

Northern Marianas College

Institutional Report submitted to the
Western Association of Schools and Colleges
Senior College and University Commission

January 6, 2020



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I. Introduction

One of Northern Marianas College's damaged classrooms in Building A.

[More photos of the damage from Super Typhoon Yutu](#) are attached as an appendix.

Institutional Context

Navigating Through the Storms

Northern Marianas College (NMC) is located in the United States Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), an archipelago of 14 islands that run parallel to the Marianas Trench. Just as the Marianas Trench is the deepest point on earth, many of the challenges faced by NMC and the CNMI reflect some of the deepest inflection points of the 21st century. As the Pacific's most northwest territory of the United States, the CNMI is within striking distance of China and North Korea, from where economic and geopolitical shockwaves ripple dangerously close to these islands' shores. The CNMI's unique relationship with the U.S. federal government has also involved a disruptive labor and immigration tide whose ebbs and flows have had profound effects on the islands' economic, social, and cultural landscape.

Most notably, the CNMI's location in the Pacific Ocean has left these islands vulnerable to some of the most devastating storms in recorded history, many of which have been exacerbated in recent years by the effects of global climate change. Taken together, these conditions form a perfect storm, both literal and

“There was thunder and lightning, things flying around outside, car alarms going off, windows shattering and our roof slowly peeling off.”

A personal account of Super Typhoon Yutu by NMC Student, **Frantia A. Sablan**¹

¹ Personal accounts of Super Typhoon Yutu from students are woven throughout the narrative of this report as part of the report's theme of struggling with, surviving, and overcoming storms. These excerpts have been used with the permission of these students.

symbolic, of challenges to the islands' only public institution of higher education.

It is thus fitting that NMC's mascot is a proa, an ancient sailing vessel of the islands' indigenous Chamorro people. This vessel was so renowned during its time as the fastest and most agile vessel in the Pacific that it was specifically distinguished as the "Chamorro flying proa." However, despite its prowess, the proa was still vulnerable to the elements. Likewise, the college has been vulnerable to a perfect storm of geopolitical conflict, socioeconomic disruptions, and climate change that affect the islands and the world. This perfect storm was manifested when Super Typhoon Yutu struck the CNMI on October 24, 2018. Yutu was the most powerful storm on the planet in 2018 and is considered the strongest typhoon to ever hit U.S. soil since 1935. A category 5 storm with 180 mph winds and gusts exceeding 200 mph, Yutu destroyed thousands of homes, crippled the islands' infrastructure for months, and left residents scrambling for food, water, and shelter for months afterwards. Causing an estimated \$854 million in damage to the islands, [Yutu wiped away more than 80% of the college's Saipan campus](#), which led to a delayed completion of the fall 2018 term. Over a year after Yutu, the islands are struggling through an

aftermath characterized by ongoing recovery efforts, a 19.6% drop in the islands' gross domestic product (GDP) that has led to cuts in government funding for the college, and a trade war between the United States and China that has disrupted supplies and increased costs for labor and materials for repairs and rebuilding.

Despite this tragedy, the people of the islands and the stakeholders of the college have persisted with an unwavering resilience that has sustained recovery efforts and inspired all to work together to move forward. Less than a year after Yutu, the college graduated one of its largest classes, enrollment increased by 5% in the fall of 2019, and not one single college employee was laid off despite government austerity measures throughout 2019. The college's proa may have been knocked off course, it may have suffered substantial damage, and some water may still leak into its hull, but it continues to sail ahead, bent but not broken. The report that follows will return to this theme of the college's proa sailing through storms, a theme that will be reinforced throughout with students' first-hand accounts of their experiences during and after Super Typhoon Yutu.

"...every day after [the typhoon]...was total chaos. Everyone needed water, food [since] people lost everything they had. I was sad but stressed out mainly. I was part of the personnel to distribute relief items as they arrived. People were pushing and shoving to be first in line for everything. There were days where I wanted to quit work and just tend to my family at home. My family were troopers though, they took care of the damages at home and cleaned up while I tried to help all the other families."

Bonnie Bernice Borja, NMC Student



History of the Institution

Through an executive order in 1981, the CNMI's first governor, Carlos S. Camacho, established the college as a division of the CNMI Department of Education. In 1985, [CNMI Public Law 3-43](#) established the college as a Land Grant institution and as a public, nonprofit, and autonomous corporation governed by its own board of regents. In that same year, the college was granted accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) as a community college that offered associate degree programs and training programs for government and business personnel. In 2001, the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) granted accreditation for the college's School of Education (SOE) to award a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, while the college's primary accreditation remained under ACCJC. In 2014, WSCUC granted the college accreditation to offer a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management, which

initiated a departure from ACCJC and a transition to WSCUC for NMC's accreditation.

Mission and Vision

In 2013, the board of regents worked with the college's president and stakeholders to formulate its current mission statement: "Northern Marianas College, through its commitment to student learning, provides high quality, affordable and accessible educational programs and services for the individual and the people of the Commonwealth." The board of regents also worked with the college's president and stakeholders to develop its current vision: "Northern Marianas will serve as the engine to drive the economic growth and the social and cultural vitality of the Commonwealth."

Governance

The college is governed by a board of regents composed of seven voting members, five representing the island of Saipan, one representing Tinian, and one representing Rota. Each member is nominated by a board nominating committee, appointed by the CNMI governor, and confirmed by the CNMI Senate to serve a four-year term. The board of regents sets policy for the college, leads broad strategic planning efforts, and appoints the president who is responsible for the operation and general administration of the college. Pursuant to

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[Board of Regents \(BOR\) Policy 1020](#), the college has a participatory governance model in which key stakeholders are represented by the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and the [Associated Students of Northern Marianas College \(ASNMC\)](#).

Programs and Services

Driven by its mission and vision, the college has developed a comprehensive set of academic and nonacademic programs and services that are offered on its Saipan campus and through distance education opportunities and limited course offerings at the Rota and Tinian centers. Table 1 lists the college's academic degree and certificate programs.

The college complements these academic degree and certificate programs with workforce development programs and developmental courses in English and mathematics. Through partnerships with other

colleges and universities, the college also provides students with access to programs that include Framingham State University's Master of Education in International Teaching, the University of Guam's (UOG) Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, and U.S. ARMY Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (SROTC). The college also offers programs that serve the community such as Adult Basic Education (ABE), the Community Development Institute (CDI), the Cooperative Research, Extension, and Education Services (CREES), the University of Hawaii's Area Health Education Center (AHEC), and University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). The college's programs are supported by a number of support services, including tutoring services, counseling services, disability support services, veterans services, financial aid, career services, library programs and services, and

Table 1: NMC Academic Degree and Certificate Programs

| Bachelor Degree Programs | Associate Degree Programs | Certificate Programs |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Bachelor of Science</p> <p>Business Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting Concentration (optional) <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Childhood Education Concentration Elementary Education Concentration Rehabilitation and Human Services Concentration Special Education Concentration | <p>Associate of Applied Science</p> <p>Business Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting Emphasis Business Management Emphasis Computer Applications Emphasis <p>Criminal Justice</p> <p>Hospitality Management</p> <p>Associate of Arts</p> <p>Business</p> <p>Liberal Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Emphasis Health and Physical Education Social Work Emphasis <p>Associate of Science</p> <p>Fire Science Technology</p> <p>Natural Resources Management</p> <p>Nursing</p> | <p>Certificate of Completion</p> <p>Basic Law Enforcement</p> <p>Business Management</p> <p>Computer Applications</p> <p>Fire Science Technology</p> <p>Hospitality Operations</p> <p>Nursing Assistant</p> <p>Small Business Management</p> |



various student organizations. In addition, the college provides several tools for distance education and online education, including NMC Online (Moodle), ed2go, and PowerCampus Self-Service. The college's Rota and Tinian centers facilitate access to these programs and services for students and community members on those islands.

"Typhoon Yutu destroyed my house and my neighborhood. I lived in that home all of my life. I was with the same neighbors who I will always call my family. Everyone's houses were destroyed, like a domino effect. Gone. To be honest, I feel like a part of me has gone too. I changed after that."
Anngela Bernal, NMC Student

Capacity, Infrastructure, and Operations

While the college offers a wide range of programs and services to the island communities, these offerings have been hampered by challenges to its capacity, infrastructure, and operations.

Super Typhoon Yutu. One of these challenges was the damage caused by Super Typhoon Yutu, which struck Saipan and Tinian in the middle of the fall 2018 term, destroying 37 of 39 classrooms and 24 of 27 buildings including CREES facilities, the college's bookstore, and the cafeteria. [The total damage caused by Yutu to the college has been estimated well above \\$20 million.](#)

While Yutu was both devastating and traumatizing, the college community came together to rise again, to rebuild and restore a sense of normalcy for its

students and stakeholders ([see "We Will Rise Again" video as a brief chronicle of that effort](#)). In order to complete fall 2018 courses, the college resumed classes on another campus at Saipan Southern High School (SSHS). However, since SSHS was holding its own classes on weekday mornings, the college had to conduct classes in the afternoons on weekdays and all day on Saturdays on a staggered schedule that ran from December 3, 2018 through February 9, 2019. Meanwhile, the college's leadership team worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build 24 temporary classroom tent structures. The college also converted office space on the campus into classrooms, bringing the total number of functional classrooms to 30. Work on the 30 classrooms was completed on February 9, which allowed the campus to reopen on February 20, 2019, resuming the fall 2018 courses. Since then, the college has held regular classes on the Saipan campus for its spring, summer, and fall 2019 terms. In addition to repairing classrooms and building temporary classrooms, the college has consolidated office spaces to accommodate programs and departments whose buildings were destroyed by Yutu, including CREES, in order to ensure the continued operations of these programs and departments. The college has also continued repairs

on other parts of campus, including the opening of a number of food vendor outlets to make up for the loss of its cafeteria. As a result of these efforts, the college achieved, despite all the challenges, an enrollment of 1,283 students for its fall 2019 term, an increase of 5% from the previous year.

Austerity Measures. Super Typhoon Yutu precipitated an economic downturn that resulted in cuts to government funding for the college. Due to the damage and disruption caused by Yutu, tourist arrival rates in the CNMI declined by 21.5% in 2018 and 31% in 2019, revenues from Saipan’s gaming industry dropped by over 50%, and the CNMI’s GDP decreased by 19.6%. Consequently, the CNMI central government had to implement austerity measures, which included a 15% reduction, or a cut of \$825,365, in government funds originally appropriated to the college for fiscal year 2019.

In response, the college took immediate action to absorb the cuts. A 10% reduction in work hours was implemented for nonfederally funded college employees earning more than \$25,000 per year. However, to ensure that instructional quality and course offerings were not affected, ten-month instructional faculty were not included in the work hour reduction. The college also adopted the following cost-saving measures:

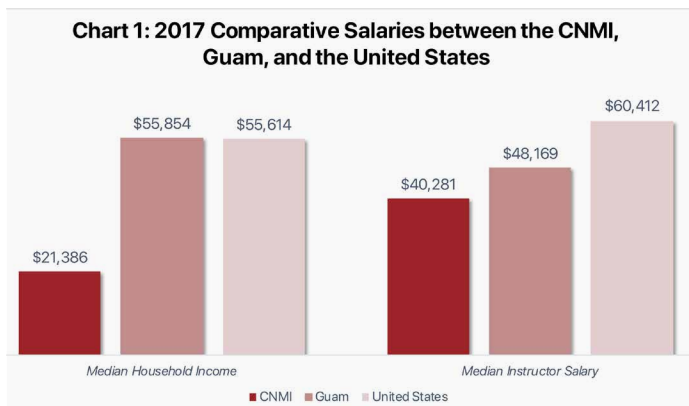
- Leveraging available federal resources, including federal grants;
- Comprehensive conservation efforts to reduce electricity consumption;
- Restriction of nonfederal travel;
- Reduction of hiring of nonfederal positions;
- Reduction of expenses for supplies, equipment, and subscriptions to educational resources; and
- Reduction of adjunct and overload costs by increasing course capacity for courses in spring and fall 2019 to align with the actual room capacities;

As a result of these measures, the college has been able to successfully continue offering its courses without any disruptions throughout the current fiscal year.

Employee Recruitment and Retention. Another challenge has been in recruiting and retaining personnel. Even before Super Typhoon Yutu and Typhoon Soudelor, the college struggled with an isolated location and non-competitive salaries that made it difficult to recruit and retain faculty and administrators. According to the 2010 U.S. Census for the CNMI, the most recent census data available, only about 3% of the CNMI’s population possesses a graduate degree or higher, which has led the college to rely on recruiting faculty, staff, and administrators from off-island. Additionally, the college’s location makes travel between the CNMI and other parts of the world prohibitively expensive, with the airfare between Saipan and the U.S. West Coast averaging

\$3,000. Such costs make it difficult for prospective employees not only to travel to the islands, but also to make return visits to family and friends.

The college’s isolated geography is exacerbated by salaries that are below the national average. Chart 1 presents a number of data points that illustrate the difficulty in offering competitive salaries.



As chart 1 shows, according to the most recent U.S. Census, compared to the neighboring island of Guam, which has a median household income of \$55,854 and the United States which has a median household income of \$55,614, the CNMI has a median household income of \$21,386. This discrepancy is mirrored in salaries offered to college instructors. As chart 1 shows, according to the Chronicle of Higher Education’s comparative data for 2017, whereas the University of Guam pays an average of \$48,169 per year and the national average for instructors at four-year public institutions is \$60,412, NMC pays instructors an average of \$40,281 per year.

The net result of the college’s isolation and the challenge of offering nationally competitive salaries has led to difficulty in recruiting and retaining college employees. As a result, some key college operations, especially program review and strategic planning, have been impacted. The college experienced setbacks in personnel recruitment and retention, however, it has continued to deliver quality programs and services to students and the community. Furthermore, the college has expanded its adjunct faculty pool from 24 in 2018 to 42 in 2019 and leveraged distance education and online learning tools to offer more courses.

“Not long after the typhoon my husband was ordered by the Army to move us to him. But I didn’t want to move because I wanted to finish my degree first.”
Neilimewol Angela Camacho, NMC Student

Impact

The challenges to the college’s capacity, infrastructure, and operations have been overwhelming, but not insurmountable. The college has met each challenge directly, with a resilience that is both inspiring and unprecedented. In the aftermath of Super Typhoon Yutu, the college worked with SSHS to continue the 2018 fall term, using that time to build temporary classrooms. A core group of dedicated employees has weathered all the turbulence of literal and figurative storms to keep the college’s proa afloat through the worst of times.

For example, recent HRO data revealed that more than 80 employees at the college, or more than half of all college employees, have been at the college for more than five years, some as long as 25 years or more. Furthermore, in the face of austerity cuts, the college distributed the burden fairly across the institution, ensuring that no one program bore the brunt of the cuts while keeping class schedules on track.

In overcoming these challenges, the college continues to have a positive impact on the island communities. It is meeting the workforce needs of the CNMI with several degree programs, including its new business management bachelor's degree, which is adapting to meet the changing needs of an economy affected by a federalized labor and immigration system. The college has supplemented its academic programs with numerous community service programs, including CREES, which has supported the islands' agricultural industry with technical expertise to help local farmers maximize their ability to increase the production of locally grown and raised food. Lastly, NMC has responded to other community needs as a partner in education and economic development, leading community collaborative efforts like the 2018 Education Summit.

"The way my family and I dealt with the typhoon was to work as a team. We comforted each other and reminded each other that we got to keep going and living."

