SHOW CAUSE VISIT REPORT

**Northern Marianas College
P.O. Box 501250
Saipan, MP 96950**

**This report represents the findings of the External Evaluation Team that visited
Northern Marianas College on October 21-22, 2013.**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Northern Marianas College
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Introduction

Northern Marianas College (NMC) was established in 1981 and received full accreditation by ACCJC in 1985. The current enrollment of NMC is approximately 1200 full-time equivalent (FTE) students. The college offers associate degrees, technical and occupational degree and non-degree certificates, and a bachelor of science in education. For the past 11 years, the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities participated with the ACCJC in joint accreditation of the NMC BS in education, but a recent decision by the United States Department of Education (USDE) determined the program needed to be accredited solely under the auspices of one institutional accrediting agency. Because of this determination by the USDE, a substantive change evaluation visit to assess the NMC BS degree solely under ACCJC standards and policies simultaneously occurred with the visit of the ACCJC's show cause team. The two teams arrived on campus October 21 and finished their work on October 22. Although the teams shared the common space of the team room, the work of the teams was separate, as will be their reports. The findings, evidence, and conclusions presented in this report thus pertain only to the Commission's action to issue a Show Cause Order on February 11, 2013.

As described in the Comprehensive Evaluation Report of 2012, NMC has had difficulty meeting Accreditation Standards on a consistent basis since the visit of 2006. By the time of the visit in October 2012, the college had moved from Show Cause to the sanction of Probation and was required to remedy all identified deficiencies. In January 2013, the Commission considered all presented evidence and found that NMC was in substantial non-compliance with Eligibility Requirements 5 and 13, as well as with Accreditation Standards, II.C.2, III.A.1, III.A.2, IV.A.2, IV.B.1.a, and IV.B.1.j, as reported in Recommendations 2, 3, and 8 of the Evaluation Team Report.

A team of four evaluators and a team assistant was sent to Northern Marianas College to determine (a) if the college has corrected its deficiencies and now was in compliance with all Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies and (b) whether the college is prepared to sustain this compliance into the future. The team thoroughly examined the evidence, presented and discovered, concerning the college's work for each of the ERs and Standards listed above. The team found no other deficiencies to report and thus determined that the college remains in compliance in all other areas.

The team met with the Board of Regents, the president, administrators, faculty, staff and students to gather evidence regarding the issue in the Show Cause action letter. In addition, the team examined evidence provided in the team room and on-line. An open forum was held as well as a exit report which generally outlined preliminary findings.

The report prepared by the college was purposeful in its redundancy. The college believed that it was responding to advice it had received from the Commission staff, i.e., to respond to each Eligibility Requirement, Standard and Recommendation so that each could "stand alone." Because the ERs, Standards and Recommendations overlap

considerably, entire sections were repeated multiple times, making the report longer than it needed to be.

In addition, the report presented only the required sections and did not include future actions the college was planning to take on each matter. When questioned about the apparent omission, the college readily supplied the planned action steps for each issue. Thus, the team was satisfied that appropriate planning was taking place.

The team expresses gratitude to the college for its forthrightness in addressing these issues, its candor about its current condition and its enthusiasm in providing higher education to the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas. The following report represents the findings of the team, organized according to the issues presented in the ACCJC Show Cause action letter of February 11, 2013.

Section 1: Institutional Performance on Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards

A. Eligibility Requirements

This section provides observations, evidence and conclusions on the two Eligibility Requirements found to be out of compliance in the Show Cause Order detailed in the February 11, 2013 Commission action letter.

1. Eligibility Requirement 5: Administrative Capacity

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

The Commission's action letter expressed concern that the College lacked sufficient staff with appropriate preparation and experience to support its operations. This deficiency was identified in the Commission's January 2008 action letter and was still not fully addressed by October 2012. The College had attempted to hire a Chief Financial Officer, but the position remained unfilled. Instead, the College hired a Dean of Administration to perform the duties of fiscal management and oversight. The institution also stated that it had been unsuccessful in hiring a Director of Information Technology and was attempting a second search at the time of the Comprehensive Visit in October 2012. The 2012 Evaluation Team Report noted that these administrative vacancies also affected the institution's ability to meet Standards IV.B.2 and IV.B.2a. which required the president to be involved in hiring qualified staff and to assure that the college has appropriate staff for its size and complexity. Recommendation 5 of the October 2012 evaluation team's report, although listed as a recommendation for improvement, also addressed the need to fill vacancies in administrative support areas.

