WASC | Senior College and University Commission

WSCUC Interim Report

INSTRUCTIONS
Interim Reports are limited in scope, not comprehensive evaluations of the institution. The report informs the Interim Report Committee about the progress made by the institution in addressing issues identified by the Commission.

The Interim Report consists of two sections:
- Interim Report Form and Appendices

Please respond completely to each question on the following pages and do not delete the questions. Appendices should be uploaded as separate attachments.

Institutions will use Box.com to upload the report. Instructions for the Box.com account and uploading the report will be provided by email.

REPORT GUIDELINES AND WORD LIMITS
Because the number of issues reported on varies among institutions (the average is four to six issues), the length of a report will vary. However, a typical interim report ranges from 20 to 60 pages, not including appendices. Narrative essays responding to each issue should be <u>no more than five pages each</u>. **The total number of pages of appendices supporting the report should be no more than 200 pages** unless agreed upon in advance with the institution's staff liaison. Be sure that all attachments follow a consistent naming convention and are referenced the same way at appropriate places within the narrative. Please name them so that it is clear what they are and what section they refer to, with cross referencing in the narrative. For example, "Attachment 2-1: Mission Statement". Attachments are preferred as PDFs.

Institutions that provide excessive information in their report will be asked to resubmit. You may wish to consult with your staff liaison as you prepare your report.

Some tips for providing evidence to support your findings:

- Put yourself in the place of a reviewer: What is the story that you need to tell? What evidence supports your story? What is extraneous and can be left out?

- Provide a representative sample of evidence on an issue, rather than ALL of the evidence.

- Consider including an executive summary or the most relevant points of supporting evidence, rather than the entire document.

- If you are referring to a specific page or set of pages in a document, include only those pages, not the entire document.

- If you are providing an excerpt of a document, include the title of the document, and a table of contents and/or a brief narrative to put the excerpt in context.

- If you provide a hyperlink to a web page, make sure the link takes the viewer directly to the relevant information on the page. Do not make your reviewer search for it.

REVIEW PROCESS

A panel of the WSCUC Interim Report Committee (IRC) and member(s) of the previous review team will review the report, typically within 90 days of receipt. Representatives of your institution will be invited to participate in the conference call review to respond to questions from the panel. Your WSCUC staff liaison will contact you after the call with the outcome of the review, which will also be documented in a formal action letter.

OUTCOMES OF THE REVIEW

After the review, the panel will take one of the following actions.

- **Receive the Interim Report** with recommendations and commendations—No follow up required.

- **Defer action** pending receipt of follow-up information—The panel has identified limited information that may be submitted in a short period of time, such as audited financial statements or the outcome of an upcoming meeting of the board. The panel may authorize the WSCUC staff liaison to review these materials without the full panel being brought together again, depending on the nature of the supplemental information.

- **Request an additional Interim Report**—Issues reported on were not adequately resolved or need continued monitoring.

- **Request a Progress Report**—A progress report is less formal than an Interim Report and is reviewed only by the WSCUC staff liaison. A progress report may be requested when institutional follow-up on one or two relatively minor areas is desired.

- **Receive the Interim Report with a recommendation that the Commission sends a site visit evaluation team—**Serious, ongoing issues involving potential non-compliance with WSCUC's Standards and Criteria for Review may require follow-up in the form of a Special Visit. Note that the IRC panel makes a recommendation for a visit, and the Executive Committee of the Commission or the full Commission decides on whether or not to require the visit.

Interim Report Form

Please respond to each question. Do not delete the questions. Insert additional pages as needed.

Name of Institution: Northern Marianas College

Person Submitting the Report: Charlotte Cepeda

Report Submission Date: November 7, 2025

Statement on Report Preparation
Briefly describe in narrative form the process of report preparation, providing the names and titles of those involved. Because of the focused nature of an Interim Report, the widespread and comprehensive involvement of all institutional constituencies is not normally required. Faculty, administrative staff, and others should be involved as appropriate to the topics being addressed in the preparation of the report. Campus constituencies, such as faculty leadership and, where appropriate, the governing board, should review the report before it is submitted to WSCUC, and such reviews should be indicated in this statement.

Northern Marianas College, hereafter referred to as the college, values accreditation and continues to prioritize its maintenance and renewal. The college submitted its Reaffirmation Report to the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) on January 6, 2020. The Review Panel conducted its review from October 25 to 29, 2021. The college received its Action Letter from WSCUC on March 8, 2022. The Action Letter highlighted four actions, six commendations, and six recommendations by the review team.

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

Six Commendations:
1. The incredible efforts were employed to quickly respond to the devastating effects of Super Typhoon Yutu in October 2018 and to support students, faculty, staff and the local community.
2. A timely, comprehensive, and effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Resilient faculty, students and staff who persevered through the “storms” of geopolitical uncertainty, socioeconomic disruptions, and climate change and the impact these storms have had on the college and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands.
4. A stronger and more supportive relationship with the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, both with the executive and legislative branches.
5. A new comprehensive facilities master plan to guide the rebuilding and future development of the college, along with securing $97.2 million in federal funds for the initial implementation of the plan.
6. Effective management of limited financial resources is reflected by low debt, stable financial reserves, and growing enrollment.

Six Recommendations:
1. Conclude and implement a new strategic plan in a timely fashion to guide the college over the next three to seven years, as well as implement the recently adopted facilities master plan. (CFR 3.5, 4.6, 4.7)

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

The college responded promptly to the six recommendations and remains committed to addressing all recommendations outlined in the Commission's Action Letter dated March 8, 2022. These recommendations are prioritized components of the college's continuous improvement efforts. Significant progress has been made in meeting the recommendations, but the process has not been without challenges.

The college established the A-team (accreditation team), composed of a cross-section of administrators and staff representing various functional areas of the College, along with Charlotte Cepeda, the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO), to address the recommendations. The A-team met regularly to analyze each recommendation, develop action plans, and identify the evidence pieces that demonstrate compliance and progress toward meeting the recommendations. A recommendation tracking worksheet was developed and is regularly updated to track progress.

The A-team established subcommittees aligned with specialized areas that correspond with each recommendation. Recommendation one was led by Rachel Fusco, Director of Capital Improvement Projects, with Kevin Bautista, Director of the Office of the President, serving as vice-chair. Recommendation two is chaired by the former assessment specialist, Geraldine Rodgers. Recommendation three is led by Polly Masga, Director of the Human Resources Office (HRO). Recommendation four is chaired by former Board of Regents (BOR) Chairman Charles Cepeda until his term ended, Michelle Sablan, board member, and contributing member, Polly Masga. Recommendation five is chaired by Clifford Aldan, Director of the Office of Information Technology (OIT) with contributions from former interim OIT directors Jerome Ortiz and Renedel Buno. The final recommendation, recommendation six is chaired by Vilma Reyes, Director of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE).

The interim report was a standing agenda item in the weekly NMC leadership meetings. College leaders were provided access to the draft report through a shared Google doc. The interim report was also a regular agenda item at the board of regents' (BOR) quarterly meetings, during which the ALO provided updates on each recommendation and addressed questions from the board. The board was provided with a draft review of the interim report in its special meeting held on October 3, 2025.

The interim report was disseminated to college stakeholders through senate presidents and divisional leaders for review. Feedback, coordinated by the ALO and Vilma Reyes, chair of the A-team, was submitted by October 17, 2025. Feedback was reviewed and incorporated into the draft interim report. The interim report is a result of collaborative efforts between the A-team and all committee members.

This Interim Report will be the college's first response to the six recommendations and the opportunity to provide updates on additional accreditation actions since the Off-Site Review (OSR).

List of Topics Addressed in this Report

Please list the topics identified in the action letter(s) and that are addressed in this report.

The college has a scheduled Interim Report due to WSCUC on November 1, 2025. This Interim Report addresses all recommendations listed below:

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

Institutional Context
Very briefly describe the institution's background; mission; history, including the founding date and year first accredited; geographic locations; and other pertinent information so that the Interim Report Committee panel has the context to understand the issues discussed in the report.

The Northern Marianas College is located in the United States Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), an archipelago of 14 islands situated along the Marianas Trench. The CNMI is the northwesternmost U. S. territory in the Pacific and lies near China and North Korea, regions from which economic and geopolitical tensions reverberate across the islands. The islands' Pacific location makes them highly vulnerable to catastrophic storms. These impacts have intensified in recent years due to global climate change. These forces collectively present both literal and symbolic challenges, for the CNMI's only public institution of higher education.

The college was established in 1981 through an executive order issued by the CNMI's first governor, Carlos S. Camacho, as a division of the CNMI Department of Education. CNMI Public Law 3-43 designated the college as a land grant college and was restructured in 1985 as a public, nonprofit, and autonomous corporation governed by a board of regents. The college was granted accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) as a community college authorized to offer associate degree programs and workforce training for government and business personnel that same year.

The college broadened its academic offerings in 2001 when the WSCUC granted program accreditation for the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education under the college's School of Education. The college's primary accreditation remained with ACCJC. WSCUC approved the addition of a Bachelor of Science in Business Management degree in 2014, marking the start of the college's transition from ACCJC to full institutional accreditation under WSCUC.

The BOR collaborated with the college president and stakeholders to adopt the current mission and vision statements in 2023. The college's mission states:

"The mission of Northern Marianas College is to cultivate stewardship through scholarship. Embracing our agency and cultural identity on the global stage, the college strives to take care of our community, our resources, our people by cultivating the structured pursuit of knowledge across the Marianas".

The college's vision states: *"As we sail ahead with focus on learning, let us lift the tide for everyone".* These continue to drive all aspects of the college.

The college is governed by a BOR composed of seven voting members, five representing the island of Saipan, one representing the island of Tinian, and one representing the island of Rota. Additional components include that at least one member must be of Carolinian descent, at least one member must be a woman, and at least five members must be from the private sector. Members serve to represent the public interest in matters related to postsecondary education.

Each member is nominated by a board nominating committee that consists of presidents from the college's senates, a student, the BOR committee chair, one representative for all three islands' mayors, and the alumni association, appointed by the CNMI governor, and confirmed by the CNMI senate to serve a four-year term. The BOR sets college policy, leads broad strategic planning efforts, and appoints the president, who is responsible for the operations and general administration of the college. 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).

The college has developed a comprehensive set of academic and non-academic 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. The college complements 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, including the University of Guam's Bachelor of Science in

Criminal Justice and Portland State University's STEM and related programs. The college also offers programs that serve the community, such as Adult Education; the Community Technical Institute; Cooperative Research, Extension, and Education Services (CREES); University of Hawaii's Area Health Education Center; and the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

The college's programs are supported by numerous services, which include tutoring, peer mentoring, international student support, counseling, disability support, veteran and military-affiliated student support, financial aid, career services, library programs and services, and various student organizations. The college also provides several tools for distance education, including NMC Online (Moodle), and is currently migrating to Ellucian Colleague Self-Service. The college's Rota and Tinian centers facilitate access to these programs and services for students and community members on those islands. These services are also accessible online.

While the college offers a wide range of programs and services to the island communities, its capacity, infrastructure, and operations face significant challenges. Super Typhoon Yutu, which struck Saipan and Tinian on October 24, 2018, destroyed 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 to be well above $20 million. Despite the devastating and traumatic impact, the college community united to rebuild and restore a sense of normalcy for its students and stakeholders.

The college secured over $100 million in grants and funding support to build a new Saipan campus. The college completed construction of the first of five new buildings in October 2025 (refer to Recommendation one).

Response to Issues Identified by the Commission

This main section of the report should address the issues identified by the Commission in its action letter(s) as topics for the Interim Report. Each topic identified in the Commission's action letter should be addressed. The team report (on which the action letter is based) may provide additional context and background for the institution's understanding of issues.

Provide a full description of each issue, the actions taken by the institution that address this issue, and an analysis of the effectiveness of these actions to date. Have the actions taken been successful in resolving the problem? What is the evidence supporting progress? What further problems or issues remain? How will these concerns be addressed, by whom, and under what timetable? How will the institution know when the issue has been fully addressed? Please include a timeline that outlines additional steps planned with milestones and expected outcomes. Responses should be no longer than five pages per issue.