Angelynn Suzuki, NMC Student

Sailing Ahead

As the college charts a course forward, it must still contend with many challenges that lie ahead. The CNMI's proximity to Asia has made the islands especially vulnerable to geopolitical forces, like the recent trade war between the United States and China, which has not only affected the local economy, but has also disrupted labor and material supplies that are critical for the islands' and the college's ongoing Yutu recovery efforts. The CNMI's evolving political relationship with the United States poses several socioeconomic challenges for the college, whether they be delays in processing FEMA funding for long-term recovery efforts or changes in federal immigration policy, which could affect some 13,000 temporary workers that account for 53% of the CNMI's workforce. Lastly, global climate change, in the way of more frequent and more severe storms, continues to pose imminent danger to the college and the broader CNMI community.

Indeed, charting a course ahead will be difficult, but many signs of hope persist. With most of the Saipan campus destroyed, the college can now rebuild with a combination of federal funds, local

government appropriations, and long-term financing. The challenges of Yutu, recruiting personnel in key leadership positions, and austerity measures have also helped strengthen the college community in keeping the NMC proa afloat. In light of all of this, it is also worth noting that the accreditation process has helped the college take stock of where it has been, where it is now, and where it is heading.

Accreditation Context

Significant Changes Since the Last Accreditation Review

Since the last WSCUC accreditation review in July 2014, the most significant changes have been the devastating impact of two major typhoons and a reorganization of leadership positions.

Two Major Typhoons. On August 2, 2015, a little over a year after WSCUC granted the college accreditation for its business management bachelor's degree, Typhoon Soudelor struck Saipan, the first of two major storms to directly hit Saipan in three years. A category 4-equivalent storm with 130 mph winds and gusts exceeding 160 mph, Soudelor destroyed many homes, knocked out power and water utilities for months, and caused over \$21 million in damage. At the college, Soudelor damaged 18 of the campus's 25 buildings, leaving many without roofs, and forced a delayed start to the fall 2015 term, which

had to be compressed from 16 weeks into 12 weeks with an accelerated schedule. As discussed earlier, a little more than three years later, Super Typhoon Yutu struck. These typhoons have introduced a new normal as the CNMI and the college grapple with the effects of global warming and work to build new facilities and infrastructures that can withstand future storms.

Changes in Leadership. The literal turbulence of two major storms has been mirrored by the figurative turbulence in key leadership positions at the college. Since the last WSCUC accreditation review in 2014, the college has seen the departure of two presidents, two Accreditation Liaison Officers (ALOs), two directors of institutional effectiveness, and two chief financial officers. In early 2016, Dr. Sharon Hart left as president to take an executive position in a higher education institution in Eastern Europe. Soon thereafter, in October of 2016, the board of regents appointed as president Dr. Carmen Fernandez who then decided not to renew her contract in August of 2018. Subsequently, the board appointed Frankie Eliptico, vice president for administration and advancement, as the college's interim president.

In addition, in the summer of 2016, the former ALO, Amanda Allen-Dunn, resigned from her position as the college's Distance Education director,

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to take a position as principal of a local parochial school. She was subsequently replaced by the college's Languages and Humanities department chair, Dr. Brady Hammond, as ALO. Dr. Hammond, in turn, resigned in July of 2017 to accept a senior leadership position at another college in the continental United States, prompting the college to appoint the dean of Learning and Student Success (LSS), Charlotte Cepeda, as the new ALO, a position she continues to serve in presently.

In July 2017, the college's director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), Jacqueline Che, resigned from her position. She was subsequently replaced by Dr. Wesley Wilson in August 2018, who served until the end of the year. The college

is currently searching for a new director. Lisa HacsKaylo, the college's institutional researcher, has been appointed as interim director.

Lastly, in January 2017, the college's chief financial officer (CFO), Tracy Guerrero, resigned from her position. She was subsequently replaced by Andrew Reese in February 2017, who resigned in November 2019. The college is in the final stages of the recruitment process for a new CFO and anticipates filling the position soon.

Responses to Previous Commission Recommendations

Table 2 itemizes responses to previous recommendations from WSCUC.

Table 2: NMC's Responses to Previous Recommendations from the WSCUC

Commission Recommendations from July 2, 2014 Action Letter

Commission Recommendation

Faculty roles and development. In recognition of the critical role of the faculty in achieving its mission, the institution is urged to ensure that the faculty: (1) demonstrate collective ownership over the curriculum in service of effective student learning; (2) are provided with the necessary and budgeted resources and professional development to achieve these goals; and (3) can work within clearly defined role expectations and evaluative criteria aligned with their varied responsibilities to the institution. (CFR 2.4, 2.9, 3.2, 3.3, 3.10)

College Response

(1) The Academic Council is the college's governance body entrusted with helping to inform the dean of LSS and the president on all matters related to instructional programs and academic regulations. To ensure faculty ownership of curriculum and student learning, the council was restructured in 2017 so that 8 of the council's 14 voting members are faculty members (CFR 2.4, 3.10). In addition, the council's chair is now selected by the Faculty Senate (CFR 2.4, 3.10).

(2) Despite the impact of two typhoons and cuts in government appropriations, the college has continued to provide numerous opportunities for professional development of its faculty, including the 2016 Pacific Circle Consortium Conference, the 2017 WASC Academic Resource Conference, and a January 2018 Course and Program Review Training led by Drs. Amy Driscoll and Carol Huston (CFR 3.3).

(3) Despite disruptions caused by two typhoons and various austerity measures, college faculty have consistently been assessed with a variety of formative and summative evaluations throughout each academic year, including annual evaluations, course evaluations, and peer observations (CFR 3.2). These evaluations inform each faculty member's Professional Development Plan (PDP), which is itself evaluated annually to measure faculty growth in meeting PDP goals (CFR 3.2).

Research and data-supported decisions. The Commission expects NMC to continue to develop its research infrastructure in order to track and analyze key quality metrics and to support decision-making at all appropriate levels. Qualified persons with requisite skills in obtaining, analyzing, and disseminating critical data should be appointed to oversee these functions. (CFR 4.1, 4.2)

In fall 2014, the director of Information Technology (IT), the director of OIE, and the dean of Student Services formed a working group, the PowerCampus Data Group, to improve data quality and reporting. This group has met periodically to address various data quality issues, and is currently headed by the director of IT. (See PowerCampus Overview Presentation Fall 2016.)

In 2017, two new positions were created to assist with the college's management of data on Power Campus. Both the director of Enrollment Services and the director of Learning Support Services (LSS) have helped ensure that data is entered and managed effectively and efficiently on PowerCampus so that multiple Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) can be tracked and generated to inform monitoring and decision-making at the college (CFR 4.1, 4.2). KPIs include graduation rates, retention rates, and course completion rates. (CFR 4.1).

In 2017, the college procured new data management tools by Watermark, Taskstream and VIA, which serve as the repository of assessment work, which will improve the college's ability to track and synthesize KPIs into reports that will inform decision-making at the college (CFR 4.1).

In addition to supporting OIE and its institutional researcher (IR), an assessment specialist was hired within the office in August 2019. This specialist has restarted the implementation of Taskstream (CFR 4.1, 4.2) and will oversee and facilitate the pilot scheduled for 2020.

Lastly, in July 2018, an additional IR position was approved. The college continues to advertise this and the director's position widely.

Assessment of Learning. Building on the assessment infrastructure developed to date, the Commission expects the faculty to implement program-level assessments in support of periodic and effective program reviews. Toward this end, the faculty need to ensure that learning outcomes in all programs, including for General Education (GE), are progressive and lead to the desired levels of culminating competency at or near the time of graduation. (CFR 2.2, 2.2a, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3, 4.4)

While turnover in key leadership positions has impacted the institution's ability to conduct systematic, institution-wide program review, a culture of faculty-driven program review persists at the program level (CFR 4.3, 4.4). Program assessment has continued in most programs, which use data from program assessment to inform a variety of decisions that affect curriculum, resource allocation, and student services (CFR 2.7, 4.3, 4.4). The college has also engaged in annual curriculum mapping to align course student learning outcomes (SLOs) and program learning outcomes (PLOs) with general education learning outcomes (GELOs) and institutional learning outcomes (ILOs). The most recent curriculum mapping

was completed in March 2019 for SOE, the Business Program, the Nursing Program, Languages and Humanities, and the Criminal Justice Program. As part of that curriculum mapping session, programs reviewed GELO's which are introduced, reinforced, and emphasized across the curriculum to ensure that regardless of the degree earned, students will have achieved the college's GELOs by graduation.

In 2017, the college's GE Committee led all academic programs in revising their respective course guides and syllabi to deliberately and clearly embed the college's GELOs into every course (CFR 2.2, 2.2a, 2.6). Course GELOs were further aligned with all course SLOs and PLOs (CFR 2.2, 2.2a, 2.6) to ensure that all college courses and programs supported a shared set of learning competencies upon student graduation (CFR 2.2, 2.2a, 2.6).

Student Success. While taking into account the challenges associated with an open admissions policy, the institution is urged to pursue diligently initiatives designed to increase the number of students who complete a degree program at NMC. This will be essential with the development of several new bachelor-level degrees and their associated demands for persistence and achievement. (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13)

The college has explored and implemented a number of initiatives to improve program completion and graduation rates.

Through its participation with the Complete College America (CCA) initiative, the college has standardized credit requirements for two-year degree programs to 60 credits and four-year degree programs to 120 credits; offered banded tuition to allow students to enroll in 15 credits per term for the price of 12 credits; and launched a number of accelerated courses and corequisite courses, all of which research has demonstrated to improve graduation rates (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13). The college has also partnered with Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific (REL), a research consortium, and the CNMI Public School System to study and improve incoming students' readiness for college mathematics. This has resulted in a number of new programs, such as early placement testing, corequisite course enrollment, and a mathematics transition course to increase readiness for college level mathematics (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13).

The college also recently launched its use of Starfish by Hobsons, a retention solution program that helps to create an online student success environment. Starfish facilitates programs such as counseling and advising, tutoring, mentoring, and others—with the aim of improving student success and retention (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13). Data shows that more than half of the college's student population have been reached by Starfish. In addition, the college recently implemented Achieve3000, an online interdisciplinary literacy tool that provides adapting assessment to help students scaffold their learning and progress.

Furthermore, the college launched Project PROA (Promotion, Retention, Opportunities, Advancement). In addition to providing tutoring and mentoring, Project PROA hosts academic and cultural workshops and activities. Project PROA also offers study space; computer, Internet, and printer use; and academic and cultural books and resources (CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13).

Commission Recommendations from March 9, 2017 Action Letter

| Commission Recommendation | College Response |
|---|---|
| <p>Recommendation 1: NMC should pursue a broad institutionalized effort to assure the digitization of and access to records, particularly those reflecting board of regents appointments and length of terms, with specific dates of appointment and expiration. Furthermore, in order to facilitate increased ease of access and availability to the public, these digitized records should be in a searchable format on the NMC website (CFR 1.7).</p> | <p>The board of regents' appointments and length of terms, entitled "Regent Terms," can be found on the NMC website under "Our college" and college documents have been digitized into searchable PDFs using a local repository (CFR 1.7).</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 2: NMC should ensure that the board of regents meeting minutes not only memorialize decisions made and actions taken, but include the rationale for all decisions and actions to fully capture this information in the public record (CFR 1.7).</p> | <p>In 2016, the board of regents began including a discussion of and rationale for each action taken in meeting minutes on the college website, with motions highlighted in boldface (CFR 1.7).</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 3: To ensure the institution operates with appropriate autonomy, NMC should actively pursue efforts to have the board of regents nomination process become an official statutory procedure through legislation passed by the CNMI legislature (CFR 1.5).</p> | <p>In 2017, Public Law 20-26 was passed, which established a regent nominating committee and process for the selection and appointment of regents to the board (CFR 1.5). Board of Regents Policy 1005 was amended to include the nominating committee, in line with Public Law 20-26.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 4: The board of regents should consider expanding or supplementing the Code of Conduct (BOR Policy 1014) to address issues of conflict of commitment, i.e. cases in which board members may be perceived to have divided loyalty between the NMC board of regents and either other boards or their employment in other parts of the government (CFR 1.5, 3.6).</p> | <p>At its meeting on October 27, 2017, the board of regents adopted Policy 1017, entitled "Conflict of Interest and Commitment Code for Board of Regents and Employees." The policy amended Policy 1017 to add a provision to address conflict of commitment (CFR 1.5, 3.6). This new provision requires all board members and employees to complete and submit a Conflict of Interest and Commitment Disclosure Statement on an annual basis (CFR 1.5, 3.6).</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 5: The goals and objectives of the president, as mutually agreed to by the board of regents and the president, should be strategic and long-term, as appropriate to the institution's purpose as a higher education institution (CFR 3.6, 3.9, 4.6).</p> | <p>At its meeting on October, 27, 2017, the board of regents revised the president's annual evaluation form to include long-term goals regarding facilities improvements. However, with the former president no longer at the college and the destruction of Super Typhoon Yutu disrupting the college's long term plan for facilities, the board will need to identify new strategic, long-term goals for the next president.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 6: The board of regents should reconsider the CEO's two-year contract limit beyond the CEO's initial contract, because of the potential effect on performance and implications for recruitment, hiring, and retention (CFR 1.7, 3.6).</p> | <p>With the previous college president no longer at the college, and a current interim president in place, the board of regents will revisit the contract duration terms as a part of the presidential search process.</p> |

Commission Recommendations from June 6, 2017 Interim Report Action Summary

| Commission Recommendation | College Response |
|---|---|
| <p>Recommendation 1: A bias towards actions, i.e. to have a sense of urgency to move from envisioning to implementation of the many plans articulated in the Interim Report.</p> | <p>In response to both Super Typhoon Yutu and austerity cuts to government appropriations within the last year, the college adopted a sense of urgency in short-term and long-term recovery efforts, as well as in adapting to budget cuts without compromising its programs.</p> |

I. Introduction

Recommendation 2: An overarching institutional research strategy that is sustainable.

The hiring of an assessment specialist in OIE, the acquisition of Watermark data management tools, and the creation of a PowerCampus Data Group are helping the college develop a sustainable overarching institutional research strategy.

Recommendation 3: Data and analysis to substantiate the value-added from the college's various student success initiatives.

The hiring of an assessment specialist in OIE will help improve the office's capacity to offer more training, guidance, and technical support to student support services so that those services can better monitor the impact of their various student success initiatives.

Recommendation 4: Evidence of how departments use data they say they need to improve the quality of education.

Despite the college's need to strengthen systematic program review at the institutional level, the persisting culture of program review at the program level has ensured that programs continue to use data to inform continuous quality improvement efforts. (See Form 1 Repository and Form 2 Repository for evidence of this culture of program review.)

Recommendation 5: Articulation of lessons learned from the program review audit and description of the status of the transition from this comprehensive report annual effort to a staggered program review schedule.

As the college prepares to reinstate institution-wide, systematic program review processes, an evaluation of previous program review processes will inform improvements to program review.

Process of Self-Study

To spearhead the development of this institutional report, the college formed the Accreditation Reaffirmation Steering Committee (ARSC) that is composed of representatives of various college stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and administrators.

In the aftermath of Super Typhoon Yutu, WSCUC Liaison Officer Dr. Maureen Maloney reached out to the college's leadership team to assess the devastation caused by the typhoon and to discuss how the Commission could work with the college in moving forward with accreditation processes. In addition to extending the deadline for the college's Interim Report to WSCUC by three months, Dr.

Maloney held a training via video-teleconference with ARSC members to help the college develop its institutional report to the Commission and to prepare for both the Offsite Review and Accreditation Visit in 2020. Soon after that training, Dr. Maloney visited Saipan on June 19 and 20, 2019. While on Saipan, Dr. Maloney met with members of the board of regents, the college's leadership team, the Office of the Governor, and several other officials, to offer guidance and insight into WSCUC and its accreditation processes. Based on Dr. Maloney's training and feedback, ARSC created a framework for developing the institutional report that divided work among ARSC members into the institutional report's main components, with each component of

the report developed by component teams as listed in table 3.

