within the context of the CNMI's overall declining economy, are clear indicators of the College's success in maintaining financial integrity and evidence of its responsible use of financial resources.

In addition, the College is working to ensure that the financial management system has appropriate control mechanisms. The College's revised Procurement Policies and Procedures manual (Appendix FF--Revised Procurement Policies and Procedures Manual), which has been adopted by the Board of Regents and will be reviewed by the Attorney General's Office, will help ensure such control mechanisms. BAFC has also been tasked to review the Standard Operating Policies and Procedures of the Finance and Budget Department (Appendix R-- Standard Operating Policies and Procedures of the Finance and Budget Department). This committee will recommend revisions and modifications that will focus on strengthening control mechanisms. Audit findings that recommend strengthening control procedures provide valuable guidance that will assist the College in its efforts to address this issue.

The College received an unqualified opinion from the auditing firm on its financial statements for FY 2009, making it the third consecutive year that this feat has been accomplished. This is especially significant when one considers that NMC had been receiving qualified opinions in its audits on financial statements since the mid-1990s. Improved control mechanisms that have been implemented contributed to earning the unqualified opinions.

The dissemination of dependable and timely information for sound financial decision making is an institutionalized procedure. Regular financial updates are provided to the Board of Regents as part of the President's report, which is a standing agenda item for every regular board meeting. In addition, the Budget Officer provides expenditure reports to all expenditure authorities on a monthly basis and upon request from authorized personnel. These reports inform the expenditure authorities on current encumbrances, budget balances, and any reprogramming adjustments that may be needed.

In response to audit findings on major federal award programs, the College has implemented corrective action plans (Appendix GG--NMC Corrective Action Plan for Audit Findings) that are addressing noted audit findings. In addition, federal programs have worked closely with their respective grantor agencies to resolve audit findings. For example, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) recently clarified that ABE was in compliance with earmarking requirements of the grant.

Recommendation #5: To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standard, the team recommends that the governing board immediately initiate a search and hire a qualified chief executive officer (CEO) and ensure that the CEO has full-time responsibility to the institution and possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies. (ER 4, Standard IV.B.1.j)

The Board of Regents, through Resolution 2010-03 (Appendix HH--BOR Resolution 2010-03) launched the 2010 NMC President Search process, which will soon conclude with the Board's selection of a qualified president for the College. The basic elements of Resolution 2010-03 will then be incorporated into Board policy in order to institutionalize the search process.

To ensure that the President has full-time responsibility to the institution with the authority to administer board polices, the Board is reviewing a draft policy on "Limits of Authority" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies) which expands BOR Policy 1002 (Appendix G--Selected Board of Regents Policies), which limits Board authority by delegating all administrative duties to the NMC President.

Regents have also engaged in training that has clarified the policy-making role of Regents in contrast to the administrative role of the President. The PPEC Boardsmanship Training (June 14—18, 2010, Honolulu, HI), facilitated by Bob Henry and David Wolf, provided an in-depth study of the proper role of board members at a community college. The training also gave Regents the opportunity network with and learn from board members of other PPEC member institutions. The PPEC training was followed soon after by the New Trustee Governance Leadership Institute sponsored by the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), which focused on the fundamentals of governance, pertinent community college issues, and understanding the leadership and fiduciary responsibility of the board.

The lessons and insights gained at the PPEC and ACCT trainings are being reinforced by a series of bi-weekly BOR Lunch Training Sessions. Two sessions have already been held. One held on September 8, 2010 that focused on the role of a governing board at a community college and the nature of board leadership within the context of the college's mission. Regent reflections from

that session (Appendix C--Notes from September 8, 2010 BOR Training) demonstrate that Regents are developing a clearer distinction between the policy-making role of Regents as opposed to the administrative role of the President. Another Lunch Training Session was held on September 29, 2010 that focused on board compliance with FERPA.

To ensure that Regents continue to deepen their understanding of the proper role of board members, the Board is also reviewing a draft policy on "Board Member Training and Development" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies) which would set forth the training and development requirements that each individual Board member must undergo upon becoming a Regent.

To ensure that the Board conforms to its proper role as a policy-making body, the Board is also reviewing a draft policy for "Disciplinary Action for Board Member Misconduct" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies) which details progressive discipline procedures to be followed should it be determined that a Regent has violated the Board's Code of Ethics.