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation One:
Conclude and implement a new strategic plan in a timely fashion to guide the college over the next three to seven years, as well as implement the recently adopted facilities master plan. (CFR 3.5, 4.6, 4.7).

Description:
The college's 2015–2020 strategic plan set defined objectives but faced major setbacks. The implementation of the strategic plan was hindered by two super typhoons within three years: Super Typhoon Soudelor in 2015 and Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018. The expiration of the 2015-2020 strategic plan allowed the college to reassess its priorities and create a long-term plan focused on sustainable and resilient facilities that will provide safety and support operational continuity through the development of a new strategic plan that reflects the college's needs, most especially as it rebuilds.

Actions Taken:
The college has made substantial progress in addressing Recommendation One with the successful conclusion and implementation of its 2015–2020 Strategic Plan and the advancement of the Facilities Master Plan (FMP). The strategic plan was developed through an inclusive process including the BOR's approval of three strategic priorities, adoption of seven strategic goals and 57 action steps and approval of a revised mission statement. The strategic priorities focus on three core areas: take care of our people, take care of our resources, and take care of our community.

To further strengthen student outcomes, the president established a student success ad-hoc committee (SSAH). This committee was tasked to develop strategies to improve students' financial stability, design a meaningful first-year experience, and recommend reforms to the college's current advising model. Its work resulted in a set of research-based recommendations of best practices that the college has been actively tracking to ensure continuous improvement in student success.

The college has also advanced its FMP with major milestones such as the groundbreaking of the Proa Union in 2023 and ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 24, 2025. The ribbon-cutting ceremony signaled the beginning of the campus's physical transformation following the devastation of Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018 that demolished over 85% of the college campus. The college immediately searched for temporary classroom spaces. The college was able to continue classes through collaboration with the CNMI Public School System. Classes were held at the Saipan Southern High School campus while the college applied for FEMA assistance to establish temporary classroom spaces on its Saipan campus, FEMA tents. These tents were to be temporary classroom spaces while the college carefully planned the trajectory towards long-term recovery and the creation of the 2021 FMP. The FEMA tents are still in use on the Saipan campus. The college has, however, secured over $100M, an increase from an originally reported $97.2M in grants and funding support for the construction of a new campus.

The FMP includes other major construction projects including the Center for Research Extension & Development (CRED), the Workforce Development & Training Center (WD&TC), and two classroom buildings. The FMP demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainability, with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified designs, solar photovoltaic systems, and culturally relevant landscaping. These new facilities reflect the college's growth and demonstrate a commitment to serving students, faculty, and the community. The FMP will continue to meet federally mandated grant timelines, with several capital improvement projects that extend from 2026 through 2028.

The college acknowledges health, safety and accessibility concerns as construction of four additional buildings is anticipated to begin in 2026. The college is seeking temporary transition spaces for classrooms and offices at suitable locations to address these concerns.

The college has also embarked on a significant digital transformation through its transition from four stand-alone databases housing student, employee, finance, and financial aid data to the Ellucian Colleague Software as a System

(SaaS). Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system (see Recommendation Five). This move modernizes institutional processes, enhances data integration, and supports more efficient decision-making across administrative and academic functions (see Recommendations Five and Six).

Analysis:
The college has demonstrated resilience and strategic focus in the rebuilding of its facilities and the advancement of institutional priorities following significant disruptions from Super Typhoons Soudelor and Yutu. The college developed the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan and advanced the FMP to emphasize sustainable facilities, operational continuity, and student success.

Strategic goals have guided initiatives such as new distance education programs, research-based student success interventions, and digital transformation through the implementation of the Ellucian Colleague ERP system, enhancing data integration and evidence-based decision-making.

Implementation of the strategic plan began in 2023 and is supported by a tracking matrix that monitors completion across 57 action steps, of which 65% have been initiated and are ongoing (see Appendix 1.1– Strategic Priorities and Appendix 1.2 - Strategic Goal Tracking). The plan is integrated into operations and decision-making, which reflects a maturing culture of planning and assessment. The strategic plan has been widely disseminated to the campus community.

Evidence of implementation is demonstrated through key achievements, including the approval of new distance education programs that expand access to nontraditional students and students on the islands of Tinian and Rota. The college has also adopted cloud-based systems that improve efficiency, automation, and service delivery. These accomplishments align directly with strategic goals focused on student success and institutional quality (see Recommendation Five).

Major FMP milestones include the groundbreaking of the Proa Union in 2023 and its ribbon-cutting in 2025 along with plans to construct four other LEED-certified facilities that reflect the college's commitment to sustainability, community service, and growth. Short and long-term solutions are employed to address health, safety, and accessibility during ongoing construction. A Facilities Planning Group meets on a weekly basis to monitor the progress and implementation of the FMP, adjusting timelines as necessary and engaging a broad cross-section of the college community in collaborative problem-solving to advance the FMP. A weekly Facilities Planning Group update is prepared by the college's Capital Improvement Projects Director and provided to the president who, in turn, provides copies to the BOR (Appendix 1.3 - CIP Facilities Planning Committee Agenda, October 1, 2025).

Project	Current Status	Remarks/Status
Solar Power Project (Solar Array on Student Center Roof)	Completed	Supports NMC's renewable energy transition and operational cost reduction.
Student Center Construction	Completed	Flagship facility under NMC's new campus redevelopment plan.
Tinian Building Damages (PW103)	In planning phase	FEMA scope and fund alignment under review.
Workforce Development & Training Center (WD&TC)	Under management review	Will house workforce development center programs.
Center for Research, Extension & Development (CRED)	Bids due on November 5, 2025; evaluations soon after	Will serve as the hub for research, extension, and community training.

Reconstruction of 32 Classrooms and Laboratories (two buildings)	Design phase; completion targeted November 2025	Emphasizes resilient construction and accessibility standards.

The FMP updates include ongoing negotiations for the construction contract for the WD&TC, the bid announcement for the CRED, and anticipated opening for bids for two classroom buildings (see FMP). These developments signify measurable progress toward restoring a fully functional, climate-resilient, and future-ready campus aligned with the FMP.

Progress reports confirm measurable outcomes that include expanded student access, strengthened employee engagement, and enhanced operational efficiency.

These efforts illustrate the college's effective use of resources, coordinated planning, and capacity-building, all of which strengthen institutional resilience and position the college for continued advancement and student success.

Next Steps:

The college will secure temporary transition spaces to ensure safety, accessibility, and continuity of instruction due to continuing construction. The temporary relocation of classes and offices has presented logistical challenges.

The college will begin consultations in 2026, to develop the 2026–2030 "45 to 50 Strategic Plan" that will allow for sustained strategic momentum. The next steps build on current progress, embedding measurable outcomes in student success, workforce alignment, and sustainability.

Full resolution of this recommendation will be achieved upon the completion and evaluation of the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan and the successful launch of the 2026–2030 Strategic Plan called 45 to 50 Strategic Plan to commemorate the college's 45th anniversary. All major FMP projects are expected to be completed by 2028, marking the full realization of the college's long-term recovery and modernization goals. Evidence of progress will be documented through regular BOR reports, assessment results, and stakeholder feedback, reflecting strengthened institutional resilience, sustainability, and effectiveness. The college will maintain stakeholder engagement through communication within and outside the college community during the FMP construction phase to strengthen transparency.

Planned Actions and Timeline

Timeline	Action	Responsible	Outcome
Ongoing	Secure temporary transition spaces for classrooms and offices to address safety, accessibility, and continuity of instruction	President, Facilities Director, Division Leaders	Safe and accessible learning and work environments during ongoing construction, minimizing disruption to academic and administrative operations
FY 2025 - 2028	Complete construction of Proa Union and ongoing FMP projects (CRED, WD&TC, classroom buildings)	President, Facilities Director; Project Managers; BOR oversight	Completion of modern, sustainable, and LEED-certified facilities supporting student learning, community engagement, and operational efficiency

FY 2025 - 2028	Monitor and document construction progress and institutional impact	President, VP of OAA, Facilities Director, CIP Director	Transparent reporting of progress, ensuring projects remain on schedule and meet quality, safety, and sustainability standards
FY 2025	Launch and evaluate 2022–2025 Strategic Plan	President, Division Leaders, BOR	Achieve measurable outcomes across 57 action steps, including student success, workforce alignment, and operational improvements; document lessons learned
FY 2026	Develop 2026–2030 "45 to 50 Strategic Plan"	President, Strategic Planning Committee, BOR	Establish long-term priorities for sustainability, student success, digital transformation, and facilities modernization; embed measurable outcomes and KPIs
FY 2025	Integrate digital transformation initiatives through Ellucian Colleague ERP	VP of OAA, OIT Director, OIE Director	Streamlined institutional processes, centralized data, enhanced decision-making, and improved reporting capabilities
Ongoing 2025–2028	Stakeholder engagement and communication during FMP and strategic plan implementation	President, BOR	Maintain transparency, gather feedback, and strengthen community and campus trust throughout construction and planning phases
FY 2028 - 2029	Evaluate outcomes of Strategic Plans and FMP upon completion	President; BOR; OIE Director	Evidence-based assessment of student access, operational efficiency, workforce alignment, and sustainability; inform next strategic planning cycle

Appendices:
Appendix 1.1 - Strategic Priorities
Appendix 1.2 - Strategic Goals Tracking
Appendix 1.3 - CIP Facilities Planning Committee Agenda, October 1, 2025

Recommendation Two:
Conclude the work of the governance review task force in a timely fashion to ensure consolidation and clarity of NMC governance structures, insist on streamlined efficiency, affirm effective academic leadership by faculty, and focus on institutional excellence. (CFR 3.6. 3.7, 3.9, 3.10).

Description:
The college adheres to an institutional excellence guide (IE Guide) that outlines the college's participatory governance structure. It details how students, faculty and staff contribute to planning, assessment, budgeting, and collaborates on issues that impact the college. A 2019 evaluation underscored the importance of reinforcing governance practices through consistent program review processes, training, and guidance. The IE Guide underwent a review to ensure alignment with the college's current needs and processes through the establishment of a governance review task force (GRTF) appointed by the president.

Actions Taken:
The college has demonstrated significant progress in strengthening its participatory governance and institutional effectiveness structures. The president established the GRTF in April 2021 to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of the college's participatory governance model. This comprehensive and inclusive review process involved faculty, staff, administrators, and ASNMC representatives.

The GRTF held a summit in May 2021, followed by multiple meetings to gather broad stakeholder input for the governance guide review process.

The college completed its internal review and produced the NMC Governance Guide (NMC GG) in August 2021. Faculty, staff, and students actively participate in governance, with strong faculty representation across key advisory councils such as the Academic Council (AC), College Council (CC), Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC), and the General Education Committee (GenEd). This structure helps ensure that academic and institutional decision-making remains transparent.

The CC recommended NMC GG approval to the president on March 17, 2022. An updated organizational chart was approved by the BOR in September 2022, and a new mission statement was adopted in January 2023. Both are found in the NMC GG.

The NMC GG articulates the roles, responsibilities and composition of governance councils, senates and committees and integrates the college's updated mission, vision and organizational chart. NMC GG also reflects the inclusion of ASNMC, faculty senate and staff senate representatives on the NMC leadership team. This presidential action reinforces participatory governance and transparency at the college level. These inclusions ensure that the perspectives of students, faculty, and staff are both informed by and inform decision-making at the highest administrative level. This action operationalizes the college's commitment to participatory governance, transparency, and shared responsibility in institutional leadership.

The NMC GG was approved by the president and disseminated by the executive secretary of the office of the president on October 2, 2023. This marked the conclusion of the work of GRTF.

This guide now serves as the college's primary reference for participatory governance, was revised and adopted in 2023 to encompass updates to the mission and vision statements, clarify decision-making roles, and refine descriptions of the internal governance structure (see Appendix 2.1 – IE Guide and NMC GG Side-by-Side Comparison).