Table 3: Component Teams for Preparation of NMC's Institutional Report to the WSCUC

Component 1, 8, 9: Introduction, Themes, Conclusion

Team Lead: Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero, Adjunct Instructor

- Dr. James Kline, Faculty

Component 2: Compliance

Team Lead: Frankie Eliptico, Interim President

- Polly Masga, Director of Human Resource
- Kaelani Demapan, Early Intervention Counselor
- Geraldine Rodgers, Assessment Specialist
- Amanda Angel-Diaz, Faculty

Component 3: Degree Programs

Team Lead: Cynthia Deleon Guerrero, Vice President of Learning and Student Success

- Barbara Hunter, Faculty
- Velma Deleon Guerrero, Sciences Health, Math, and Athletics Department Chair
- Rosaline Cepeda, Faculty
- Wilhelm Maui, Faculty

Component 4: Educational Quality

Team Lead: Charlotte Cepeda, Dean of Learning and Student Success

- Hedwig Hofschneider, Director of Project PROA
- Alexis Cabrera, Student Leadership Coordinator
- Arthur De Oro, Director of Community Development Institute

Component 5: Student Success

Team Lead: Christine Inos, Director of Learning Support Services

- Manny Castro, Director of Enrollment Services
- Zerlyn Taimanao, Criminal Justice Program Coordinator
- Maria Aguon, Executive Director of Tinian Center
- Daisy Propst, Director of Financial Aid

Component 6: Quality Assurance and Improvement

Team Lead: Adam Walsh, Faculty

- Lisa Hacskaylo, Interim Director of Institutional Effectiveness
- Raymond Muña, Prior Learning Assessment Program Coordinator

Component 7: Sustainability

Team Lead: Shelly Ann Tudela, Interim Chief Financial Officer

- Martin Mendiola, Executive Director of Rota Center
- Adrian Atalig, Director of Information Technology
- Arthur De Oro, Director of Community Development Institute
- Timberly Ngewaki, Budget Analyst

Interim president Frankie Eliptico took the helm of the ongoing work of ARSC to prioritize and accelerate the work of the committee.

As part of the institution's effort to engage the college community from October 15 through 19, 2019, ARSC component teams invited all employees to attend the "Understanding What's in NMC's Institutional Report" presentations. Component teams shared overviews of their findings and

invited session participants to ask questions and provide feedback. To maximize participation, these accreditation presentations were recorded and broadcast online and throughout the Saipan campus and to the Rota and Tinian centers. In addition to the broadcast and video recordings, participants provided feedback through surveys that were administered through an online form. Results of these surveys were compiled and provided to ARSC and component teams to guide their continued development of the institutional report.

The work of the component teams was synthesized into a draft of the institutional report, which was shared with the college community on December 4, 2019. On December 12, the board of regents reviewed the draft from December 4 and voted to endorse the report, authorizing the board chair to work with the interim president in reviewing subsequent drafts. Another round of component team presentations was held on December 13 that engaged college stakeholders with brief presentations, followed by question and answer sessions. More feedback was collected from stakeholders via an online form which was then reviewed by ARSC and the college's leadership team and incorporated into the report.



II. Compliance with Standards

Process

For the [Review under WSCUC Standards](#) and [Compliance with Federal Requirements](#) Worksheet, ARSC component teams evaluated the college's compliance with WSCUC Standards and Criteria for Review (CFR) based on their work in preparing their respective components of the institutional report. With faculty, staff, and administrators represented on each team, component teams were assigned to discuss and respond to specific CFRs and to provide evidence of the college's compliance with the CFRs. Feedback on the college's compliance with Standards and CFRs was also gathered from stakeholders during the "Understanding What's in NMC's Institutional Report" presentations that took place from October 15-19, 2019.

The [Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators \(IEEI\)](#) was completed by the dean of Learning and Student Success (LSS) with input from department chairs, program coordinators, and directors. The dean of LSS and the director of enrollment services completed the Compliance with Federal Requirements Form 1-4.

“When midnight hit, our roof and ceiling were gone...Calling the police was a hassle; sadly, they couldn't rescue us due to the typhoon's wind and heavy rain. They told my mother and I to hide in a small area where rain couldn't hit us; so, we hid under a table. The panic in me could not handle everything that was occurring that night, so I got out of that table. As I was trying to get out, a heavy metal bar collapsed from what was left of the roof and fell a few centimeters close to my head.”

Gerald Padrid, NMC Student

Required Documents

Each of the following documents and worksheets can be accessed via the embedded links below:

- [Review under WSCUC Standards Worksheet](#)
- [Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators \(IEEI\)](#)
- [Compliance with Federal Requirements Worksheet](#)

Strengths

Institutional Autonomy

The college's institutional autonomy is widely recognized by the CNMI community and is protected by constitutional and statutory laws and legal precedence. [Article XV, Section 2](#) of the CNMI Constitution clearly stipulates the autonomy of the college, stating, "The board of regents shall... have autonomy in the administration of its affairs." In 2012, this autonomy was reinforced by [CNMI Legislative Initiative 17-12](#). The initiative amended the CNMI Constitution to authorize the board of regents to work with the college president to develop and update the institution's mission statement to reflect the changing needs of the community. Prior to that amendment, the college's mission statement was fixed in the CNMI Constitution, which precluded the college from being able to periodically review and update the mission of the college. The amendment thus gave the college the

autonomy it needed to take ownership of its mission. This autonomy was reinforced by [CNMI Public Law 20-26, which established the Regent Nominating Committee Process](#). As the law noted, "One way to protect NMC's accreditation is by strengthening the autonomy of the Board of Regents membership nomination process." The law established a nominating committee that includes key stakeholders from the college, including one regent, one member from the CNMI mayor's council, one member from the NMC Alumni Association, and one member from each of the college's four representative bodies, Associated Students of the Northern Marianas College (ASNMC), the Faculty Senate, the Staff Senate, and the College Council.

Persisting Culture of Program Review

While program review has not been systematic nor institution-wide since the last accreditation review, a culture of program review has persisted at the program level. Many academic programs use the results of routine and periodic program assessments to inform decision making about curriculum, resources, and overall effectiveness. This culture of program review is evidenced by the continued use of two key program review and assessment tools by all academic programs: Form 1 and Form 2.

Form 1. Form 1 is a program-level assessment that utilizes the Nichols & Nichols five-column model to focus a program's evaluation on achieving measurable results. Each year, the model begins the program assessment process by articulating the program's alignment with the institution's mission through an expanded statement of institutional purpose (Column 1), which is then extended into measurable outcomes (Column 2) that are to be measured using predetermined means of assessment and success criteria (Column 3). This process aligns respective program learning outcomes (PLOs) and/or administrative unit outcomes with the college's mission and vision. Towards the end of a program assessment cycle, assessment results are compiled and summarized (Column 4) and then discussed as actionable items (Column 5). The cyclical and iterative nature of this process helps ensure that programs engage in routine formative and summative assessments that inform how programs grow and evolve from year to year. As such, Form 1 is a particularly useful tool for ensuring that programs practice data-driven, evidence-based continuous quality improvement. Given how useful the Form 1 tool is for programs, it is worth noting that from 2015 through 2018, Form 1s were consistently completed every year by many of the college's academic programs and nonacademic

programs ([see Form 1 2015-2018 Repository](#)).

Form 2. While Form 1 serves primarily as an annual formative assessment tool, Form 2 builds on that assessment to provide a multi-year, summative evaluation of the program as part of a broader program review process. The college's Form 2 calls on each program to incorporate Form 1 data into a broader reflective narrative about the program's history, accomplishments, challenges, and future needs. In Form 2, programs also present and discuss data points, including course completion rates, retention rates, and graduation rates, all of which support the reflection embedded into the Form 2 narrative. These narratives, in turn, inform program decisions that can help the program improve, including changes to curriculum, staffing adjustments, and resource allocation. Since the college's program review cycle has programs complete and submit Form 2s on a multi-year, staggered basis, the most recent set of Form 2s collected was from Academic Programs for 2017. Given the value of Form 2s in the program review process, it is notable that all of the college's degree programs submitted Form 2s that year ([see Form 2 2017 Repository](#)).

Assessments and Data Collection. Supporting this culture of program review is a wide array of

assessments and data collection conducted by many academic and nonacademic programs. Led by the PowerCampus Data Group, the Office of Admissions and Records (OAR) and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) enter and curate a wide range of student data, including enrollment, course completion rates, retention rates, and graduation rates, which are provided to college programs and made available on the college's website (see Student Achievement Data). The division of LSS, including the Office of Student Activities and Leadership (OSAL) and OIE, also regularly conduct several student and stakeholder surveys, such as the [Ruffalo Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory](#). In addition, academic programs conduct course evaluations every term, the results of which are provided to faculty and program leads for continuous improvement. These assessments and data collected provide a rich source of information that feeds into program assessment and program review at the program level.

Rigorous, Robust Capstone Assessments

A number of the college's academic programs have rigorous and robust capstone assessments that ensure student mastery of essential competencies for their respective programs. The Nursing Program requires clinical hours of all its students before graduating and ensures that graduates are eligible for the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered

Nurses (NCLEX-RN), which is required by the Northern Mariana Islands Board of Nursing. The School of Education (SOE) requires its graduates to take a teaching practicum, ED 492: Student Teaching Practicum, under the mentorship of a master teacher or ED 493: Community Education Practicum.

SOE also requires all graduating students to pass the PRAXIS II test, which measures a teacher's knowledge and skills in subject specific areas and is required by the CNMI State Board of Education for licensure as a highly qualified teacher. Upon program completion, SOE graduates are eligible for state licensure and are ready to be employed by the CNMI Public School System. For its part, the Business Department requires all its graduating students in the bachelor's degree program to take MG 440: Capstone Major Project, which has students run their own simulated business under the guidance of an instructor. These capstone assessments not only hold students accountable to a high set of academic standards, but they also prepare graduates for their chosen occupations.

Areas for Growth

Implementing a Systematic and Institution-wide Program Review Process

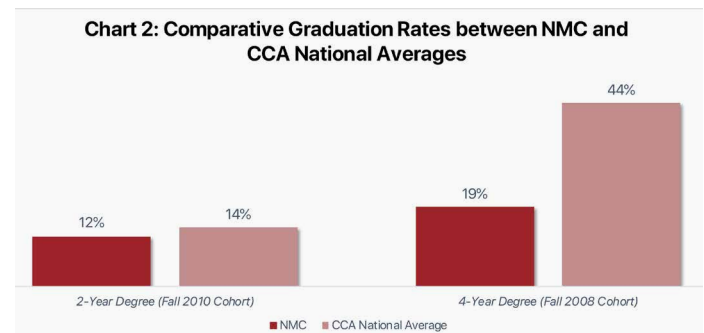
To support the culture of program review that persists at the college and make use of the various

assessments and data collection occurring at the college, these efforts must be integrated into a systematic, institution-wide process of program review. With the changes in leadership in OIE, program review at the college has not had a steward to ensure the consistent execution of program review. While the dean of LSS has been designated as the acting chair of the Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC), the lead committee for the college's program review efforts, the myriad of duties and responsibilities required of the dean have made it difficult to provide focused leadership of PROAC. This speaks to broader issues about the sustainability of the current program review process, which may be addressed by revisiting and revising the process. First, the current process may be too cumbersome and confusing, which may discourage programs from engaging in program review. This could be addressed by evaluating the current program review process in order to simplify and streamline the process. Second, the many assessments conducted and data collected by several offices could be consolidated and better coordinated in order to eliminate duplicate efforts and to provide a centralized data bank for all college programs. Aware of these challenges, PROAC is evaluating the college's program review processes and exploring ways to provide programs with more guidance on the

program review process and more feedback on their program review submissions. This feedback will be incorporated into the update of the [Institutional Excellence \(IE\) Guide](#).

Improving Graduation Rates

The college continues to work to improve its graduation rates. Chart 3 compares the college's graduation rates to national data compiled by Complete College America (CCA).



As chart 2 shows, for a cohort of students who first enrolled in fall 2010 in a two-year program and fall 2008 in a four-year program, the average of first year students who complete a two-year associate degree program in three years is 14%, while the average of those who complete a four-year bachelor's degree program in six years is 44%. For the same fall 2010 and 2008 cohorts respectively, graduation rates at NMC were similar at the associate level, with 12% completing a two-year associate degree in three years. However, the graduation rates at the baccalaureate level were considerably lower with

19% completing a four-year bachelor's degree in six years. These numbers demonstrate that many students who start at the college do not complete their degrees. Retention rates for college's fall 2010 cohort enrolled in a two-year associate degree declined each successive year from initial enrollment, with 49% of the cohort retaining after the first year, 32% retaining after the second year, and only 21% retaining after the third year. While the college has begun to address these issues by redesigning its developmental programs and reinforcing early intervention services, much remains to be done in order to improve the college's graduation rates.

Improving Accessibility

In 2017, the Office of Civil Rights for the U.S. Department of Education found compliance issues with the college website stating that certain pages on the site were not accessible to students and adults with disabilities. To address this, the college immediately sought the assistance of the University of Hawaii to conduct a website audit and to perform a number of fixes to address accessibility issues.

To assist with compliance, the college is redesigning its website to be more accessible to members of the public with disabilities. Also, through the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), the

college provides technical assistance to the college's employees on information and training opportunities related to developmental disabilities, accessibility, equity, and inclusion. The college is exploring policies that would require all faculty and staff to undergo training on disability rights and responsibilities and accessibility for NMC-sponsored events on and off campus.



III. Degree Programs

Romana Tefania Tudela Chong receives the Academic Excellence Award at the 2019 commencement exercises.

“Typhoon Yutu recovery marked a very important part of my life because I had to overcome such a disaster on my own as I begin my adulthood. I am 19 years old, I live separate from my parents, not dependent on anyone, and I work to make my living and recovery. Every day ended with frustration, exhaustion, and sometimes tears. Every day after the typhoon hit was a great struggle but it was made easier knowing that I was not alone.”

Annie Mae Mendiola, NMC Student

Meaning

Institutional Learning Outcomes

Driven by its mission to provide high quality, affordable and accessible programs and services and grounded in a philosophy that respects the dignity and unique talents of each person, the educational goal of the college is to offer programs that prepare students for employment, for transfer to other postsecondary institutions, and for general self-enrichment and lifelong learning. To support these goals, the college established the following institutional learning outcomes (ILOs):

Knowledge: Students will be able to define, describe, demonstrate, and explain knowledge within a field of study.

Skills: Students will be able to apply, use, perform, exhibit, and demonstrate skills required of a particular field of study or field of endeavor.

Creativity: Students will be able to plan, design, develop, find, synthesize, and create solutions, strategies, documents, and products.

Intellect: Students will be able to exhibit the capacity for independent thought and critical thinking.

Communication: Students will be able to communicate effectively through writing, speaking, performing, exhibiting, or other forms of expression.

Analysis: Students will be able to acquire, interpret, analyze, assess, and evaluate information.

Academic Programs

With ILOs providing the foundation for all learning, the college offers eight associate degrees in

business, business administration, criminal justice, fire science technology, hospitality management, liberal arts, natural resource management, and nursing, each with various areas of emphasis, two bachelor degrees in business and education, also with various areas of emphasis, and seven certificate programs in basic law enforcement, business management, computer applications, fire science technology, hospitality operations, nursing assistant, and small business management, as well as workforce development and certificate training, and developmental courses. Through partnerships with other colleges and universities, the college also provides students with access to Framingham State University's Master of Education in International Teaching, and University of Guam's Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice and U.S. ARMY Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (SROTC).

