

MAY 22 2009

SHOW CAUSE VISIT REPORT
NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE

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A Report Prepared for
The Accrediting Commission *for* Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

This report represents the findings of the evaluation team
that visited

Northern Marianas College
on
April 20-22, 2009

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**Northern Marianas College
Report on Show Cause Visit**

April 20-22, 2009

Introduction and Overview

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, at its January 2009 meeting, reviewed Northern Marianas College Show Cause Report of October 2008 and the report of the evaluation team which visited the college in November 2008. The Commission took action to accept Northern Marianas College Show Cause report, **continue the College on Show Cause**, and require the College to submit a Show Cause Report by April 1, 2009, with a visit of Commission representatives to follow.

Accreditation History: Northern Marianas College's recent accreditation history is outlined to provide context to the visit by this April 2009 evaluation team. The College underwent a comprehensive evaluation in October, 2006. As a result of that evaluation, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges took action at its January 2007 meeting to impose **Probation**, and to require the institution to correct several deficiencies. The College submitted a Progress Report in March 2007 and submitted a second Progress Report in October 2007. The October report was followed by an evaluation team visit. At its meeting of January 2008, upon review of the College reports and the October 2007 evaluation team report, the Commission acted to place Northern Marianas College on **Show Cause**. The Commission required the College to submit a special report in March 2008 on its actions to resolve some of the deficiencies identified by the accreditation teams. It was also required to submit a Show Cause Report, detailing why its accreditation should not be terminated, by October 15, 2008.

At its June 2008 meeting, the Commission acted to accept the Northern Marianas College March 2008 Special Report and continue the College on **Show Cause**. Because the institution had not addressed the findings of its external audit in a timely and effective manner, the College was also required to submit a Special Report in October 15, 2008, on its resolution of the 2007 fiscal year external audit findings. The report was to demonstrate that the College had resolved its recommendations on integrated planning and systematic program review (Recommendations 1 and 2). The report was followed by the November 2008 visit of Commission representatives.

April 2009 Evaluation Visit: The College submitted its Show Cause Report to the Commission on April 1, 2009. An evaluation team visit was conducted on April 20-22, 2009, by Dr. Sherrill L. Amador, Team Chair, Commissioner, and former Palomar College Superintendent/President; and Dr. Chris Myers, Interim Director of Research and Planning, Cerritos College. The College was prepared for the visit and the team room had all the necessary documentation.

The team met with the Board of Regents, the College President, ALO/Dean of Academic Programs and Services, Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Director of Information

Technology, Institutional Researcher, Rota and Tinian Instructional Site Coordinators, Management Team, and members of the College Council (CC), Planning, Program Review & Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC), Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC), Faculty Senate, ASNMC Student Government, Staff Senate, and the Student Services Managers/Directors and Academic Department Council. One faculty member met with the team by appointment.

The team noted that the College had maintained the momentum of completing considerable institutional work since the last evaluation team visit in November 2008. It was obvious to the team that the College took the Commission's Action Letter and its accreditation responsibilities very seriously and was focusing and prioritizing its work to comply with the Accreditation Standards as well as strive for institutional effectiveness.

College Response to the Commission Recommendations

The visiting team's evaluation of the College's work to resolve Recommendations 1 and 2 from its October 2006 evaluation as requested in President Barbara Beno's action letter of February 3, 2009, follows:

Recommendation 1. The College should review existing planning processes in order to establish and implement a shared vision for the future of the College with agreed upon priorities that:

- a. develops and implements budgeting and resource allocations guided by institutional needs for human resources and services;**
- b. includes the two centers on Tinian and Rota in the planning;**
- c. integrates all aspects of planning, evaluation, and resources allocation;**
- d. is driven by College mission and goals;**
- e. relies on faculty and staff participation;**
- f. is well documented and widely distributed.**

(Standards I.B.2, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.5, I.B.6, II.A.1, II.A.2, II.B.4, II.C, III.A, II.B, III.C, III.D, IV.A, IV.B, including various subsections)

Observations and Analysis of Evidence: Northern Marianas College Board of Regents adopted its PROA Strategic Plan 2008-12 (SP 2009-12) on September 25, 2008. (The letters PROA represent the first letters of the College's four strategic goals.) The College used its Strategic Plan 2006-2010 as the foundation for the new plan. A college-wide visioning process based on external reviews and SWOT analysis was held in spring 2008 followed by strategic planning activities in summer 2008. All college constituencies including those from the Rota and Tinian sites participated in these planning activities. The Key Trio consulting firm assisted the College with the processes and continues to work with the College on planning and research issues.