Analysis:
The college has demonstrated effective and inclusive action in strengthening participatory governance and institutional effectiveness. The revision of the governance framework, expansion of faculty leadership, modernization of data systems (refer to Recommendations Five and Six), and commitment to continuous improvement reflect a maturing governance culture aligned with institutional mission and WSCUC standards (see Appendix 2.2 -

Governance Committee Composition).

The conclusion of the GRTF's work resulted in a governance framework that is clear, inclusive, and aligned with institutional priorities. The NMC GG is now the official reference for the college's participatory governance system. It has streamlined decision-making processes by defining committee charges, leadership roles, and reporting lines. Faculty leadership in academic decision-making has been affirmed through faculty-led bodies such as the AC, CC, and GenEd. The inclusion of ASNMC, FS, and SS representatives in the Leadership Team ensures real-time communication and representation at the highest level.

Evidence of progress includes the dissemination of the approved NMC GG in October 2023 and meeting minutes demonstrating active participation of faculty, staff, and students in governance discussions.

These outcomes confirm that the college has successfully concluded the GRTF's mandate and institutionalized a governance model characterized by transparency, effectiveness, and participatory governance.

Faculty at the college are actively engaged in academic leadership through roles in various committees. Faculty representation is substantial, comprising 33% of PROAC, 27% of the CC, and 53% of GenEd. 100% of AC's voting members are instructional and non-instructional faculty, a total 57% of the council, with the remaining 43% non-voting stakeholders. Both the GenEd committee and AC are faculty-led, affirming faculty leadership in academic matters. Faculty serve in academic advising roles, guiding students to support their academic success. Faculty members also have contractual obligations to serve on committees, contributing feedback and perspectives that support institutional governance.

Next Steps:

The NMC GG is an organic document that will undergo regular review and updates to remain responsive to changes in organizational structures and practices. The CC will spearhead a periodic review process for governance policies, procedures, and practices to support this.

The college will strengthen the link between governance and institutional effectiveness by the refinement of processes through which governance decisions are documented, communicated, and shared. The college will continue to encourage wider stakeholder involvement to ensure meaningful and comprehensive participation in governance decisions.

A central focus of these efforts is the ongoing affirmation of the faculty role in academic leadership; the reinforcement of a culture grounded in participatory governance and the use of evidence-informed practices. These actions combined with the redesign of academic program review processes demonstrate that the college has developed consolidated governance structures, streamlined decision-making, and affirmed faculty leadership in academic matters. Collectively, they reflect the college's sustained commitment to participatory governance, institutional excellence, and continuous improvement in alignment with WSCUC Standards.

Planned Actions and Timeline

Timeline	Action	Responsible	Outcome
Annually	Review and update NMC Governance Guide (NMC GG) regularly to reflect organizational changes	College Council	Governance policies and procedures remain current, clear, and aligned with institutional priorities; enhanced transparency and responsiveness
FY 2025-2026	Strengthen linkage between governance and institutional	PROAC Chair; GenEd Committee Chair; OIE	Governance decisions directly inform planning, assessment, and

	effectiveness	Director; Department Chairs	resource allocation; culture of evidence-based decision-making reinforced
Spring 2026 – Pilot in Spring 2027; Full implementation Spring 2027	Redesign academic program review framework	Educational Strategy and Design Group; PROAC; Faculty Program Leads; OIE Director	Systematic, data-informed, and sustainable program review process; strengthened academic quality and faculty leadership
FY 2025	Conduct workshops, coaching, and provide program review handbook	OIT Director; OIE Director; Department Heads	Centralized and automated access to real-time data; improved decision-making, transparency, and accountability across governance councils
Ongoing	Affirm faculty leadership in academic governance	Faculty Senate; AC; GenEd Committee; College Council	Faculty leadership maintained in academic decisions; academic policies and program review guided by instructional expertise
Ongoing	Encourage broad stakeholder engagement in governance	President; BOR; College Council; FS; SS; ASNMC	Meaningful participation of students, faculty, and staff in planning, assessment, and decision-making; strengthened transparency and inclusivity
Ongoing, reviewed annually	Document, communicate, and share governance decisions	President; PROAC; College Council	Standardized communication of decisions and policies; improved understanding of institutional processes and accountability

Appendices:
Appendix 2.1 - IE Guide and GG Side-by-Side Comparison
Appendix 2.2 - Governance Committee Composition

Recommendation Three:
Develop approaches to implement the draft strategic goal, "cultivate our employees," ensuring the recruitment, retention and ongoing professional development of sufficient, qualified, and diverse faculty and staff. (CFR 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)

Description:
A key challenge facing the college is the need to develop effective approaches that support the recruitment, retention, and ongoing professional development of sufficient, qualified, and diverse faculty and staff. The college has struggled with consistent factors such as its remote location and non-competitive salaries, both of which hinder recruitment and retention of faculty and staff. The most recent available U.S. Census for the CNMI in 2010 reported that only about 3% of the population holds a graduate degree or higher, forcing the college to rely heavily on off-island recruitment.

The geographic isolation of the CNMI also creates significant barriers, as airfare between Saipan and the U.S. West Coast averages $3,000, making travel and family visits costly. These challenges are compounded by salaries that fall below the national average, highlighting the urgent need to strengthen strategies that enhance recruitment, retention, and professional growth opportunities for faculty and staff and the inability of the college to offer regular cost-of-living raises.

Actions Taken:
The college launched a series of institution-wide initiatives to strengthen recruitment, retention, and professional development. These efforts encompass increased care of employee wellness, professional development, recruitment and retention strategies, and support for a sufficient, diverse and highly qualified workforce.

To operationalize this goal, the college identified three key action items (refer to Appendix 1.2 – Strategic Goal Tracking):

Action Item 1: Develop and implement an incremental, sustainable salary scale.

Action Item 2: Provide incentives for employees who assume additional duties and responsibilities beyond their contractual obligations.

Action Item 3: Explore and design new employee benefits that reflect emerging trends in today's workforce.

The college demonstrates its commitment to employee engagement and compensation equity through action item one with the release of Presidential Directive 31 on February 21, 2025. This directive authorizes vice presidents and deans to exercise professional judgment when submitting proposals for increased compensation within their areas of responsibility.

The college recognizes the need for long-term sustainability and acknowledges the importance of updating its salary scale. Although the current scale, approved by the BOR in 2017, was reaffirmed as still relevant through a recent review, the college continues to explore strategies for modernization. Vacancies are currently announced at Step 2 for positions under local appropriations and up to Step 8 for federally funded positions, consistent with the interim compensation and classification procedure adopted in 2013.

The college has also reviewed and updated its faculty ranking system in May 2022. The review resulted in a 53% upgrade in rank and title among full-time faculty. This progress has contributed to enhanced motivation and recognition of faculty accomplishments.

The college also provides additional employee compensation for numerous circumstances. An example is faculty who teach beyond the contractual load of 15 credit hours per semester or 30 credit hours per academic year receive additional compensation ranging from $500 per credit for faculty with bachelor's degrees, $700 per credit for master's, and $900 per credit for terminal degrees. Faculty are additionally compensated for supervision of internships, clinicals, and practicum students, as well as for service on certain committees. Stipends have been made available for faculty senate officers in recent years but are based on funding availability. The college must identify a funding source for consistent stipends. Staff may receive additional compensation while serving in interim roles or teaching as adjunct faculty. Employees also get additional compensation at the grade and step level for appointments at the acting capacity beyond ninety days. This additional compensation equates to two steps above the employee's pay level.

The college has been responsive to employee retention through initiatives that include employee tuition waivers, designated winter breaks, and service milestone recognition. The college has also implemented a telework procedure to support flexible work practices and other initiatives that promote productivity, and improve work–life balance. The college has been able to allocate funds in recent years to provide employees with financial support for telework preparation and retention benefits. These initiatives are designed to boost morale and encourage employees to remain committed to the college.

The college supports employee wellness by the establishment of the health squad in February 2022. Outcomes include the reclassification of "sick leave" to "health leave," that allows employees to take mental health days. The college also provided Calm app subscriptions, achieving a 70% employee engagement rate between May 2022 to May 2024. Additional wellness initiatives include subsidized gym memberships (with 30% of costs covered for participating employees), NMC Health Night, Walk This Way Fridays, and participation in the H.A.F.A. Initiative, a Center for Disease Control-recognized diabetes prevention program led by Marianas Health (see Appendix 3.1 – Health Night Flyer). These collective initiatives reflect the college's strong commitment to fostering physical, mental, and community wellness.

Despite these changes, challenges remain. Employee burnout continues, as many staff and administrators undertake responsibilities beyond their primary roles. The 2025 wellbeing survey shows employees view the environment as supportive and collaborative, and they remain optimistic for the college's ongoing transformation, however, issues such as workload, communication gaps, and inconsistent recognition persist.

Recruitment remains a critical area for improvement. The process begins when a division leader identifies a staffing need and submits a position justification, job description, vacancy announcement. The request is then reviewed by HRO, the budget officer, the CFO, the vice-president of administration and advancement, and ultimately the president. Approved vacancies are posted on the college's website, higher education platforms (for hard-to-fill positions), and the Association of Institutional Researchers (for OIE positions). Applications are screened by HRO, interviews are conducted by panels identified by department leaders, and final offers are extended following background checks.

The president appointed an HRO ad hoc committee in April 2023 to review existing minimum qualification requirements (MQRs) to address rigid MQRs, strengthen recruitment and better align faculty qualifications with institutional goals. This committee conducted a comprehensive analysis of institutional needs and emerging trends in higher education. Results from the ad hoc committee's analysis led to the adoption of revised MQRs in August 2024. These MQR updates support academic excellence while expanding access to a broader pool of qualified candidates.

The college continues to strengthen recruitment efforts through participation in local job fairs and extending searches beyond the CNMI for hard-to-fill positions. Challenges such as salary competitiveness, geographic limitations, and funding constraints continue to affect the pool of off-island applicants.

The college supports its employee's professional growth through access to the Magna Digital Library (400+ resources) in 2023, on- and off-island training and skill-up sessions in areas such as Adobe e-signatures, cybersecurity, and people management (see Appendix 3.2 - Professional Development). College-wide professional development is offered at the start of each semester, while divisions tailor opportunities to meet unique needs.

The HR ad hoc committee reconvened in 2023 to further ensure a qualified and diverse workforce, revising MQRs, updating classification lists, reviewing salary scales, and analyzing faculty sufficiency through workloads and faculty-student ratios. Overload teaching persists, with 34 full-time faculty supported by 35 adjuncts, that underscores ongoing staffing challenges.

The college avoided implementing two potential austerity measures in 2024 and 2025 through proactive planning and strong fiscal management despite the ongoing challenge of population out-migration. The college prioritized employee retention by introducing targeted initiatives that strengthened morale and engagement recognizes the importance of maintaining stable workforce. Among these efforts was the provision of financial assistance for teleworking, which supported flexibility, productivity, and staff well-being. These combined measures enabled the college to sustain essential operations without compromising its commitment to employees, reinforcing institutional stability and fostering a culture of care and continuity.

Finally, the integration of HR and payroll systems into the Ellucian Colleague SaaS platform marks an important step in digital transformation. Through the PROA Portal Plus Self-Service, employees can now submit timesheets and leave requests electronically and access payroll and benefits information in real time. This transition enhances efficiency, transparency, and alignment with the college's broader goals.

Analysis:

The college has made meaningful progress in addressing workforce challenges through a data-informed approach to recruitment, retention, and professional development. Initiatives such as the revision of the salary scale, implementation of Presidential Directive 31, and expansion of wellness and engagement programs reflect alignment with institutional priorities to cultivate and support employees. The integration of BambooHR and Ellucian Colleague SaaS has strengthened data transparency and enabled more effective tracking of employee metrics, while a 70% participation rate in wellness initiatives suggest positive institutional impact. Targeted retention initiatives including financial assistance for teleworking to support flexibilities, productivity and well-being have contributed to workforce stability and morale.

