

Northern Marianas College

P. O. Box 501250,
Northern Marianas College,
Saipan, MP 96950 U.S.A.
Tel. (670) 234-5498

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PROGRESS REPORT

Progress Report to ACCJC

Northern Marianas College
March 30, 2007

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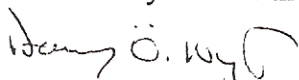
Section I

Progress Report Preparation:

Since the recommendations presented during the oral presentation in October by the Visiting Team, the Northern Marianas College administration has been proactive in addressing the proposed and then finalized recommendations presented. Then, following receipt of notification that Northern Marianas College was placed on Probation, the Acting President had a meeting with college employees and students on February 8th (Meeting summary is Appendix I-1). Then institutionally, each of the four issues to be addressed in the Progress Report were discussed in detail with the college community using its existing committees and councils. The Acting President, working with the Academic Council (the Academic Program Chairs, Acting Dean of Academic Programs and Services, Director of the School of Education, Counseling and Office of Admissions and Records), the Deans and Executive Directors (Finance Officer, Acting Dean of Academic Programs and Services, Dean of Student Services, Acting Information Learning Technology, Director of the Office of Institutional Evaluation, Acting Human Resources Manager, and Director of Institutional Advancement) as well as the College Council (Rota Program Coordinator, Tinian Program Coordinator, Faculty Senate President, Staff Senate President, Finance Officer, Acting Human Resources Manager, Dean of Student Services, Acting Information Learning Technology, President of the Associated Students of NMC, Director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, and Acting President) in reviewing each draft. The final draft was presented to the Board of Regents Chair prior to the committee meetings during the week of March 26-29. The report was then presented to the Board of Regents Chair and the Fiscal, Legislative and Program members during meetings on March 28th.

This Institutional Progress Report is submitted for the purpose of addressing the concerns brought up in the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges' actions during its January meeting placing Northern Marianas College on Probation.

I certify that there was broad participation by the campus community and we believe this Progress Report accurately reflects the actions taken by the institution.



Danny Ö. Wyatt
Acting President, Northern Marianas College

Section II

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

October Visiting Team Report (9):

Northern Marianas College has had an Acting Chief Executive Officer since the resignation of the previous president on August 25th, 2006.

Actions Taken: The NMC College Council met on October 17th at 5:00 p.m. to address concerns in the letter received from ACCJC President Barbara Beno concerning the Acting President's continuing dual responsibilities as Dean of Academic Programs and Services as well as Acting President (Appendix A-1). In response to ACCJC concerns the following actions were taken by the College Council as identified in the letter to Dr Barbara Beno in Appendix A-2:

Danny Wyatt, the Dean of Academic Programs and Services gave up his dual responsibility of Dean and Acting President and took on the latter role only.

Dr. Debra Cabrera, Social Sciences Instructor and Self-Study Steering Committee Chair, was asked and accepted the positions of Acting Dean of Academic Programs and Services and the Acting Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) effective October 17th, 2006.

The Board of Regents has been actively recruiting a Chief Executive Officer utilizing a thorough search that was developed by the Board's Search Committee as detailed in Appendix A-3. The process being implemented in the college's search for a new chief executive officer is found as in Appendix A-4. Two applicants were interviewed in the third week of February; one withdrew her nomination while the second was not approved by the Board. Interviews of other applicants have continued with a further interview occurring on March 27th and another to commence the second week of April.

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

October Visiting Team Report (9):

Northern Marianas College's administrative capacity was identified as placing the college in danger of not meeting this Eligibility Requirement.

Actions Taken: In light of current and possible future budgetary constraints, the College Council, upon recommendation from the Planning, Budget and Evaluation Committee (PBEC), proposed a reduction in administrative positions to place the college more in line with the funding under which it continues to operate (Appendix B-1). In addition, positions administered in an acting capacity are being filled.