The first year implementation efforts of the planning and budgeting cycle of the SP 2008-12 is informed by the results of the College's first cycle of program reviews. The recommendations from the program reviews for all academic, student services, and

administrative units were compiled in the *Program Review 2008 Composite Report*. The College achieved 100% submission rate by all programs and services. The governance group, Institutional Priorities Ad Hoc Committee (IPAC) prioritized all the recommendations. These prioritized recommendations along with the *Operational Plan: Annual Implementation Action Plan for Year 1*, a management document, were used by the Planning, Budget and Evaluation Council as the basis for budget requests for Fiscal Year 2009. The team found many examples of the direct linkages of program review recommendations, strategic goals, and resource allocations in the first cycle which resulted in several positive actions, these are just a few:

- English Language Institute created and funded, based on identified need through student performance data
- Program and course deletions, course revisions, course re-sequencing with programs
- New course development in Mathematics based on student performance data
- Reallocation of funds to new priority for Community Development Institute coordinator
- Renovation and repair of Building V restrooms

The College assessed its first cycle (2007-08) of institutional planning and budgeting processes and determined that simplification was needed. A new governance document, *Institutional Excellence Guide, "Students First"* was developed through shared governance processes and adopted by the Board of Regents in December 2008. This document delineates the roles and responsibilities of all governance groups including the Board of Regents, College Council, standing committees, Associated Students, Faculty and Staff Senates, and the College President. The document defines shared decision-making and outlines the institutional planning, assessment, and budgeting processes, structures and timelines. Also, calendars and timeframes for submissions of documents from the program review process to resource allocation are prescribed.

The membership on the revised governance groups has become more inclusive. Representatives from Rota and Tinian are voting members on the College Council, Planning, Program Review & Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC), and the Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC), which are the three major planning and budgeting groups for the College. The number of faculty representatives has increased on all governance groups as has their participation rate. As an example, from February 20 to March 27, 2009, 83% of the faculty representatives had attended all five of the regular meetings of PROAC, and 65%, attended eight work sessions. This work resulted in a thorough review of the program reviews and recommendations, the processes used, and the impacts the recommendations are having on the programs and the institution.

Based on interviews, meeting minutes of CC, PROAC, BAFC and Board of Regents from November 2008 to April 2009, program reviews, the operational plan, and the Legislative budget for 2010, the team determined that College is currently using its new guide in its second cycle of planning and resource allocation. Committee members are very positive of what has occurred to date and are self-critical of the past. To continue to improve processes and provide training for all staff, a guide has been drafted, *Planning, Program*

Review, and Budget Manual (April 2009), and is currently being reviewed by the appropriate governance groups with anticipated approval by College Council in May. It was evident to the team that on many levels within the College (faculty, management, staff and students) are embracing program review, student learning outcomes, and planning and are able to explain how the new model functions. There appears to be a genuine commitment by the college community to make these new processes work. Committee members are engaging in self-critical discussions of what has been learned from the program reviews and SLO assessments at the course and program level. The team found many examples where change is taking place based on the analysis of data provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

To provide accountability for college-wide planning, PROAC and the management team have added quarterly updates to the operational plan document where strategic goals, objectives, required actions, success criteria, timelines, assigned responsibility, and resources needed are stated. These updates indicate the status of the planned actions by categorizing actions as completed, pending, and in progress. Two quarterly updates, Q1—August-October 08, Q2—November 08-January 09 are completed. Q3—February 09-April 09 is due in June. This is a working document used by PROAC, BFAC, the management team, and the College Council to ensure continuous progress. The team determined that the 27-page document is being used regularly. The team noted that a significant amount of planned institutional work had been completed at the time of the visit.

Conclusion: The College has substantially implemented this recommendation. The College completed its first cycle of integrated planning last year. Using the College's new planning model, the second cycle will be completed in June 2009 when the Board approves the operations budget for 2010. A Composite Report capturing the status on all planning actions stated in *Operational Plan: Annual Implementation Action Plan for Year 1* will be produced by August 2009. At that time, the College should communicate the planning results to all internal constituencies and the external community. These final steps will bring the College to full proficiency level using the ACCJC Rubric on Institutional Effectiveness in Planning. The College has several processes and documents to evaluate its planning and budgeting processes as well as the actions taken.

Recommendation 2. The team recommends again that the College institutionalize a coordinated, systematic process for evaluating program effectiveness. This process should include definitions of learning outcomes for all programs, a determination of program relationships to labor markets, and objective measures of student performance, which can inform and guide decisions to improve programs. (Standards I.B.1, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.5, I.B.6, I.B.7, II.A.1, II.A.2, II.B.4, II.C, III.A, III.B, III.C, III.D, IV.A, IV.B.2.a, IV.B.2.b)

Observations and Analysis of Evidence: The College's Student Learning Outcomes Comprehensive Implementation Program (SLOCIP) documents the assessment and program review process, which utilizes the Nichols Five-Column Model and specifies the required report components. The program review process uses two templates to capture

data for analysis: one for academic programs and one for academic support and administrative programs. The elements of the academic program consists of a brief history of the program, student achievement data (course completion, retention term-to-term, program completion or degree/certificate completion rates), human resources-faculty, technology resources, program SLO mapping, and recommendations for the program and for the institution. The elements of the academic support and administrative programs consist of a brief history, specific services/functions of the program, data/evidence, human , physical, technology resources, program SLO/administrative unit outcomes mapping, and recommendations for the program and institution.