The college remains committed to strengthening its workforce by fostering diversity and valuing varied backgrounds and qualifications. Demographic data show that 66% of employees identify as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 21% as Asian, 11% as Caucasian, and 1% as Hispanic or Latino. Overall academic credentials for the college's workforce include 6% with terminal degrees, 28% with master's degrees, 31% with bachelor's degrees, 26% associate degrees, and 8% with high school diplomas.

Employees demonstrate commitment and dedication to the college and its mission through challenging times and burnout as demonstrated in years of service (31% of employees have 10 or more years of service, 15% have 5 to 10 years, 22% have 1 to 3 years, and 13% are newly hired).

Retention efforts have been enhanced through the adoption of BambooHR, which tracks workforce metrics, supports recruitment and classification, and integrates monthly employee well-being surveys. Reports from 2024–2025 show consistent well-being scores (3.7–4.0 out of 5), stable relationship ratings, and higher personal motivator scores compared to organizational motivators. However, declining participation rates, from approximately 40% to approximately 25–30%, suggest survey fatigue and limit the representativeness of results.

Retention was 97.3% in 2022, declined to 88.2% in 2023, with 31% leaving for employment opportunities outside the college. Retention further dropped to 80.8% in 2024, with 34% leaving for personal reasons. Retention for 2025 has only been calculated through August and stands at 95.8%, highlighting the success of recent engagement and support strategies.

The establishment of ad hoc committees and cyclical reviews of MQRs demonstrates commitment to continuous improvement and equity; however, sustainability of compensation enhancements and the need for a more comprehensive assessment of outcomes remain areas for continued focus. Ongoing workload concerns and reduced survey participation indicate opportunities to refine engagement and feedback strategies are other areas of improvement. The college has coordinated actions that have been effective in stabilizing the workforce and improving employee satisfaction, laying a strong foundation for sustained institutional resilience and capacity building.

Next Steps:
The college will continue to strengthen its employee-focused strategies by embedding them into long-term planning and college culture. This includes deeper analysis of workload and sufficiency and integrity of employee data, the improvement of onboarding and succession planning, and the improvement of employee recognition systems.

The college plans to address the strategic goal of "cultivate our employees" by three action steps. Action step one, "establish an incremental and sustainable salary scale": The college will conduct a financial analysis to project costs for salary scale adjustments, benchmark compensation against other colleges to establish a fair and competitive salary scale, identify funding source(s) to support this effort, develop a phased implementation plan, and engage governing board, faculty, and staff.

Action step two, "incentives and additional workload undertaken outside of listed duties and responsibilities": The college will facilitate a comprehensive inventory of employees who perform additional duties and responsibilities beyond their contractual obligations, design an incentive structure to address these, identify funding sources(s) to support the incentives, and develop a transparent policy for assigning additional duties.

Action step three, "explore and develop new employee benefits that reflect emerging trends in the modern workforce": The college will continue to monitor trends, survey employees to identify interest and readiness, continue innovative flexible work arrangements, integrate professional development to align with best practices, and evaluate outcomes to scale the successfulness and viability of each effort.

The HRO will continue the refinement of its systems focused on the optimization of BambooHR data and maximizing the capabilities of the PROA Portal Plus. Additional features within Ellucian Colleague will be activated to streamline performance management, professional development tracking, and HR analytics.

The college is also committed to strengthening pipelines for diverse talent recruitment, expanding flexible work options, and ensuring that professional growth remains an ongoing institutional priority. Evaluation tools like the employee wellbeing and employee satisfaction surveys on BambooHR and real-time data from integrated systems will support evidence-based improvements moving forward.

The college will hire more full-time or adjunct faculty, redistribute course assignments more evenly, review course trends and plan for sufficient staff who can teach. This can be supported with a three-semester class schedule that allows students to register for the first two semesters and view the third. This provides a snapshot of potential course needs in advance.

The HRO will continue its cyclical three-year review of MQRs to ensure that standards remain high and relevant to the local, national and federal expectations.

Planned Actions and Timeline

Timeline	Action	Responsible	Outcome
FY 2026	Establish an incremental and sustainable salary scale	BOR, president, CFO, HRO	Competitive and sustainable salaries to improve recruitment and retention
FY 2026	Implement incentives for employees assuming additional duties beyond contractual obligations	president, vice president, deans, HRO	Recognition and fair compensation for extra responsibilities, improving morale and reducing burnout

FY 2026	Explore and develop new employee benefits aligned with modern workforce trends	President, HRO	Expanded benefits package
FY 2025- 2028	Conduct cyclical three-year review of MQRS	HRO, APS, faculty senate	Updated and relevant qualification standards ensuring faculty excellence and expanded recruitment pool
Ongoing	Strengthen recruitment pipelines locally and off-island for hard-to-fill positions	HRO, APS, APS Dean	Expanded applicant pool and improved hiring success
Ongoing	Enhance employee professional development opportunities	HRO, all division leaders	Increased skills, knowledge, and engagement among faculty and staff
Ongoing	Monitor and analyze employee workload, staffing sufficiency, and course assignments	HRO, all division leaders	Balanced workload, optimized staffing
FY 2026	Integrate HR and payroll systems into Ellucian and optimize Bamboo HR	HRO, OIT	Streamlined HR processes, real-time reporting, and improved employee data management
Semi-annually	Evaluate employee satisfaction and well-being surveys and system analytics	HRO, OIE	Evidence-based improvements in engagement, morale and retention
Ongoing	Implement flexible work arrangements	HRO, all division leaders	Improved work-life balance and increased employee retention
Ongoing	Recognize and reward service milestones and contributions	HRO, president, all division leaders	Enhance employee morale, motivation and long-term retention
FY 2025	Review and update faculty rank and title system	APS, HRO	Increased recognition and motivation for faculty performance and achievement
FY 2026	Expand adjunct and full-time faculty hiring and course scheduling and increase staff hiring	HRO, APS, all division leaders	Adequate staffing to meet student demand and reduce faculty overload

Appendices:
Appendix 3.1 - Health Night Flyer
Appendix 3.2 - Professional Development Opportunities

Recommendation Four:
Provide substantial and continuing support for the president, leveraging best practices in onboarding and development, to help the president achieve a focused set of initiatives early in the president's tenure. (CFR 3.1, 3.3, 3.6)

Description:
The college experienced the departure of two presidents within a four-year span, one in 2016 and the other in 2020. The college is aware of the need for consistent leadership, so the BOR identified an interim president until a full-time president was hired in July of 2021. The college realized the necessity for stability in leadership and established a comprehensive onboarding process to support the president's long-term success and retention.

Actions Taken:
The college has implemented a comprehensive and multi-phased approach to support the presidential onboarding and leadership development since the appointment of its current president (see Appendix 4.1 - Presidential Transition Schedule). This approach included a structured onboarding process to integrate the president into the on and off-campus communities.

The interim president created a comprehensive transition plan to support the onboarding of the college's new president in June 2021. The plan outlined key actions, including formal announcements, preparation of presidential briefing binders, development of a relationship map, and acknowledgment of the presidential search committee.

The president was introduced to internal stakeholders in July 2021, beginning with the college's leadership team and the BOR. A press conference, alongside scheduled meetings with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members, served as key opportunities for engagement within the college community.

The president was also formally introduced to the top-level state executives, the legislature, and key government and private organizations, including the Department of Labor, Saipan Chamber of Commerce, Saipan Rotary Club, the mayors of Tinian and Rota, the CNMI Public School System Commissioner, the State Workforce Development Board, and WSCUC Liaison Officer Dr. Maureen Maloney, among others.

The president issued the monthly "Sailing Ahead" email to the college community from July 1, 2021 through August 16, 2022, in which he shares a clear vision, strategic priorities, and updates on institutional initiatives. This communication strategy reinforced transparency, informed stakeholders of ongoing actions, and strengthened alignment with the college's mission. Monthly updates transitioned into regular leadership communications, integrated into broader reporting.

During the first year of his tenure, the president held listening sessions with various departments, programs, committees, and groups to foster collaboration and understand the needs of the college community. He continues to hold these sessions periodically, while the college supports him through weekly leadership team meetings that promote alignment with institutional priorities.

The college continues to provide the president support through weekly leadership team meetings that foster collaborative decision-making and alignment with institutional priorities.

The BOR demonstrates professional growth for the president through prioritization of professional development and annual evaluation of the president (see Appendix 4.2 - President's Professional Development). The president has actively participated in high-impact learning and leadership engagements, to include national conferences such as the Association of Community College Trustee Leadership Conference, Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution Summit, Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education Conference, White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders Higher Education Leadership Conference, and regional events like the Micronesian Islands Forum, and the University of Guam Conference on Island Sustainability. These opportunities allow the president to strengthen regional collaboration, engage in national-level advocacy, and remain current with emerging trends and best practices in higher education leadership.

The BOR understands the need for consistent annual evaluations of the president and transitioned into a 360-degree assessment tool aligned with the American Association of Community Colleges' standards. The 360 evaluation requirements include evaluations from the BOR, the president's direct reports and a self-evaluation. A 360-degree evaluation provides a powerful way to assess a college president's leadership by drawing on feedback from all directions. Rather than relying solely on the perspective of the BOR, the process offers a more complete picture of how the president's leadership is experienced across the college. This approach enhances self-awareness by highlighting both strengths and areas for growth.

The diversity of the evaluation fosters a greater sense of accountability and transparency, reassuring the campus community that their perspectives matter in shaping institutional leadership. This inclusiveness strengthens trust and aligns presidential priorities with the college's mission and strategic goals. The insights gained can inform professional development, guiding retreats, coaching, or other targeted efforts to sharpen leadership effectiveness. The president's understanding of how decisions and actions are perceived across different groups places the president in a better position to make balanced choices that serve the entire college.

To further refine the president's strategic direction, the president participates in a weekly meeting with the BOR chairman. The BOR plans a retreat aimed at sharpening and advancing presidential priorities in alignment with institutional goals and accreditation requirements.

Analysis:
The college has demonstrated notable progress in strengthening leadership stability and efficiency following presidential transitions between 2016 and 2020. The BOR effectively ensured continuity by appointing an interim president and implementing a comprehensive, multi-phased onboarding process for the current president in 2021. This structured approach facilitated a smooth leadership transition, enhanced engagement with internal and external stakeholders, and aligned presidential actions with institutional goals. The president's "Sailing Ahead" communications and subsequent integration of regular leadership updates fostered transparency, strengthened institutional trust, and reinforced mission alignment. The BOR's adoption of a 360-degree evaluation model, aligned with national standards, has improved accountability and provided meaningful feedback for leadership growth. Participation in national and regional professional development forums further supports strategic awareness and institutional visibility. Regular meetings between the BOR chair and the president, combined with planned retreats, ensure consistent monitoring and refinement of strategic priorities. These coordinated efforts have strengthened governance, enhanced communication, and improved operational efficiency, demonstrating the college's capacity for stable, transparent, and effective leadership collectively.

Next Steps:
The president will be supported by the college an ongoing development plan. The planned BOR retreat will serve as a key venue to align presidential initiatives with updated strategic planning efforts and institutional performance measures. The institutionalized onboarding framework will be formalized to ensure continuity and strong leadership for future transitions.

Planned Actions and Timeline

Timeline	Action	Responsible	Outcome
FY 2026	Formalize and institutionalize the presidential onboarding framework for future leadership transitions	BOR, president, HRO	Standardized onboarding process ensuring smooth integration of new presidents and continuity in leadership
Annually	Conduct annual 360-degree evaluation of president	BOR, president, president's direct	Comprehensive leadership assessment highlighting strengths,

		reports, HRO	areas for growth, and alignment with institutional goals
Ongoing	Plan and implement annual BOR retreats focusing on presidential priorities and institutional strategy	BOR, president	Strengthened governance, strategic alignment, and institutional performance monitoring
FY 2026	Facilitate ongoing professional development for the president through regional and national leadership conferences	BOR, president	Enhanced leadership capacity, regional and national visibility, and adoption of best practices in higher education
Ongoing	Maintain regular communication with internal and external stakeholders (emails, meetings, listening sessions)	president	Transparent communication, strengthened trust, and enhanced engagement across campus and community
Semi-annually	Monitor and update presidential transition and leadership development plans based on outcomes	BOR, president, OIE	Continuous improvement of leadership processes, ensuring effectiveness and stability

Appendices:
Appendix 4.1 - Presidential Transition Schedule
Appendix 4.2 - President's Professional Development

Recommendation Five:
Empower and resource information technology (IT) to reorganize and refocus the department in ways that establish clear responsibilities and business processes, provide support for academic programs, and improve the college's operational efficiencies. (CFR 3.5, 3.6, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)

Description:
The college's OIT has faced significant structural and operational challenges that have impeded the ability to provide integrated technology support. The previous organizational structure resulted in disbursement of core OIT personnel across disparate units that include media support and learning technology services. This required personnel to take on additional roles, led to delayed support responses, and inconsistent security protocols. These challenges were heightened by high turnover in key OIT positions and insufficient resources allocated to technology infrastructure that impacted the college's ability to effectively support academic programs and operational efficiencies.