1. The position of Vice President of Academic and Student Programs and Services, vacant since May 2004, has been eliminated.
2. The position of Executive Assistant to the President, vacant since 2003, remains vacant until the position of chief executive officer is filled, who will help determine whether the position is to be filled or eliminated. Currently the position is unfunded for the current fiscal year.
3. The position of Dean of COMPASS has been eliminated. Specific functions of the Dean of COMPASS have been reassigned to the Dean of Academic Programs and Services: Adult Basic Education (ABE/GED), Community Development Institute (CDI), and CREES; and functions reassigned to the Dean of Student Services are: Information and Learning Technology (ILT), Library and Support Services (LS) and Public Radio Station KRNM.
4. Library Services had four resignations effective the end of Fall Semester, 2006. The Curriculum Resource Center (CRC) position offered to an applicant was rejected by the applicant and thus remains being advertised; the Academic Librarian position is being filled following interviews in February and March; the position of Director of Library Services remains under the Acting Director due to lack of applicants, with advertising for that position ongoing. Despite these vacancies Borja library, Archives and Pacific Collection, and CRC on Saipan campus remain open during regular hours to students, utilizing existing personnel and part-time student workers.
5. Human Resources Office Director position has been replaced by the Human Resources Manager position. This position is currently being filled following advertising and interviews completed the second week of March.
6. The Chief Accountant position is being filled.
7. The Director of Maintenance position has been eliminated and replaced by the position of Maintenance Manager which remains on hold due to funding restrictions.
8. The Director of Information and Learning Technology (ILT) position is currently being re-advertised following a period of insufficient applicants.

College Council Minutes identifying these changes in organization are attached (Appendix B-1). The change in organization structure was presented to the Board of Regents for their approval on February 20th, with the Board expected to take action at its next regular meeting in April.

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

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

October Visiting Team Report (Recommendation 3:7, Recommendation 3:21, Recommendation 3:28): The visiting team found extensive and serious deficiencies in the Distance Education capabilities during its October visit, especially between Saipan and Rota. An additional concern was brought in the January 31st letter, specifically “detail how it intends to provide educational services, including instruction and support services, that ensure the education obtained on those sites is the equivalent of that obtained on the main campus and meets all accreditation requirements.”

Actions Taken: Recognizing that the college’s cabling and computer network backbone was deteriorating, the college met with Pacific Telecomm Inc (PTI) officials and personnel in September 2006 (report summary is Appendix C-1). To help address overall institutional difficulties related to connectivity, the college then hired the PTI to complete a survey of the institution’s network and servers (Appendix C-2). Corrective actions has been occurring since January through contracted work funded primarily by the college’s Title III program as described below:

- **Distance Education Capacity**

VTC classes for the Rota instructional site were not offered during the Spring Semester, 2007, due to connectivity problems between Rota and Saipan. To address that deficiency and in order to better serve students taking classes utilizing the VTC connection, the local service provider upgraded the DSL speed at the Rota instructional site from 720Kbps to 1.5Mbps connection (as noted by email in Appendix C-3) resolving this condition. This has greatly reduced connection losses such as those experienced by the WASC visiting team in October.

In addition, a second VTC facility on the Saipan Campus is currently under reconstruction in Building V, which also houses the School of Business and two computer labs/classrooms as well as facilities being converted to an additional classroom. Currently the air conditioning unit to cool the facility under renovation is being installed utilizing Workforce Development Improvement Program (WMIP) and Educational Tax Credit funding (ETC).

NMC received an ANA (Administration for Native Americans) grant totaling \$900,000 for the multi-budget years (FY 2007-09) beginning October 1st, 2006. The grant will enable the college to connect the 3 islands via a wireless broadband network to provide distance learning opportunities to Rota and Tinian. With ANA Grant funds, ECF Consultants have visited the islands, completed initial testing and expect to have the network constructed in time for fall classes. Title III Grant funds have been used to improve and expand the information and instructional technology infrastructure system (replacement of wiring, upgrading of hardware, equipment, and software) on the Saipan campus by establishing a fiber optic network. This will greatly improve the data transmission and improve our ageing network on the Saipan Campus.