General Observations

The college has acted decisively to fill administrative positions, with the result that all positions identified in the 2012 team report have been filled. Positions have been advertised and have garnered applicants with appropriate experience. Higher-level

positions have had to be advertised several times with competitive salaries to attract qualified applicants. At the time of the visit, only four vacancies were posted for NMC, none key to providing administrative services for the college.

Findings and Evidence

All permanent administrative positions are advertised on the NMC's website, local newspapers, national websites, and when appropriate at higherEdJobs.com, and recruitment follows an approved, written employment process. All employees of the college and the administrative staff have a two- year contract and are evaluated annually using the Institution's Assessment for Employees by their immediate supervisor. The president was provided an initial two-year contract and is evaluated annually by the Board of Regents (BOR).

The Human Resources Office utilizes a chart that details the minimum qualifications for advertising each administrative position.   Minimum qualifications determine the salary. The President has the latitude to adjust salaries for those senior administrative positions reporting directly to the President.   The President has an active role in the selection process and was primarily responsible for evaluating and selecting all administrative positions in 2013. (IV.B.2)

In 2011, the president restructured a position after several attempts at externally filling the Chief Financial and Administrative Officer position. The advertisement had garnered only an insufficient or unqualified pool of applicants. Despite an increase in the compensation salary and a job advertisement that generated considerable interest, the college had difficulty attracting a qualified applicant. Restructuring the position to Dean of Administration resulted in the hiring of an internal applicant into the position in January 2012.

The responsibilities of this newly-created Dean of Administration position included overseeing the budget officer, chief accountant, facilities manager, director of community development institute, director of technology, procurement manager, and the bookstore manager. The dean made several proactive changes, including immediately reactivating the Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC) to provide participatory input into the budget process. This committee was inactivated by the departure of the prior Chief Financial and Administrative Officer in 2011. The BAFC is a major governance body that is responsible for providing recommendations to the president on all financial operational matters. The BAFC aligns institutional priorities with the allocation of resources (Form 3 process to fund college priorities) and reviews and adjusts the budget in accord with future projections of funding.

Other priorities on which the new Dean of Administration immediately focused were to create a financial plan for the next two years, provide to the president regular budget status and monthly financial reports for sharing with the BOR, and focus on the 2012 audit of the college's finances. In March 2013, the Dean led the college through the external audit, which yielded no audit exceptions and resulted in an unqualified auditor's

opinions on the financial statements as well as the report on internal control and compliance for federal programs. Two findings were identified in the report, neither considered a material weakness.

While recognizing the improvements made by the newly created position, the 2012 evaluation team recommended that the college fill the position of Chief Financial Officer and also recommended that the college complete the hiring for an IT Director and Admissions Director.   The college responded to the recommendation by hiring both positions in 2013.

The college has met Eligibility Requirement 5 by hiring the following:
- Chief Financial Officer, effective May 2013
- Director, Information Technology, effective April 2013
- Director/Registrar, effective May 2013
- Director, School of Education, effective May 2013.

The following comprise the Management Team and have been in their positions as of the effective dates shown below:
- President, effective July 2011, and an offer of renewal in May 2013.
- Dean, Academic Programs and Services, May 2010
- Dean, Student Services, January 2010
- Dean, Administration & Resource Development, filled January 2012
- Dean, Cooperative Research Extension & Education Services, 2006
- Chief Financial Officer, April 2013
- Director, Office of Institutional Effectiveness, 2012
- Director, Office of Information Technology, April 2013
- Director, Office of External Relations, 2010
- Director/Legal Counsel, Human Resources, September 2012

The Show Cause team also observed that Commission's action letter made special note of the destabilizing effect of the absence of a presidential contract. The Show Cause visiting team had verbal knowledge that the BOR had extended an additional contract on October 21, 2013 to the president for two years, backdated to July 1, 2013. However, in separate meetings with both the BOR and the president, the Show Cause team learned that the terms of the contract had not yet been finalized. The Show Cause team agrees with the Commission's action letter that the institution has made significant progress in strengthening the stability of the institution under the leadership of the current president. Nevertheless, the team expresses concern that because the contract negotiations were occurring during the team visit, the team was unable to confirm evidence of continued institutional stability either under the leadership of the current president or through recruitment of a replacement.

