

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

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

**This report represents the findings of the External Evaluation Team that visited
Northern Marianas College on October 22-25, 2012.**

**Gari Browning, Ph.D.
Team Chair**

LIST OF TEAM MEMBERS

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SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INSTITUTION: Northern Marianas College

DATE OF VISIT: October 22 – October 25, 2012

TEAM CHAIR: Gari Browning, Ph.D.
President/Superintendent, Ohlone Community College District

The visit of the External Evaluation team was conducted from October 22 through 25, 2012. Prior to the visit the team chair and the team assistant conducted a pre-visit to the College to arrange logistics and address any issues that required in-person attention. On the first day of the visit, prior to the initial team meeting, two members of the team visited the facilities and personnel at the off-campus site on the island of Tinian. Since transportation to Rota, the other island served by the College, is unreliable, the team forewent a visit. No college credit offerings are currently available at either Tinian or Rota, but since the College intends to provide courses at these locations in the future, a visit was appropriate.

All team members were experienced in community college teaching and/or administration and nearly all had previous accreditation team experience. Four of the nine members had served on eight or more teams previous to this visit. All members were knowledgeable and conscientious, prepared well prior to the visit, coalesced quickly into an effective team, and were thorough in their assessment of the College. The ACCJC team was complemented by a three-member team from ACSCU assigned to evaluate the School of Education baccalaureate degree.

The quality of the writing of the Self Evaluation report did not accurately represent the quality of the College. In some cases the evaluation sub-sections were, in effect, additional description rather than an analysis of the degree to which the College met the given Standard. The Actionable Improvement Plans did not always follow logically from the Self Evaluations. A significant number of people who worked on the report are no longer with the College. Most significantly, the Self Evaluation did not address the Recommendations from the most recent visit clearly in the report, as required by the Commission Action letter, until the Commission specifically requested it to do so. Overall, the Self Evaluation did not accurately disclose the impressive amount and quality of the work the College had done to address the Commission Recommendations and meet the Standards. Members of the College community were universally knowledgeable of the importance of accreditation, what was required to meet the Recommendations, and the gravity of the College's accredited status.

The team found that the College had satisfied the Commission Recommendations and met the Eligibility Requirements and Standards in nearly all cases, although resolutions to some were just in the nick of time. The College has satisfied Recommendations made at the time of the last Comprehensive Evaluation (2006) and since in the following areas:

- Integrated planning—resolved February 2012
- Financial integrity—resolved February 2012
- BOR role and conduct—resolved February 2012
- CFO—resolved February 2012
- Policy review—resolved February 2012
- Autonomy—resolved June 2011

- Following Commission policies—resolved June 2011
- Hiring a CEO—resolved June 2011
- Administrative staff—resolved June 2011
- Broad-based planning—resolved June 2011
- Faculty professionalism—resolved June 2011
- Planning processes—resolved February 2009
- Evaluating programs—resolved February 2009
- Student Learning Outcomes—resolved January 2008
- Employee evaluation—resolved January 2008
- Facilities—resolved January 2008
- Sufficient staff—resolved January 2008
- BOR training—resolved June 2007
- Suspension of Distance Education—resolved June 2007

Although the College addressed an earlier issue of the unreliability concerning its Distance Education delivery by suspending services, the Commonwealth citizens not living on Saipan do not have access to credit higher education courses. This issue remains unresolved and is the subject of a new team recommendation.

The team had recommendations in the following areas:

In 2006 the Commission recommended that the College suspend Distance Education offerings for residents of the islands of Tinian and Rota until such time that the College could assure the consistent delivery of those courses and services. In spring 2008, the College complied and suspended college credit courses provided online. Unfortunately, the College has not been able to find a way to resume online courses with improved delivery. The team is concerned that students on these islands do not have access to higher education unless they are able to relocate to Saipan. This is not a viable option for all potential students on these two islands.

The College does not have consistent and published qualifications for faculty. Administrators set requirements based on individual courses or job announcements and have ultimate responsibility for hiring faculty. This practice has led to inconsistent qualifications of teaching faculty across the College.

The Board of Regents has been striving and succeeding in adhering to its role as a policy-making body. However, as a long-standing policy, representatives of College constituent groups serve as Honorary Regents, discussing and advising the BOR directly at Board meetings. This practice provides a way around the governance structure that has been created for faculty, administrators, staff, and students to have input into College decisions and provides the groups represented by the Honorary Regents a greater say in decisions than others. This issue represents a misunderstanding of the governance process on the part of members of the College community primarily, and it is one that the Board has not yet recognized as needing attention.

While the library conducts a student satisfaction survey, there is no evidence that student learning, especially in the area of information competency, is measured directly. There was also some concern that, since the College has done such a thorough, time-intensive job with SLOS for instructional programs and services, it should make sure SLOs for the library and learning resources have received equal attention.

In spite of the College's progress and success in meeting the Commission's requirements, the team was concerned about the College's ability to sustain the progress made due to administrative instability. Although the legislature has demonstrated its commitment to the College and the role it plays in the welfare of the Commonwealth's future, other aspects of the economy impact the College. For instance, because of the Commonwealth's inability to pay the salaries of its physicians, individuals with urgent medical problems must travel to Guam for treatment. Such circumstances, while beyond the control of the College, make it difficult to attract and retain qualified staff.

TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1: To meet the Standards, the team recommends that in order to improve access for residents of Tinian and Rota, the College make available delivery of instruction and services online or in person that are comparable to those provided at the Saipan campus (Eligibility Requirement 1—Mission, Standards II.A.1, II.A.1.a, II.A.1.b, III.C.1.c, III.C.1.d).

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

RECOMMENDATION #3: To meet the Standards and assure the integrity and quality of programs and services, the team recommends that the College develop, and consistently apply, clear criteria in determining qualifications for faculty (Eligibility Requirement 13-- Faculty, III.A.1, III.A.2).

RECOMMENDATION #4: To improve upon Standard III.B, the team supports the College's Actionable Improvement Plan to continue to pursue resources to fund its Facilities Master Plan and to address anticipated program needs (Standard III.B.1.a).

RECOMMENDATION #5: To improve upon Standard III.C, the team recommends that the College complete its review and revision of the IT Services Operational Plan, Policy, and Procedures and fill identified IT staff vacancies with qualified personnel (III.C.1, III.C.2.a, III.C.1.d, III.C.2).

RECOMMENDATION #6: To improve upon Standards III.D and IV.A, the team recommends that the College, in order to ensure clarity in the governance structure, revise its governance structures, and that the Institutional Excellence Guide be updated on a continuous basis as changes occur (Standard III.D.2.g, IV.A.2).

RECOMMENDATION #7: To improve upon Standard IV.B, the team recommends that the College continue to update board policies, in particular, the board self evaluation policy, and implement this policy on a regular basis (Standard IV.B.1.e, IV.B.1.g).

RECOMMENDATION #8: To meet the Standards, the team recommends that the Board and the president assure that Board policies consistently distinguish between their roles, of

the Board as a policy-making body and the president as responsible for the operation of the College, and improve the understanding of the College community regarding the responsibility of the president in advising the Board. Specifically, the team urges the College and Board to reconsider its policy of having Honorary Regents, who are elected to represent some College constituent groups, participate in direct discussion of policy issues during Board meetings (Standards IV.A.2, IV.B.1.a, IV.B.1.j).

INTRODUCTION

Northern Marianas College (NMC) is the sole regionally accredited institution of higher education of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI). It was established in 1981 and first accredited by ACCJC in 1985. It offers two-year associate degrees, occupational certificates, and a Bachelor of Science in Education, which the ACSCU accredits. It enrolls approximately 1,300 students.

The College site is a former medical facility built in 1960. Although old, the buildings are clean and, with constant effort, well maintained. They supply sufficient space for the College's programs and services.

Since its previous comprehensive external evaluation in fall 2006, Northern Marianas College has had difficulty meeting accreditation standards. Commission actions and the College's accredited status changes follow.

- January 2007, the Commission placed NMC on Probation status requiring a Progress Report in March 2007;
- June 2007, the Commission required NMC to submit a second Progress Report followed by a visit in October 2007;
- January 2008, the Commission placed NMC on Show Cause status and required the College to submit a Special Report by March 2008;
- June 2008, the Commission continued the College on Show Cause status requiring another Special Report as of October 2008;
- January 2009, the Commission continued the College on Show Cause status requiring another Show Cause Report in April 2009 to be accompanied by a visit;
- June 2009, the Commission removed NMC from Show Cause and reaffirmed the College's accreditation;
- October 2009, the Commission accepted the College's Mid-Term report and required a Special Visit in April 2010 to check on compliance with several Eligibility Requirements and Standards;
- June 2010, the Commission placed the College on Show Cause status requiring a Show Cause Report due in October 2010 with a visit;
- January 2011, the Commission continued the College on Show Cause and required a Show Cause report followed by a visit in March 2011.
- June 2011, the Commission removed the College from Show Cause and acted to impose Probation, requiring a Follow-up report due October 2011 followed by a visit;
- February 2012, the Commission continued the College on Probation and required that the College resolve fully Recommendations 3, 4, and 10 from the 2010 report and Supplemental Recommendations 1 and 2 from the fall 2011 team report. The action letter warned the College that, having failed to address deficiencies that were identified six years prior, the comprehensive review must provide substantive evidence that the College had fully addressed all of the identified deficiencies. Otherwise, the Commission may take action to terminate accreditation.