For the transmission of Online Classes NMC uses NMC Online, a Learning Management System (LMS) that allows faculty to post course content for students to access all course related material from any computer 24/7 from Saipan, Tinian and Rota. NMC also has purchased Elluminate Live through CREES/Caripac Grant funds and WMIP funds. Elluminate Live is a web-based communication software that allows faculty to conduct classes synchronously via the Internet and any computer. NMC will continue to use the combination of NMC Online and Elluminate Live in conducting classes to Tinian & Rota next fall. VTC will also continue to be used, once the islands' Internet Service Provider has repaired its damaged under water cables.

Other necessary equipment (larger television monitors, conference phones and fax machines) to support the VTC classes for the Distance Education (DE) classrooms on Tinian and Rota will be purchased by the "capacity building" Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) grant. Price quotations have been solicited from local vendors and responses are slowly coming in.

The ANA grant provides funding for 2 facilitators on Rota and Tinian; 1 on Tinian and 1 on Rota. These personnel will provide technical assistance and academic support to the students and faculty on Tinian and Rota instructional sites utilizing DE facilities and modalities.

One of the biggest criticisms of the institution has been lack of support for its adjunct faculty, both on the Saipan campus as well as at the Rota and Tinian instructional sites. In order to institutionalize changes to increase the quality of instruction, the following best summarizes the actions being taken by the institution:

- **Policy and Procedures**

The Academic Council (AC) is reviewing several policies and procedures that will safeguard or improve the quality of instruction on the main campus as well as the Rota/Tinian instructional sites. These include:

1. Certification of Adjunct Faculty: A form has been developed to be used for certification of adjunct faculty by Department Chairs and Directors (Appendix C-4).
2. Orientation of Faculty (full-time and adjunct): The Academic Council has requested the Faculty Senate to work closely with the Human Resource Office and revise the "Faculty Handbook" and schedule regular orientation for full-time and adjunct faculty as identified in Faculty Senate President email shown in Appendix C-5.
3. The Director for Information and Learning Technology is a non-voting member of the Academic Council (AC) as well as Program Coordinators for the Rota and Tinian instructional sites. The recently approved Academic Council By-Laws reaffirms the critical need to have a representative from the ILT Department participate in discussions relating to technology and distance education (Appendix C-5).

4. The need to travel to Rota and Tinian to evaluate faculty (both full-time and adjunct) at least once a year was discussed in the AC meetings. Due to financial constraints (travel costs from Saipan to the sites by Department Chairs and Program Directors), it was recommended by the AC members that instructional site Program Coordinators perform classroom observations, and share results with appropriate Department Chairs and Program Directors. In addition, changing adjunct faculty from Personnel Actions to Part-Time contracts is being examined. This will more clearly delineate adjunct faculty responsibilities. No decision was made; this topic is still under discussion by the AC (Appendix C-6).
5. "Quality of Instruction and Services in Instructional Sites" continues to be a serious topic of discussion on the AC agenda. Several monitoring strategies are currently under consideration by the Academic Council. These are:
 - a. Completion of an NMC Orientation, including training in DE.
 - b. Appropriate course guide(s) will be provided to the faculty to guide preparation of course syllabus(i). Faculty will file a binder or an e-portfolio that contain course syllabus(i), class assignments, and the assessment measures to determine if these correlate with the instructional goals and student learning outcomes before classes begin (Appendix C-6).

- **Support Services to Students and Faculty**

Student Resource Centers

Student Resource Centers (SRC) on Rota and Tinian are equipped with computer hardware, software, computer-related equipment (printer, copier, and a fax) and are used by students to do classroom assignments and special projects. The Centers have internet connections and, students are able to conduct on-line research and to contact their instructors for help. The SRCs hold a small collection of films (DVDs and Videos), and students may check out films and books from the main campus library on Saipan as well as other PPEC institutions through interlibrary loan.

Library

The management and operation of the NMC Tinian Library has been assumed by the Tinian Office of the Mayor. The Mayor of Tinian plans to expand the library into a Tinian Public Library and continues to work closely with the JoeTen-Kiyu Public Library on Saipan. The Olympio T. Borja Library (NMC) continues to provide support, within its means, to the Tinian Public Library.