The college has leveraged its academic programs to formalize agreements with several institutions and programs in order to supplement and extend student learning, which includes articulation agreements with UOG, the University of Hawaii system, Hawaii Pacific University, Maricopa Community College, and Chaminade University. Through the CNMI's affiliation with the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), NMC students

are also eligible for reduced tuition rates at two and four-year public postsecondary institutions like California State University, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Boise State University, and Washington State University. In collaboration with Portland State University, the college has also facilitated student participation in BUILD EXITO, an undergraduate research training program funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that is geared towards training students/scholars who are interested in conducting scientific research in biomedical, bioengineering, behavioral, clinical, health, and social topics. With a grant from the National Science Foundations (NSF) Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP), the college is also an active member of the Islands of Opportunity Alliance (IOA), which works to expand the capacity for self empowerment in Pacific islander communities through culturally-resonant STEM education initiatives that privilege traditional knowledge systems while also embracing western schools of thought and scientific ways of knowing. More recently, the college signed an agreement with UOG to offer a criminal justice bachelor's degree and is currently working on a similar agreement with UOG to offer a program in pre-engineering and Chamorro studies.

In 2014, the college also launched a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Program that helps students earn college credit for their experiential learning by demonstrating mastery of course learning outcomes acquired outside the classroom. Students who enter the program are expected to follow the college requirements as outlined in policy and admission guidelines of the PLA. Students must be able to understand and use the conventions of standard written English, to access and navigate information online, and submit the portfolio for assessment and evaluation that will demonstrate, explain, and verify that there is undergraduate learning that could be awarded credit. Students can earn up to 30 college credits. Since the program's launch, 84 students have earned a total of 729 credits towards their degrees.

Quality

Meeting Workforce Needs

The Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 (CNRA) extended most provisions of U.S. immigration law to the CNMI. Prior to the CNRA, the CNMI had controlled its own immigration and labor laws, which the CNMI used to recruit a large foreign workforce to support the growth of the islands' tourism and garment industries. However, with the passage of the CNRA, the CNMI was expected to transition from a primarily foreign

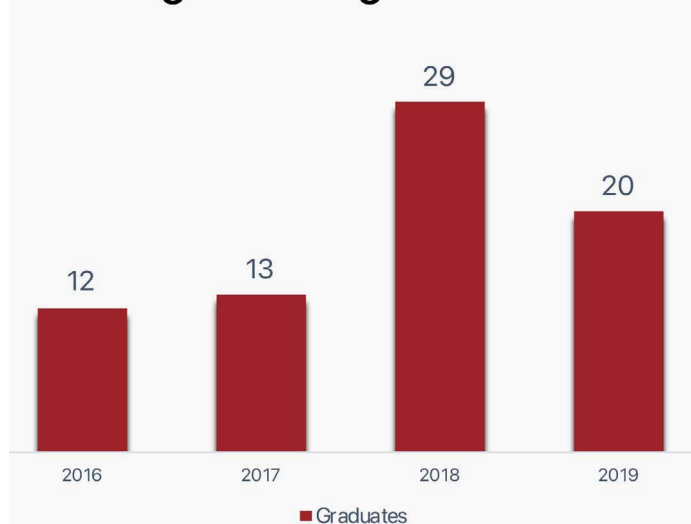
workforce to a primarily resident workforce. To facilitate this transition, the CNRA included a CNMI-only transitional worker provision. Foreign workers in the CNMI who did not qualify for federal immigration visas like H-1B and H-2B visas could be eligible for the CNMI-only transitional worker classification (CW-1) visa. This visa classification enabled employers in the CNMI to apply for temporary permission to employ nonimmigrant workers who are otherwise ineligible to work. CW-1 visas also included a CW-1 education fee intended to fund CNMI education efforts to train residents to eventually replace foreign workers during the transition phase of the CNRA, a portion of which was appropriated to the college.

While the transition phase of the CNRA was originally scheduled to terminate on December 31, 2019, it was clear by 2015 that the CNMI's economy would suffer with the exodus of a large foreign workforce that a resident workforce had yet to replace. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) noted in a 2015 report that foreign workers made up more than half of CNMI's workforce. The GAO's report concluded that without foreign workers, the CNMI's 2015 gross domestic product would have been reduced by 26-62%, especially as an emerging gaming industry increased the

workforce needs of the CNMI's economy. To avoid the potential impact that the CNRA's December 2019 deadline would have on the economy, the CNMI's delegate to the U.S. Congress, Congressman Gregorio Kili Camacho Sablan introduced House Resolution 5956, the Northern Marianas U.S. Workforce Act of 2018, which was signed into law on July 24, 2018, by President Donald Trump. The law extended the CW-1 Program through December 31, 2029.

The college has responded to this evolving workforce landscape by introducing new programs and adapting current programs to meet the workforce needs of the CNMI. In 2014, the college launched its business management bachelor's degree, after meeting with private sector stakeholders. The program has experienced a steady increase in the number of graduates.

Chart 3: NMC Business Management Degree Graduates



As chart 3 reveals, the number of graduates with a business management bachelor degree increased from 12 in 2016 to 20 in 2019, for a total of 74 degrees conferred.

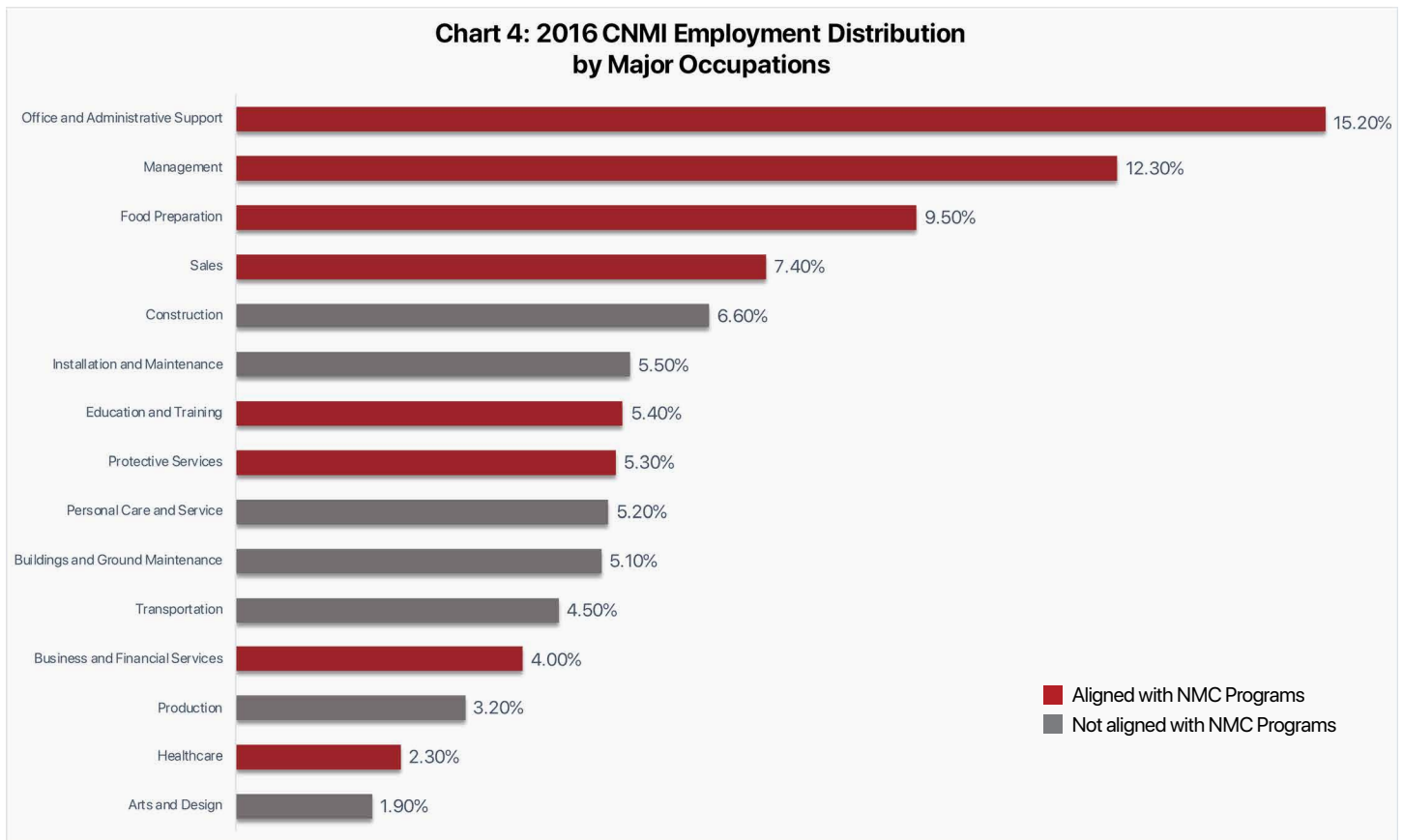
As further evidence that the college is meeting the workforce needs of the CNMI, recent workforce data reveals that the college's degree programs are generally aligned to the top occupations in the CNMI. In 2016, the CNMI Department of Commerce completed a Prevailing Wage and Workforce Assessment Study (PWWAS) that identified current employment trends in the community. Chart 5 presents the top 15 occupations identified by the report.

Among the 15 occupations identified in chart 4, the college's degree and certificate programs are aligned with eight occupations:

- Office and administrative support, management, sales, and business and financial services are aligned with the business certificate and degree programs;
- Food preparation is aligned with the hospitality certificate and degree programs;
- Education and training is aligned with the education degree programs;
- Protective services is aligned with the criminal justice certificate and degree programs; and
- Healthcare is aligned with the nursing certificate and degree programs.

Furthermore, to ensure that graduates are prepared for their respective occupations, the college's degree

III. Degree Programs



programs include a number of certification and experiential requirements. SOE utilizes the PRAXIS series of tests that are aligned with the CNMI Board of Education’s teacher certification requirements, requiring incoming students to pass the PRAXIS 1 and all graduating students to pass PRAXIS 2. SOE also requires its students to complete student teaching or community education practicum before graduating. Likewise, the Nursing Program assists its students in preparing for the NCLEX-RN and requires graduating students to complete clinical hours.

Program Assessment

While the college works to reinforce a systematic, institution-wide program review process, academic programs have continued to engage in routine program assessment in order to monitor and improve the quality of its courses and degree programs. Every year, academic programs complete a Form 1, which facilitates a process of continuous quality improvement of programs that is guided by evidence and data. From 2015 through 2018, Form 1s were consistently completed every year by the college’s academic programs.

The use of Form 1 for program assessment has been reinforced by academic programs that continue to complete Form 2, which has driven academic programs to consider the overall quality of their programs in order to identify major areas for growth and improvement. In the most recent cycle of program review for academic programs, 2017, the submission rate of Form 2s from the college's degree programs was 100%.

Results of Program Assessment

Program assessment among academic programs has led to some important changes within the broader academic offerings at the college. From 2015 through 2018, Academic Council facilitated the revision of 93 course guides with changes that were primarily driven by the results of program assessment.

Collectively, academic programs learned from their program assessments that an increasing number of working students and nontraditional students over 25 years old were enrolling at the college. This led to a broader offering of online courses, increasing from 20 online courses in fall 2015 to 42 online courses in fall 2019.

Integrity

Program Guarantee

The college firmly upholds the integrity of all its academic degree programs, especially as it pertains

to ensuring graduates are fully prepared for the workforce. This is underscored in [Board of Regents \(BOR\) Policy 3001 Program Guarantee](#). The policy grants up to eight credits of retraining without cost under the condition that the employer certifies that the student lacks the target job competencies normally expected of an entry-level employee who has graduated from an equivalent vocational/technical program.

Monitoring Student Learning

Faculty adhere to accreditation standards and promote learning outcomes in various ways. All course guides and course syllabi include the general education learning outcomes (GELOs), program learning outcomes (PLOs), and student learning outcomes (SLOs). These outcomes are reviewed and discussed in depth throughout the semester to guide students' understanding of activities and intended learning outcomes. For online courses, faculty facilitate orientation through a course video created with the Screencast-O-Matic tool to provide a detailed review of learning outcomes at the beginning of the course. Additionally, instructors provide weekly reviews of course activities and their outcomes. Programs also engage in annual curriculum mapping activities to monitor staggered course assessments and program course content progression through spiral course sequencing.

Areas for Growth

Program Review

While the college's academic programs have continued to engage in routine program assessment, the quality of programs could be bolstered by the reinforcement of a systematic, institution-wide program review process. The reinforcement of program review could lead to several benefits for academic programs. PROAC could provide timely and specific feedback to programs on respective Form 2s to guide continuous quality improvement efforts. By participating in the kind of broader dialogue that characterizes an institution-wide program review process, academic programs could learn best practices from each other or from nonacademic programs. Strengthening the systematic program review process by linking it with budgeting and resource allocation could also lend more authenticity to the process.

Qualified Instructors

As discussed in this report's introduction, several factors hamper the college's ability to recruit and retain instructors for its courses, including the CNMI's isolated geography and the lack of competitive salaries. To address this, the college is revisiting its minimum qualification requirements to broaden the pool of full-time and part-time faculty

available in the CNMI. The college can also develop more initiatives to support the development of instructors in the CNMI, whether those initiatives be scholarship funding, fellowships, or offering more graduate and post-graduate education opportunities.

College Readiness

One key to improving student achievement at the college is helping ensure that incoming students are prepared for the rigors of postsecondary education. To this effect, the college continues its collaboration with Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Pacific, a Honolulu-based education research firm, and the CNMI Public School System on several initiatives. These initiatives include Public School System (PSS) requiring all high school juniors and seniors to take the college's mathematics and English placement tests, launching a college preparatory mathematics course, and a College Now Program that offers college credit-bearing courses at the high schools.



IV. Educational Quality

NMC graduated one of the largest classes in its history in May 2019.

“Although I lost everything financially, the storm helped me become healthier spiritually and emotionally. I didn’t see the devastation after the typhoon as a loss, but as an advantage for me to focus on different aspects of my health that I hadn’t been paying enough attention to before the storm. It made me appreciate the little things in life. It made me realize that family time and building relationships with others is what really lasts forever. Whatever materialistic things we have and work hard to get don’t last forever.”

Nathan Ada, NMC Student

Student Learning

Learning Centered

The college recognizes that its central function is to facilitate learning at the postsecondary level in a manner that helps its students become contributing members of society. To that effort, the college is dedicated to helping students actualize their potential for the enhancement of their individual lives as well as for the improvement of the Commonwealth as a whole. It is a philosophy that stands at the heart of the college mantra, “Students First,” and informs every level of learning, from the institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) to the student learning outcomes (SLOs).

This commitment to student learning was the impetus for the college joining the Complete College America (CCA) initiative. As part of that initiative to help improve student success and learning, the college has implemented several CCA Game Changer Strategies. The college now offers banded tuition, which allows students to take 15 credits for the price of 12 credits, to fast-track progression towards graduation. In addition, the college offers corequisite enrollment options for students that allow them to take both developmental and credit-bearing courses in order to minimize the amount of time students spend in developmental programs. Furthermore,

the dean of Learning and Student Success (LSS) and program leaders worked to streamline the path to degree completion by reviewing and revising most individualized degree plans (IDPs) to reflect a standard 60 credits for two-year degrees and 120 credits for four-year degrees.

The college is also home to the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program, which is funded by the Workforce, Innovation, and Opportunities Act under Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. The program provides basic skills classes to adults with less than a high school education and helps develop life-long learners with the skills, expertise, and knowledge needed for career and college success. The High School Equivalency Test and Adult School are the diplomas offered by ABE, which are measured using Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems reading and mathematics assessment tools. For the 2018-2019 academic year, of 187 students enrolled full-time in the program, 45 students (24%) graduated and 133 students (71%), entered or retained employment upon exiting the program.