The College has been engaged in addressing accreditation issues for the last six years. Progress, however, has been quite uneven. In comparing the Action Letters, progress in resolving Recommendations has been as follows: From June 2007 until February 2009 the College made significant strides to meet the Standards. No progress was seen between February 2009 and

January 2011; then progress resumed early in 2011 and has carried through to the present time. At this point, faculty, administrators, staff, Regents, students, and even legislators are well versed about the Standards and expectations of the Commission. Many processes and documents are well refined and meet or exceed the Standards. The College has certainly derived some benefit from its close attention to standards of good practice, and most especially from the hard work invested in improving the College to meet the Commission Standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1: To meet the Standards, the team recommends that in order to improve access for residents of Tinian and Rota, the College make available delivery of instruction and services online or in person that are comparable to those provided at the Saipan campus (Eligibility Requirement 1—Mission, Standards II.A.1, II.A.1.a, II.A.1.b, III.C.1.c, III.C.1.d).

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

RECOMMENDATION #3: To meet the Standards and assure the integrity and quality of programs and services, the team recommends that the College develop, and consistently apply, clear criteria in determining qualifications for faculty (Eligibility Requirement 13--Faculty, III.A.1, III.A.2).

RECOMMENDATION #4: To improve upon Standard III.B, the team supports the College's Actionable Improvement Plan to continue to pursue resources to fund its Facilities Master Plan and to address anticipated program needs (Standard III.B.1.a).

RECOMMENDATION #5: To improve upon Standard III.C, the team recommends that the College complete its review and revision of the IT Services Operational Plan, Policy, and Procedures and fill identified IT staff vacancies with qualified personnel (III.C.1, III.C.2.a, III.C.1.d, III.C.2).

RECOMMENDATION #6: To improve upon Standards III.D and IV.A, the team recommends that the College, in order to ensure clarity in the governance structure, revise its governance structures, and that the Institutional Excellence Guide be updated on a continuous basis as changes occur (Standard III.D.2.g, IV.A.2).

RECOMMENDATION #7: To improve upon Standard IV.B, the team recommends that the College continue to update board policies, in particular, the board self evaluation policy, and implement this policy on a regular basis (Standard IV.B.1.e, IV.B.1.g).

RECOMMENDATION #8: To meet the Standards, the team recommends that the Board and the president assure that Board policies consistently distinguish between their roles, of the Board as a policy-making body and the president as responsible for the operation of the College, and improve the understanding of the College community regarding the responsibility of the president in advising the Board. Specifically, the team urges the

College and Board to reconsider its policy of having Honorary Regents, who are elected to represent some College constituent groups, participate in direct discussion of policy issues during Board meetings (Standards IV.A.2, IV.B.1.a, IV.B.1.j).

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #3, February 2012: To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standard, the team recommends that the college integrate financial planning with institutional planning and ensure that fiscal resources are adequate to support student learning programs and institutional effectiveness so that financial stability is maintained. (ER 17, Standard III.D.1.a).

Integrated financial/institutional planning and maintenance of financial stability were priority recommendations in previous accreditation reports. The previous team found that the College had partially met the recommendation, but that the program and budget planning nexus had become uncertain with the dissolution of the Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC).

The College places close attention on integrating financial planning with institutional planning, as evidenced by the policy, practice, and forms used in budgeting, financial monitoring, and making adjustments to account for fiscal constraints that occur throughout the academic year. It continues to use its Institutional Excellence Guide developed in 2008 as the key guide to participatory decision-making. The College's Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC) puts together composite reports to assist in the program decision-making process, linking program need to resource allocation. The College adjusted its Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC) so that it might better respond to more urgent and relevant financial exigencies and to the president's White Paper. While planning places strong emphasis on Program Review and institutional dialogue regarding the needs that link to the institution's budget, the president recognizes the need to respond quickly and affirmatively to financial circumstances that may occur. The president, therefore, has adjusted the process to include the review of the president's Management Team to ensure that the day-to-day operational and fiscal needs appropriately align with institutional priorities.

The College is committed to adhering to its four-phase financial management process that emphasizes the linking of program and institutional planning to its financial plan. The phases include: 1-Planning and Interlinking of Plans, 2-Resource Allocation, 3-Program and Service Delivery, and 4-Assessment and Evaluation. The president is well aware; however, that these phases, in the context of a participatory governance structure, require significant time to accommodate sufficient institutional dialogue and the decision-making process outlined in the College's Institutional Excellence Guide. Accordingly, to ensure that the financial integrity of the institution is not compromised, the president has instituted additional management processes that ensure alignment of plans with current financial realities. In short, the president recognizes that adherence to Standard III.D.1 must not result in failure to adhere to Standard III.D.3. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation #4, February 2012: To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standards, the team recommends that the college assure the financial integrity and responsible use of its financial resources and ensure that the financial management system has appropriate

control mechanisms and widely disseminates dependable and timely information for sound financial decision-making. The College must also correct noted audit findings.

The College has responded to this recommendation by establishing a new accounting software system and financial status report. The College is endeavoring to share financial data in a timely manner, via monthly budgetary status reports, quarterly budget reports, and encumbrance reports, with and from its various constituencies. These improvements have allowed the college to adjust its budget and resource allocation processes. The College's internal control and compliance measures are examined via annual audits. These controls have improved continuously since 2007. A Dean of Administration has been employed and is temporarily serving as the chief financial officer. The PROA Strategic Plan 2008-2012 shows a link between planning and resource allocation. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation #10, February 2012: To meet the Standard the team recommends that the governing board engage in training on the proper role and conduct of regents, general governing board relations and practice, college policy and Accreditation Standards and Commission Policy and adhere to its role in establishing policy and strategic-level decision-making; in accordance with its own policy (Standards IV.B.1, IV.B.1.b, IV.B.1.e, IV.B.1.j, IV.B.1.h).

In the Self Evaluation, the College lists a large number of training sessions that have been conducted since 2008 to ensure the Board understands its role as a policy-making body. Regents have also participated in training on Accreditation Standards and Commission policies from February 2010 to April 2012. The team observed that the Regents exhibited a good understanding of their role. The College should act to provide training for members of the College Community to ensure a broad-based and consistent understanding of the distinct roles of the Board and the College. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Supplemental Recommendation #1, February 2012: In order to meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College expeditiously recruits a permanent Chief Financial and Administrative Officer while it formally reviews and specifies a process to monitor the Budget Progress Report as part of a collegial system of financial management control mechanisms. (Standards III.D.2, III.D.2.d, IV.A.2.a).

Regarding Supplemental Recommendation #1, the internal control issue and the discovery of unknown funds point to a weakness in the financial management system that limit the College's ability to make sound financial decisions. Information from the system is neither dependable nor timely. The recent dissolution of the Budget and Finance Committee, which the Self Study Report indicated played a central role in college budget processes, is a concern to the Commission. Therefore, the individual hired as chief financial officer must have government finance, and accounting qualifications in order to continue to meet Accreditation Standards (III.D.) and Eligibility Requirements 5--Administrative Capacity and 18--Financial Accountability.

The president has assessed the structure of the fiscal area of the College, has restructured the Chief Financial and Administrative Officer position into a Dean of Administration position, and has moved a current employee into that position. The president determined that current staff possessed the requisite experience, knowledge, and abilities to satisfy this Recommendation. The Budget and Finance Committee has been reactivated. The dissolution of the BAFC had been a concern of the previous team and was noted in their Recommendation #3. Further, the dean

initiated the issuing of Financial Status Reports (FSRs) to provide decision-makers with timely financial information.

Although the College has received unqualified audits and there has been no identification of material weaknesses, the previous team noted and the College president agreed that material weaknesses could develop or occur without the proper oversight and leadership to ensure that knowledgeable and skilled accounting and finance staff were effectively used to protect the resources of the institution. Since the hiring of the Dean of Administration, the College reports that there has been substantial improvement to assure the ACCJC and others that the Standards are met. Financial information dissemination has been improved.

To improve further upon the institution's response to the team recommendations and to ensure that meeting Standard III is sustained, the College has committed to recruiting and hiring a Director of Financial Services/Chief Financial Officer to complement the Dean of Administration and strengthen the College's financial practices. Still further, the College has commenced investigating the purchase of a new Enterprise Reporting System to improve upon its system of providing an integrated registration, financial, human-resource data and reporting system.

One of the previous team's concerns was whether the College has adequately addressed the issue of repeated audit findings. There have been repeated findings previously with regard to some financial matters. However, none appear to rise to the level materiality. Indeed, the College has sought and has clarification and affirmation of remaining in good standing with the federal granting agencies. A review of the past audits indicates that even those findings that have been repeated do not represent findings of material weakness, and the related amounts questioned are not material. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Supplemental Recommendation #2, February 2012: In order to meet Standards, the team recommends that a schedule and process for the review of all College Policies be developed and implemented. The process should ensure participation by all constituencies and include a clear procedure for the development of Policies and the process for submission for Board Approval (Standards IV.A.2, IV.B.1.b-e).