The Planning, Program Review & Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC) reviewed all program review reports generated following this process and published the results in *Program Review 2008: A Composite Report of Academic Programs, Student Services Programs, and Administrative Programs*. Using this process, the College has taken several planned actions. One example is: the Office of Admissions and Records program review processes resulted in hiring an Enrollment Manager, who plans to use institutional research data and analysis to identify factors associated with student retention. Also, a Student Retention Committee is being formed.

PROAC evaluated the program review process in fall 2008 through input from all staff using the process. The results are documented in *An Evaluation of the Process and Outcomes of Assessment and Program Review, First Cycle 2008*, draft March 28, 2009. Evaluation results indicated that the process should be continued with some minor modifications. PROAC also assessed the implementation of program review recommendations and found that the majority of programs had implemented one or more recommendations and evaluated the impact of the implementation.

The team determined that the SLO portion of the SLOCIP is also being implemented. All academic program SLOs were mapped to the revised general education SLOs in fall 2008. Program SLOs were assessed, as documented in the Composite Report. In addition, faculty assessed SLOs in more than 90% of the College's courses. Although the institutional (general education) SLOs were completed, they have not yet been assessed. The team noted that the faculty used the fifth column of the Nichols model to report data analyses rather than its intended purpose of documenting how assessment results have been used to make improvements. The team suggests additional training be provided related to the Nichols model fifth column.

The team verified that evaluation survey results from the first cycle show that college faculty and staff has engaged in greater dialogue about student learning, administrative outcomes, processes and resource allocation, and planning.

The evaluation report documents efforts to increase the College's capability to access and use information for decision-making. This includes providing training related to program review, SLO development and assessment, and using student achievement data; implementing new computer software (including portal module of PowerCampus and TracDat); and hiring a data base administrator. As a result, additional student outcome

data have been made available to faculty and staff for assessment and decision making. The team learned there are also plans to survey college graduates and alumni, and to develop and assess institutional performance benchmarks. At the time of the visit, a draft document developed by a consultant, *Executive Summary--Assessing Student Success: A Vital Component of Institutional Effectiveness*, was being reviewed by the governance groups. The adoption of the document is expected in late May. The document outlines the recommended student assessment instruments and their functions and how they will be used in data collection of baseline assessment, indirect institutional measures of student learning outcomes, and direct institutional measures of student learning. This work will assist the College in further refining the development and measurement of key performance indicators.

Conclusion: The College has achieved the program review portion of this recommendation. The College is implementing, evaluating, and revising its program process, and is generating student performance data. The College has done a good job of documenting dialogue, assessment results, and tying program results to planning. The team determined the College attained proficiency level based on the ACCJC Rubric of Institutional Effectiveness in Program Review.

The College has partially achieved the total integration of the student learning assessment and achievement portion of this recommendation. There is evidence that course and program SLOs have been developed and assessed and that institutional (general education) SLOs have been developed and are being assessed. The College has completed the developmental level and is working toward the proficiency level based on the ACCJC Rubric of Institutional Effectiveness in Student Learning Outcomes. Note: SLOs were a separate recommendation (Recommendation 4) in the October 2006 Comprehensive evaluation team report.

Therefore, this recommendation has been substantially implemented.

Other Observations of the Team

During the visit, the team observed some faculty and staff using the word “grievance” to voice complaints and concerns. This reflects the experience of an institution using a new model of governance and the lack of clarity of what format (governance process, human resources, legal rights, etc.) a concern, complaint and or grievance should be resolved. The team noted that the College is seeking to rectify the situation through training of all constituent groups. An April 2009 draft document entitled *Planning, Program Review, and Budget Manual* was in the process of being vetted by all the governance groups. The team also suggests the College review its exiting grievance policies and practices and make any necessary changes to improve clarification. The team suggests that a distinction be made of when a complaint is operational (resolved through administrative levels) versus governance (resolved through governance channels and groups) to improve lines of communication.

In the November 2008 evaluation team report, the Board of Regents was cited for not having evaluated the College President. In December 2008 the evaluation was completed. At the time of the visit, a survey instrument was distributed to the Associated Students, Staff Senate, Faculty Senate, and management team. As part of a second evaluation of the president, the Board decided to invite input from the constituent groups. The groups were also asked to give input into the president's goals and objectives for the upcoming year. This input was to be used to help inform the Board's decision on the president's contract which is up for renewal in May 2009. The timing of the survey, so close to the renewal of president's contract, created a political situation where some constituent members perceived they would have direct impact on the outcome of the president's contract. This scenario occurring one month before the CEO contract renewal could result in unstable college leadership situation, either perceived or real.

The team suggests that the timing and sequence of constituent feedback of the CEO and contract renewal of the CEO needs to be revised by the Board of Regents. As emphasized in Standard IV, the governing board has the sole responsibility for evaluating and determining length of service of the CEO. And, the Board of Regents may determine that constituent feedback is a part of any process developed for future evaluations. The team strongly suggests that the Board of Regents working with the College President should clarify its procedures for the CEO evaluation process and sequence and timelines of the evaluation components as they relate to contract renewal dates to ensure the leadership stability of the College.