In summary, however, the administrative vacancies have been filled, and the college has an appropriate administrative staff for operating the college. The college currently meets

ER 5. However, the team is concerned regarding the retention and continued stability of the administrative staff, including the CEO.

Conclusion: The College meets the requirements for Eligibility Requirement 5.

Eligibility Requirement 13: Faculty

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

General Observations

To comply with ER 13, the college has developed, reviewed, approved, and implemented changes to both BOR Policy 5005 and Procedure 5005.1 to set minimum qualifications for all faculty. Implementation of the new policy and procedures resulted in the finding that 10 faculty members, or approximately one third of the full-time faculty, failed to meet the new minimum qualifications. Those 10 faculty members were offered several options which, if followed, would allow them to remain with the institution. Also, nine new faculty members were hired for the fall semester. The hiring of such a significant number of faculty and the reassignment of almost an equal number of current faculty caused great concern and some resistance within the institution. However, the necessary actions for assuring compliance with ER 13 were accomplished in the required time frame and with appropriate input from the governance system.

Findings and Evidence

When the ad hoc committee formed in October 2012 failed to prepare a proposal acceptable to the Commission for establishing compliance with ER 13, the Director of Human Resources and Dean of Academic Programs and Services proposed a policy modeled after the "Faculty Credentials Guidelines" of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. This proposal was the basis for BOR Policy 5005, "Minimum Instructional Faculty Qualifications," which was approved on August 7, 2013, and followed by approval of BOR Procedure 5005.1, "Minimum Degree Requirements for Academic Instructional Faculty by Position." The procedure lists the minimum qualifications by discipline. Using BOR Procedure 5005.1, the instructional qualifications of all full-time faculty were examined, with the result that several full-time faculty were reassigned either completely or partially so that requirements of the new minimum qualifications policy and procedure could be met. The College did an exemplary job in reassigning the displaced full-time faculty, comprising approximately one third of the full-time faculty.

The college hired nine full-time faculty members and employed many new adjuncts for fall semester 2013 to meet Eligibility Requirement 13. The president has been primarily involved in hiring more than half of those full-time faculty positions and shared the responsibility with the Dean of Academic Programs and Services to expedite having the

new faculty members on board to teach in the fall semester (IV.B.2.a). The Show Cause team's review of the personnel files confirmed all nine new full-time faculty satisfy or exceed the minimum qualifications established in BOR Policy 5005 and Procedure 5005.1.

To meet the need cited by the 2012 visiting team for improving the timeliness of faculty evaluations, the College made two categories of improvement. The Academic Council revised the schedule for the student appraisal of courses and instructors. The new schedule requires the appraisals to be administered three weeks before the end of the semester, with results made available to faculty and their department and program supervisors when the final grades are submitted. Also, the Human Resources Office oversees the annual evaluation process for full-time faculty members. The evaluation instrument to measure faculty performance is administered by department chairs and directors.

The results of the most recent evaluation cycle show a completion rate of ninety-five percent. Timely availability of evaluation results supports the faculty's and supervisors' discussions on instructional improvement.

To meet ER 13's second requirement for a "*core . . . sufficient in size and experience to support all of the institution's educational programs*" the Dean of Academic Programs and Services and the Institutional Researcher, with feedback from the Human Resources Office and Academic Council, determined that a range of 65-70 percent full-time and 30-35 percent adjunct faculty members would best meet the needs of the College, in order to ensure appropriate and timely participation in curriculum, development of SLOs, evaluations and planning. Based on weekly student contact hours, the data for 2010 through 2012 indicate a three-year average of 69 percent full-time and 31 percent part-time faculty. With the hiring of nine new full-time faculty members, this ratio is even greater for fall 2013.