Actions Taken:
The college has strengthened the capacity and operational effectiveness of OIT through deliberate and strategic initiatives designed to clarify responsibilities, enhance efficiency, and establish a centralized data infrastructure that supports evidence-based decision-making across all levels of the institution. The college expanded the OIT by recruiting two additional personnel at the end of fiscal year 2023 to address longstanding service delivery challenges. This action broadened OIT's ability to support technology operations across Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. This expansion has enhanced coverage and responsiveness for a wide range of services, including cloud-based enterprise systems, multimedia production and live streaming, classroom technology platforms, centralized help desk operations, and collaboration suite administration.

The college experienced significant workforce attrition within OIT, resulting in a 44% reduction in staffing by the end of fiscal year 2025 despite these improvements. The loss of four core personnel created gaps in systems administration, software development, infrastructure management, and multimedia services, resulting in excessive workload additions to the remaining staff, as well as extended service response times that affected overall service quality and user satisfaction. Major institutional projects that include the implementation of the Ellucian Colleague enterprise resource planning (ERP) system and several capital initiatives have further stretched OIT's limited capacity. The additional workload demands have contributed to staff burnout and heightened risks for operational continuity.

The college prioritized leadership stabilization and strategic restructuring within OIT. The successful recruitment and onboarding of an OIT director with extensive expertise in infrastructure and technology management marked a pivotal step toward OIT's revitalization. The director initiated a transformation process focused on alignment with the college's mission, academic goals, and institutional objectives. Two foundational planning documents the OIT Operations Plan FY2025–2030 and the State of Technology 2025 were developed to define technology priorities, summarize institutional needs, and establish a framework for evidence-based decision-making (see Appendix 5.1 - OIT Operational Plan FY 2025-2030 and Appendix 5.2 - NMC State of Technology 2025). The director also established regular engagement with the president's leadership team through structured meetings to ensure technology initiatives remain integrated with the college's strategic direction.

The OIT director introduced a new five-team operational structure that consolidates functions and delineates clear roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines consistent with industry best practices to address prior fragmentation and improve coordination. This structure consists of the director, project management operations, customer experience operations, development operations, infrastructure operations, and security operations. These teams provide centralized leadership, enhance cross-functional collaboration, streamline workflows, and strengthen cybersecurity and technology risk management. The college has demonstrated its commitment to building a resilient, efficient, and strategically aligned technology infrastructure that supports institutional effectiveness and continuous improvement through these actions.

Diagram 2.1. Proposed IT Organizational Structure

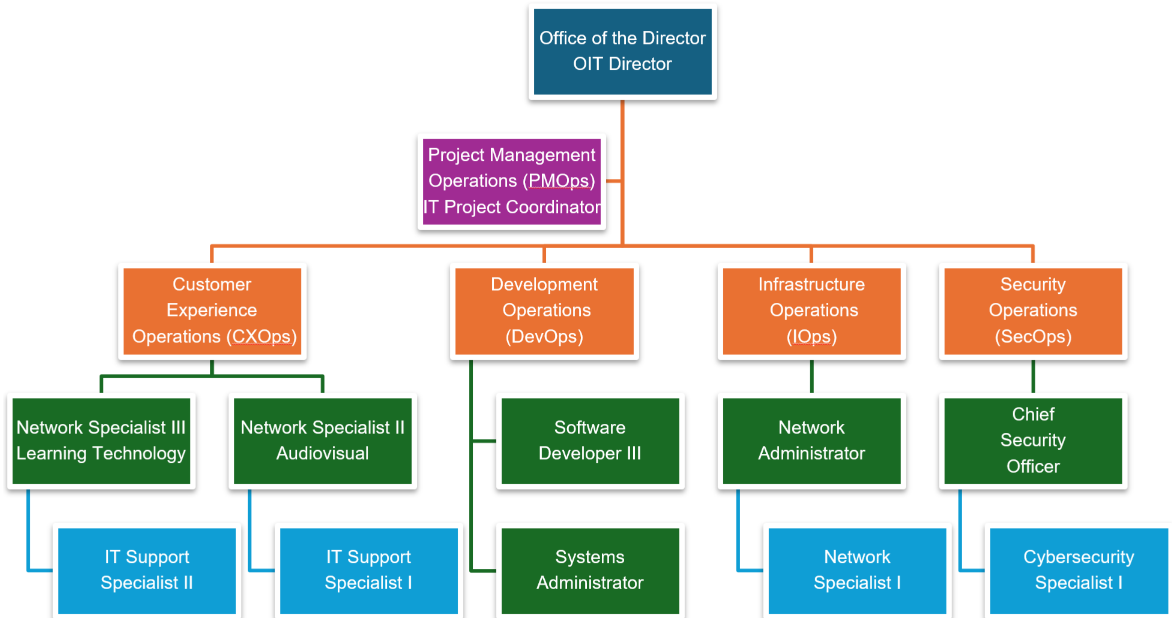
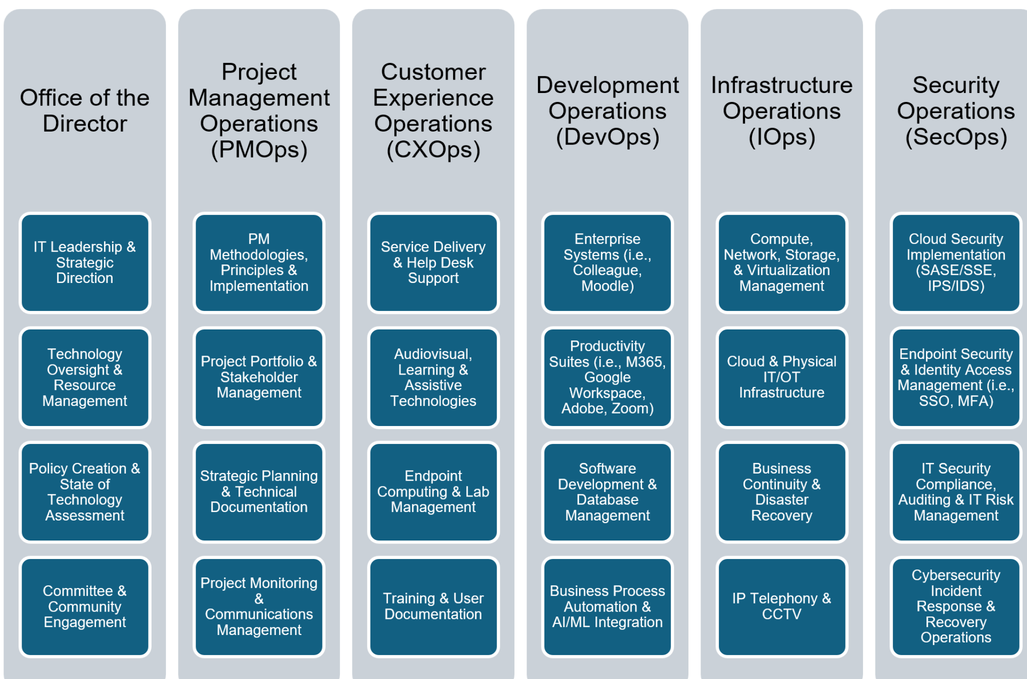


Diagram 2.2 – Proposed IT Operational Teams



The college has maintained its commitment to building robust OIT team capacities through its investment in professional development. The OIT staff have enhanced skills through training, certifications, and industry conference attendance that demonstrates commitment to continuous learning. Initiatives include participation in Cisco Live (2022), InfoComm (2022), Asia Pacific Consortium (2023), Adobe Max (2024) and Ellucian Colleague training (2024-2025).

Professional growth plans have been developed for existing staff, and active recruitment efforts are underway for critical positions, including systems administrator and software developer roles. Additional positions (chief security officer, network administrator, and support specialists) have been submitted in the FY26 appropriations budget to strengthen OIT efficiency.

The enterprise modernization initiative represents a systematic approach to technology transformation. The college established standardized computing platforms through an enterprise-grade laptop refresh program in 2022 and the implementation of a robust network infrastructure. This supports operational excellence goals and faculty productivity. This initiative is complemented by advanced collaborative digital workspace utilizing cloud technologies for seamless multi-campus coordination.

The college has embarked on significant digital transformation by migrating from multiple siloed databases to Ellucian Colleague, a cloud-based enterprise resource planning platform. This migration streamlines processes, enhances data integration, and supports efficient decisions across administrative and academic functions. The system integrates independent databases into one unified data repository that enables *Colleague Insights* to serve as the college's central reporting system. This integration supports real-time institutional dashboards that enhance data visibility and accuracy across key functional areas to include enrollment management, financial planning, and academic scheduling. The platform encompasses student information, human resources, financial aid, financial management, and academic administration, thereby strengthening institutional capacity for evidence-based decision-making and operational efficiency.

The college has established an OIT stakeholder engagement structure that promotes alignment, transparency, and collaborative decision-making across all levels of the institution. The OIT actively participates in external partnerships, including the CNMI Cybersecurity Planning and Data Governance Committees, to advance coordinated security initiatives and standardized data management protocols across government and educational entities.

The OIT maintains regular representation on the Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC) and the Ellucian Colleague Core Team to ensure that technology perspectives inform budgetary priorities and resource allocations. Leadership alignment is further supported through OIT's active participation in divisional meetings and the Facilities Planning Group, allowing technology initiatives to remain synchronized with broader campus development and infrastructure projects.

The college ensures consistent coordination across three islands through standardized communication protocols, regular inter-campus meetings, and shared documentation systems. OIT facilitates proactive communication with the campus community through technology updates, user training, and feedback mechanisms such as surveys, focus groups, and open office hours to assess needs and satisfaction.

The college views OIT's organizational transformation as an ongoing process supported by systematic assessment. Regular evaluations of OIT's structure and performance are conducted using stakeholder input and operational data to identify improvement opportunities, reduce manual processes, and enhance overall service efficiency and institutional effectiveness.

Analysis:
The college demonstrates a clear and effective institutional response to longstanding structural and operational challenges within its Office of Information Technology (OIT). The description and actions taken reflect a thoughtful transition from a fragmented and reactive model to a strategically aligned, data-informed, and efficiency-focused technology infrastructure. The successful recruitment of an experienced OIT director has provided critical leadership stability and direction, evidenced by the development of the OIT Operations Plan FY2025–2030 and the State of Technology 2025. These documents formalize a planning framework that aligns technological priorities with institutional goals, supporting long-term sustainability and evidence-based decision-making.

The reorganization into a five-team operational structure demonstrates strong progress toward efficiency and accountability. Clearly defined roles and centralized coordination address the prior disbursement of personnel and ensure improved service integration across all campuses. The establishment of specialized functions, particularly in cybersecurity, infrastructure, and customer support, reflects alignment with higher education technology management best practices.

The analysis indicates that while workforce attrition remains a significant challenge, the college has mitigated its impact through targeted recruitment, professional development, and inclusion of new critical positions in future budget cycles. These measures show proactive planning and institutional commitment to maintaining operational capacity and preventing service disruptions. The emphasis on staff training, certification, and participation in industry conferences reinforces a culture of continuous learning and professional growth.