The board has established a 6-year cycle of review of its policies and identified policies that are procedural in nature for particular attention. A list of policies with embedded procedures was supplied to the team during the visit. The College is moving quickly to review and revise its policies. Those revised to date are appropriate. The Board should promptly address policies that provide for Honorary Regents in order to assure that policy is in place to guide institutional understanding of governance roles. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation 1, June 2011: To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standards the governing board should exercise its authority to govern the college and protect the college from undue influence by the Commonwealth government including the government's ability to line-item dictate the college budget. The governing board should act autonomously to govern the college free from indirect interference by Commonwealth governor or members of the legislature; this will defend the college from the vagaries of changes in political power (ER 3, Standards IV.B.1.a, IV.B.1.c).

The College has taken actions to ensure that it has autonomy from the Commonwealth government. In 2011 the Board enacted a resolution affirming its autonomy (BOR Resolution

2011-03). The president and members of the Board have continued to meet regularly with members of the legislature and their staff to successfully advocate for fairly consistent funding from the Commonwealth government despite a sharp decline in the total budget available. The Commonwealth budget acknowledges the president authority for College expenditures. Although the Commonwealth retains authority regarding the overall appropriation to the College, the current team verified again that it does not have line item or staffing control.

The team also verified that the Board has been protecting the College from undue influence. The Standard IV committee cited the example of the legislature forwarding a proposal to change the name of the College. Upon determining the view of the College community, the BOR lobbied successfully against the change. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation 2, June 2011: To meet the Eligibility Requirement, the team recommends that the college ensure that Commission policies are followed at all times and that the institution respond to Commission requests truthfully and accurately (ER 21).

This recommendation stems from actions of the previous president. The previous visiting team reviewed the steps the College had taken to address this issue and determined that it had been resolved. The current team found the current president, staff, BOR, and members of the legislature to be well versed in Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, and related policies. They were well aware of the gravity of the current accredited status of the College and anxious to show their conscientiousness in meeting the requirements and satisfying all Commission recommendations. The only negative comment referring to Commission actions suggested that the College's inability to meet the employment needs of the community was the fault of Commission sanction. Upon investigation it became clear that these comments concerned the fact that the College cannot submit the Substantive Change Proposal needed to start new programs while it is on sanction. The College was advised to begin the planning processes for such programs in order to be prepared should sanction be lifted (See Standard IV.A.). *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation 5, June 2011: To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standard, the team recommends that the governing board immediately initiate a search and hire a qualified chief executive officer (CEO) and ensure that the CEO has full-time responsibility to the institution and possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies (ER 4, Standard IV.B.1.j).

The BOR enlisted the services of a professional search firm that specializes in finding community college CEO's. The result was the hiring of a president with over thirty years in community colleges and extensive administrative experience, including nine years as a community college president prior to going to NMC. The president was offered and accepted a two-year contract, the norm for all employees of Northern Marianas College. The president's contract ends in June 2013.

The team verified that the president has full-time responsibility to the College and that the BOR has assigned and adhered to its policy delegating full responsibility and authority to her to implement policies and for the operation of the College. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation 6, June 2011: To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standards, the team recommends that the college ensure that the administrative staff of the college has the

appropriate preparation and experience to provide administrative services; this includes the college chief executive. The governing board should delegate the authority to college administration to operate the college and hold the administration accountable for institutional effectiveness and for adhering to adopted policies and governance processes (ER 5, Standards III.A.3.a, IV.B.1.j, IV.B.2.a, IV.B.2.b, IV.B.2.c, IV.B.2.d, IV.B.2.e).

The team found that the College had been working steadily and rapidly to fill administrative vacancies. After a period of instability, the College has reached equilibrium with just a few positions remaining in the search process. Since the last visit, the College has filled the following positions: the president, the Dean of Academic Programs and Services, the Dean of Student Services, the Director of Human Resources/Legal Counsel, and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness. The College has restructured the positions of the Chief Financial and Administrative Officer and the Dean of Community Programs and Services into a new position, the Dean of Administration. The College is still advertising for several other key positions, including a Director of Financial Services/Chief Financial Officer and a Director of IT. The Board has been advised to review the practice of providing two-year contracts to administrators and faculty, especially to the president, in the interest of improving the internal stability of the College. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation 7, June 2011: To fully meet the Standards, the team recommends that the college restore ongoing, collegial, self-reflecting dialogue about the continuous improvement of institutional processes. The college should provide evidence that planning is broad based and offers opportunities for input by appropriate constituencies (Standards I.B.4, I.B.6).

The team found a planning process that is elaborate and well established. The 2008 Institutional Excellence Guide clearly outlines the process of planning, tying allocation of resources to the process. It also establishes the link matching budget increases or reductions to an evaluative process. The financial resources of Northern Marianas College are limited but sufficient to support learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Resources are planned, budgeted and distributed so that the resources support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation 8 June 2011: To meet the Standard, the team recommends that the college ensure that faculty distinguish between personal conviction and professional views and that information is presented fairly and objectively (Standard II.A.7.a).

Board policy 3001 Professional Ethics addresses faculty professionalism. Upon hire and at the beginning of each academic year, each faculty member is given a statement of Professional Ethics and Academic Freedom and Responsibility. In addition, College faculty are engaged in training sessions on professional teaching. Students are also asked to respond to three questions regarding the information presented and discussed in every course. Responses will be used for further professional development sessions. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Team Recommendation 1, February 2009: The college should review existing planning processes in order to establish and implement a shared vision for the future of the college with agreed upon priorities that:

- (a) develops and implements budgeting and resource allocations guided by institutional needs for human resources and services;**
- (b) includes the two centers on Tinian and Rota in the planning;**
- (c) integrates all aspects of planning, evaluation, and resources allocation;**

- (d) is driven by college mission and goals;**
- (e) relies on faculty and staff participation;**
- (f) is well documented and widely distributed.**

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

The PROA (Planning, Program Review, Outcomes, and Assessment) process is guided by a participatory governance committee, PROAC, with membership that includes an academic dean, five faculty, the Faculty Senate president, and representatives from Tinian and Rota. The College has followed this planning process for planning and Program Review discussions for three cycles, beginning in 2008. It has incorporated a timeline and Program Review forms and provides for resource allocation. Planning summits in 2010, 2011, and 2012 have included all campus constituents in an effort to develop and update long-term plans for the College. The PROA process is well integrated into the College processes and is working well. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Team Recommendation 2, February 2009: The team recommends again that the college institutionalize a coordinated, systematic process for evaluating program effectiveness. This process should include definitions of learning outcomes for all programs, a determination of program relationships to labor markets, and objective measures of student performance, which can inform and guide decisions to improve programs. (Standards I.B.1, I.B.3, I.B.4, I.B.5, I.B.6, I.B.7, II.A.1, II.A.2, II.B.4, II.C, III.A, III.B, III.C, III.D, IV.A, IV.B.2.a, IV.B.2.b)

The PROA (Planning, Program Review, Outcomes, and Assessment) process, guided by the PROAC, is a well established College process which has led Program Review discussions for three cycles, beginning in 2008. Three evaluation and process forms, 1, 2, and 3, are used as tools to assist the College in linking its resource allocation with its program evaluation process, and together provide for a comprehensive cycle of planning, review, and resource allocation *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Team Recommendation 4, January 2008: The team recommends the college complete the cycle of developing, measuring, analyzing, and discussing student learning outcomes, and acting on the findings, as part of a continuous effort of improvement. With regard to Recommendation 4, it is expected that the college will have achieved the Development Level on student learning outcomes as identified in the Commission's Rubric of Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness by the time of the Progress Report. (Standards I.B.1, II.A.1.a, II.A.1.b, II.A.2, II.A.3, II.A.5, II.A.6, III.A.6, III.B.2.b, III.C.2, III.D.3, IV.A.5, IV.B.2.b).

The Self Evaluation suggests and the team verified that the College has met this milestone and has kept pace with the Commission SLO timeline. The visiting team was able to verify through documentation that NMC understands Program and Student Learning Outcomes and how these processes link with institutional planning. There is a sense of collegial and coordinated efforts to work together, as evidenced by program or departmental-level meetings, Academic Council, and Management Team meetings. There is campus-wide awareness and support of these efforts, which is evident in the documentation of 100 percent of courses having Student Learning Outcomes and 100 percent documented Program Learning Outcomes for programs. Interviews and other evidence validate that the College uses the results of assessment to make improvements (Form 1). The College can point to numerous examples of course and program improvements resulting from implementation of Student Learning Outcomes. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Team Recommendation 5, January 2008: The team recommends the college implement the employee evaluation processes that are in place in a timely and formal manner in order to assure the effectiveness of its human resources and encourage improvement (Standards II.A.2.a, II.A.1, III.D, IV.A.1, IVA.4, IV.B).