Core Competencies

General Education

The college's General Education (GE) Program

aims for students to acquire core competencies that include important general knowledge, basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, and the ability to integrate their knowledge and skills so as to promote the capacity for life-long learning. To accomplish this goal, the GE Program is designed to accomplish several objectives. The program introduces students to the major content areas of higher education that include mathematics, biological and physical sciences, social and behavioral sciences, the humanities and fine arts, library and computer use, physical exercise and good health practices. Additionally, the college's GE Program provides students with knowledge and skills to fulfill their educational and occupational goals and to become better prepared to function effectively as citizens in a democratic society. Lastly, the college's GE Program prepares students for life-long learning, personal development, and successful adaptation in the world's ever-changing and increasingly interdependent local, regional, and global societies.

To accomplish these objectives, a set of general education learning outcomes (GELOs) clarify core competencies expected of students, all of which are embedded in every course offered at the college. Table 4 lists these GELOs which are aligned with WSCUC core competencies.

Table 4: NMC General Education Learning Outcomes

GELO 1: Critical Thinking

- 1.1: Make connections between two or more areas of knowledge and apply learning to daily life experiences.
- 1.2: Use critical and analytical thinking skills to solve a variety of problems.

GELO 2: Humanities

- 2.1: Demonstrate an awareness of the scope and variety of works in the arts and humanities, and articulate the value of aesthetics and creativity.
- 2.2: Make decisions in daily life based on creative thought and ethical principles.

GELO 3: Citizenship and Society

- 3.1: Define an individual's civic, political, and social responsibilities as a member of both the local and global community.
- 3.2: Recognize stereotyping, bias, and faulty reasoning in the opinions of others.

GELO 4: Technology and Information Literacy

- 4.1: Collect, organize and present information from various sources, including books, periodicals and the Internet.
- 4.2: Use computers to access information effectively and efficiently.

GELO 5: Oral Communication

- 5.1: Demonstrate oral communication proficiency in discussions, debates, and presentations.
- 5.2: Summarize and evaluate the oral communication of others, asking appropriate questions as necessary.

GELO 6: Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning

- 6.1: Analyze mathematical problems, determine the steps necessary to solve problems, calculate solutions, and test for correctness.
- 6.2: Answer questions and explore observations using scientific methodology.

GELO 7: Written Communication

- 7.1: Produce clear well-organized written work, documenting, as appropriate, borrowed sources using a recognized citation method.
- 7.2: Demonstrate mastery of Standard English grammar, spelling, and punctuation

The college's GELOs are embedded into and reinforced by six core courses required of every student at the college. Table 5 lists these courses and their respective purpose statements that are aligned with the college's GELOs and ILOs.

Standards of Performance at Graduation

Capstone Assessments

Students are held to high standards of learning and performance, which are advanced by a series of

capstone assessments across all degree programs. Several degree programs require capstone practicum courses, such as the Nursing Program's clinical hours, SOE's ED 492: Student Teaching Practicum and ED 493: Community Education Practicum, and the Business Department's MG 440: Capstone Major Project. These capstone requirements are reinforced by the use of several national standardized tests of professional competency. For example, all graduates of SOE are required to pass the PRAXIS test and the Nursing Program helps students prepare for the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN).

In addition to these specific programs, all graduates of associate programs are required to enroll in SO 297: Current Issues in the CNMI, which serves as a capstone course that engages students as active, competent, and effective participants in the social, cultural, economic, and political development of their community, the CNMI, and the world. SO 297 specifically requires all graduates to complete a four to six page research paper or group project that demonstrates proficiency in most of the college's GELOs. To assess the degree of learning in SO 297, in fall 2016 and spring 2017, the GE Committee, which periodically reviews, revises, and assesses the student achievement of GELOs, evaluated student mastery of the following GELOs:

Table 5: Core Course Requirements at NMC

| Course | Purpose |
|---|---|
| BE 111: College Success | The purpose of this course is to assist students in making a successful transition to college life and adult life beyond college as a result of becoming knowledgeable through key instructional areas associated with academic and adult life success. |
| EN 101: English Composition 1 | Students must be able to organize and present ideas effectively in formal writing. This course focuses on several of the most common strategies for developing ideas in writing and on the conventions and grammatical patterns associated with each of them. |
| MA 132: Intermediate Algebra (or higher) | The purpose of this course is to enable students to develop proficiency in elementary algebra and algebraic functions and to discover applications of algebra by constructing models to solve real-world problems. |
| CO 210: Fundamentals of Speech Communication | This course enables students to understand the value and process of communication, and in particular the theories, principles, and methods concerning effective use of speech communication. The course also provides a means for students to improve their informal and formal speech communication abilities. |
| HE 150: Personal Health | This course is designed to introduce students to the issues of personal health and the lifetime benefits provided through establishing a healthy lifestyle. |
| SO 297: Current Issues in the CNMI | The overall goal of the course is to promote the growth of students as active, competent, and effective participants in the social, cultural, economic, and political development of their community, the Commonwealth, and the world. |

GELO 1.1: Make connections between two or more areas of knowledge and apply learning to daily life experiences.

GELO 1.2: Use critical and analytical thinking skills to solve a variety of problems.

GELO 7.1: Produce clear well-organized written work, documenting, as appropriate, borrowed sources using a recognized citation method.

GELO 7.2: Demonstrate mastery of standard English grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Using the Association of American Colleges and Universities VALUE Rubrics for Critical Thinking and Written Communication, sample student essays from all SO 297 sections in those terms were evaluated, which led to two major findings and three recommendations. There were clear indications that evidence and citation were not priorities and that the work was not at the level required to demonstrate mastery of the GELO 7.1. The GE Committee also

found it difficult to assess GELO 1.1, which involves life experiences that may not have been apparent in the sampled essays. Based on these findings, the GE Committee recommended that SO 297 instructors reinforce the use of rigorous evidence that avoids plagiarism and utilizes proper citation; review GELO 1.1 to provide more clarity and measurability of the outcome, and reinforce overall GELO attainment through strong program review processes.

Areas for Growth

Assessment of Student Learning

While the college requires capstone assessments for graduating students, similar rigor is applied throughout degree programs. Similar to expectations for student performance in SO 297, the college

should examine all IDPs to identify appropriate courses for systematic assessment of student learning. For example, a shared cornerstone project could be developed for all CO 210: Fundamentals of Speech Communication sections that integrates the college's GELOs.

Revised GELOs

The college has established GELOs for all its graduates. Despite having only one set of GELOs, there are distinctions in the standards of performance between the two-year and four-year degrees.

The college needs to articulate clearly defined performance standards in the rubrics used to evaluate general education outcomes.

Quality and Effectiveness of Instruction

Quality and effectiveness of instruction have a profound impact on student learning. These aspects of course instruction are monitored regularly through program evaluations, peer observations, end of semester evaluations, and annual performance evaluations. The college will continue the dialogue about effective learning strategies that instructors could employ and how competencies for those strategies could be cultivated and measured among instructional faculty.



V. Student Success

NMC nursing student Ruby Jean Belington (right) received her pin during the NMC Nursing Program Pinning Ceremony.

“I’m fortunate that we didn’t lose our house but we had to worry about the mess, water and food. On the other hand, I had to worry about my education and family members and friends. I was stressing on what NMC will do and if I had to finish my assignments...Although it was a distressing time, I was able to cope with this challenge through a good support system and having a positive mindset.”

Maria Francine Fleming, NMC Student

Student Learning

Student success at Northern Marianas College is defined by how well students learn to connect to the broader community in ways that contribute to the social, cultural, and economic vitality of the CNMI. The key terms in this measure of success and learning are connection and contribution.

Connection

Living on small, isolated islands with limited resources has engendered a culture of communal help and solidarity. This is a defining characteristic of the CNMI and was apparent in the aftermath of both 2015’s Typhoon Soudelor and 2018’s Super Typhoon Yutu. Despite the extensive destruction of homes, utility outages, and limited basic supplies, neighbors still helped each other clear debris, villages came together to provide food and water, and the entire community pulled together for short-term and long-term recovery efforts.

That connectedness is one value that the college cultivates among its students and practices itself. At various points in the student experience at the college, students are expected to connect and engage with their community. SO 297: Current Issues in the CNMI engages students in conversations and analysis of diverse viewpoints and encourages them to invite guest speakers from community organizations and

agencies. Other academic programs require students to work directly with industry-related communities, such as the Nursing Program requirement of clinical hours in the local hospital and clinics or SOE's requirement for its graduating students to learn from a master teacher and complete a teaching practicum at schools in the community.

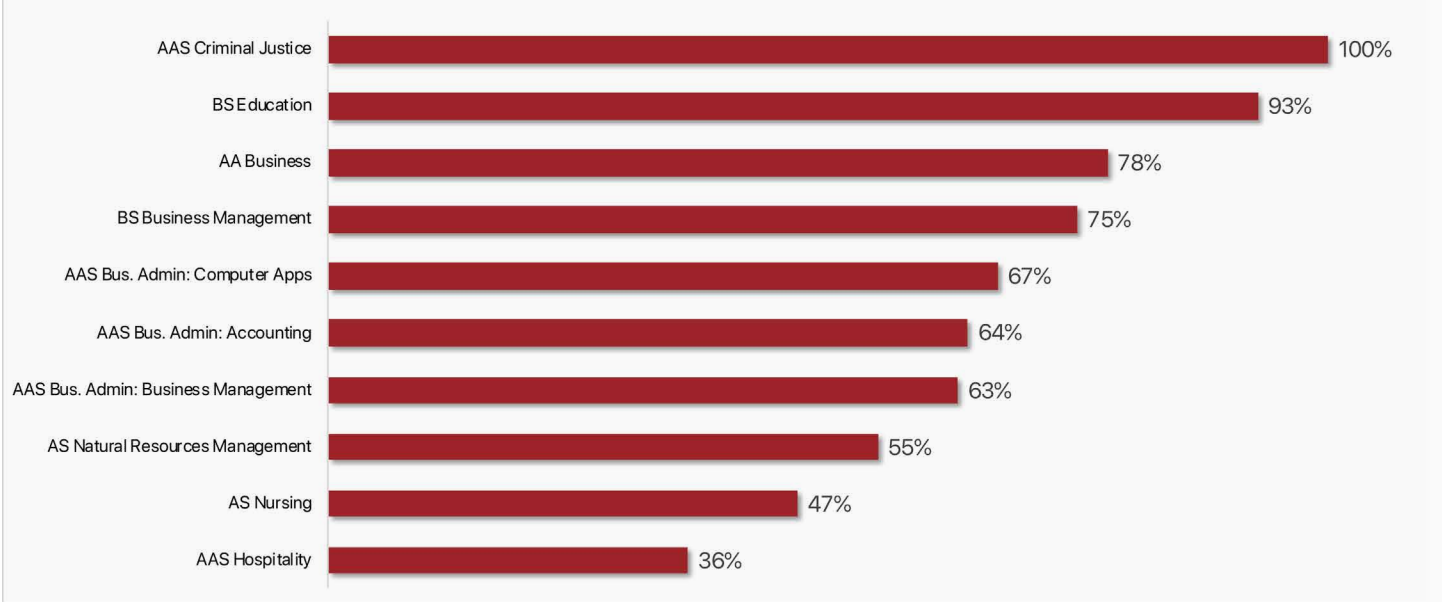
Contribution

As important as it is to be connected to one's community, connection in and of itself is not enough for students at the college. Another measure of student success is how well students apply their learning towards contributing in positive and authentic ways to their community. Specifically, the college helps students translate critical thinking into applied learning. For example, SO 297 requires students to contribute to the discussion of important local, regional, and national issues by completing a research paper or group presentation, and encourages students to participate in a civic project. The college also works closely with the public and private sectors to ensure graduates are prepared to be contributing members of the workforce. To ensure that its graduates are ready to teach in the CNMI Public School System, SOE requires a 640-hour capstone experience and passing score for PRAXIS as a graduation requirement. The Criminal Justice Program has formulated an agreement with

the CNMI Department of Public Safety to offer its CJ 299: Internship/Fieldwork course, which is designed to expose students to a real-life, challenging work experience while also laying the foundation for future employment opportunities. The Natural Resources Management (NRM) Program offers a similar course, NR 298: Natural Resources Management Internship, which is designed to help students apply what they have learned in the program towards addressing real-world issues in environmental stewardship. The business department offers a corresponding internship with its TS 288: Practicum Internship Training course, and also co-sponsors, with the Commonwealth Development Authority, an annual business plan competition, which challenges students to create innovative business proposals and to cultivate their skills and creativity in creating and sustaining a business operation.

One outcome of these internships and a clear indicator of a graduate's successful contribution to the community are how well they transition into the workforce. Workforce readiness is one goal of the college's programs, and for which job placement data is gathered. However, according to data gathered by degree programs for 2015-2016, job placement was inconsistent across programs. Chart 6 provides this

Chart 5: 2015-2016 Job Placement Rates for NMC Graduates



data by degree programs that are designed to lead to occupations.

As chart 5 reveals, while four programs achieved job placement rates of 75% or higher, four of the 10 degree programs ranged between 55% and 67% and two were below 50%, at 47% for the associate in nursing degree and 36% for the applied associate in hospitality degree. This data suggests that job placement is one area in which the college can improve, especially in its applied associate in hospitality degree, which directly supports the islands' primary industry, tourism. Recent work from the college's Career Services Office includes networking with potential employers and tracking college graduates. Specifically, the office has begun tracking graduates three and 12 months

after graduation using the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) First Destination Survey as a guide. The University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) also collaborates with the CNMI Disability Network Partners to provide training opportunities on workforce readiness for students with disabilities.

Outreach

Beyond academics, the college also promotes a wide range of outreach projects through which students contribute to their community. One of the college's flagship outreach efforts is its Start Smart Seminar. The U.S. Census data of 2010 for the CNMI revealed that while 29% of the U.S. population over 18 years or older held a bachelor's degree or higher, the rate in the CNMI was only 18%. The college thus secured funding from the U.S. Department of

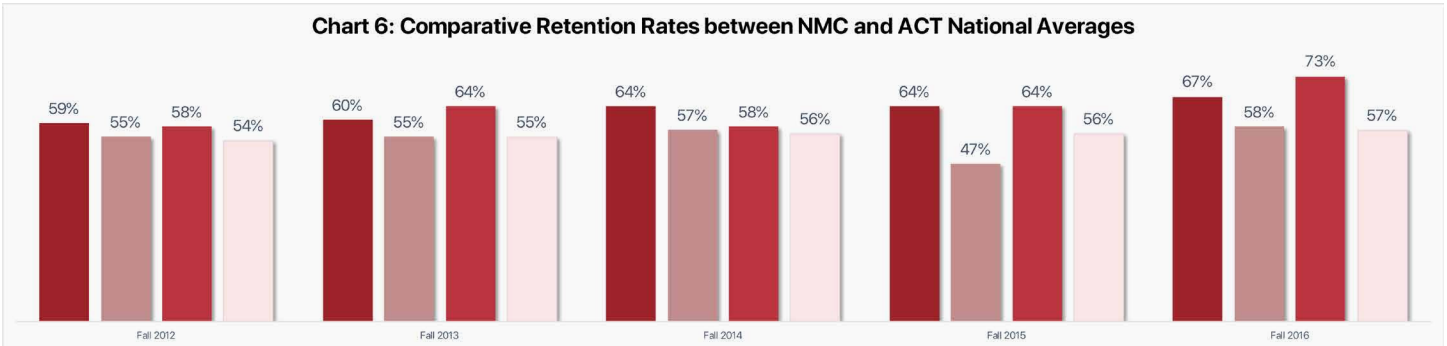
Education's (ED) College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) to increase the number of students in the CNMI who enter and succeed in higher education. With funding from CACG, the college began hosting annual Start Smart Seminars, which invite high school seniors to a day-long seminar about the benefits of higher education. Over the years, the seminars have been expanded to include testimonies from college graduates, roundtable discussions about planning for college, and tutorials on completing various application documents. In the past decade the Start Smart Seminar has benefited thousands of high school students, many of whom have gone on to pursue a college education. Recently the seminar expanded into a Junior Start Smart Seminar that includes high school juniors.