Conclusion: The institution meets Eligibility Requirement 13.

Section B: Accreditation Standards
This section of the report provides general observations, findings and evidence, and conclusions regarding each of the Standards found to be out of compliance in the Show Cause order. This section also provides direction for where additional detail concerning the issue may be found elsewhere in the report.

1. Standard II.C.2
The institution evaluates library and other learning support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.

General Observations

The college responded to this deficiency by examining all learning outcomes for all learning support services. As a result, the Library created five new Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), implemented them, and assessed their effectiveness. Additionally, a minimum of two SLOs were established and assessed in all learning support services.

Findings and Evidence

To avoid the repetition that would result from the overlap between the content of Standard II.C.2 and that of Recommendation 2, the findings and evidence for Standard II.C.2. are found in the report's findings and evidence for Recommendation 2, starting on page 12.

 Conclusion: The college meets Standard II.C.2

 2. **Standard III.A.1**
The institution ensures the integrity and quality of its programs and services by employing personnel who are qualified by appropriate education, training and experience to provide and support these programs and services. Criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel are clearly and publicly stated. Job descriptions are directly related to institutional mission and goals and accurately reflect position duties, responsibilities and authority.

 General Observations

The Show Cause team determined that procedures for recruitment and hiring are in place and consistent with Commission Standards. New HR policies make clear that an appropriate policy related to minimum qualifications was reviewed and approved by the BOR and are now in place.

Findings and Evidence

After interviews with HR staff and detailed examination of appropriate personnel files in the HR office files, the team is able to verify that the institution has satisfied this requirement. The institution has worked diligently to correct deficiencies related to minimum qualifications. BOR policy 5005 regarding, "Minimum Degree Requirements for Academic Instructional Faculty by Position," was reviewed and finalized at the BOR meeting on August 7, 2013. The new minimum qualification policy was used in hiring new instructional staff.

The Show Cause team has determined that the college has applied the new BOR Policy 5005 and Procedure 5005.1 to employ personnel qualified by appropriate education, training, and experience.

Conclusion: The College meets Standard III.A.1

3. Standard III.A.2
The institution maintains a sufficient number of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The institution has a sufficient number of staff and administrators with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support the institution's mission and purposes.

General Observations

The college has worked hard this past year to hire new faculty and administrators that are necessary to support the institution's mission and purpose. Although challenging at times, the college was able to identify and hire appropriately-trained staff to fill all full time faculty and administrative positions.

Findings and Evidence

The team interviewed HR staff, department chairs, and appropriate administrators, and determined that the college has implemented new hiring processes based on minimum qualifications for faculty and appropriate preparation and experience for administrators In addition, for the ratio of full time to part time faculty established at 65-70 and 30-35, the College is currently meeting this goal and has done so for the period 2010-2012.

Further information on the team's findings and evidence concerning this standard can also be found in the report's section on page 15, concerning Eligibility Requirement 13.

Conclusion: The college meets Standard III.A.2.

4. Standard IV.A.2
The institution establishes and implements a written policy providing for faculty, staff, administrators, and student participation in decision-making processes. The policy specifies the manner in which individuals bring forward ideas from their constituencies and work together on appropriate policy, planning, and special purpose bodies.

General Observations

The college revised its decision-making process from a shared governance model to a participatory model, based on appropriate input from constituencies, councils and committees and also defined the decision-making process and authority within the institution. The new structure is codified in policy and the Board of Regents is conversant with the changes. While making these governance changes, the college also eliminated the position of Honorary Regent from the Board, thus complying with Recommendation 8 of the previous team, and also removing the conflict of multiple voices representing the college at the Board level. See Recommendation 8, page 15 for additional detail.