Recommendation #6: To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standards, the team recommends that the college ensure that the administrative staff of the college has the appropriate preparation and experience to provide administrative services; this includes the college chief executive. The governing board should delegate the authority to college administration to operate the college and hold the administration accountable for institutional effectiveness and for adhering to adopted policies and governance processes. (ER 5, Standards III.A.3.a, IV.B.1.j, IV.B.2.a, IV.B.2.b, IV.B.2.c, IV.B.2.d, IV.B.2.e)

Despite challenges in filling vacancies, most administrative positions have been filled by qualified full-time deans and directors.   Among administrators with appropriate preparation and experience to provide administrative services is the Interim President who was appointed to the position with over 17 years of experience at the College, which included serving in various administrative capacities (Appendix II--Resume of Interim President Lorraine T. Cabrera).

Particularly since the statement "Equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered" has been removed from all Job Vacancy Announcements (JVAs), all applicants are now screened based on actual minimum qualifications by the Human Resource Office.

The work of Interim President and other college administrators has been enhanced by their participation in various professional development opportunities, including the following:
- Pacific Post-Secondary Education Council (PPEC) Training and Workshop: "Building Capacity for Regional Assessment: Tools and Lessons for Successful Accreditation Visits" (November 11—13, 2009, Tumon, GU)
- WASC Program Review Workshop (February 25-26, 2010, Long Beach, CA)
- ACCJC Self-Study Training Workshop (February 26-27, 2010, Tumon, GU)
- WASC Academic Resource Conference (ARC) (April 21-23, 2010, Long Beach, CA)
- WASC Level 1 Retreat on Student Learning and Assessment (September 23—24, 2010, Anaheim, CA)
- Strengthening Student Success Conference (October 6—8, 2010, Costa Mesa, CA)

The College's broad participation in these professional development workshops and conferences positioned faculty, staff, and administrators to quickly mobilize into Accreditation Reaffirmation Action Plan (ARAP) Standard Teams that were trained in accreditation ERs and standards. As a result, these teams were prepared to approach the October 15, 2010 Show Cause Report as a scaled down self-study process for the Commission. The work of the teams led to the actions and findings that are reported in this report.

To ensure that the Board delegates the authority to the Interim President and Management Team to operate the College, the Board is reviewing a draft policy on "Limits of Authority" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies) which expands BOR Policy #1002, which limits Board authority by delegating all administrative duties to the NMC President. Regents have also engaged in training that has clarified the policy-making role of Regents in contrast to the administrative role of the President. Moreover, to hold the Board accountable to this delegation of authority, the Board is also reviewing a draft policy for "Disciplinary Action for Board Member Misconduct" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies) which details progressive discipline procedures to be followed if and when a Regent violates the Board's Code of Ethics.

*Recommendation #7: To fully meet the Standards, the team recommends that the college restore ongoing, collegial, self-reflecting dialogue about the continuous improvement of institutional processes. The college should provide evidence that planning is broad based and offers opportunities for input by appropriate constituencies. (*Standards *I.B.4, I.B.6)*

The Fall 2010 Professional Development Days started the 2010—2011 academic year with healthy discussions about student learning, institutional processes, and the future of the College. Student, faculty, staff, and administrators were assigned to heterogeneous groups in order to encourage dialogue between and across programs. As notes from the sessions reveal (Appendix B--Notes from NMC Fall 2010 Professional Development Day Discussions), many participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to have such a dialogue, and urged the College's leadership to continue holding similar events.

The College continued the dialogue with a series of assemblies on August 27, 2010 to discuss the College's ongoing work to comply with ACCJC ERs, meet ACCJC standards, and improve the quality of the College's programs. As minutes from these assemblies reveal (Appendix F-- Minutes from August 27, 2010 Faculty Assembly), there were healthy discussions about a myriad of issues affecting the College, discussions that have continued in the work of the College's governance and constituent bodies.

The dialogue of the Fall 2010 Professional Development Days and the August 27, 2010 assemblies were reinforced at the College's Fiscal Year 2011 Planning Summit on October 1, 2010. To underscore the importance of the summit, the Interim President suspended classes and closed all offices for that day to ensure that all College faculty, staff, and administrators participated. Notes from the summit (Appendix H--Notes from FY 2011 Planning Summit) demonstrate that the entire College community was directly engaged in discussions about

strategic planning, the College's operational plan, and how all of the College's programs are linked to the PROA-SP 2008—2012.