The Start Smart Seminar is complemented by a similarly successful biannual community outreach, Cash-for-College workshop. Recognizing that many students were intimidated by the process of applying for and seeking financial aid and scholarships, the college launched Cash-for-College workshop to provide participants with personal, step-by-step assistance in completing college financial aid forms, focusing especially on forms for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education

(TEACH) Grant, and various public and private scholarships.

In addition to the Start Smart Seminar and Cash-for-College workshop, the college helps its students contribute to their communities through a number of civic projects. In partnership with Cooperative Research, Extension, and Education Services (CREES) and numerous government and nonprofit partners, students in the college's 4-H Marianas Program engage children from the community in an annual summer camp. The college's 4-H students apply their leadership skills towards helping their community by teaching the summer camp participants about swimming, sailing, cultural weaving, banana painting, shoreline restoration, the various conservation areas, the history of the CNMI, and how to identify marine debris. The college's Community Development Institute (CDI) and the CNMI Area Health Education Center sponsor an annual summer program, where students receive preparatory college mathematics and science classes and introductory courses in nursing and rehabilitation and human services, which are aligned with health degree programs at NMC. The programs also receive various presentations from fitness coaches, dentists, doctors, and nurses and other health professionals in the CNMI.

Chart 6: Comparative Retention Rates between NMC and ACT National Averages



Student Persistence

Student success is linked to a student’s ability to persist through a degree program towards completion of all courses required for that program. The college monitors a number of metrics related to persistence, including retention and graduation rates.

Retention

Retention rates measure the percentage of first-time, full-time undergraduate students who return to the same institution the following fall. Drawing from the college’s [Student Achievement Data](#) and the [ACT national retention data](#), chart 6 compares the college’s retention rates to national averages for both two-year public, open admission institutions and four-year public, open admission institutions offering bachelor’s degrees only.

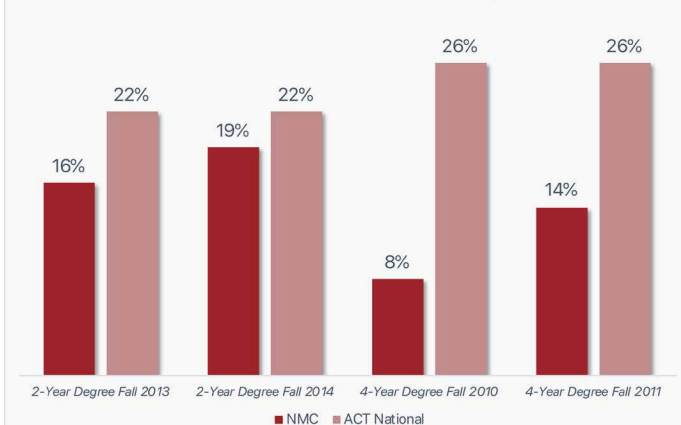
The data presented in chart 6 reveal that since 2012, retention rates for the college’s degree programs are consistently higher than national rates for similar institutions and have been improving. For the two-year programs, the most recent 2016 fall

college cohort rate is 67%, somewhat higher than the national rate of 58%. The retention rates for the four-year degree programs are higher than the national rate as well, with a rate of 73% for the 2016 fall cohort compared to the national rate of 57%.

Graduation

Graduation rates measure the percentage of first-time, full-time undergraduate students who complete their program at the same institution within a specified period of time. A standard for that time is 150% of the time expected for a degree, or three years for a two-year degree and six years for a four-year degree. Drawing from the college’s [Student Achievement Data](#) and the [ACT national graduation data](#), chart 7 compares the college’s graduation rates to national averages for both two-year public, open admission institutions and four-year public, open admission institutions offering bachelor’s degrees only for the fall 2013 and 2014 and fall 2010 and 2011 cohorts respectively, the most recent undergraduate cohorts for which these data is available.

Chart 7: Comparative Graduation Rates between NMC and ACT National Averages



The data presented in chart 7 reveal that the college's graduation rate for the two-year degree is 19%, which is slightly less than the comparable national rate of 22%. For four-year degrees, the gap is considerably wider, with the college's graduation rate at 14% compared to the national rate of 26%. It is clear from these data that the graduation rate at the college is below national rates for both its two-year and four-year degree programs. However, graduation rates for both the two-year and four-year degree programs are improving.

In addition to the standard ways of calculating graduation rates already cited in this report, the WSCUC Absolute Graduation Rate (AGR) provides a richer, more inclusive picture of student success at NMC. Chart 8 presents AGR data for the college from 2010 through 2017.

The AGR eight-year average is currently 30.6%, and while enrollment has been fairly stable and

Chart 8: Absolute Graduation Rates for NMC

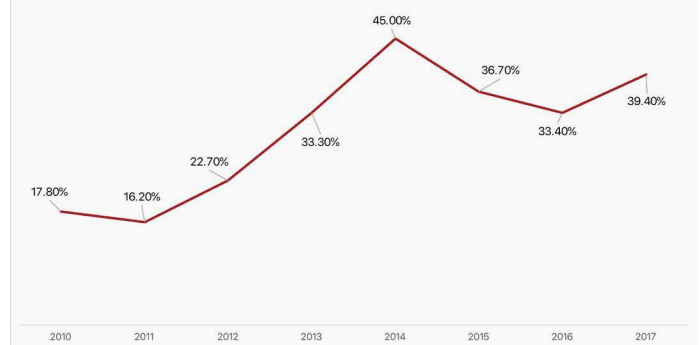
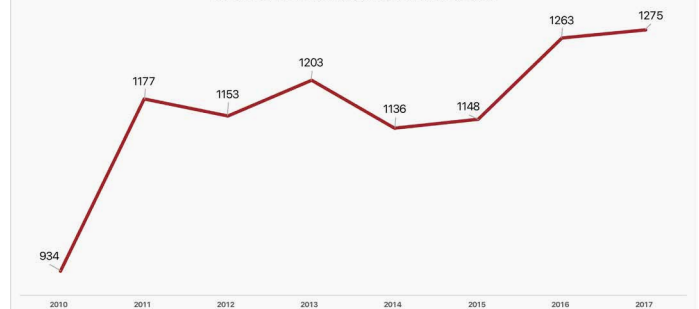


Chart 9: Enrolled Students Headcount



slowly increasing, the AGR has been generally trending upward as well. This indicates the trend reflects actual improvement in AGRs, and supports the trends seen in the standard graduation rates already discussed.

Supporting Students

The college offers a wide array of services that help students persist through their college experience.

Project PROA

In 2015, the college launched Project PROA, which is an acronym for Promotion, Retention, Opportunities, and Advancement. Project PROA's goal is to increase the number of indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian students who graduate

from high school and enroll in and successfully complete college. This program is a five-year grant (2015-2020) made possible by federal funds from the U.S. ED under the Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions. Project PROA provides several services to help both high school and college students succeed, including tutoring, mentoring, academic activities and workshops, access to technology resources, and targeted assessments like Achieve3000.

Counseling Services

Counseling services support students by planning and coordinating educational workshops and presentations that enhance learning, promote social, emotional, physical, and mental wellness, and address current global issues and concerns. Topics from these workshops and presentations have included study skills, time management, managing stress, choosing a major or career, suicide awareness, and other prevention and intervention strategies institution-wide relating to suicide and mental health.

Early Intervention

The college's Early Intervention Program targets students at risk of failing courses by assisting instructors in following up on their referrals for student absenteeism, assessment of services needed, and helping students work out potential problems that

might keep them from completing courses. Since fall 2017, the Early Intervention Program has undergone important changes that have improved its impact on student retention. Prior to fall 2017, the program was entirely paper based, requiring instructors to complete paper forms that were then submitted to and routed through counseling staff. This paper-based approach made it difficult for instructors and counselors to monitor the progress of students in the program. To address these challenges, in fall 2017, college faculty and counseling staff converted the paper form into a Google form that allowed instructors to submit referrals online and empowered counselors to manage the program's workflow. The use of this Google-based system continued from fall 2017 through fall 2019 and generated additional benefits, including the ability to aggregate data from forms, identify trends in student absenteeism, and flag students who were referred often to the program.

In fall 2019, this Google-based system was replaced with [Starfish Solutions](#), a retention solution program that helps to create an online student success environment, facilitating programs such as counseling and advising, tutoring, mentoring, and others—with the aim of improving student success and retention. Starfish is helping students access support networks for their courses, receive early alerts for

academic concerns, view and follow academic plans, and sign up for online appointments with course instructors, counselors, and advisers. Faculty are also submitting progress reports in real time and connecting students to appropriate campus offices.

Information Technology

The college's Information Technology (IT) services also support students with high broadband internet connectivity, a secure wireless connection, and hardware and software tools for student and faculty use. IT is reinforcing these support services with a current redesign of the college's website to make it ADA-compliant, upgrades to critical campus software like PowerCampus, and the development of a mobile application that will serve as a central hub for college information and updates for students.

Specific Populations

The college also provides services, as needed, to specific populations such as individuals with disabilities, veterans, active military personnel and their dependents, and international students to promote their academic and social success. The college ensures reasonable accommodations are made for all self-identified individuals with disabilities through communications and proactive planning with faculty, staff, and the Disability Support Services counselor. The college also

provides assistance to U.S. military veterans and active service personnel and their families in the completion of benefit requests and other optional services as needed. Support with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) processes, academic advising, and campus-acclimation for international students are provided through collaborative work between the degree program advisors and the international students' counselor.

University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

Through the University of Hawaii at Manoa's Center for Disability Studies, the college was awarded a subcontract for the CNMI University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) to run from 2017 to 2022. The purpose of UCEDD is to support, enhance, and improve the quality of life for persons with developmental disabilities. This is accomplished through cooperation, coordination, and collaboration across jurisdictions to develop programs that promote self-determination, integration, full inclusion, and person-centered planning with family involvement and family advocacy.

In order to fulfill federally regulated mandates, UCEDD operates independently within the college's structure and serves as the bridge between the

community and academia, providing technical assistance, information, and services on disability education, research, dissemination, and services. Based on a comprehensive needs assessment conducted in 2017 on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, UCEDD's top areas of focus are education and early intervention, health, community support in respect to emergency preparedness and employment. In response to the recent devastating typhoons, UCEDD conducted emergency preparedness surveys and focus groups in the CNMI in order to evaluate current services and to utilize the data to create appropriate training programs for first responders and for individuals with disabilities.

Areas for Growth

Tracking Student Data

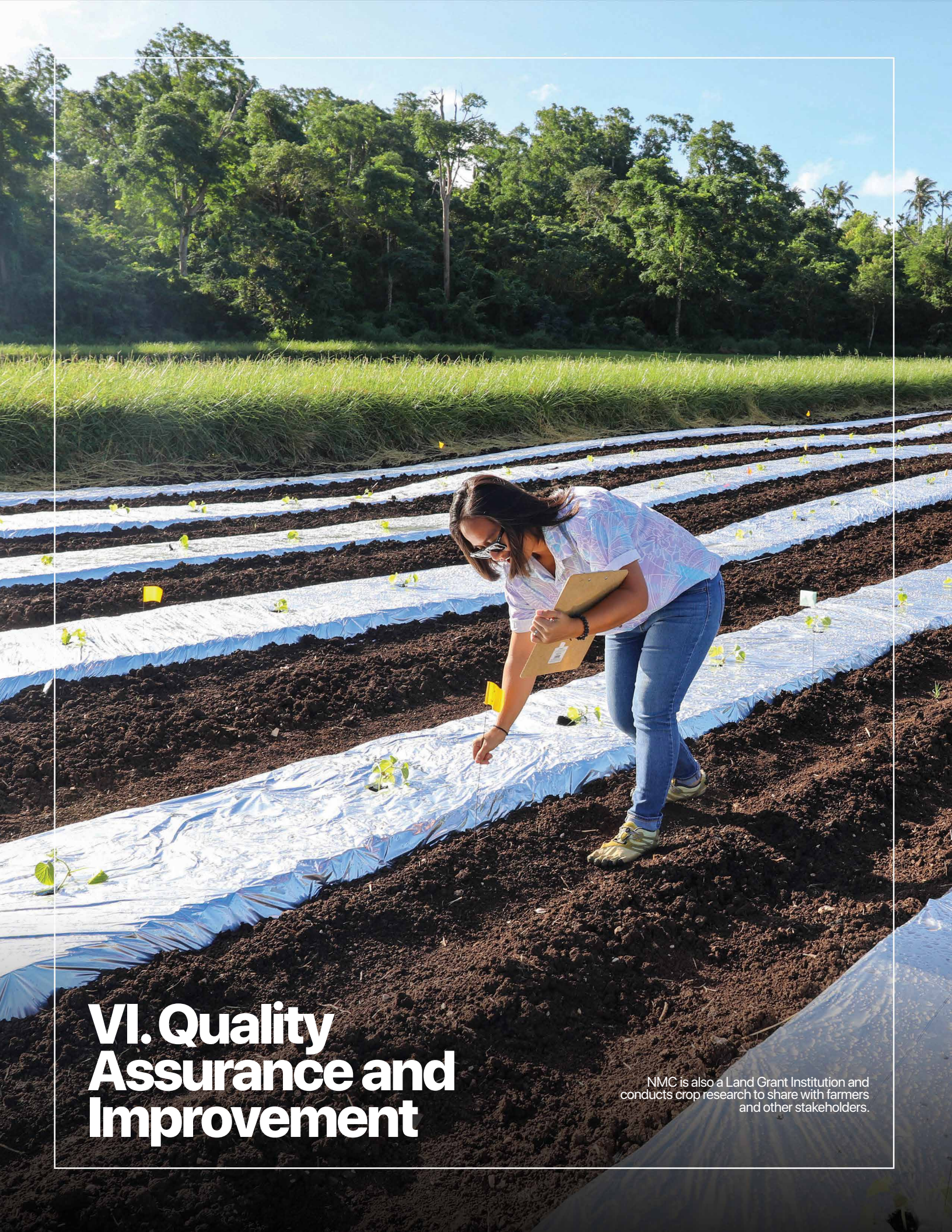
The college collects a wide variety of student achievement data, including data on retention, course completion, graduation, and job placement. However, much of this data is separated from each other in different data silos across programs. The PowerCampus Data Group should lead an effort to identify, sort, and streamline all data collection efforts so that data can be better synthesized and published in order to inform decision making and continuous quality improvement.

Strategic Focus

While the college offers many programs to assist students and support them towards degree completion, it is clear that these various programs can be coordinated in a strategic manner to achieve the most impact. The college should evaluate all of its student support services in order to improve their impact.

Program Review

One area that can help the college's student support services better meet the needs of students is through the assessment of the programs. The college's student support services can also benefit from revisiting or creating new administrative unit outcomes that are more clearly aligned with improving student success, especially retention and graduation rates.



VI. Quality Assurance and Improvement

NMC is also a Land Grant Institution and conducts crop research to share with farmers and other stakeholders.

“It was stressful having to accept the reality of it all. It was stressful having to apply for assistance myself since my parents did not speak/understand English fluently and were too busy working harder than ever to earn money for repairs and replacements for lost necessities. It was stressful searching for people to help repair our home because many demanded more than what we could offer. It was so, so stressful having to adjust to these large changes.”