Findings and Evidence

The evidence of this work is contained in a document entitled "Institutional Excellence Guide (IEG), An Organizational Guide to Participatory Governance, Planning, Assessment and Budgeting." Describing the roles of each decision-making body in the institution, the document provides guidelines for participation of the governance bodies and descriptions of the college's planning, assessment, and budgeting processes. Though the document is new, having been updated for a period of 11 months with input from the campus community, it was formally distributed in its most updated format the day before the Show Cause team arrived, the information is comprehensive and clearly-presented. For example, the IEG states that individuals participate in decision making through their input on the participatory governance bodies, describes the categories and composition of governance groups, and emphasizes that, "Major participatory governance bodies are involved in ultimate recommendation to the President or decision-making entity" (IEG 11).

Further information on the team's findings and evidence concerning this standard can also be found in the report's section on page 15 concerning Recommendation 8.

Conclusion: The college meets Standard IV.A.2

4.   Standard IV.B.1.a
The governing board is an independent policy-making body that reflects the public interest in board activities and decisions. Once the board reaches a decision, it acts as a whole. It advocates for and defends the institution and protects it from undue influence or pressure.

General Observations

Minutes for the Board of Regents meetings reveal that the BOR has engaged in appropriate discussion regarding its responsibility to act as a whole. The Board has also been an advocate for the college within the Commonwealth government.

Findings and Evidence

The BOR demonstrated its responsibility to act as a whole during the Show Cause team's interview with the entire BOR. Several members gave examples of referring issues to the appropriate college authority rather than engaging in inappropriate discussions as individual members. Acknowledging the difficulty of doing so in their close-knit culture, BOR members described their growing ability to deflect inappropriate requests, thus strengthening the lines of communication between the community and the college in the appropriate way. The team observed the importance of this endeavor and the BOR's commitment to maintain these efforts and thus deepen the community's understanding of appropriate communications with the BOR.

The BOR has worked to ensure that the college remains an autonomous, independent policy-making body. The BOR actively sought a conditional amendment to give the College the right to determine the college mission.. The BOR facilitated this change by facilitating sessions to explain the importance of autonomy to the college. The Show Cause team heard testimony from the BOR about its activities in this arena and discerns that the BOR understands its responsibilities.

Conclusion: The college meets Standard IV.B.1.a.

6. Standard IV.B.1.j

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

General Observations

The BOR has evaluated the president using a mutually-agreed upon instrument and indicated at the time of the team's October visit that results of that evaluation were currently being used to develop the terms of a new contract.

As evidenced by the BOR's increased level of participation in training and the subsequent move to a participatory governance model, the BOR has shown that it appropriately delegates responsibility to the president.

Findings and Evidence

Though the outcome of the BOR's contract negotiations with the president was unknown to the team at the close of the visit, the delegation of authority to the president to manage the operations of the college is a cornerstone of the new governance system and well documented. This responsibility is clearly described in the Institutional Excellence Guide and in BOR policy. In interviews, individual BOR members made a point of recognizing their role as policy-makers and the president's role as operational. One member emphasized, "We have reached that transformative change in our capacity to be able to work collaboratively in partnership with the president, keeping in mind the clear distinction between the roles and responsibilities of the board as policy maker and the president as the operational officer." To a person, the BOR attributed the new understanding of its responsibility to training facilitated by recognized accreditation authorities, including the training presented by the ACCJC president in November 2012. The team explored the Board's understanding of this delineation of roles and was convinced of BOR members' understanding that they are ultimately responsible for the quality of the institution achieved through appropriate delegation to the president for all operations.

Conclusion: The college meets Standard IV.B.1.j

7. Standard IV.B.2

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

General Observations

This Standard was referenced in both the 2012 Evaluation Team report and the Commission's Show Cause letter as one that was potentially affected by the college's inability to maintain appropriate administrative capacity, as described in Eligibility Requirement 13. Recommendation 5 of the 2012 Evaluation Team Report also addresses the requirement to fill administrative vacancies.

Findings and Evidence

The 2012 Evaluation report found that the president had not been actively involved in the selection of faculty. With the new minimum qualifications in place, the college hired nine new faculty for the fall 2013 semester, and the president was involved in hiring those positions. Review of planning documents as well as various governance documents showed that she provides leadership in planning and budgeting and in assessing institutional effectiveness. The documentation provided for Recommendation 8, on page 15 of this report provides additional detail.