The College formally evaluates its full-time staff, faculty and administrators on an annual basis. In addition, there are also end-of-course evaluations for faculty. Evaluation forms provided to the team for all full-time personnel identify and rate areas of responsibilities and participation. The employee and supervisor discuss and apply recommendations for professional development or improvement in performance. Since all evaluations are processed manually, results for the end-of-course evaluations are not given to the faculty in a timely manner and reduce their value in addressing improvements. The College should improve its turnaround time for providing results of student evaluations to faculty. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Team Recommendation 6, January 2008: The college should pursue funding to renovate or replace aging buildings with facilities that are appropriate to meet the current and future needs of the college (Standards III.B.1, III.B.1.a, III.B.1.b, III.B.2.a, III.B.2.b, III.D.1.a, III.D.1.b, III.D.1.c).

The institution developed a Facilities Master Plan (FMP) in 2009 and has been allocating resources to address the FMP and the programmatic needs of the institution. Most of the funding allocated for these improvements comes from special apportionments and grants restricted for particular uses. The FMP describes a ten-phase plan to address the needs identified in the FMP. The initial phase begins with addressing the needs of the School of Education, library services, and student climate (student center). The College estimates that the initial phase of the plan will cost \$27 million. No funds have been identified to address the initial phase, but over recent years the College has been able to obtain some funding to repair, improve, and adjust existing spaces. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Eligibility Requirement #5 Administrative Capacity, January 2008: The institution has sufficient staff, with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose (ER 5).

The president determined that current staff possessed the requisite experience, knowledge, and abilities to satisfy this recommendation. The Budget and Finance Committee has been reactivated. Financial reporting and dissemination of information have been improved. The College continues a search for a Director of Financial Services/Chief Financial Officer who would report to the Dean of Administration; in the meantime the dean has been assigned the responsibility of Chief Financial Officer. The position of Director of Institutional Effectiveness has also been filled. Remaining open is the position of Director of Information Technology. The College is planning to fill this position. The College is aggressively addressing staffing needs. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Commission Recommendation 2, June 2007: Commission Recommendation #2: The governing board of Northern Marianas College must undergo sufficient training in accreditation requirements of the ACCJC (Standards IV.B.1.f, IV.B.1.i).

The College lists an array of board training sessions in which the Regents have participated. The team verified that the Board members participated in several accreditation training sessions from February 2010 to April 2012. In addition, new Board members are required to view Accreditation Basics as part of their orientation. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Team Recommendation 3: The college should provide quality assurance for instructional programs at distant sites and instruction through distance modalities. If alternative means of delivering equitable access to quality instruction is not available when technology fails, the college should suspend distance education at remote centers until new connectivity is established (Standards II.A.1.b, II.A.2, II.A.2.d, II.C.1, II.C.1.a, II.C.1.b).

In spring 2008 the College followed this recommendation by suspending Distance Education courses to Tinian and Rota. Unfortunately, now in 2012, the College has not established a comprehensive alternative method of supplying higher education opportunities to this segment of their population. Although the College has met this recommendation, new connectivity has not been established at remote centers. The College is not meeting its mission to provide postsecondary education for the citizens of the Commonwealth. *The College has met this Recommendation. See Recommendation 1 in the October 2012 External Evaluation Report.*

Commission Recommendation 1, January 2007: Northern Marianas College must take appropriate steps to ensure that the delivery system used to provide instruction to Tinian and Rota is completely reliable and works at all times, or discontinue offering classes via telecommunications. The College must also detail how it intends to provide educational services, including instruction and support services that ensure the education obtained on the Tinian and Rota sites is equivalent of that obtained on the main campus and meets all accreditation requirements (Standards II.A.1.a, II.A.1.b, III.C.1.c, III.C.1.d).

The College reports and the team verified that it suspended academic instruction at Tinian and Rota in spring 2008 and has not resumed credit instruction since that time. Since the legal charge of the College and its mission state that the College provides postsecondary educational opportunities for the Commonwealth as a whole and for the people of the Commonwealth, the College must find a means to provide specific opportunity to access higher education to the residents of these islands. At this time, a small number of students (25) are recruited and move to the main island to attend credit classes. Although obsolete video teleconferencing units were replaced and upgraded on Tinian and Rota in 2012, the College reports that it does not offer credit programs on these islands. While the College describes its intent to offer programs “100 percent online” to serve students on Tinian and Rota, there is as yet no plan outlining this action. The Board is scheduled to review and approve a Distance Education Policy in December 2012. NMC is exploring online and Distance Education platforms to deliver instruction. Equivalent instruction at off campus sites continues to be postponed. *The College has not met this Recommendation. See Recommendation 1 in the October 2012 External Evaluation Report.*

NOTE: A compilation which tracks recommendations from January 2007 through February 2012 is appended to the end of this report.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

1. Authority

Northern Marianas College is authorized to operate as an educational institution and to award degrees by the Constitution of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands. ***The College meets this requirement.***

2. Mission

The College's educational mission is clearly defined, adopted, and published by its governing board consistent with its legal authorization, and is appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education and the constituency it seeks to serve. The mission statement defines institutional commitment to achieving student learning and to providing higher education to all citizens of the Commonwealth. ***While the mission statement technically meets the Eligibility Requirement, the College is not meeting the entirety of its mission statement because it is not providing higher education opportunities to the portion of its citizenry residing on the islands of Tinian and Rota.***

3. Governing Board

The College has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality, integrity and financial stability of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out. The Board of Regents is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. Its membership is sufficient in size and composition to fulfill all board responsibilities.

The governing board is an independent policy-making body capable of reflecting constituent and public interest in board activities and decisions. A majority of the board members do not have inappropriate interest in the institution. The Board has required policies, including a conflict of interest policy.

Meeting this ER has been a previous concern. The team verified that the Board had participated in a great many training sessions, including sessions on accreditation from February 2010 to April 2012. In addition, new Board members are required to complete the Commission's online course, Accreditation Basics, as part of their orientation. The Board has established a six-year calendar for Board policy review. The Board now meets on a monthly basis compared to its previous quarterly basis calendar. In June 2011, the Board passed Resolution 2011-03 that "noted the expectations of ACCJC that the College, as an ACCJC accredited institution, must comply with ACCJC Eligibility Requirements and Standards." ***The College meets this requirement.***

4. Chief Executive Officer

The College has a CEO appointed by the Board whose full-time responsibility is to the institution, and who possesses authority to administer policies and the operation of the College.

Meeting this ER has been a previous concern. The Board engaged in a search for a CEO and hired one with extensive community college and presidential experience. She is serving under a two-year contract. The Board has conducted a mid-year evaluation of the president, and plans includes updating the summative evaluation instrument to conduct the annual evaluation of the president. ***The College meets this requirement.***

5. Administrative Capacity

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

Meeting this ER has been a previous concern. The College states that it has hired a Dean of Administration to serve as its chief financial officer. The College is in search for a Director, Financial Services/Chief Financial Officer, who will report to the Dean of Administration. It has yet to hire an IT Director. *The College meets this requirement.*

6. Operational Status

The College is operational, with students actively pursuing its degrees. *The College meets this requirement.*

7. Degrees

The majority of the College's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and a significant proportion of students are enrolled in them. *The College meets this requirement.*

8. Educational Programs

The College's degree programs are consistent with its mission, are based in recognized fields of higher education study, are sufficient in content and length, are conducted with appropriate rigor and culminate in identified student outcomes. *The College meets this requirement.*

9. Academic Credit

The College awards academic credits based on recognized practices by degree granting institutions of higher education and consistent with accepted practices of the Pacific Post-Secondary Education Council. Academic credit is measured by the credit hour and is based on achievement of the course's stated outcomes and overall required contact hours. *The College meets this requirement.*

10. Student Learning and Achievement

The College defines and measures Student Learning Outcomes and student achievement through regular and systematic assessment. Program and course Student Learning Outcomes are published in the college catalog, course guides, and course syllabi. *The College meets this requirement.*

11. General Education

The College defines and includes in all its degree programs a substantial component of General Education courses designed to ensure acquisition of general knowledge, academic skills, critical thinking skills, and the ability to integrate knowledge that promotes the capacity for life-long learning. The General Education component includes the required areas of knowledge and is consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education. *The College meets this requirement.*

12. Academic Freedom

The College has a Board policy that clearly defines academic freedom and responsibility and requires faculty members to distinguish between personal convictions and course goals and objectives. *The College meets this requirement.*

13. Faculty

While the College is in the process of hiring to sustain faculty levels, it has a core of qualified full-time faculty appropriate to the size of its student body. Although the current faculty have appropriate qualifications, the team has recommended more consistency in the College's criteria for hiring new faculty. *The College partially meets this requirement.*

14. Student Services

The College provides appropriate services for all of its students. These services are designed to support student learning and meet specific needs of the College's student population. *The College meets this requirement.*

15. Admissions

The College has a stated policy defining requirements for admission of students, consistent with its mission and programs. *The College meets this requirement.*

16. Information and Learning Resources

The College provides long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and instructional programs. *The College meets this requirement.*

17. Financial Resources

The College is funded by the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI) government and has a guaranteed base level of funding as a percentage of the CNMI budget. The College also receives revenue from tuition and fees as well as from federal grants. The Board has a practice of maintaining a healthy reserve, to which it adds funds on an annual basis.