Audrey Jan Afable, NMC Student

Program Review

Program Review Process

Program review processes at Northern Marianas College are outlined in the college’s Institutional Excellence (IE) Guide, which sets forth governance procedures at the college, including planning, budgeting, and program review. As stated in the IE Guide, the main governance body that oversees the college’s program review process is Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC). Based on its aggregate review and evaluation of Form 1 and Form 2 submissions, PROAC synthesizes recommendations to the institution and to programs into an annual composite report. This report is submitted to the Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC), College Council, the college leadership team, and the president to inform the decision-making process with the ultimate goal of improving student learning at the college. As the final step in the program review process, the composite report signals an important closing of the loop in planning, budgeting, and review processes.

Several factors have hindered the college’s program review processes. First, two major storms, Typhoon Soudelor and Super Typhoon Yutu, upended routine processes at the college, including program review. Second, the inconsistent leadership in the

Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) has limited the systematic program review processes as set forth in the IE Guide. Third, changes in program review leadership have also resulted in the need for training on program review provided to the college community. Fourth, an evaluation of program review revealed that the college's program review processes are cumbersome and difficult to effectuate.

Culture of Program Review

Despite the need to strengthen institution-wide, systematic program review, a culture of program review persists at the college. In particular, academic programs have continued to complete both Form 1s and Form 2s. From 2015 through 2018, Form 1s were consistently completed every year by many of the college's academic programs and non-academic programs. Similarly, academic programs have continued to develop Form 2s. Since the college's program review cycle has programs complete and submit Form 2s on a multi-year, staggered basis, the most recent set of Form 2s collected was from academic programs for 2017, in which all of the college's degree programs submitted Form 2s. The process of preparing Form 1s and Form 2s involves the gathering and analysis of data that informs reflective dialogue in many programs about the quality and effectiveness of those programs. This

reflective dialogue also informs decision making about continuous quality improvement in those programs.

The data and information presented in these Form 1s and Form 2s have informed a number of important changes at the program level and at the institutional level. For example, the Nursing Program implemented a number of changes to improve student learning and student success. Based on the program's most recent Form 2, the program adopted the Kaplan Review Program to help students prepare for the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN), its individualized degree plan was revised, and a new student-parent orientation was launched to engage families in supporting candidates in the program. As another example, the Developmental Mathematics Program's Form 2 informed the program's investment in training with the Complete College America initiative, the launching of corequisite courses to improve course completion rates, and the implementation of the Carnegie Math Pathway to improve program completion rates. Results from the Developmental Mathematics Program's Form 2 also led to a partnership with the CNMI Public School System (PSS) and Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific, to codesign and implement a high school

mathematics transition course to increase the number of PSS high school graduates who start in college-level mathematics courses upon admission to NMC.

Assessment

Academic Council

In addition to PROAC, the college's Academic Council assists with various assessment processes. The primary purpose of the Academic Council is to assist the dean of LSS on all matters related to instructional programs and academic regulations. This includes reviewing and offering recommendations on the quality of and continued need for various instructional programs. The Academic Council also reviews and evaluates all academic program learning outcomes, general education learning outcomes, and student learning outcomes.

Working with the dean of LSS, in fall 2019, the Academic Council launched its [Course Assessment Plan](#), which provides the guidelines and a cyclical plan for assessing all college courses. At the course level, this assessment seeks to systematically examine the degree to which students are achieving the learning outcomes. This process is engaging faculty and staff in the evaluation of student performance with the goal of continuous

improvement of educational quality and student learning. Since beginning work on the plan in fall 2017, the council has been instrumental in creating and implementing the plan.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection Processes

Many offices and programs at the college collect a wide variety of data, including student achievement data, workforce development data, quality effectiveness data, data on human resources, and financial data. Much of the student data generated at the college comes from PowerCampus. Given that many offices, programs, and faculty have access to enter, extract, and manage data in PowerCampus, in 2014, a PowerCampus Data Group was formed to coordinate these data efforts. Including Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), Office of Admissions & Records (OAR), IT, and faculty representatives, the PowerCampus Data Group was tasked with assessing and expanding the functionality of PowerCampus.

In addition, Watermark assessment tools, Taskstream and Via, were adopted in fall 2017 in order to streamline, centralize, and sustain assessment and program review processes. Led by OIE and coordinated with IT, PROAC, and key

administrators, the implementation of Taskstream was on track spring 2018. The role of system administrator for Taskstream has recently been filled with the hiring of the assessment specialist in August 2019. Current plans are to pilot Taskstream with three programs in 2020.

Data Analysis

Inconsistent institutional program review, along with the changes in leadership in OIE, has undermined the extent to which consistent data analysis has been generated and provided to college programs and decision makers. However, the college continues to provide some data analysis. Student achievement data on Key Performance Indicators are synthesized and provided to the college's stakeholders, which provides some analysis of trends and patterns over time, such as retention rates and graduation rates. Data is also synthesized in annual reports, with the most recent one found in the 2019 NMC Citizen Centric Report, which also provides analysis to inform decision making at the college.

Areas for Growth

Revamp Program Review

While turnover in OIE has contributed to the college's challenges in implementing institution-wide, systematic program review, the college's program review processes were also evaluated in

October 2019 to identify other areas for growth in program review. Results from that evaluation indicated that in addition to reinstating a systematic, institution-wide process of program review, more training, support, and guidance must be provided to programs. PROAC is currently in the process of reviewing the results of this recent evaluation, as well as the history of the college's program review processes, to restart those processes in a more systematic manner.

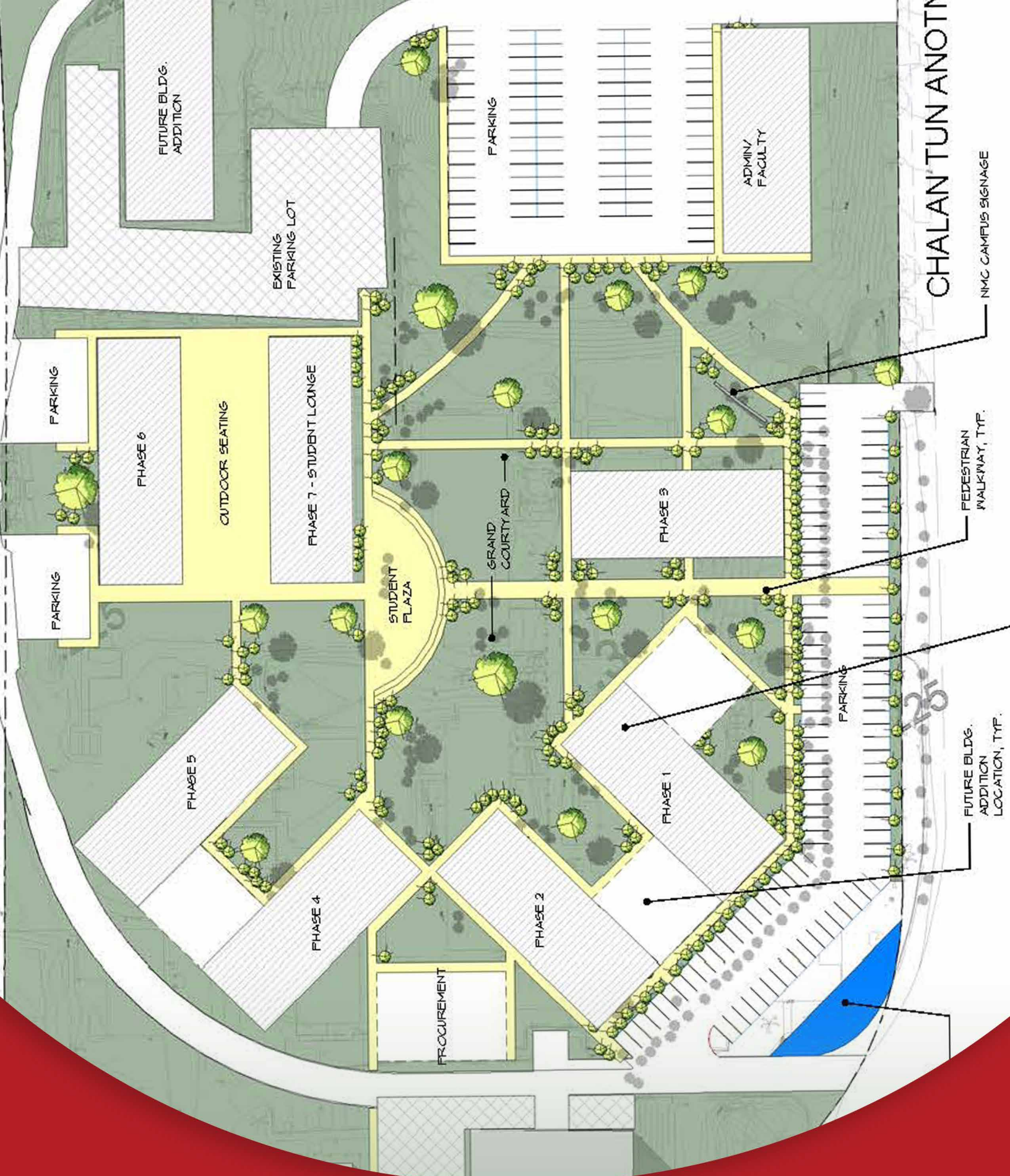
Integrated Data Collection

The many assessments conducted and data collected by several offices could be consolidated and better coordinated in order to eliminate duplicate efforts and to provide a centralized data bank for all college programs. The PowerCampus Data Group could lead this effort in first cataloging all data collected and then clarifying data collection roles. Furthermore, this data can be curated in a manner that is more accessible to college stakeholders.

Adequate Staffing

Given the turnover rate in OIE, the college is moving forward with expanding capacity within the office. Moreover, as demands for accountability drive up similar demands for more data and data analysis, OIE needs additional staffing and expertise to meet those demands. With more staffing, the office would

benefit from more institutional memory that can ensure better continuity during periods of turnover. With additional staffing, the office can also provide more training and support to college programs for program review and assessment processes.



VII. Sustainability

Preliminary rendering of the new NMC Campus.

“...just when we were getting used to things, my car broke down [and]...I almost had a mental breakdown because of the situation. I’m transferring to Portland State University in the fall, and I had been saving up everything I could that didn’t go to paying bills. I ended up depleting my savings and there was a point where I wondered if I could even afford a plane ticket to Oregon. It was difficult for me to deal with my workload from school and have the energy to go to work while carrying these burdensome thoughts. I finally learned to take it one day at a time by looking at the things I was thankful for. My family was safe, our car was being repaired, and I was getting offers from the university.”

Isabel Palacios, NMC Student

With two major storms in three years, geopolitical instability affecting the local economy, and leadership transitions at the institution, Northern Marianas College has sailed through some rough storms in recent years that have challenged its sustainability. However, the college has survived these storms with creative resilience that has empowered its proa to adapt to changing circumstances.

Financial Viability

Austerity Measures

The college relies primarily on appropriations from the CNMI government for revenue, with additional revenue coming from student tuition and fees. While appropriated revenue from the CNMI government rose from \$6,017,477 in 2017 to \$7,438,731 in 2019, austerity measures were announced in 2019 as the CNMI economy suffered a downturn in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Yutu. Tourist arrival rates declined by 21.5% in 2018 and 31% in 2019, revenues from Saipan’s gaming industry dropped by over 50%, and the CNMI’s GDP decreased by 19.6%. The resulting austerity measures included a 15% reduction, or a cut of \$825,365, in the allocation of government funds originally appropriated to the college for fiscal year 2019.

Adapting

As discussed earlier, the college took immediate action to absorb the cuts with a series of cost-saving measures. The college also minimized operational expenses by eliminating fourth quarter operational allotments to programs, thereby saving \$155,971 by August 2019. As a result of these measures, despite the cuts in government appropriation, as of October 11, 2019, the college had \$7,578,159 cash in its bank accounts. This financial standing allowed the college to successfully avoid cutting instructional pay and continue offering courses without any disruptions.

Furthermore, over the past decade, the college has taken measures to ensure the financial sustainability of the institution. Table 6 lists some indicators of the financial sustainability of the college.

Table 6: Indicators of NMC's Financial Sustainability

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| \$10,458,619 | Fiscal Year 2018 Year-end Cash |
| \$8,604,622 | Investment Accounts |
| \$697,925 | Time Certificate of Deposit Accounts |

As table 6 shows, the college ended the 2018 fiscal year with \$10,458,619 cash in its bank accounts, \$8,604,622 in investment accounts, and \$697,925 in time certificate of deposit accounts. Of that amount in its investment accounts, approximately \$1 million is available to the college for operations

at the discretion of the president, with the remaining amount entrusted to NMC Foundation's stewardship. As another indicator of its financial sustainability, the college has achieved 11 consecutive audits with unqualified audit opinions.

Resource Allocation

Strategic and Operational Planning

On September 17, 2014, the college's board of regents adopted institution's [2015-2020 Strategic Plan](#), which set forth goals that provided broad institutional priorities for resource allocation. However, soon after the launch of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, the college was struck by Typhoon Soudelor, which disrupted planning activities as college personnel and stakeholders shifted focus to short-term and long-term recovery efforts. Despite that setback, the college eventually operationalized its strategic plan into the 2017 Operational Plan, which had all college programs develop key objectives to align with the strategic plan's imperatives, articulate action steps, identify means of assessment and success criteria, identify persons responsible, and ensure regular monitoring of progress towards completion of each objective.

While the 2017 Operational Plan clearly translated the college's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan into a set

of concrete and measurable objectives and action steps, several factors hindered the college's ability to effectuate and monitor the effectiveness of the operational plan. Soon after the operational plan's expiration in the fall of 2018, the college was struck by Super Typhoon Yutu, which shifted the college's focus from reporting on the plan's progress towards recovery efforts. Furthermore, the strong need for consistent institution-wide, systematic program review processes hindered the ability of programs to collect data and evidence that were needed to measure the progress of implementing the operational plan. Inconsistencies in leadership in OIE compromised program review processes and impacted the monitoring and reporting of progress of the operational plan.

Budgeting Processes

Planning, budgeting, and program review processes are clearly laid out in the college's Institutional Excellence Guide. The Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC) is the governance body that is primarily responsible for facilitating the college's budgeting processes. BAFC is charged with aligning institutional priorities with the allocation of resources, reviewing and adjusting the budget in accordance with present circumstances and future projections, and for reporting and making recommendations to the chief financial officer

(CFO). The committee ensures that appropriate members of the college community participate in the development of annual operational budgets, annual strategic operational plans, new major programs and services, and major facilities planning prior to adoption by college officials.

The college maintains two budget cycles, a legislative cycle that follows the CNMI government's fiscal budget and an internal operations budget cycle. The focus of BAFC is the operations budget. BAFC facilitates the operations budget preparation process by reviewing budget submissions from college programs and offices and holding open hearings for each submission. After reviewing and deliberating on all proposed program budgets, BAFC submits its recommendations to the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for further review and submission to the president for review and approval before submission to the board of regents for final action.

The college's budgeting process is strengthened by the broad diversity of stakeholders represented on BAFC, which includes one student representative from the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College (ASNMC), two faculty representatives from Faculty Senate, two staff representatives from Staff Senate, two representatives from the division of Learning and Student Success, School of Education

(SOE) director, and the IT director. BAFC also includes five ex-officio members: the CFO, a staff from the budget office, the Rota center executive director, the Tinian center executive director, and the vice president for Learning and Student Success. This diversity of perspectives has enabled the college to flexibly respond to changing conditions with conservative budgets that have helped ensure ample contingency funding.