Conclusion: The college meets Standard IV.B.2

8. Standard IV.B.2.a

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

General Observations

This Standard was referenced in the 2012 Evaluation Team report as well as the Commission's Show Cause letter as one that was potentially affected by the college's inability to maintain appropriate administrative capacity, as described in Eligibility Requirement 5. Recommendation 3 of the 2012 Evaluation Team Report also addresses the requirement to fill administrative vacancies. While Standard IV.B.2.a is not recognized as a deficiency in either the team report or the Show Cause action letter, the team nonetheless wished to address it in this report to conclude the matter.

Findings and Evidence

The evidence presented in the documentation regarding ER 5 on page 2 and Recommendation 3 on page 14 also applies to Standards IVB.2 and IVB.2.a. With the hiring of all vacant administrative positions, the college is now in compliance with these Standards.

Conclusion: The college meets Standard IV.B.2.a

Section 2: Institutional Response to Evaluation Team Recommendations

2012 Recommendation 2
To meet the Standards, the team recommends that the library build on its successful student satisfaction survey efforts by implementing strategies to directly measure Student Learning Outcomes concerning information literacy. (Standard II.C.2)

General observations

The 2012 evaluation team found that an information literacy component in the BE111 College Success course has become a requirement of all NMC degree programs. However, limited work has been done on establishing and assessing meaningful student learning outcomes (SLOs) in library and other learning support services. The student survey data used to assess learning, while helpful, does not capture or adequately assess student learning. Recommendation 2 was directed toward the library SLO and the information literacy component. However, the college has taken its work on the recommendation a step further by updating all outcomes for all learning support services. The Library and Learning support services are integrated throughout the organization and support the mission of the college. The services included in this standard comprise the Department of Library Programs & Services (LPS) and other Learning Support Services (LSS).

Several discussions occurred over the course of the spring 2013 semester to formulate or update and assess SLOs for both the LPS and LSS. The LSS programs initiated assessments of at least two SLOs for their areas during spring 2013 and completed the assessments by the end of summer. The college offers a mandatory core course, BE111 College Success, which includes an information literacy component that is a requirement for all NMC degree programs. The course has its own set of SLO's, and achievement of the course outcome is tied to five new learning outcomes.

Findings and Evidence

In response to Recommendation 2, the college responded with the processes already in place for student learning outcomes for the library (LPS) and all learning support services (LSS). The learning support services include the English Language Lab Tutoring Services, College Access Challenge Grant tutoring services, International Student Services, Career Center, Computer Lab, Distance Education, Media Services, and Disability Support Services.

The LSS fall under several areas of responsibility:

- The Director of Distance Learning Education (DLE) is responsible for the Distance Education Program.
- The Director of Information Technology has responsibility for the Computer Labs and Media Services
- The Dean of Student Services has responsibility for Disability Support Services, Tutoring Services, Career Services, and International Student Services. In addition, he oversees the Library Programs and Services.
- The Dean of Academic Programs and Services has responsibility for the English Learning Lab within the Languages and Humanities Department

Under the Dean of Academic Programs and Services, SLOs and a regular assessment for all academic programs has been in place since 2008.   However, as evidenced in the 2012 evaluation report, though SLOs and administrative unit outcomes (AUOs) for non-instructional programs were established, they were not regularly evaluated.

Representatives for LPS and LSS met on February 25, April 18, and October 4, 2013, to undergo SLO training, and to collaborate on updating their SLOs and discuss assessment of the semester's SLOs.

Library (LPS)
All students must take BE111 College Success, an information literacy component that is a requirement of all NMC degree programs. The library showed evidence that it had adopted the definition of information literacy developed by the American Library Association and the Association of College and Research Libraries, i.e., *"a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information."*

The LPS established five learning outcomes tied to this definition, and outcomes were assessed over the spring and summer of 2013. The library showed evidence of multiple methods of assessment to measure student learning, including:
- Analyzing the works cited from research assignments
- Participatory exercise and assignment
- Quizzes
- Surveys
- Identifying and citing academic periodicals.