The implementation of the Ellucian Colleague cloud-based ERP platform represents a transformative step toward data centralization, automation, and enhanced operational efficiency. By integrating previously siloed databases into a unified data system, the college has strengthened its ability to generate real-time, accurate reporting through Colleague Insights. This advancement supports transparent, evidence-based decision-making across key administrative and academic functions, reflecting a maturing institutional capacity for integrated planning.

OIT's engagement in both internal governance and external partnerships further strengthens its operational effectiveness. Regular participation in the Budget and Finance Committee, the Ellucian Core Team, and CNMI cybersecurity and data governance bodies ensures that technology considerations are embedded in institutional and territorial-level planning. Consistent coordination across Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, coupled with structured communication and feedback mechanisms, reflects a strong institutional focus on inclusivity and user responsiveness.

Building on the progress described above, the college will focus next on efforts to stabilize staffing levels, implement Colleague Insights, and strengthen technology governance.

Next Steps:

The appointment of an experienced OIT director and the development of the OIT Operations Plan FY2025–2030 and State of Technology 2025 established a clear framework for technology alignment with institutional priorities and evidence-based decision-making. The implementation of a five-team operational structure has improved coordination, clarified roles, and increased efficiency across campuses, addressing prior fragmentation.

OIT experienced a significant 44% reduction in personnel in FY2025, resulting in longer service response times and reduced depth of technical expertise across core functions. This has also created elevated reliance on a limited number of technical specialists, increasing the risk of staff fatigue and operational vulnerability if critical personnel are unavailable. In addition, although major components of the Ellucian Colleague ERP system are now live, the College has not yet fully implemented its advanced automation and analytics functions, limiting the degree to which real-time data can inform institutional decision-making. Finally, continued maturation of technology governance processes, including structured academic engagement, is necessary to ensure sustained alignment between instructional priorities, student success initiatives, and technology resource planning.

The college has actively mitigated challenges of workforce attrition through targeted recruitment, professional development, and planned staffing expansions. The transition to the Ellucian Colleague cloud-based ERP system represents a major institutional milestone that enhances data integration, transparency, and operational efficiency. OIT's engagement in institutional governance and partnerships strengthens alignment, accountability, and collaboration.

To address these issues, the college has established a forward-looking action plan and timeline. OIT has begun reinstituting the Technology in Education Committee (TEC) to strengthen OIT governance structure. Most major next-step initiatives will begin in 2026, that will allow sufficient planning, resource alignment, and hiring cycles.

The TEC will serve as a key mechanism for academic feedback and technology decision-making and will guide the refinement of technology needs tied to teaching, learning, and student support.

The college will prioritize filling critical technical positions, expanding cybersecurity capacity, completing ERP analytics implementation, and establishing long-term lifecycle management for technology infrastructure beginning in 2026.

Planned Actions and Timeline

Timeline	Action	Responsible	Outcome
October 2025	TEC begins information-gathering and consultation	OIT and APS	Documented faculty/staff/student needs and feedback
Spring 2026	Recruit and onboard systems administrator & software developer	HR and OIT Director	Return to baseline service capacity; reduced ticket resolution times
Fall 2026	Implement cybersecurity risk framework	OIT Security Lead	Annual cyber audit; reduced system vulnerabilities
Spring 2027	Deploy full Colleague Insights dashboards	OIT and OIE	Live dashboards for enrollment, finance, academics
FY 2026-2027	Pending funds availability, add chief security officer, network administrator, and support staff	President, HR, and OIT Director	Fully staffed OIT; resilience and redundancy established
2026-2030	Implement lifecycle replacement & cloud-first infrastructure strategy	OIT Director	Improved reliability; reduced downtime; annual refresh reporting

The college will consider this recommendation fully achieved once it demonstrates a stable and fully trained IT workforce, improved and consistently monitored technology service delivery, and full adoption of the Ellucian Colleague system and associated analytics tools in institutional planning. Successful completion will also be reflected in documented governance integration, particularly through active engagement of the Technology in Education Committee and faculty participation in technology decisions, as well as verified cybersecurity maturity through annual audits and compliance reviews. Finally, the college will institutionalize a continuous-improvement cycle by evaluating IT performance annually and aligning technology planning and budgeting processes to ensure long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

The college's actions reflect a sustainable transformation toward a resilient, efficient, and strategically integrated technology environment that advances institutional effectiveness and continuous improvement.

Appendices:
Appendix 5.1 - IT Operations Plan FY2025-2030
Appendix 5.2 - NMC State of Technology 2025

Recommendation Six:
Establish a standardized and centralized data reporting infrastructure with a sense of urgency to efficiently produce mandatory reports, provide consistent and reliable data that are widely accessible and that inform decisions at all levels of the college. (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4)

Description:
Frequent leadership turnover in both the OIE and the OIT, along with heavy reliance on a single database administrator, and the use of four siloed databases, hindered the college's progress toward developing a consistent, campus-wide data management process. The lack of stability contributed to fragmented data systems, inconsistent reporting practices, and limited access to reliable institutional information. Acknowledging these challenges, the college recognized the need for an integrated and consolidated data repository, supported by key positions to ensure data accessibility and promote data-informed decision-making across the institution.

Actions Taken:
The college immediately moved to establish a robust, centralized, and standardized data reporting infrastructure. This initiative is pursued with a pronounced sense of urgency to ensure the swift production of mandatory reports, provide consistent and reliable data, enhance data accessibility, and empower immediate, informed decision-making across all levels of the institution. This initiative proceeded in planned phases to ensure successful outcomes.

Phase 1: Rapid Planning and Governance Framework - Building on Foundational Efforts
The college's commitment to data governance began with foundational efforts. The OIE director delivered NMC data talks, a presentation on data governance, to the college's leadership team to enhance awareness of data governance principles.

OIE unsuccessfully attempted to officially form a data management committee under the NMC GG in 2022 due to a lack of institutional readiness. Simultaneously, the college sought external funding for a data management plan grant in April 2022, which unfortunately was not awarded. These early efforts demonstrate the college's recognition of the critical need for a robust data strategy.

The college formed a data governance planning group (DGPG) in April 2023, supported by a presidential memorandum. The DGPG was charged with assessing the college's current data landscape and recommending a sustainable data governance framework. These efforts produced a final report submitted to the president and the leadership team in October 2024 (see Appendix 6.1 - DGPG Recommendations). Key recommendations were to dissolve the temporary planning group to transition to a permanent operational structure, formally establish a dedicated data governance program and hire a full-time data governance manager to lead and oversee the program.

Phase 2: Capacity Building and Strategic Partnerships
The college developed its institutional capacity through professional development fostering regional and national strategic partnerships. The college participated in the Data Governance Information Quality hosted by the Data Governance Professionals Organization that provided initial data governance knowledge. Membership and participation in the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) convenings provided a permanent network and resources on data governance. Partnerships with the CNMI Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) and the Association of Institutional Researchers further strengthened the data governance-support system. Some members of the DGPG also completed specialized Data Governance Mastery and Data Literacy Mastery courses with the Data Management University.

The college entered into a service agreement with McREL International for planning and development support to further strengthen its data governance framework (see Appendix 6.2 - NMC McREL International Service Agreement). The DGPG and McREL partnered on an awareness campaign to build institutional support for data governance in February 2023. McREL presented how a structured approach to data management improved decision-making and institutional effectiveness to the college leadership at this time.

The college is a key participant in the SLDS Preschool through Workforce (P20W) initiative. The president serves on the P20W executive committee, contributing to policy and procedure review and approval, and the OIE and IT directors contributing to the P20W data governance committee. These efforts ensure the college's team is equipped with the latest knowledge and best practices to drive the college's data initiatives forward.

DGPG held bi-weekly meetings and incorporated in-house awareness sessions on data governance-related topics from April 2023 to October 2024. During the transition to Ellucian Colleague SaaS, the core team; composed of data stewards, OIT, HR, OIE, APS, Student Support Services (SSS), and senior leadership; was created to serve as the coordinating body managing integration, migration, reporting, coding, and alignment across campus (see Appendix 6.3 - Core Team April 2024 Agenda). These collective efforts significantly strengthened institutional capacity and informed the college's data governance roadmap.

Phase 3: Digital Transformation and Centralized Data Platform
The college continues to address the lasting impacts of two super storms that severely damaged its facilities while advancing its broader efforts to standardize, centralize, and democratize access to data. Its transition to the cloud-based ERP system, Ellucian Colleague SaaS, as discussed in recommendation five, supports continuity of operations during the campus rebuild. This system enables faculty, staff, and students to access the data they need anytime and anywhere.

Ellucian Colleague consolidates and replaces three of four stand-alone databases into a single, unified system that include MIPS Abila – finance, procurement, budget, and payroll management, PowerFAIDS – financial aid, and PowerCampus – student information system, and augment BambooHR.

Feedback on this transition has been positive as elaborated by the following:

> *The lack of integration between PowerFAIDS, PowerCampus, and Finance created inefficiencies and delays in financial aid, frustrating students. With the transition to Ellucian Colleague, processes are integrated and automated, enabling faster FAFSA imports, streamlined award management, earlier aid access, and direct use at the bookstore…* - Daisy Propst, director financial aid

> *The Colleague–Moodle integration streamlines course management by automating enrollment, and ensures accurate real-time rosters, and reduces administrative work for instructors. Key improvements include single sign-on through Microsoft 365, fully automated course enrollment, and a planned final grade push starting Fall 2025, which eliminates duplicate grade entry and further enhances efficiency. -* William Hunter, coordinator of distance education

> *The integration of Colleague with Watchman Payment Systems, Resero CampusCloud, and VitalSource has streamlined the NMC bookstore into a student-centered service. Real-time synchronization of financial aid balances and course schedules, instant access to digital materials, and convenient online ordering improve affordability, access, convenience…* - Elphidia Sablan, bookstore manager

> *Students benefit from the new system as a one-stop platform that integrates finances, classes, and more. It streamlines scholarships and work-study salaries through secure direct deposit, supports independent semester planning, and improves financial transparency with clear tuition and fee breakdowns.* - Bonnie Gio Sagana, student, ASNMC president, and incoming PTK president

> *"I had the opportunity to use the Colleague Insights platform to view and work with enrollment data for the first time in the Fall 2025 semester. It was beneficial in helping to guide our department's course creation decisions to meet the needs of our students in real time, and I was happy to find that I could work with OIE staff to tailor the reporting to meet my department's needs and design more effective reports for the APS Division and college at large."*- Ajani Burrell, Language and Humanities Chair

> *Since acquiring BambooHR in 2022, the college has transformed its human resources management by shifting from manual, Excel-based processes to a centralized digital system. Integrated with Ellucian Colleague, BambooHR now connects employee data with finance, enabling synchronized payroll, benefits, and reporting*

that strengthens institutional efficiency and decision-making. The system has improved data accuracy, streamlined compliance processes, and reduced report generation time from 24 hours to five minutes, providing timely insights for planning. Additionally, BambooHR's well-being reports offer leadership actionable data on workforce morale and engagement, supporting data-informed strategies to enhance employee satisfaction, retention, and institutional culture. Together, BambooHR and Colleague create a unified and reliable data environment that promotes transparency, operational efficiency, and continuous improvement across the college.
- Polly Masga, director, Human Resources Office

The shift to Ellucian Colleague SaaS ensures that data, no longer siloed, is shared across departments through a single, secure platform, providing access to data needed to drive decision-making at the college. A cross-functional core team governs the Colleague transition, meeting bi-weekly or as needed to manage integration and documentation. During this transition, staff continue to use both legacy system and Colleague, a dual effort that involves validating data across systems while strengthening the College's capacity for accurate, reliable, and consistent reporting over the long term.

Phase 4: Operationalizing Reporting and Analytics
The college adopted Colleague Insights, Ellucian's integrated reporting platform, as the central backbone of its data reporting infrastructure because it is easier to understand and supports data democratization through plain language queries. The data reporting analyst received training on the system and now uses the platform to build dashboards and data tables that support college decisions.