Meeting this ER has been a previous concern. The team found a planning process that is elaborate and well established. The 2008 Institutional Excellence Guide clearly outlines the process of planning, tying allocation of resources to the process. It also establishes the link matching budget increases or reductions to an evaluative process. The financial resources of Northern Marianas College are limited but sufficient to support learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Resources are planned, budgeted and distributed so that the resources support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. *The College meets this requirement.*

18. Financial Accountability

The College undergoes an annual audit and makes available external financial audits by a Certified Public Accountant. The College submits its audit to the ACCJC annually. The College has received unqualified opinions on its financial statement in its last four audit reports.

Meeting this ER has been a previous concern. The College has in place a multi-level approval process for all purchase requests and contracts. Financial reports are distributed to each department regarding account status and encumbrances. Independent third-party external audits have resulted in unqualified audit opinions on the College's financial statements. *The College meets this requirement.*

19. Institutional Planning and Evaluation

The College evaluates and publishes statistics and other data on its assessment of student learning and achievement benchmarked against other similar institutions. The College has had in place since 2008 a thorough planning process designed to identify goals, allocate resources to achieve those goals, implement action plans, effect institutional improvements, and assess results. *The College meets this requirement.*

20. Integrity in Communication with the Public

The College publishes and makes available to students and prospective students an annual catalog which includes all required information. *The College meets this requirement.*

21. Integrity in Relations with the Accrediting Commission

The College provides assurance of its compliance with Commission Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and policies by publishing all accreditation reports and documents on its website. The College and Board have sustained efforts to meet Commission Recommendations over the past several years.

Meeting this ER has been a previous concern. The College makes statements several times throughout the Self Evaluation document suggesting that it has been unable to develop new programs to meet workforce needs as the result of actions by the Commission. Upon investigation of these statements, it was made clear that the issue was the College's inability to file a Substantive Change Proposal to add new programs while it remains in sanctioned status. The College was advised to engage in planning for such programs until sanctions are lifted. *The College meets this requirement.*

EVALUATION OF COLLEGE QUALITY

STANDARD I: INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND EFFECTIVENESS

STANDARD IA--MISSION

General Observations

The current mission statement of Northern Marianas College, as stated in the 1985 Amendment 38 to the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Island Constitution, reads:

The mission of Northern Marianas College shall be to provide the best quality and meaningful post secondary and adult educational opportunities for the purpose of improving the quality of life for the individual and for the Commonwealth as a whole. The College shall be responsible for providing education in the areas of adult and continuing education, post secondary and adult vocational education and professional development for the people of the Commonwealth (I.A).

This statement accurately describes the general purpose of Northern Marianas College and covers the programs it offers to the students and the community the College serves. The NMC Mission web page also includes the Institutional Philosophy, Educational Philosophy and Vision: College Commitments to:

- a. Students and to Excellence in Education
- b. Faculty and Staff
- c. Access and Diversity

The College offers an array of programs to its students: a Bachelor of Science degree, seven associate degree programs, four certificate programs and two developmental programs. It also provides continuing education and outreach programs. Some of the special programs offered include University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Adult Basic Education, the Community Development Institute, and others to serve the diverse population of the Commonwealth. Students are further supported through a wide range of student services including but not limited to Counseling programs, Career Services and Testing, English Language Lab and the Office of Student Activities and Leadership. These educational programs and services are in clear alignment with the stated mission of the College (I.A.1).

For-credit post-secondary educational services of the three main islands of the Commonwealth are delivered through the main campus on the island of Saipan. Currently, all of the for-credit educational programs are offered only at the main campus of the College. Team members visiting the Instructional Site located on Tinian confirm that the College provides GED, Adult Education programs, and seminars and workshops. Program activities are also provided through the federally funded Cooperative Research Extension Education Services (CREES). The Center staff also carries out recruitment activities at the local high school and provides College information to potential students. The CREES program is also active on Rota. While no for-credit courses or programs are offered on Tinian and Rota or via Distance Education, policies are being developed and are on schedule to be approved by the Board of Regents at their December 2012 meetings to deliver online, for-credit college classes and student services that will be accessible to students of Tinian and Rota.

Findings and Observations

The NMC mission states that it provides post secondary education and professional development for the people of the Commonwealth, but the College has been unable to provide reliable delivery of college online courses to its residents on the islands of Tinian and Rota for some time. Courses have been suspended in response to a 2007 Commission Recommendation and delivery of them has not been improved sufficiently to be reliably resumed. Given inadequate progress in providing for the higher education needs of this portion of the Commonwealth population, the visiting team found that the College was not meeting its stated mission. The team feels for-credit post-secondary education for residents and students of these two islands can be improved if more on-line courses and services can be made available in the near future. (I.A.1)

At the time of the visit, the mission statement of NMC was a part of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands. The Board of Regents (BOR) of the College, in recognition of its authority and responsibilities, requested the legislative body to make certain changes to the Constitution. The new language, recently approved by Commonwealth voters, amended the Constitution to restate the College's mission to read as the "Purpose of the College" and granted the Board the authority to enact changes to the College Mission (I.A.2).

In addition to the constitutionally prescribed mission, the College has created an institution philosophy which reads:

Respecting the human dignity and unique talents of each person, Northern Marianas College is dedicated to helping its students actualize their potentials for the enhancement of their individual lives as well as for the improvement of the Commonwealth as a whole. The College is committed to an on-going process of planning, assessment, re-evaluation, and improvement in all aspects of its mission.

The visiting team was able to ascertain, through examination of records and in conversation with College personnel, that there are extensive planning activities embedded into the activity cycle of the College. The main biennial planning and evaluation cycle of the College includes the assessment of programs and their relevance to the mission of the College. In this elaborate program planning and evaluation process entitled Program Review Outcomes and Assessment (PROA), the mission statement is constantly referenced. Two of the official forms that are primary tools used in this process are known respectively as Form 1 and Form 2. The first section of each of the forms begins with the official Mission Statement of the College as it is stated in the Constitution of the Commonwealth. The program statements which follow the Mission Statement serve as a reminder that the program and related activities are to be carried out in accordance with the stated mission of the College (I.A.3).

The planning and evaluation process, PROA, involves many levels of the College. This highly participatory process involves the many members of the College community in the various stages of the review cycle. PROAC, which stands for Planning, Program Review Outcomes and Assessment Committee, serves as the oversight body for this process. It carries out its work with the assistance of two standing subcommittees. One focuses on Academic and Student Services and the other focuses on non-academic programs and services. The established process of planning reflects the institution's educational philosophy that "the College is committed to an

on-going process of planning, assessment, reevaluation, and improvement in all aspects of its mission.”

The programs, after their recommended approval by the PROAC and final review and approval by the president of the College, are submitted for approval to the Board of Regents. Relevance of the educational programs to the stated mission of the College is referenced and documented throughout the process--from development, funding, and implementation to evaluation (I.A.4).

Conclusions

The College demonstrated that the mission statement of the College is used extensively for decision-making in the institution. A survey conducted during the College’s Professional Development Day in August of 2010 and a survey administered after a September Board of Regents’ training discussion the same year indicated that there is broad consensus within the College community that the PROA strategic plan employed by the institution reflected the mission of the College (I.A.3). The effort to request a legislative change to amend the Constitution of the Commonwealth, which governs the mission of the College, demonstrates the College’s awareness of the importance of the mission statement in guiding the current and future work of the institution. The College and its personnel actively engaged the public to advocate for this legislative change, and it was passed by voters of the Commonwealth in the November 2012 general election.

The College mission clearly includes service to all citizens of the CNMI; however, since suspension of Distance Education courses in spring 2008, the College has not provided a reasonable opportunity for residents of Tinian and Rota to access higher education. The College is not meeting its mission in this regard. *The College partially meets Standard I.A.*

Recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION #1: To meet the Standards, the team recommends that in order to improve access for residents of Tinian and Rota, the College make available delivery of instruction and services online or in person that are comparable to those provided at the Saipan campus (Standards II.A.1, II.A.1.a, II.A.1.b, III.C.1.c, III.C.1.d).

STANDARD IB—IMPROVING INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

General Observations

The Northern Marianas College uses its governance structure to effectuate a broad-based ongoing self-reflective dialogue to monitor its efforts to improve student learning. The Board of Regents Policy 201 stipulates that the Board receive annual reports on the performance of the College, benchmarked against comparable peer institutions, to assist the Regents in monitoring the effectiveness of the College.

On the College level, an extensive participatory governance structure helps to encourage wide participation from stakeholders within the system. All constituency groups are well represented on the major College committees. Institutional dialogues take place within the Management Team, the College Council, the Budget and Finance Committee, the PROAC, and the Academic

Council. Meetings of these groups take place on a regular basis. Ongoing discussion of student success and institutional effectiveness also take place on Professional Development Day, assemblies held during the academic year, and in Strategic Planning sessions (I.B.1).

Findings and Evidence

Between the 2006 and the current accreditation visit NMC has established a number of institutional goals. As a part of the 2008 Strategic Planning process, it developed four goals and twenty-eight initiatives. These goals were augmented by an Operation Plan which, according to the College Self Evaluation Report, organizes actionable items, identifies responsible individuals, establishes timelines, and specifies needed resources. The links between the goals and the operational plans were the subject of a Planning Summit organized in 2010 at which the entire College engaged in a dialogue to ensure that these initiatives would be actualized using the established PROA process. In 2011, the College convened another Strategic Planning summit which resulted in a set of planning goals and priorities for fiscal year 2012, developed in conjunction with the new president. The goal-setting efforts of the College were further aided by the White Paper developed by the new president in 2011, which guides the College's allocation of resources for fiscal year 2012.