Evidence documents show results of the assessment were used to make improvements, and the LPS staff will update the resources used quarterly and develop research aids to increase students' knowledge of the college's learning resources. The LPS staff also is collaborating with faculty to administer an information literacy evaluation for establishing a baseline at the start of a student's career and measuring progress at the midway and ending points of the college career. All LPS SLOs are assessed by the college's Program Review Outcomes and Assessment Committee (PROAC) on a

staggered two-year assessment cycle. Programs document that they are on track with their assessment through their quarterly updates to PROAC .

Learning Support Services (LSS)
All LSSs have established student learning outcomes and administrative unit outcomes. To assess the effectiveness of student learning, LSS SLOs are also assessed by PROAC on a staggered, two-year assessment. A six-page document shows evidence that the departments have sufficiently defined their outcomes for PROAC to track, monitor, and evaluate each department via their Form 1. Each department's assessment and improvement plans will be reported by the department in its annual program review on Form 2 in the second year of each cycle.   PROAC will make recommendations for resource allocations based on this information..

The means of LSS assessment include:
- Surveys
- Quizzes
- Feedback from résumé writing workshops
- Pre and post tests.

All non-instructional outcomes coincide with campus educational objectives.   These processes are described as part of the Program Review Outcomes and Assessment committee (PROAC) responsibility. The process is aimed at connecting institutional effectiveness with assessment of intended student learning outcomes and is tied to resource allocation. The PROAC Form 2 provides a comprehensive analysis of the program's effectiveness and presents recommendations for the program and the institution based on a thorough analysis of data. Results from the program review are then used to inform the planning and budgeting process. The Form 3 process was a piloted project for linking program review, budgeting, and resource allocation to address budget shortfalls in FY 2012. PROAC will continue to monitor and track progress of each program's assessment to ensure student learning and to tie resource allocation to assessment results. Five SLOs are established in the library with at least two SLOs in all other learning support services.

The 2013 team finds that the library and learning support services has several authentic assessments in place. Each area has created improvement plans based on the spring and summer evaluation and follows a two-year staggered assessment plan.

Conclusion: The college satisfies Recommendation 2.

2012 Recommendation 3

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

General Observations

The 2012 Evaluation Team found that the college had no criteria for guiding the faculty hiring process and that some current faculty were teaching in specific subjects, e.g., history or English, when their graduate degrees were in teaching or education. It should be noted that Standard III.A.2, while appearing as part of the recommendation, is only mentioned once in the general observations section and not in the 2012 team report narrative leading up to this recommendation. This Standard calls upon the institution to "maintain a sufficient number of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution" and also "a sufficient number of staff and administrators." The college responded to the faculty portion of this requirement by establishing a full-time/part-time ratio in policy and procedure, as discussed in the Eligibility Requirement 13 section of this report, page 5. The college responded to the administrative portion, as described in the Eligibility Requirement 5 section of this report, page 2.

Findings and Evidence

To satisfy this recommendation as well as Eligibility Requirement 13, the college developed and implemented a new policy on minimum faculty qualifications that included criteria clearly outlining educational requirements. In actuality, the college applied these criteria to *current* faculty as well as future hires. As a result, 12 current faculty did not meet the minimum qualifications to teach their regular assignments. To assure that faculty could be accommodated, the college offered several options for meeting minimum qualifications: i.e., reassignment to instructional disciplines for which the individual was qualified to teach; additional coursework (at college expense) to gain appropriate education to teach in the current assignment; or reassignment to another area of the college. Of the 10 individuals, nine remained with the institution and accepted the offered options. The team has determined that the college made an appropriate effort to accommodate current faculty while satisfying the recommendation and meeting both ER 13 and associated Standards.

The college has worked diligently to hire new faculty and administrators to support the mission and purpose of the college. Although implementation of the minimum qualifications for current staff was challenging, the college managed to achieve total faculty-both full-and part-time-adherence to the new minimum qualifications in a short period of time.