The legacy system continues to be used for reports that rely on stored data, while Colleague Insights supports decision-making with migrated and new data. For instance, the college used Colleague Insights to analyze, and report Fall 2025 registration data through dashboards that refreshes daily. This provides timely information for planning and enrollment management. Colleague Insights serves as a repository for historical data that enables analysis, trend comparisons, that informs operations and decisions.

The OIE collaborates with all divisions and programs to identify needs, which results in the creation of reports and dashboards that centralize and standardize critical institutional data such as enrollment headcount, full-time equivalent (FTE), class rosters and course waitlists, etc. Colleague Insights provides timely information, and leadership and customizable tables allow users to apply filters to access specific information.

DIAGRAM 3.1 - 2025 Enrollment Status

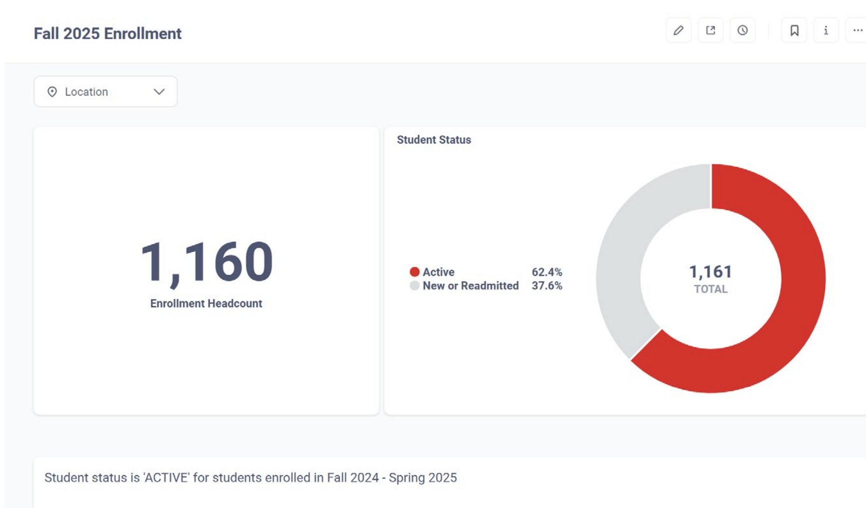


Diagram 3.1 shows the enrollment data on active and new or readmitted students.

Diagram 3.2 - NMC Course Dashboard

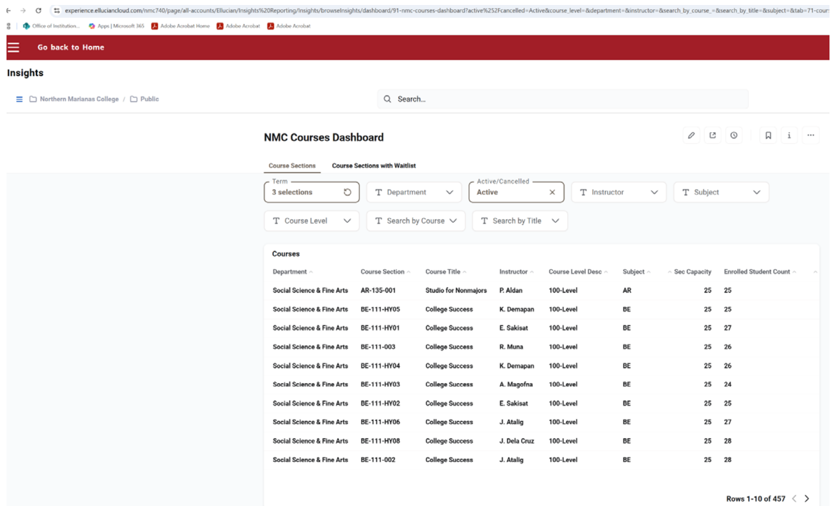


Diagram 3.2 provides course specific information such as alpha numeric code, course title, instructor, subject, seat capacity, and enrolled student count.

Recent efforts have enabled more accurate and accessible reports that guide program plans, resource allocation, and the ability to respond to student needs. Enrollment dashboards inform academic scheduling, while waitlist and FTE reports assist in forecasting instructional capacity. The data migration has caused expected challenges such as inconsistent and inadequate data. Data within the legacy system is scrutinized to ensure that clean and accurate data is migrated into Colleague. Thorough data-informed discussions and decision-making at the level of the college's leadership team is sporadic at best in the interim.

The college website (www.marianas.edu/reports) serves as a central hub for publicly accessible data, including student achievement metrics such as retention and completion rates, disaggregated by associate and bachelor's degree programs. The annual Citizen-Centric Report, provides an overview of the college's of performance, strengthens transparency and accountability to students, the community, and external stakeholders.

The college continues its digital migration, focusing on refinement of data quality, and the expansion of the use of standardized dashboards across all functional areas. OIE collaborates with OIT and campus stakeholders to enhance Colleague Insights, provide individual training for department heads, deans, and other users. Once migration is complete, comprehensive training will ensure personnel can generate real-time, standardized reports that support student success, institutional effectiveness, and continuous improvement.

Phase 5: Building Human Capital
The college recognizes that skilled personnel are crucial to the success of these initiatives. A data reporting analyst was hired to reduce reliance on the IT staff and improve response times. The OIE director is currently taking on the duties of the assessment specialist position which was recently vacated to ensure continuity. The college remains committed to a prompt hire for this position, with recruitment underway.

Analysis:
The college has made significant progress in building a unified data environment through the efforts of the Data Governance Planning Group, its partnership with McREL International, and the adoption of Ellucian Colleague Insights. The shift to Colleague SaaS has enhanced data integration, accessibility, and reliability, enabling data-informed decision-making and greater transparency across the College. In collaboration with the CNMI SLDS P20W initiative. The college is also laying the groundwork for data sharing with key government agencies, including the Departments of Labor, Finance, and Commerce, as well as the Public School System and Northern Marianas Technical Institute (NMTech), to align educational programs with workforce and economic development needs in the

community.

Next Steps:
The college continues to address challenges related to unclean and unaudited data that have slowed the migration to Ellucian Colleague and limited timely access to reliable reports. To resolve these issues, the college will strengthen data governance, expand data literacy, and deepen collaboration with the CNMI SLDS P20W initiative to support data sharing with the P20W. These partnerships will help align curriculum, workforce, and economic development priorities.

The college will complete data cleaning and validation from AY 2025-2027. The college will institutionalize data governance processes and expand employee data literacy training beginning in 2025 through 2029. The college plans to hire a full-time staff member to lead data governance efforts in FY 2026 pending funding availability. The college will partner with EDSTRAT and stakeholders to co-design and pilot a new academic program review process beginning in 2026-2026, culminating in a published program review handbook by AY 2027–2028.

Indicators of completion and success include Full deployment and integration of Colleague modules, ensuring a “single source of truth” for institutional data. Reliable, timely, and standardized data reports regularly informing leadership and planning decisions. A dedicated staff member overseeing data governance and analytics. Implementation of a co-designed, evidence-based program review process that links assessment results with planning, budgeting, and workforce alignment.

The college expects to achieve a sustainable data infrastructure and a fully embedded culture of evidence, assessment, and continuous improvement that supports informed decision-making at all levels of the college by 2029.

Planned Actions and Timeline

Timeline	Action	Responsible	Outcome
FY 2026 - 2027	Formalize Data Governance Program and hire a full-time Data Governance Manager	President, OIE Director, HRO	Establish permanent leadership for data governance, ensure continuity and accountability in data management
FY 2025 - 2028	Implement Colleague SaaS transition	OIT Director, OIE Director, Core Team	Centralized, integrated database system supporting finance, HR, student services, and academic functions
FY 2026	Integrate Colleague with Moodle, Watchman, Resero, VitalSource, and BambooHR	OIT Director, OIE Director, Core Team	Streamlined processes for course management, bookstore operations, HR/payroll, and financial aid; reduced manual workloads
FY 2026 - 2028	Deploy Colleague Insights dashboards and reports for real-time decision-making	Data Reporting Analyst; OIE Director	Timely access to enrollment, course, HR, and financial data; enhanced institutional planning and operational efficiency

FY 2025 - 2026	Provide training on data systems for faculty, staff, and leadership	OIE Director; OIT Director; Core Team	Increased capacity across campus for self-service reporting and data-informed decision-making; reduce reliance on central staff
FY 2026 - 2027	Establish standardized reporting protocols and templates	OIE Director; Data Governance Manager	Consistent and accurate reporting across all divisions; improved data quality and transparency
FY 2026 - 2027	Expand use of BambooHR analytics for workforce and engagement metrics	HR Director; OIE Director	Enhanced monitoring of employee engagement, retention, and professional development; evidence-based HR planning
FY 2026 - 2027	Conduct cyclical assessment of data quality and dashboard effectiveness	Data Governance Manager; OIE Director	Continuous improvement of data accuracy, relevance, and utility; supports institutional effectiveness and accreditation compliance
Ongoing	Engage in strategic partnerships for capacity-building	President; OIE Director	Maintain up-to-date practices in data governance, participate in regional/national networks, and leverage external expertise
Ongoing	Expand training and professional development in data governance	OIE Director; Data Governance Manager	Ensure sustainability and continuous skill development for staff supporting data initiative

Appendices:
Appendix 6.1 - DGPG Final Report
Appendix 6.2 - NMC McREL International Service Agreement
Appendix 6.3 - Core Team April 2024 Agenda

Identification of Other Changes and Issues Currently Facing the Institution
Instructions: This brief section should identify any other significant changes that have occurred or issues that have arisen at the institution (e.g., changes in key personnel, addition of major new programs, modifications in the governance structure, unanticipated challenges, or significant financial results) that are not otherwise described in the preceding section. This information will help the Interim Report Committee panel gain a clearer sense of the current status of the institution and understand the context in which the actions of the institution discussed in the previous section have taken place.

Significant Changes Since the Reaffirmation Review:
The college recognized the need for online programs to address multiple priorities, including accommodations of student needs, mitigation of potential safety concerns during campus construction, and the provision of student access for Tinian and Rota. The college initiated the substantive change process and, in October 2024, received its first approval for a distance education program for the Associate of Applied Science in Criminal Justice Online .

The substantive change report received in October included recommendations that required the college to establish and formally approve a full Teach Out Policy. The college provided internal stakeholder awareness and opportunities for feedback on the teach out plan through its internal governance review process. A request for review and feedback was given to the AC on February 3, 2025. Academic council, a faculty-led committee, includes instructional and non-instructional faculty, the director of learning support services, library programs and services, OIE, enrollment services, OIT, and the president of ASNMC. A similar request for review and feedback was made to the college council on January 30, 2025, which is composed of two students (the ASNMC president and one student appointed by ASNMC), three faculty members (the faculty senate president and two faculty appointed by the faculty senate), three staff members (the staff senate president and two staff appointed by the staff senate), and three administrators appointed by the president. The teach out plan was formally presented to and approved by the BOR in its regular meeting on August 13, 2025.

The college gained WSCUC Senior Commission approval through the substantive change process for two additional distance education degree programs: the Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts Online and Bachelor of Science in Business Management Online on January 27, 2025. All three distance education programs were launched in Fall 2025.

Additional Issues:
The college continues to demonstrate exemplary fiscal management, having achieved more than 18 consecutive years of clean financial statements audits and two straight years of no findings, a distinction that makes it the only government agency in the CNMI with this record. This achievement serves as a living testimony of the college's mission to take care of our people, our resources, and our community that reflects its unwavering commitment to transparency, accountability, and stewardship of public funds. The college has consistently complied with federal and local requirements and accounting standards, affirming its ability to safeguard resources and maintain effective internal controls.

The college operates within the broader fiscal environment of the CNMI, which continues to experience significant financial strain in the post-COVID-19 period. As a territory primarily reliant on tourism, the CNMI has not yet fully recovered from the economic impacts of the pandemic. Limited appropriations, delayed allotments, and increased operational costs create ongoing budgetary pressures that directly affect the college. The financial realities of the CNMI require continued vigilance and adaptive planning regardless of the pursuit of grants, external funding opportunities and cost-saving measures.