To secure broader representation and inclusion of all constituencies, the Interim President announced the expansion of the Management Team to include the presidents from NMC's constituent bodies—Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and Associated Students of Northern Marianas College (ASNMC). This expansion concretely provides more access to and opportunities for input from all constituents.

These examples of College-wide dialogue within just the past three months are being institutionalized into the College's shared governance model now that governance and constituent bodies have begun to meet more frequently. With the start of the fourth cycle of program review, PROAC and BAFC have begun working on streamlining and improving the link between program review, planning, budgeting, and resource allocation. PROAC's 2010 Composite Report will serve as the starting point for its work with BAFC, but the work will continue as BAFC readies for the budget call for Fiscal Year 2012. Working with College Council, PROAC and BAFC will also streamline the schedule for the College's assessment, planning, and budgeting processes. Given the broad representation of these bodies, all constituents at the College will have opportunities to provide input and participate in these processes.

Likewise, the Academic Council is moving forward with its work to revise the College's course assessment processes into a more manageable staggered schedule. The council is also working to improve instructional quality by integrating the College's evaluation mechanisms for instructional faculty into a coherent system informed by numerous formative and summative assessment data.

Recommendation #8: To meet the Standard, the team recommends that the college ensure that faculty distinguish between personal conviction and professional views and that information is presented fairly and objectively. (Standard II.A.7.a)

A Faculty Assembly was held on August 27, 2010 to discuss issues and concerns of ACCJC's April 13—14, 2010 Special Visit Team's findings, specifically meeting Standard II.A.7.a. The Dean of Academic Programs and Services addressed the assembly, drawing their attention to the College policies and ACCJC Standard II.A.7.a that require faculty to distinguish between personal conviction and professional views, particularly in the classroom. Copies of the BOR Policy 3004 regarding Academic Freedom and Responsibility (Appendix K--Extracts from BOR Policies on Academic Freedom and Responsibility) were also provided, which the assembly discussed. The Faculty Assembly also discussed additional means of assessing the effectiveness of the College and its faculty in adhering to this Standard.

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personal conviction and professional views, particularly in the classroom. Copies of the BOR Policy 3004 regarding Academic Freedom and Responsibility (Appendix K--Extracts from BOR Policies on Academic Freedom and Responsibility) were also provided, which the assembly discussed. The Faculty Assembly also discussed additional means of assessing the effectiveness of the College and its faculty in adhering to this Standard. Faculty discussion (Appendix F-- Minutes from August 27, 2010 Faculty Assembly) echoed ideas being developed by Academic Council, as well as several other ideas that the council will explore, including administration "walk-abouts", discontinuing the use of online surveys, and sharing feedback and information contained in evaluations with faculty in a timely manner. The Academic Council continues to review these suggestions, including the inclusion of additional items on this existing course evaluation tool to measure the level at which the College meets this Standard.

Academic Council has begun revisiting the current evaluation system for faculty, focusing on ways to improve compliance with this standard. The Academic Council decided to revise the College's course assessment processes into a more manageable staggered schedule. Building on the resources and insights gained at the recent September 23—24, 2010 WASC Level I Retreat on Student Learning and Assessment, the Dean of Academic Programs and Services and members of Academic Council have begun expanding the current evaluation practices at the College into a comprehensive instructor evaluation system that will integrate student evaluations, supervisory evaluations, peer evaluations, and course assessment data into instructor portfolios (Appendix CC--NMC Project Information for Level 1 Assessment Retreat 2010).

The College has documented evidence of one incident in which the institution received and addressed a student grievance/complaint about one faculty member that violated Standard II.A.7.a.

The College has determined that complaint/grievance policies and procedures may need to be revisited and updated. BOR Procedure Nos. 8.2.2P and 8.2.2.1P (Appendix N--BOR Procedures 8.2.2P and 8.2.2.1P) require an immediate review and revision as each procedure is flawed, inaccurate, inconsistent, and lacking serious relevance to the realities of the College. At least one Grievance and Fairness Committee report (Appendix O--Grievance and Fairness Committee Report) cited challenges in utilizing the currently published procedures to effectively evaluate a student's complaint.