The College convened another strategic planning process in October 2012. An outside consultant was brought in to assist with this process. Shortly before the arrival of the visiting team, a two-day College-wide strategic planning session was held. In meeting with the Strategic Planning Committee, the visiting team was able to confirm the wide participation of the College community in the different stages of planning and pre-planning up to that point.

The goal setting and processes of evaluation NMC has established appear to constitute a workable plan. The Self Evaluation provides detailed descriptions of the processes being used and the broad-based participation of College personnel involved in these efforts. The tools identified to carry out the evaluation and funding allocation processes appear to be fine instruments and should be tested to ensure their usability, and then fully adopted by the College. The Self Evaluation and the accompanying evidence and forms do not contain records of evaluative documents that have been used by the College. At the time of the visit, it was not obvious that the goals, objectives, or programs had been widely evaluated against explicitly stated measurable goals developed in prior years. The College appears to be making an effort to strengthen this area in the improvement proposed in the PROA process (I.B.2).

The PROA (Planning, Program Review, Outcomes, and Assessment) process, guided by the PROAC, is an elaborate process that seems to be well established at the College. It has led the College in Program Review discussions for three cycles, beginning in 2008. It has incorporated a timeline and Program Review forms. Forms 1, 2, and 3 are used as tools to assist the College in linking its resource allocation with its program evaluation process, and together provide for a comprehensive cycle of planning, review, and resource allocation. In interviews with College personnel it was pointed out that Form 3 information was particularly useful in prioritizing program funding when the College faced severe fiscal hardship in the time leading up to Fiscal Year 2012. The College has identified proper benchmark peer institutions and has completed an initial comparison analysis against the peer institutions in certain areas. In addition, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness has completed a Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory for spring 2012. These and other data collected by the College can assist the process of evaluation through

which the College can measure its progress towards the goals and priorities it has established through the broad-based dialogue conducted in the community. The College identified the hiring of the Director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, which was to be filled by late September 2012 as one its goals. The visiting team confirmed that a qualified new Director of OIE was indeed hired during the visit (I.B.3; I.B.6).

The planning process at NMC is elaborate and well established. The 2008 Institutional Excellence Guide clearly outlines the process of planning, tying allocation of resources to planning. It also establishes a link matching budget increases or reductions to an evaluative process. The document further describes the groups that represent different stakeholders of the College and their participation in a Shared Governance Model working in a participatory decision-making environment. The approval process for the creation of the Liberal Arts Associate's degree program serves as a good example of how the College made effective use of the process in the way it was designed to function. In this case, the academic department submitted the program for approval based upon the established PROA process. The proper governance groups of the College were engaged in the program approval process. The program was submitted to the Academic Council and PROAC for approval using the Form 2. A clear Program Description linked the proposed program to the mission of the College. The faculty of the department established Program and Student Learning Outcomes, aligning these to GE learning outcomes. At the course level, each of the courses of the program further identified its learning outcomes and matched these to that of the program. On this foundation, the program was approved and resources and funding were allocated to support the implementation of the program. The results and data from the implemented program were subsequently reviewed and evaluated and submitted to the College Management Team for final approval and incorporation into the annual plan.

The College is making a number of changes in its budgeting and financial planning areas to better strengthen the financial condition of the institution. These moves are intended to create a more strategic, functional method of allocation that will allow NMC to assign funding to each function which themselves are to be clearly linked to measurable goals and objectives in the short, medium, and long term plans. The president of the College has also assigned the Governance Review Task Force to revise the Institutional Excellence Guide to reflect changes to the resource allocation process (I.B.4; I.B.6).

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness currently produces a set of student achievement data which is used by the academic programs to integrate student achievement into Program Review. It also produces data on student characteristics, labor market demand, and student enrollment figures for each of the programs. These reports augment a number of institutional reports such as Key Performance Indicators Update and NMC Fact Book that are available to the public and are accessible on the NMC website. The College's plan to improve data collection and the effort to generate meaningful comparisons by measuring the College's performance against its identified peers will be helpful in the effort to improve its effectiveness (I.B.5).

One example of the effective use of the evaluative information in program improvement and development can be seen in the establishment of the LinC, Learning in Communities Program. This program, which makes use of the concept of learning communities with the aim of increasing student persistence and achievement, came about as a result of the evaluation of student success and retention data in the second cycle of the PROA process. It was noted that

students in remedial math programs were succeeding at a low rate. A proposal and detailed action plan was developed to address the issue and to raise the achievement rate through the learning communities approach, and to augment the linked courses in the program via the involvement of peer mentors. The LinC program was approved and funding was allocated to begin the program for the June 2010 to June 2012 cycle. A coordinator for the program was appointed and a Learning Communities Committee comprising representatives of Student Services and Academic Advising, respectively, the Dean of Student Services, the Dean of Academic Programs and Services, Faculty Senate, Academic Council, and Associated Students was formed. Evaluation of student success at the conclusion of the cycle indicated significantly higher student success rates in LinC courses in comparison to similar non-LinC courses.

Conclusions

NMC continues to refine the planning and evaluation mechanism it has developed and employed effectively to improve Student Learning Outcomes. The efforts to tie the evaluation of various programs to funding recommendations have resulted in tangible outcome improvement in the long run. In the meantime, the College is strengthening the evaluative elements of Form 2 to include more substantial data, evidence, and analysis, and to then use these as justifications for funding recommendations. The plan to include third party reviewers to assess programs adds further strength to the evaluative process. Form 2 submission will be assisted and improved through a more informative process so that the authors of the forms can provide useable information to assist PROAC with its assessment. The visiting team feels the current plan, though well implemented, adopted and comprehensive, may be too detailed and too time consuming to be applied consistently to all programs in two-year cycles. The team encourages NMC to explore changes to make the current plan more efficient so that the review process can be applied consistently to all parts of the College (I.B.7).

Northern Marianas College has developed a highly participatory planning and evaluation process to assist the College with improving its effectiveness in serving its students. Since 2006, it has created policies, institutional guides, and processes in order to improve student learning. All levels of the College have been given opportunities to participate in activities, committees, meetings and assemblies to become more informed and be more engaged in various parts of the College improvement plan. The new president, who assumed duties at the College in July of 2011, brought new energy to the institution and has pushed the College's coordinated planning efforts. The filling of the position of Director of Institutional Effectiveness will further aid the campus in streamlining and refining the planning, resources allocation and evaluation processes. These efforts will need to be continued diligently as this elaborate mechanism is being systematically implemented as part of the institution's aim to make continuous improvement to its services so that it can become an even more effective learning institution for the students and the people of the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Islands. *The College meets Standard I.B.*

STANDARD II: STUDENT LEARNING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

STANDARD IIA—INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

General Observations

Northern Marianas College provides a broad educational program that works in partnership with the community and is consistent with the mission of the college. The instructional programs are of strong quality and customized to meet the needs of the diverse student body served by the College. Evidence of this includes the following programs offered by the District (II.A.4):

- Bachelor of Science Degree, Education
- Early Childhood Education
- Elementary Education
- Rehabilitation and Human Services
- Special Education
- Associate in Arts Degree, Business
- Associate in Arts Degree, Liberal Studies
- Associate in Science Degree, Natural Resources Management
- Associate in Arts Degree, Nursing
- Associate in Applied Science, Criminal Justice
- Associate in Arts Degree, Hospitality Management
- Associate in Arts Degree, Business Management
- Associate in Arts Degree, Accounting
- Associate in Arts Degree, Computer Applications
- Continuing Education Program
- Short-term training programs
- Workforce Business & Industry training

The Cooperative Research, Extension and Education Service (CREES) at NMC relies on federal funding to assist in the fields of animal, plant, family and consumer sciences and environmental safety. The Adult Basic Education Program is supported by a federal grant and is another example of a program meeting the needs of the local community. Distance Education, which was suspended in spring 2008, has been since reapproved by the president and Board (May 2012) and involves a restructured alignment of course offerings and training. The reinstatement of Distance Education will provide access to for-credit courses and programs for the approximately 2,500 residents of Tinian and Rota. The institution awards degrees and certificates based on student achievement of a program's stated learning outcomes. A systematic process for new programs and courses is outlined in the "Procedure for Proposing a New Program or Course" (II.A, II. A.1.a, II.A.2, II.A.2.i, II.A.5). *The College partially meets Standards II.A, II.A.1.a.*

NMC ensures the quality of its programs and services through the Program Review process and the Academic Council. SLOs, PLOs, and Administrative Unit Outcomes (AUOs) are included in the Program Review process, and program effectiveness is assessed based on data analysis using Forms 1 and 2 of the planning process. Program Advisory Councils are also important resources for the College to maintain currency in different fields and to update courses (II.A.2.f).

