

March 8, 2022

Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero  
President  
Northern Marianas College  
PO Box 501250  
Saipan, MP 96950  
Northern Mariana Islands

Dear President Deleon Guerrero:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Northern Marianas College (NMC) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting February 25, 2022. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Accreditation Visit to NMC October 25 – 29, 2021. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by NMC prior to the Offsite Review (OSR) and the supplemental materials requested by the team after the OSR. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Charles Cepeda, Board of Regents Chairperson; David Attao, Chief Financial Officer; Frankie Eliptico, Vice President of Administration and Advancement; Vilma Reyes, Interim Dean of Academic Programs and Services; and Charlotte Cepeda, Dean of Student Support Services and Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO). Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's status with WSCUC.

### **Actions**

1. Receive the Accreditation Visit team report
2. Reaffirm accreditation for a period of eight years
3. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in spring 2029 and the Accreditation Visit in fall 2029
4. Schedule an Interim Report to be submitted by November 1, 2025 to address all the requirements listed in this letter with particular emphasis on:
  - a. reorganizing and refocusing information technology.
  - b. establishing a standardized and centralized data reporting infrastructure.

The Commission commends NMC in particular for the following:

1. The incredible efforts employed to quickly respond to the devastating effects of super typhoon Yuta in October 2018 and to support students, faculty, staff and the local community.
2. A timely, comprehensive, and effective response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. Resilient faculty, students and staff who persevered through the “storms” of geopolitical uncertainty, socioeconomic disruptions, and climate change and the impact these storms have had on the college and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands.
4. A stronger and more supportive relationship with the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI), both with the executive and legislative branches.
5. A new comprehensive facilities master plan to guide the rebuilding and future development of the college along with securing \$97.2 million in federal funds for the initial implementation of the plan.
6. Effective management of limited financial resources reflected by low debt, stable financial reserves, and growing enrollment.

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following issues:

1. Conclude and implement a new strategic plan in a timely fashion to guide the college over the next three to seven years, as well as implement the recently adopted facilities master plan. (CFR 3.5, 4.6, 4.7)
2. Conclude the work of the governance review task force in a timely fashion to ensure consolidation and clarity of NMC governance structures, insist on streamlined efficiency, affirm effective academic leadership by faculty, and focus on institutional excellence. (CFR 3.6, 3.7, 3.9, 3.10)
3. Develop approaches to implement the draft strategic goal, “cultivate our employees,” ensuring the recruitment, retention and ongoing professional development of sufficient, qualified, and diverse faculty and staff. (CFR 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)
4. Provide substantial and continuing support for the president, leveraging best practices in onboarding and development, to help the president achieve a focused set of initiatives early in the president’s tenure. (CFR 3.1, 3.3, 3.6)
5. Empower and resource information technology (IT) to reorganize and refocus the department in ways that establish clear responsibilities and business processes, provide support for academic programs, and improve the college’s operational efficiencies. (3.5, 3.6, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)
6. Establish a standardized and centralized data reporting infrastructure with a sense of urgency to efficiently produce mandatory reports, provide consistent and reliable data that are widely accessible and that inform decisions at all levels of the college. (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4)

In taking this action to reaffirm accreditation, the Commission confirmed that NMC addressed the three Core Commitments and successfully completed the two-stage institutional review process conducted under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation. In keeping with WSCUC values, NMC should strive for ongoing improvement with adherence to all Standards of Accreditation and their associated CFRs to foster a learning environment that continuously strives for educational excellence and operational effectiveness.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter is being sent to the chair of NMC's governing board. The Commission expects that the team report and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the NMC's website and widely distributed throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in these documents. The team report and the Commission's action letter will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response on the WSCUC website.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that Northern Marianas College undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while contributing to public accountability, and we thank you for your continued support of this process. Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Jamiene S. Studley  
President

JSS/mam

Cc: Phillip Doolittle, Commission Chair  
Charlotte Cepeda, ALO  
Charles Cepeda, Board Chair  
Members of the Special Visit team  
Maureen A Maloney, Vice President