On April 16, 2010, the Dean of Student Services convened a working group to review and make recommendations for revising the College's Student Grievances & Appeal policies and procedures. The group continues work and intends to submit its recommendations to the Office of the President by the end of the Fall 2010 term.

Recommendation #9: To meet the Standard, the team recommends that the college maintain student records securely, and confidentially and that it published and follows established policies for release of student records. (Standard II.B.3.f)

OAR has expanded its Standard Operating Procedures as guidance for all College employees and also intensified its internal guidelines and procedures to ensure strict adherence to institutional policies and FERPA on the maintenance, security, and release of student records. The OAR has since proposed an Acknowledgement Form to the Human Resource Office that will require all College employees, including limited term appointments and student work-studies of to sign as acceptance of their responsibility and duty to maintaining confidentiality of records.

To ensure widespread understanding and compliance with College policies, FERPA, and ACCJC Standard II.B.3.f, the College provided a series of professional development sessions that focused on student record confidentiality and management. In August of 2010, all College employees were mandated to attend the Professional Development Days workshops and training sessions. The focus group assigned to work on Standard IIB presented FERPA regulations, NMC policies, and facilitated discussion on improvement plans that addressed the confidentiality of records as well as employee responsibilities to maintaining the confidentiality of records. The Office of Admissions and Records also facilitated an "update" workshop on FERPA regulations to faculty and staff in August of 2010. In September 2010, the College provided a campus-wide, mandatory FERPA training that was scheduled for six (6) days to allow all employees to attend.

The College is currently reviewing and updating its *Records Management Plan* that will, upon its completion, be forwarded through the governance process for review, approval, inclusion and implementation as a Board Policy for Records Management and Retention.

The Interim President also created a Student Records Policy and Procedure Task Force (Appendix U--Interim President Lorraine Cabrera Memorandum Establishing Student Records Policy and Procedure Task Force) to (1) review existing policies and procedures that pertain to the maintenance and handling of student records, (2) provide recommendations with regard to the changes and/or the implementation of current or proposed College policies and procedures affecting students, and (3) identify resources and an appropriate timeline for implementing the recommendations.

Recommendation # 10: To meet the Standard the team recommends that governing board engage training on the proper role and conduct of regents, general governing board relations and practice, college policy and Accreditation Standards and Commission Policy and adhere to its role in establishing policy and strategic-level decision-making; in accordance with its own policy. (Standards IV.B.1, IV.B.1.b, IV.B.1.e, IV.B.1.j, IV.B.1.h)

Regents have engaged in training on a number of topics and issues, including the proper role of regents, board leadership and practice, and accreditation. On February 19, 2010, the ALO conducted a training session with the Board entitled "Accreditation 101". The PPEC Boardsmanship Training (June 14—18, 2010, Honolulu, HI) provided an in-depth study of the proper role of board members at a community college. The PPEC training was followed soon

after by the New Trustee Governance Leadership Institute sponsored by the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT).

The lessons and insights gained at the PPEC and ACCT trainings are being reinforced by a series of bi-weekly BOR Lunch Training Sessions, including a session held September 8, 2010 that focused on the role of a governing board at a community college and the nature of board leadership within the context of the college's mission. Regent reflections from that session (Appendix C--Notes from September 8, 2010 BOR Training) demonstrate that Regents are developing a clearer distinction between the policy-making role of Regents as opposed to the administrative role of the President. Another Lunch Training Session was held on September 29, 2010 that focused on board compliance with FERPA.

To ensure that Regents continue to deepen their understanding of the proper role of board members, the Board is also reviewing a draft policy on "Board Member Training and Development" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies) which would set forth the training and development requirements that each individual Board member must undergo upon becoming a Regent.

The Board has also recognized that ambiguities and contradictions in current Board of Regents policies have made Regent roles unclear. The Board has thus embarked on a systematic review of all BOR policies and is reviewing a draft "BOR Policy Development and Review" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies) which would set forth how policies shall be reviewed on a periodic basis and specify the steps involved in the adoption of new policies or the revision of existing ones.

To hold itself accountable to proper role and conduct of board members, the Board is reviewing a draft policy for "Disciplinary Action for Board Member Misconduct" (Appendix V--Draft BOR Policies) which details progressive discipline procedures to be followed should it be determined that a Regent has violated the Board's Code of Ethics.