The College now publishes a general catalog on an annual basis. Comprehensive program, course and faculty information can now be updated at each publication. The College website also includes all of the catalog information. The curriculum includes General Education courses with an emphasis on critical thinking skills and the promotion of lifelong learning. Transfer of credit, degree requirements, and articulation agreements are overseen by the Registrar's Office. The Liberal Arts Coordinator has formed a General Education matrix which is reviewed by the Academic Council and which articulates GE courses as they align to course and program requirements. Basic content and methodology are reviewed by the General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC). In 2011, NMC published a Program Guarantee Policy which validates the workforce training and entry level competencies to all local employers of students who graduated from NMC in science, or with the BA degree in Education (II.A.3, II.A.3.a, II.A.3.b, II.A.6, II.A.6.a, II.A.6.c).

The College uses English and math assessment for placement. Both pre- and post-tests are utilized to assess student learning. COMPASS (Computer-Adaptive Placement Assessment and Support System) will be tested in spring 2013. The institution validates effectiveness in measuring student learning by administering other assessments such as Accuplacer and Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). Documentation has been provided as evidence that the College has institutionalized the use of course syllabi and that all courses have listed SLOs. The End-of-Course assessment is used to obtain general student feedback about the course and instructor and to allow for course and program improvement. Course completion rates and student progression data are also used to determine if students are achieving the stated learning outcomes. The institution awards credit based on achievement of the course's stated outcomes and overall required contact hours.

In order to address the Clock-to-Credit-Hour Conversion Requirements, the College Council and Management Team are forwarding Board Policy 302, Policy and Credit Hour to the NMC Board of Regents for consideration (II.A.1, II.A.1.b, II.A.2.g, II.A.2.h, U.S. Department of Education Regulation 602).

Standard modes of instruction are utilized to meet the objectives of the curriculum and needs of the students. However, credit instruction has been suspended at the Rota and Tinian off-site locations due to complications in delivery. Regardless of the delivery mode, all academic programs and courses are reviewed. The Academic Council prepared a "Guide to Preparing Course Guides" that describes the process for establishing and reviewing new programs and courses. The Academic Council, in collaboration with departments, reviews course objectives and methods of instruction. Since 2012, the College has adopted a Staggered Course Assessment tool for the Academic Council to evaluate SLOs at the course level (II.A.1.b, II.A.2, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.d). *The College partially meets Standard II.A.1.b.*

NMC has been working on a college-wide process for Student Learning and Program Learning Outcomes. Department Chairs and faculty work together to create SLOs and course assessment. The College has identified General Education Learning Outcomes that are linked to Program Outcomes. Assessment tools have been institutionalized to create consistency on an annual basis. In October 2010, the College sent a team to California to attend the ACCJC Meeting and to obtain feedback on the Staggered Course Assessment. This is now a major tool to assess program and course SLOs. In spring 2011, the Evaluation Committee of Academic Council (ECAC) was formed to evaluate the Staggered Course Assessment. Staggered Course

Assessment, End-of-Course assessment, class evaluations, and Program Review are the major tools for evaluation. Continuous improvement is part of NMC's good practice for establishing measurable SLOs. Programs Reviews now include both internal and external data to assist with program planning (II.A.1.c, II.A.2, II.A.2.a, II.A.2.b).

Program and course development and evaluation are now part of the regular College planning process. Course assessments are occurring every two years. Faculty take the lead on improvement to courses and programs and changes in instructional materials. Department Chairs and faculty work together to ensure that course guides have the appropriate content and rigor. The Academic Council (AC) reviews course guides for both existing and new courses. In addition, the AC is responsible for ensuring appropriate breadth, rigor, sequencing, completion time, and learning comprehension. Program relevancy is determined by student and community demands. Faculty and staff utilize course pass and graduation rates as indicators of achieving outcomes (II.A.2.c, II.A.2.e, II.A.2.f).

Quality of instruction is also ensured by the Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC). This entails a systematic process of reviewing programs and services. New programs must be reviewed and approved via College processes and governance bodies, including the Board of Regents.

NMC continues to promote to the College community the importance of measuring outcomes as part of a comprehensive assessment program. This is evident by the regular interdepartmental meetings which take up discussion of this topic, as well as by related professional development workshops which occur. All organizational activities involve established quantitative and qualitative performance indicators (II.A.2.f).

The College has established a planning process that is cyclical and includes systematic evaluation of programs and services, improvement plans, and re-evaluation. NMC's operational budget is now linked with Form 3 which includes Program Review and budgeting. The College documents Board Policy 3008 & 3009 for both new program approval and program discontinuation.

Board Policy 3001 is based on Professional Ethics and standards of professional discipline. The institution has established a clear policy on student academic honesty which is listed in all major College publications. Codes of Conduct are a part of personnel contracts and student handbooks. Integrity and Ethics statements are detailed in the College Catalog. All other College policies and procedures are located on the College's N-Drive and website (II.A.3.c, II.A.6.b, II.A.7, II.A.7.b, II.A.7.c).

Comments on topics of Commission Interest:

- the institution's progress in developing Student Learning Outcomes, measuring them, and using the results of measurement to plan and implement institutional improvements:

Since the previous accreditation visit in 2006, NMC has developed and assessed Student Learning and Program level outcomes. The College presented documentation of 100 percent of courses and programs having Student Learning Outcomes. Assessment is in place for courses, support services, certificates and degrees. Interviews and other evidence validate that the results of assessment are used to make improvements, and the College can point to numerous examples

of course and program improvements resulting from implementation of Student Learning Outcomes. There is clear documentation of institutional dialogue through the various committee structures. Through the Program Review process, assessment results play a major role in decisions to increase student learning. After spending the past six years responding to serious recommendations from the accreditation team and ACCJC, it is apparent that there is a renewed spirit and college-wide support to meet institutional standards.

- the degree of institutional dialogue about student learning and student achievement as well as about institutional processes for evaluation and plans for improvement; evidence of a culture and practice that supports continuous improvement of educational quality and a focus on improving student outcomes:

The Planning, Program Review and Assessment Committee (PROAC) has become the clearinghouse for review of all courses and programs while utilizing assessment data in planning for improvement. Evidence validates that the results of Program Review are linked to institutional planning through Forms 1 and 2, and eventual resource allocation (Form 3). It is evident that the Program Review processes are ongoing (with programs reviewed every 2 years), systematic and used to assess and improve student learning.

Findings and Evidence

Northern Marianas College supports instructional programs that are clearly designed to meet the needs of its diverse student population and community, as verified by the Self Evaluation Report. There is evidence that the College leadership and faculty have demonstrated commitment and dedication to focusing on the instructional mission of the college. The institution utilizes delivery systems and modes of instruction that meet the objectives for student learning on the main campus. After review of Tinian and Rota island centers, it has been verified that credit classes continue to be suspended. Rota has no current staff assigned and Tinian has support from four NMC employees (excluding CREES staff). A small noncredit adult high school program with just ten active students is currently supported at the center Monday through Friday between 4:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. The Tinian facility has access to a Video Conference Room (VTC) that hosts community activities and provides access to meetings from Saipan. However, the video conferencing equipment is outdated, and the team observed first hand that it does not provide consistent, high-quality transmission. Stronger instructional ties need to be established with the local high school, and workforce training possibilities with the Dynasty Casino should be pursued. The College needs to research Labor Department Data and determine community workforce needs on Tinian and Rota, vis-à-vis their current job markets by 2014. Credit courses need to be easily accessible to these Commonwealth citizens.

Documentation verifies that since the 2006 accreditation visit, NMC has embraced Program and Student Learning Outcomes and how these processes link with institutional planning. There is a sense of collegial and coordinated efforts to work together on this area, as evidenced by program or departmental-level meetings, and Academic Council and Management Team meetings. There is campus-wide awareness and support of these efforts, which is evident in the documentation of 100 percent of courses having Student Learning Outcomes and 100 percent documented Program Learning Outcomes for programs. Faculty clearly take the lead in the development and evaluation of Student Learning Outcomes and course assessments. Interviews with Department Chairs validate the College Mission, intended SLO, means of Assessment/Success Criteria,

summary of Data collected, and how the results are used by departments in discussions about making related improvements (Form 1). Faculty play a strong role in linking SLOs to Program Level Outcomes. In addition, the following improvements to courses and programs are direct evidence of faculty expertise and participation:

- improvement of instructional materials for developmental classes
- revision of course guides (course outlines)
- implementation of SLOs at instructional level
- peer observations
- course linking
- changes in course prerequisites

Interviews with Department Chairs and Program Leaders verify that assessment, and inclusion of data in assessments, have also been areas of improvement. In reaching Proficiency level vis-à-vis the ACCJC Rubric, evidence has been verified that assessment is in place for all courses, support services, certificates, and degrees. Institutional dialogue occurs through the Program Review Process (PROAC, Forms 1 and 2). Interviews with Department Chairs and the Dean of Academic Programs and Services detailed the “records of dialog” and Forms 1 and 2 as evidence of departmental discussions on how to improve programs based on assessment results. As an example, the Business Department reviewed data on their overall decline in persistence and graduation rates. After extensive discussion, faculty developed a plan to meet with English and math departments and the local high school to discuss strategies to improve college readiness in these areas.