The Mayor of Rota controls the Rota Public Library. The facility for the public library was built on the Rota NMC instructional site and opened in 2002. While the facility has been completed for several years now, it remains unopened due to structural damage to the roof as a result of a super typhoon a few years ago. Library support to NMC Rota is coordinated by the NMC Program Coordinator and the Acting Director for Library Services on the main campus. Requested books and supplementary materials are checked out and pouched to Rota. These materials are collected and returned to the main campus Library by the NMC Program Coordinator.

In addition, the Ebsco database is available to all NMC students, staff and instructors at all three instructional sites through the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning organization. This invaluable database “provides access to more than 7,500 of the world’s leading magazines and journals in education, health, social issues, business and student services” <http://prel.org/>

Counseling Support

Also under consideration is providing counseling services for both Rota and Tinian instructional sites. While both Elluminate Live and VTC were considered possibilities for providing counseling services, neither has been identified as suitable due to confidentiality issues or difficulty in scheduling. For the Tinian instructional site the potential for a service agreement with that island’s mental health counselors is being examined.

An alternative for providing counseling services to NMC Tinian is being considered by NMC. A full-time Mental Health Counselor employed by the Tinian Health Center is assigned to also work with the students from the Public School System (elementary and secondary school students). This was an arrangement established through a memorandum of agreement and NMC is looking into how this arrangement may also be established between the College and Tinian Health Center. Rota presents a problem as there are no mental health counselors on that island.

Because of the costs required to travel between the islands, using the VTC or teleconference strategies were discussed to provide counseling services to students, faculty, and staff on Tinian and Rota. Privacy and confidentiality are the major issues that have to be addressed before any final decision can be made.

Academic Advising

Course and degree advising are done by the Instructional Site Program Coordinators. The Tinian Instructional Site Program Coordinator has completed academic advising workshops on Saipan which are held annually or more often depending on need. The Rota Instructional Site Program Coordinator will also be completing the regularly scheduled academic advising training as part of the college’s Professional Development Days occurring prior to the start of the Fall Semester.

Program Coordinators also assist students in Financial Aid advising in coordination with the Financial Aid Office on Saipan.

A further decision that NMC must make concerns the viability of the Rota and Tinian instructional sites.

The following enrollment figures are cause for concern in whether the college can continue to provide full instructional services to Rota and/or Tinian:

Enrollment at Instructional Sites, Academic Year 2007

Tinian	Spring 07	Fall 06
Upward Bound	0	0
Degree Programs	39	66
Professional Enrichment	1	1
Early Admissions	0	0
Total:	40	67

Rota	Spring 07	Fall 06
Upward Bound	9	1
Degree Programs	9	15
Professional Enrichment	0	0
Early Admissions	3	1
Total:	21	17

It is clear that enrollment at these sites could be deemed insufficient to justify the costs of operating them while providing "equitable" services. This issue will continue to be examined further with the continuing budget constraints.

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

October Visiting Team Report: As noted in the October report, "...an orientation for new members was scheduled though only two of the five new members attended" the July training (46). Since that training, and because of regional changes in the Boards of other Pacific Island institutions, the Pacific Post-Secondary Education Council (PPEC) proposed an additional Boardmanship training in March.

Actions Taken: Following submission of the *Northern Marianas College's Self Study Report* in July, two of five new members of the current Board of Regents completed Boardmanship Training organized through the college and made available to regional Boards of Regents through the PPEC. One Regent had not been appointed and approved by the CNMI Senate until August, well after that first training. The first training, as mentioned in the Self Study, was missed by the Board Chairperson and another Regent due to prior commitments to attend a PREL conference in Palau.

On March 2nd, a second Boardmanship workshop organized by the PPEC occurred in Hawaii through the Association of Governing Boards (AGM) with Dr. Shaw as the facilitator. This training was attended by two of the three Board members who had not attended earlier training opportunities (Appendix D-1). The Regent who had missed the earlier training and the Regent replacing the previous Board Chairperson from Tinian attended that training.

In addition, Commissioner Floyd Takeuchi visited the college in March. He spoke with the acting president on March 3, the Board Chair on March 4, and college community on March 5.

In correspondence with the WASC President (Appendix D-2), specific training on accreditation requirements by the ACCJC will be organized following the hiring of the chief executive officer.