The college may need to implement austerity measures to ensure fiscal stability if resource constraints intensify. Such measures would prioritize essential academic programs and student services while deferring or scaling back noncritical expenditures. This is not the first time the college has had to consider austerity measures. The CNMI central government implemented austerity measures in 2024 and again in 2025. The college, due to its fiscal responsibility, was able to avoid this measure on both occasions.

The college is preparing for a major facilities expansion despite fiscal challenges. The college anticipates the simultaneous construction of four new buildings designed to address critical instructional, student support, research and extension and workforce development needs in 2026. While these capital improvements represent an important investment in the future of higher education in the CNMI, they also necessitate careful financial planning to balance construction timelines, operational readiness, and long-term sustainability amid fiscal uncertainty.

Looking forward, the college remains committed to disciplined budgeting, diversification of revenue streams, and strategic resource management. These efforts, together with its unparalleled record of clean audits, demonstrate the college's capacity to navigate fiscal challenges while preparing for both immediate needs and long-term growth.

The college faces ongoing uncertainty regarding federal funding for higher education. Recent discussions at the federal level have raised concerns about potential reductions in key funding streams, including Title IV programs, which provide critical financial support to students through PELL grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, federal work-study, and other federally funded programs. Any reduction in federal allocations could have significant implications for both student access and institutional operations.

Federal grants have historically been a cornerstone for supporting student success, campus infrastructure, and academic program development. Cuts to these grants would directly affect the college's ability to maintain current programs, invest in technology and facilities, and provide essential services to students, particularly those from underrepresented or low-income backgrounds. The potential reduction in funding also introduces heightened fiscal uncertainty, forcing the college to evaluate staffing, programmatic offerings, and operational priorities in a more conservative manner.

Potential changes to the PELL Grant program represent a critical concern at the college. PELL grants provide essential financial aid to approximately 75% of the college's student population. Adjustments to award amounts, eligibility criteria, or funding caps could limit access for students who rely on these grants to pursue post-secondary education. This may lead to increased financial strain for students, reducing enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. These changes necessitate proactive planning to ensure continued access and affordability while maintaining fiscal stability for the college. In addition to direct student aid, federal funds also provide fiscal support for the college's Project Promotion, Retention, Opportunities, Advancement (PROA) program. Project PROA is an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution grant that facilitates activities and workshops, financial literacy counseling, in-person/virtual mentoring and tutoring, additional resources and study spaces.

These challenges are compounded by a broader picture that requires the college to navigate rising operational costs, increasing demand for digital and distance education, and the ongoing need to attract and retain qualified faculty and staff. Federal funding reductions will not only impact immediate student support but also limit the college's ability to implement strategic initiatives, invest in institutional improvement, and respond to emerging workforce and community needs.

The college monitors federal policy developments, engages in advocacy efforts, and explores alternative revenue streams to mitigate potential shortfalls. Strategic planning incorporates sensitivity analyses and scenario planning to prepare for varying levels of federal support. The college seeks to ensure that students continue to have access to high-quality, affordable education despite potential federal funding constraints by anticipating changes and building resilience.

Concluding Statement

Instructions: Reflect on how the institutional responses to the issues raised by the Commission have had an impact upon the institution, including future steps to be taken.

Northern Marianas College demonstrates a commitment to its mission of institutional excellence and its vision of fostering educational and operational advancements in alignment with the WSCUC standards. The college has made significant progress in addressing the six recommendations outlined in the WSCUC action letter dated March 8, 2022, while navigating challenges such as post-typhoon economic constraints and austerity measures.

The college has been successful in the implementation of its 2022-2025 strategic plan that guides institutional direction and operational priorities. The FMP progresses with the completion of the first of five new buildings in October 2025, aligning with federal grant timelines. Governance structures have been streamlined through the governance review task force, the reinforcement of faculty-led academic leadership and transparent decision-making. Robust recruitment, retention, and professional development programs support a qualified workforce, while the OIT restructuring enhances academic and operational efficiencies through a centralized data reporting infrastructure and the Ellucian Colleague platform.

The college has established robust recruitment, retention and professional development programs that foster a wide range of qualified workforce to support academic and operational goals. Moreover, the college has embarked on a journey to restructure OIT. This process clarifies responsibilities, enhances academic support and improves operational efficiency. The college has begun to establish a centralized data reporting infrastructure through this that will ensure reliable, accessible data to inform decision-making and meet mandatory reporting requirements.

The college has made strides in meeting the six recommendations and acknowledges that there is still much to accomplish in the next four years. The college remains committed to addressing all six recommendations outlined in the WSCUC Action Letter dated March 8, 2022. The college's efforts fortify its foundation, ensure alignment with accreditation standards and advance its mission of institutional excellence.

The college will continue to address the six recommendations through the following actions:

Recommendation One: The college will integrate the strategic plan into operations, revisiting it on time to launch the "45 to 50 strategic plan" in 2026 to commemorate the college's 45th anniversary. The college will continue the construction of a new campus that complies with federal grant timelines and requirements. Progress will be monitored via weekly BOR updates and through the work of the facilities planning group to ensure alignment with strategic and digital campus goals.

Recommendation Two: The NMC GG will undergo regular scheduled review led by CC to adapt to organizational changes. The college will strengthen the link between governance and institutional effectiveness by the refinement of processes through which governance decisions are documented, communicated, and shared. The college will continue to encourage wider stakeholder involvement to ensure meaningful and comprehensive participation in governance decisions. The faculty's academic leadership will continue to be reinforced. The program review process will support consolidated, efficient governance aligned with WSCUC standards.

Recommendation Three: The college will continue to strengthen its employee-focused strategies by embedding them into long-term planning and college culture. This includes deeper analysis of workload and sufficiency and integrity of employee data, the improvement of onboarding and succession planning, and the enhancement of employee recognition systems.

The college plans to address the strategic goal of "cultivate our employees" by three action steps. Action step one, "establish an incremental and sustainable salary scale": The college will conduct a financial analysis to project costs for salary scale adjustments, benchmark compensation against other colleges to establish a fair and competitive salary scale, identify funding source(s) to support this effort, develop a phased implementation plan, and engage governing board, faculty, and staff.

Action step two, “incentives and additional workload undertaken outside of listed duties and responsibilities”: The college will facilitate a comprehensive inventory of employees who perform additional duties and responsibilities beyond their contractual obligations, design an incentive structure to address these, identify funding sources(s) to support the incentives, and develop a transparent policy for assigning additional duties.

Action step three, “explore and develop new employee benefits that reflect emerging trends in the modern workforce”: The college will continue to monitor trends, survey employees to identify interest and readiness, continue innovative flexible work arrangements, integrate professional development to align with best practices, and evaluate outcomes to scale the successfulness and viability of each effort.

The HRO will continue the refinement of optimization of BambooHR data and maximize the capabilities of the PROA Portal Plus. Additional features within Ellucian Colleague will be activated to streamline performance management, professional development tracking, and HR analytics.

The college will also commit to strengthening pipelines for diverse talent recruitment, expanding flexible work options, and ensuring that professional growth remains an ongoing institutional priority. Evaluation tools like the employee wellbeing and employee satisfaction surveys on BambooHR and real-time data from integrated systems will support evidence-based improvements moving forward.

The college will hire more full-time or adjunct faculty, distribute course assignments more evenly, review course trends and plan for sufficient instructional faculty. This will be supported with a three-semester class schedule that will allow students to register for the first two semesters and view the third and provide data on anticipated numbers of additional faculty needed in a particular semester.

The HRO will also continue its cyclical three-year review of MQRs to ensure that standards remain high and relevant to the local, national and federal expectations.

Recommendation four: The college will continue to support the president’s ongoing professional development plan. The planned BOR retreat will serve as a key venue to align presidential initiatives with updated strategic planning efforts and institutional performance measures. The institutionalized onboarding framework will be formalized to ensure continuity and strong leadership for future transitions.

Recommendation five: OIT will implement its 2025-2030 operations plan through detailed annual operational plans developed by the OIT director in collaboration with key stakeholders across the college. These operational plans will detail specific initiatives, timelines, resource requirements, and success metrics for each fiscal year, with progress regularly assessed and reported to the college leadership. A phased approach will be implemented that focuses on building foundational infrastructure and security capabilities while addressing critical operational needs that have immediate impact on institutional effectiveness.

Service improvements and process enhancements will be prioritized to deliver early value to the campus community, while major transformational initiatives will be carefully planned and executed with appropriate change management support. This phased approach ensures that essential services maintain continuity while new capabilities are systematically introduced and integrated into existing operations.

The re-formation of the technology in education committee (TEC) that will include representation from faculty, staff, and students will provide continuous guidance and oversight on efforts throughout the strategic plan period. This committee will review implementation progress, validate priorities, and ensure alignment with college needs. It will provide feedback mechanisms that incorporate diverse perspectives from across the campus community. The TEC structure will facilitate communication between OIT and the college’s academic, student, community, and administrative divisions, ensuring that technology initiatives directly support educational excellence and institutional mission fulfillment.

Regular stakeholder communication will ensure transparency and engagement throughout identified projects. Simultaneously, the continuous adaptation framework will remain responsive to emerging technologies and evolving institutional needs, adjusting based on lessons learned through execution. The implementation of the Ellucian Colleague platform across all institutional modules will establish comprehensive ERP capabilities that streamline operations, improve data accessibility, and enhance decision-making capabilities across all functional areas. This ERP platform will provide integrated student information systems, financial management, human resources, and academic management capabilities that support institutional effectiveness and operational efficiency.

The enhancement of data management and analytics capabilities will support evidence-based decision making, improve student outcomes, and inform strategic planning through in-depth reporting and analysis tools. These enhancements give institutional leadership timely access to accurate data that supports informed decision-making and strategic planning activities. The creation of technology-enabled learning and working environments will support innovation in teaching, improve collaboration, and deliver institutional effectiveness through modern digital tools and platforms that facilitate academic excellence and administrative efficiency.

The implementation of robust technology lifecycle management processes will optimize procurement, track assets effectively, and ensure timely refreshment of critical systems. This is achieved by leveraging virtualization, cloud services, and resource consolidation strategies to enhance flexibility, improve resilience, and maximize return on technology investments. The adoption of sustainable technology practices will reduce environmental impact and optimize energy usage in alignment with college's commitment to responsible stewardship. This includes energy-efficient equipment selection, cloud-first strategies that reduce local infrastructure requirements, and disposal processes that minimize environmental impact while ensuring data security.

The continuous adaptation framework ensures that technology infrastructure continues serving diverse campus community requirements while maintaining flexibility to incorporate new technologies and approaches that enhance institutional effectiveness. This framework, combined with an unwavering focus on supporting the college's educational mission, will enable the college to navigate challenges and capitalize on new opportunities throughout the five-year period of the strategic plan. Regular assessment and adjustment of strategic priorities will ensure continued alignment with institutional mission and objectives while maintaining operational excellence across the institution. This approach will be adapted based on emerging technologies, evolving institutional needs, and lessons learned through implementation experiences.

Recommendation six: In the midst of a major data migration, the college faces challenges from unclean and unaudited data that have slowed report generation and limited timely leadership decision-making. The college will continue to incorporate lessons from its SHEEO and CNMI SLDS P20W partnerships into ongoing core team work to address these challenges. The college will integrate data governance processes across the college and pending funds, hire full-time staff to lead and expand this effort to ensure long-term sustainability.

The core team will continue to govern the Colleague system, with a focus on documentation, standardized data definitions, and cross-functional workflows to establish a single source of truth for institutional data. Full deployment of Colleague aims to eliminate fragmented reporting practices and enable faster, more reliable, and strategic decision-making.

The college will strengthen its culture of assessment by embedding it into each program as well. This effort begins with a revamp of the academic program review process (see Recommendation Two). Consultation with EDSTRAT and active engagement with APS and employers will produce a co-designed academic program review process and template, followed by a guided pilot and a program review handbook beginning in 2026. These initiatives will ensure program review, assessment, and data reporting become integrated, reliable tools that support evidenced-based decision-making and institutional effectiveness.

The college recognizes the importance of sustained progress of these six recommendations and expresses gratitude to WSCUC for the opportunity to provide updates through this interim report.