Global, National, Local Challenges

Climate Change

The devastating impact of climate change has become the new normal for the Marianas as storms become more frequent and more intense, ocean levels rise, and the average year-round temperature increases. As the American Meteorological Society noted in its latest State of the Climate in 2018 report, “Every year since the start of the twenty-first century has been warmer than the 1981–2010 average,” adding that in 2018, “the dominant greenhouse gases released into Earth’s atmosphere—carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide—continued to increase and reach new record highs.” In the Marianas, this has resulted not only in increased temperatures and rising sea levels, but, as the report states for 2018, “a busy typhoon season for Guam and the CNMI that would see Typhoon Mangkhut pass over Rota in the

CNMI and northern Guam in September and Super Typhoon Yutu pass directly over Tinian and Saipan in the CNMI in October.” The impact on the Marianas was made especially clear in a recent report from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which stated, “As a small, isolated Pacific island, Saipan is expected to be particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change and variability, especially rising sea levels.” As discussed earlier, 2015’s Typhoon Soudelor and 2018’s Super Typhoon Yutu caused considerable damage to the college, destroying more than 80% of the Saipan campus.

More than a year after Super Typhoon Yutu, the college continues to work the CNMI Government, FEMA, and other local and federal agencies on long-term recovery efforts that will ensure new facilities will be able to withstand the impact of severe weather. Specifically, the college is working to secure funding from FEMA’s Section 428 Alternative Procedures Public Assistance Program, which will enable the college to build new facilities rather than repair current facilities that are outdated and timeworn.

More recently, on December 21, 2019, the U.S. Department of Education confirmed a [grant award of \\$21.9 million for NMC](#) that can be used toward the construction of new facilities. The grant was

VII. Sustainability

made under the U.S. Department of Education’s Emergency Assistance to Institutions of Higher Education program. The announcement of the new grant, which was [featured on the front page of local newspapers](#), was a great morale booster not only for NMC but also for the entire CNMI community.

Additionally, the College is pursuing funds from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (U.S. EDA), from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and other sources.

Table 7 lists facilities that the college plans to build with the funds as they become available. Approximately \$18 million is needed to build new classrooms, \$17 million for a student support center, \$16 million for a workforce development center, \$15 million for student housing, \$6 million for a CREES facility, \$6 million for a sports complex, and \$5 million for a parking structure.

The college is currently in the process of procuring the services of a architecture and engineering (A&E) to help lead the facilities master plan (FMP). This new FMP will capture the current and future growth needs of the College in a way that emphasizes student access, technology, and energy efficiency.

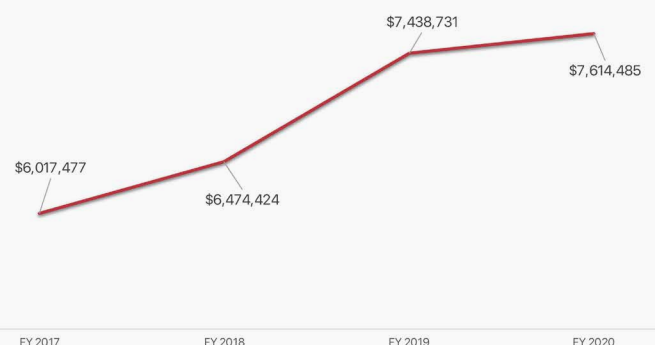
Table 7: NMC Plan for FEMA 428 Alternative Procedures Public Assistance Program

| Item | Amount |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| New Classrooms | \$ 18 Million |
| Student Support Center | \$ 17 Million |
| Workforce Development Center | \$ 16 Million |
| Student Housing | \$ 15 Million |
| CREES Facility | \$ 6 Million |
| Gymnasium | \$ 6 Million |
| Parking Structure | \$ 5 Million |

Government Funding

At the national level, higher education has been besieged by declining government funding. “Overall state funding for public two- and four-year colleges in the 2017 school year (that is, the school year ending in 2017) was nearly \$9 billion below its 2008 level, after adjusting for inflation” (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities). In addition, according to the U.S. ED, since the 2008 recession and with the rise of online education, more than 200 colleges and universities have closed down. However, despite these national trends, government funding for the college has increased, as demonstrated in chart 10.

Chart 10: CNMI Government Appropriations for NMC



Note: The 2019 figure was subsequently reduced due to government-wide austerity measures

Even with recent austerity cuts, NMC received more government funding in the 2019 fiscal year than it had in the 2017 fiscal year.

Workforce

In addition to climate change, the CNMI's evolving and unique political relationship with the U.S. has presented challenges to the islands' workforce. Given the turbulent history of the CNMI's workforce and the 2029 deadline for the expiration of the CNMI-Only Transitional Worker classification (CW-1) Program, the college has worked to meet the evolving workforce needs of the economy. In addition to launching its business management bachelor's degree in 2014, as discussed earlier under degree programs, the college's academic programs have been aligned with a recent CNMI Prevailing Wage and Workforce Assessment Study (PWWAS) to ensure that its academic programs are preparing students for the current workforce needs of the local economy. Furthermore, the college is a member of the CNMI State Workforce Development Board, which works with federal, regional, and local agencies and organizations to provide a range of employment, education, training, and related services and supports to help all job seekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. In addition, the Community Development

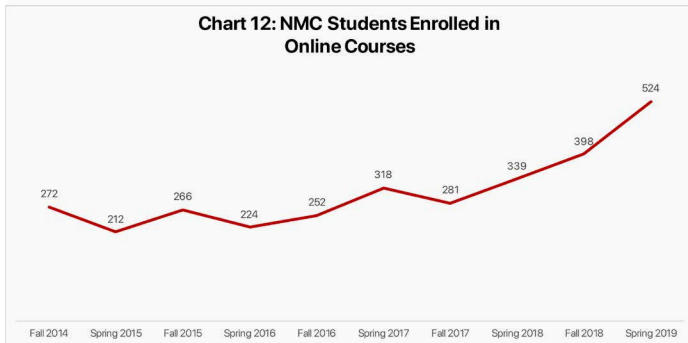
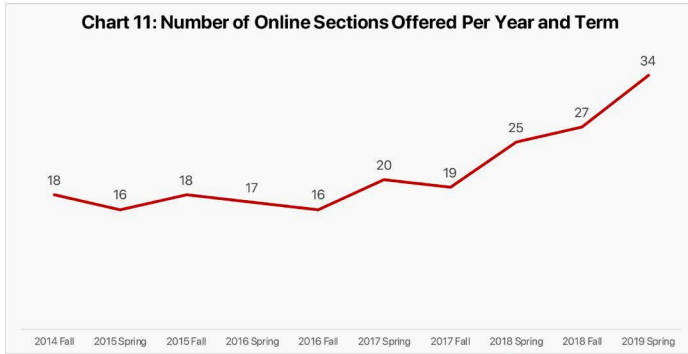
Institute's (CDI) workforce development and certificate program offers courses and certificate programs that are also aligned with occupations identified in the PWWAS, including areas such as education, health, public safety, tourism and hospitality, and business. As a demonstration of this alignment, from 2017 through 2019, CDI provided services to 49 individuals in health services, 247 law enforcement personnel, 235 business professionals, 460 employees of the tourism and hospitality industry, and 862 educators. The college also led the community in hosting the 2018 Education Summit, which brought together educators, government leaders, and businesses to discuss workforce development and other initiatives.

Distance Education

Capitalizing on the growth of online education, the college has increased the number of online courses offered through NMC Online (Moodle), which has seen a steady increase of students enrolling in online courses. Chart 12 tracks the number of students enrolled in online courses over the past five years.

As chart 12 shows, student enrollment in online courses increased by 93% over five years, going from 272 in fall 2014 to 524 in spring 2019.

To build on the successful growth of its online courses, the college secured a grant from the United



States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture, to develop online courses in food and agriculture science. The grant also provided resources to train faculty in the use of NMC Online (Moodle). The college has also developed an articulation agreement with Maricopa Community College that gives students options for online courses that are convenient for student schedules and required for certain programs.

It should be noted that the college’s Distance Education Program, particularly NMC Online (Moodle), mitigated the impact of Super Typhoon Yutu and its aftermath by providing students with a platform to continue their coursework as temporary campus facilities were explored and developed.

Areas for Growth

New Strategic Plan

As the college’s current 2015-2020 Strategic Plan is set to expire, the college has taken steps to develop a new strategic plan. In June 2019, the college convened a three-day strategic planning summit to begin work on the new plan. The summit engaged internal stakeholders, including the board of regents, faculty, staff, and students, as well as external stakeholders, including government officials and business leaders, in focused discussions about how the college can navigate the current education and economic landscape to chart a new direction forward. Stakeholder discussions at the summit will serve to guide the college’s leadership in preparing a draft strategic plan for further review by college stakeholders. The college now needs to develop the strategic plan and consider whether it may be more prudent to narrow the plan to a three-year timeframe that more clearly focuses on a few achievable goals, while also giving the college flexibility to respond to crises that may emerge.

Building Capacity

As the college builds on the strengths of its online courses and digital tools, it will also need to build the capacity of its current personnel. Given the challenges of recruiting and retaining qualified

personnel from off-island, the college can benefit by investing more in the training and education of its current faculty and staff.



VIII. Conclusion

“We thought Typhoon Soudelor was the final storm that would rage our islands, but it seems like the man above was still angry for the way we treat our island. The experience of Typhoon Yutu, I would say, brought us to work as a community. Even if we were in the middle of classes or work, it was a life lesson that needed to be heard, to STOP and start learning to work together as a whole. It was difficult at first, because you had to save your time to help others, no matter what. After Yutu, residents started to realize a lot. We started talking to people we never realized had existed. We started opening bridges that couldn’t fall. We started to share. The typhoon was a disastrous event, but the service given was enough for us to create a bigger and better change for our home, the Northern Mariana Islands. Typhoon Yutu was definitely a knock on our door.”

Eloise Rose E. Lopez, NMC Student

This report began with a discussion about the many storms, both literal and figurative, that Northern Marianas College’s proa has survived. To reinforce this theme, reflections from college students have been interwoven throughout the report, giving these students an authentic voice in representing the institution. For that reason, this report’s conclusion begins and ends with the full text of two student narratives, both of which highlight three underlying motifs.

Community

Devastating typhoons, socioeconomic turbulence, and fiscal instability may have torn the Northern Mariana Islands apart, but they have not torn apart the sense of community that binds the islands and the college together. When Typhoon Soudelor and Super Typhoon Yutu destroyed campus facilities, faculty, staff, students, and the broader community came together to rebuild and recover, ensuring that learning continued and students succeeded. In response to a constantly shifting federalized labor market, the college has worked with community partners to offer programs that will help build the local workforce. And despite the challenges of austerity measures, the college community has come together to share the burden of budget cuts, not only to continue offering its programs, but also to ensure that no one single

program or group of stakeholders bears the brunt of the cuts. In all of this, it has taken a community to keep the college's proa afloat.

Resiliency

At the heart of the college community is a resiliency that empowers all of the college's stakeholders to survive and thrive throughout all of the storms that have struck. Even when typhoons damaged basic infrastructure, caused scarcity in water and food supplies, and ripped roofs from homes, faculty showed up to teach, staff showed up to support, and students showed up to learn, boasting an increase in enrollment less than a year after Super Typhoon Yutu. When budget cuts threatened to undermine its financial standing, the college found a way to make do with less. Despite limited funding, the college was resourceful in expanding programs to meet the growing workforce needs of an evolving economy. Storms may have blown the college off course, but an undaunted resiliency is the wind that propels the college's proa ahead.

Sailing Ahead

Traditional navigators of the Chamorro flying proa were also known for their ability to navigate through the Pacific Ocean using knowledge of the natural world and memory of traditional navigation

techniques. As the college navigates its future, it must also rely on its community and resiliency to find its way, no matter what storms lie ahead. Developing a new strategic plan will be critical in this regard. That plan must build on the strength of community at the college by engaging all stakeholders, both internal and external, in soliciting their institutional memory, their professional expertise, and, above all, their hopes and aspirations for the future of the college and the CNMI. In developing that plan, the college will reinforce its foundation of resiliency with buildings that can withstand more frequent and more intense storms, and a spirit that may bend but will never break.

“This was the first time I was completely homeless. My family had nothing besides each other and what was in our cars. We moved around from shelter to shelter waiting months for assistance from FEMA. I feel that my resiliency was best displayed as I took on many jobs in order to help my parents provide for our family. My dad was working for PSS [Public School System] at the time and since school was delayed, he wasn't able to get paid. There were times in which we had barely enough money for dinner, and we barely had time to clean up our broken home. These moments showed how strong we could be even when times were tough. A year later I'm still not in the clear with my home. It's being fixed now. But, I'm proud of myself and my family. Because we may have bent, but we didn't break.”

Gavin Pangelinan, NMC Student

Acronyms

Acronyms and Glossary

| | |
|----------|---|
| ABE | Adult Basic Education |
| AC | Academic Council |
| ACCJC | Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges |
| ADA | Americans with Disabilities Act |
| AGR | Absolute Graduation Rate |
| AHEC | Area Health Education Center |
| ALO | Accreditation Liaison Officer |
| ARSC | Accreditation Reaffirmation Steering Committee |
| ASNMC | Associated Students of Northern Marianas College |
| BAFC | Budget and Finance Committee |
| BOR | Board of Regents |
| CACG | College Access Challenge Grant |
| CCA | Complete College America |
| CDI | Community Development Institute |
| CFO | Chief Financial Officer |
| CFR | Criteria For Review |
| CNMI | Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands |
| CNRA | Consolidated Natural Resources Act |
| CREES | Cooperative Research, Extension, and Education Services |
| CW-1 | CNMI-Only Transitional Worker classification (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) |
| ED | United States Department of Education |
| ed2go | Education to Go |
| FEMA | Federal Emergency Management Agency |
| GAO | Government Accountability Office |
| GE | General Education |
| GELO | General Education Learning Outcomes |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| H-1B | Specialty Occupations; have completed a foreign degree that is equivalent to a U.S. bachelors or higher degree in the specialty occupation. (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) |
| H-2B | Temporary Non-Agricultural Workers (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) |
| HRO | Human Resources Office |
| IDP | Individualized Degree Plan |
| IE Guide | Institutional Excellence Guide |
| IEEI | Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators |
| ILO | Institutional Learning Outcomes |
| IOA | Islands of Opportunity Alliance |
| IR | Institutional Researcher |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| IT | Information Technology |
| LSAMP | Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation |
| LSS | Learning and Student Success |
| NACE | National Association of Colleges and Employers |
| NCLEX-RN | National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses |
| NIH | National Institutes of Health |
| NMC | Northern Marianas College |
| NRM | Natural Resources Management |
| NSF | National Science Foundation |
| OAR | Office of Admissions and Records |
| OIE | Office of Institutional Effectiveness |
| PDP | Professional Development Plan |
| PLA | Prior Learning Assessment |
| PLO | Program Learning Outcomes |
| PRAXIS Series | Tests that measures the academic skills and subject-specific content knowledge needed for teaching (Educational Testing Services) |
| PROAC | Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee |
| Project PROA | Promotion, Retention, Opportunities, Advancement |
| PSS | Public School System |
| PWWAS | Prevailing Wage and Workforce Assessment Study |
| REL Pacific | Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific |
| SLO | Student Learning Outcomes |
| SOE | School of Education |
| SROTC | U.S. ARMY Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps |
| SSHS | Saipan Southern High School |
| STEM | Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics |
| TEACH Grant | Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education Grant |
| UCEDD | University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities |
| UOG | University of Guam |
| VALUE Rubrics | Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education |
| WICHE | Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education |



MISSION

Northern Marianas College, through its commitment to student learning, provides high quality, affordable and accessible educational programs and services for the individual and people of the Commonwealth.

VISION

Northern Marianas College will serve as the engine to drive the economic growth and the social and cultural vitality of the Commonwealth.