To respond to the inclusion of Standard III.A.2 in this recommendation, the college researched how other colleges establish full to part-time ratios for ensuring adequate staff and determined a 70:30 ratio was appropriate for the size of NMC in order to have a faculty of sufficient size to develop curriculum, participate in development of SLOs, to complete timely evaluations and engage in academic planning activities. The college meets the ratio. In addition, the response to ER 5 on administrative capacity included hiring of all administrative vacancies, thus assuring an adequately staffed administration.

Conclusion: The college satisfies Recommendation 3.

2012 Recommendation 8

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

General Observations

The college vigorously addressed each part of this recommendation by making improvements on multiple fronts. The team found evidence that even before the visit of the 2012 evaluation team; the president and the BOR began work on distinguishing their roles. The 2012 visit revealed, however, the need for more improvement in the BOR's understanding of its policy role and also in its ability to distinguish between policy and operational procedures. The Show Cause team observed that a major initiative to analyze the governance system and codify the structure began immediately after receiving the Commission's action letter. As a part of that activity, the college undertook efforts to clearly define the president's role in governance and to respond to the criticism that the presence of honorary regents who sit on the BOR representing some constituent groups undermined the president's responsibilities and authority with the Board of Regents.

Findings and Evidence

To deepen their understanding of the role of a regent, BOR members continued an ambitious training schedule consisting of attendance at workshops presented by national or regional groups as well as participation in trainings provided by consultants through ACCT. Some of the consultants appeared in person, and another presented via the web modality Skype. BOR attendance at these sessions was not always 100 percent, but a BOR majority engaged in these activities in 2013. Future training plans include participating in ACCT's Trustee Education Seminar Series over the next twelve months, and meeting with the ACCT Consultant via a BOR Retreat in December.

The BOR has reviewed all of its policies and made a specific effort, with the advice of the president, to separate policy from procedures, previously combined in one document. This activity took a considerable amount of time and effort on the part of the BOR and the administration. During the August BOR meeting alone, 18 policies were reviewed and acted upon. The BOR now has firsthand experience with distinguishing policy from procedure and ensuring that the BOR's role remains at the policy level. In discussions with the Show Cause team, the BOR members demonstrated that they are conversant with their collective role and conveyed their sense of achievement in being able to

discuss their work in redefining policies. The team is satisfied that the BOR has successfully built its collective understanding of its role. It appears that the BOR is now well positioned to act as a whole at the policy level and effectively to advocate for the college. The challenge will be for the BOR and its members to maintain those roles despite external or even internal pressures to devolve into old behaviors

The college decided to restructure its shared governance process into a participatory governance model for decision-making. In making that shift, the college paid specific attention to defining the role of the president as the conduit to the Board and the president's responsibility to act as the voice of the institution. Within this new structure, it became clear to the college that the seating of Honorary Regents on the BOR undermined this information pathway and should be eliminated. On June 6, 2013, the Regents voted to abolish the role of honorary regent.

Conclusion: With the clarification of the president's role in governance and the elimination of the Honorary Regents, the college has satisfied Recommendation 8.

Summary and Conclusion

In the short space of less than a year, the institution has demonstrated its capability for meeting the eligibility requirements, complying with accreditation standards, and responding to the recommendations described in the Commission's Show Cause action. Northern Marianas College has promptly and systematically established the policies and implemented the procedures necessary to show compliance. It has changed the composition of its Board of Regents by removing Honorary Regents and changed its governance structure from a shared governance model to a participatory governance structure which codifies the role of the president. Because of a major advocacy effort on the part of the BOR, the college mission is now a responsibility of the college rather than the legislature. The minimum qualifications of faculty have been established and utilized in hiring. The learning outcomes in information literacy have been established and assessed. All administrative vacancies have been filled.

A responsibility of an accredited college is to adhere to all Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Commission policies at all times. Northern Marianas College has demonstrated that it meets those requirements today, but many of these procedures, guidelines, and governance structures and college policies have just been established or changed. The college has found itself in this situation before and was unable to sustain its adherence to the tenets of accreditation. By its continued attention to these matters, NMC must provide assurance that its current state of compliance with Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies can be sustained, thus assuring the long-term stability of its improvements. The team urges the college to continue its efforts in demonstrating its commitment by fostering stability and sustaining the effort that has been demonstrated thus far.