Comprehensive assessment reports are complete and documented through the Dean of Academic Programs and Services and Research Office. Form 1 includes course data. Form 2 has student success, persistence, and graduation rates embedded in the report. Evaluation involving the Academic Council occurs for programs every two years as part of the Program Review process. The Self Evaluation consistently stated and verified that College faculty used internal and external data to make adjustments to drive their programs. The College demonstrated use of comparable national and institutional data in prioritizing program needs when hiring for key positions. Interviews with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and College Researcher validate compliance with U.S. Department of Education Standards for Satisfactory Performance of Student Success. The College presented National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) data showing that NMC reached the mid range compared to similar colleges on the rate of associate degrees awarded, retention of full- and part-time students, and overall graduation rates. Institutional data on course completion rates, graduation data, programs, and certificates are part of the Program Review Process. The course post assessment test is a strong tool to measure Student Learning Outcomes and allows for faculty to improve instructional methods. The process of Staggered Course Assessment has been adopted by the College and allows for appropriate review and evaluation of each course. The College has demonstrated the ability to implement comprehensive, formal, systematic, and ongoing assessment methods for programs and courses based on Student Learning Outcomes as well as other standards of measure, meeting U.S. Department of Education Regulation 602.16.

The current Program Review process is complex. However, empowering the Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC) to act as the College-wide vehicle to

drive the planning process has significant support from the College community. NMC Form 3 is used to link Program Review to planning, budgeting, and resource allocation.

The Academic Council, in collaboration with departments, oversees all curriculum guides and course syllabi. Established procedures for proposing, developing, reviewing and approving new degree and certificate programs are overseen by the Academic Council. The Council meets on a regular basis, published the Guide to Preparing Course Guides and maintains documented meeting minutes. The Council is the governing body that oversees the delivery, administration and evaluation of all programs. Program Advisory Councils are active, and there is strong participation from the College community.

The College's catalog and website include a comprehensive listing of policies and procedures, and degree and faculty information. Consistent with the College mission, the College needs to be responsible for providing adult vocational education, post secondary education, and professional development for the people of the Commonwealth. NMC has limited vocational and occupational degrees; it is worth mentioning, however, that the Nursing Program continues to have a strong percentage of students passing the NCLEX licensure examination.

Final approval of new programs rests with the Board of Regents. Board Policy 4467 ensures the high quality of instruction and states that "Excellence in education is the prime function of the College." BP 3001 addresses instructional quality through continued evaluation at the course, faculty, and program level.

The Board also has an established policy to address program elimination and an exit strategy to ensure student completion of required coursework. BP 3010 addresses academic dishonesty and BPs 3001 through 3004 cover professional ethics and academic freedom.

Conclusions

Since 2006, NMC has demonstrated a sincere commitment to their stated mission of promoting quality and meaningful post-secondary and adult educational opportunities for the purpose of improving the quality of life for the individual and the Commonwealth as a whole. The commitment to student learning is evident in the support of their instructional programs and the provision of a variety of student support services. The library and other learning resources are consistent with the college's educational mission. The College needs to find a means to meet the needs of students on Tinian and Rota (II.A.4). *The College partially meets Standard II.A.*

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION #1: To meet the Standards, the team recommends that in order to improve access for residents of Tinian and Rota, the College make available delivery of instruction and services online or in person that are comparable to those provided at the Saipan campus (Standards II.A.1, II.A.1.a, II.A.1.b).

STANDARD IIB—STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

General Observations

Northern Marianas College offers a comprehensive array of student support services that are delivered through various programs and departments on campus. Student support services are made available to the general student population on the main campus in Saipan, and on the islands of Tinian and Rota. Services provided include student recruitment, admissions and registration, assessment, orientation, academic advising, personal and career counseling, financial aid, transfer assistance, and student health and wellness activities. Programs and services recognize the diversity of a student body that includes various language groups, diverse cultures (e.g., Chamorro, Carolinian), ethnicities, socio-economic statuses, disabilities, and learning styles.

Most of the student support services offices are easily accessible as these are located in Building I, near the center of the campus. The Student Services Division is well managed and led by a Dean of Student Services who reports directly to the College president and is a member of the Management Team. The programs and departments in the division each have identified a mission statement that is aligned with that of the College.

Student support services department and program directors, managers, staff and students meet regularly for the purpose of information exchange and to dialogue on student learning and administrative unit outcomes. Staff from the main campus in Saipan ensure that staff representing the islands of Tinian and Rota participate in dialogue through videoconferencing (II.B, II.B.1, II.B.3.a). Although for-credit Distance Education courses are not offered for students in Tinian and Rota at this time, students from these islands are recruited to attend NMC in Saipan and have access to the College website.

The College publishes a schedule of classes and College catalog that is accurate and current. Information includes requirements for admission, major policies affecting students, and locations or publications where other policies may be found (II.B.2.a, II.B.2.b, II.B.2.c, II.B.2.d). The catalog and class schedule are available in both print and online format. The printed schedule of classes also contains course descriptions that are identical to those found in the catalog.

Student support services are evaluated systematically through the Planning, Program Review, and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC). The PROAC consists of faculty, staff, students and administrators who review the processes by which departments and programs effectively assess and evaluate student learning and administrative unit outcomes that may result in recommendations for additional resources. Student satisfaction surveys (e.g., the NMC Registration Survey) and student engagement surveys (e.g., the Survey of Entering Student Engagement/SENSE) are distributed regularly for the purpose of identifying and assessing student needs (II.B.3).

The College is committed to providing students with an environment that supports personal and civic responsibility through active participation in student governance, campus clubs, student activities, and college committees. The Office of Student Leadership and Activities promotes student leadership opportunities for students by providing support for the Associated Students of

Northern Marianas College (ASMNC), and the Inter College Council engages student clubs to work collaboratively in support of efforts to promote respect for and understanding of the diversity on campus and in the community (II.B.3.b, II.B.3.d).

Counseling and advising services are focused on providing students with academic, career and personal guidance with an emphasis on helping students to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Education from the College, transfer to a college or university off island, and/or to earn a certificate of completion. Services are provided through the Counseling Programs and Services Office in addition to the Offices of Disability Support Services, International Student Services, and special programs such as the Federal Department of Education College Access Challenge Grant. Services are evaluated through a variety of means, including surveys and meetings in which dialogue occurs between members of various departments which provide services to students (II.B.3.c).

The College administers English and math placement tests that incorporate multiple measures. The English placement tests are web-based through Accuplacer and include an essay-writing component that is validated regularly by instructors from the Languages and Humanities Department. The math placement test is paper-based and has been developed by faculty in the department, and places students in pre-college and college level math. The College collects and assesses placement data on both the English and math placement tests regularly in order to adjust cut scores (II.B.3.e).

The College maintains hard copies of student records in the Office of Admissions and Records (OAR) and in the Office of Student Financial Aid. Electronic files on students are maintained in both offices and only appropriate staff are provided user names and passwords to access the PowerCampus system that houses student information. The records can only be accessed by College personnel with appropriate clearances and authorizations for access based on criteria that is consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 (II.B.3.f). Student support services are evaluated extensively by a wide range of administrators, faculty, staff, and students, particularly in the Student Services division. The primary means of assessing and evaluating student support services is through the Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC). Membership on the PROAC includes a gamut of administrators, faculty, staff, and students (II.B.4).

Program Reviews for each student support services department and program are submitted to the PROAC for consideration. The Program Reviews identify student learning and administrative unit outcomes that are measured by each department and program. Student support programs that participate in Program Review include Counseling Programs and Services, Career Services, Testing Services, Student Activities and Leadership, Financial Aid, and Admissions and Records (II.B.4). The College uses the Nichols and Nichols five-column template to assess and evaluate student support services, and program-level student learning and administrative unit outcomes (II.B.4).

Findings and Evidence

Northern Marianas College (NMC) is the only accredited public college that serves residents on the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. Since its inception in 1981, the College has produced graduates who have returned to the College as faculty, administrators, and staff. The

College has a significant number of employees who are strongly connected to it, and, as a result, they demonstrate a deep commitment and passion for serving the students at the College.

Faculty and staff who are associated with student support services demonstrate a keen dedication to serving the students at the College. Many of the faculty and staff firmly believe in the mission of the College and are proud of the positive contributions that it continues to make in support of the community. Administrators, faculty, and staff in the Student Services division demonstrate that they will work with each other collaboratively in order to support the students at the College. The College offers its students a wide array of support services that are aligned with the mission of the College. Student support services mission statements are clearly defined and embedded in Program Level Expanded Statements of Institutional Purpose (ESIPs), statements that provide effective and concise language aligning department and program mission statements with that of the College (II.B). The quality of student support services at the Tinian and Rota sites is similar to that of the main campus in Saipan, as staff from both sites participate in planning and evaluation of student support services through videoconference meetings with peers from the Student Services division in Saipan (II.B, II.B.1)

The College catalog adequately addresses general information, requirements, and major policies affecting students. Information on the College website and in the schedule of classes is consistent with that of the catalog. The catalog is published annually and is free to all students who participate in orientation. One minor improvement that may be addressed concerns the heading Community Programs, which is listed on the table of contents on the catalog website, but not on the hard copy catalog (II.B.2.a, II.B.2.b, II.B.2.c, II.B.2.d).

The institution researches and identifies the learning support needs of its students and provides services that address those needs. Student recruitment, admissions and registration, placement testing, counseling and advising, and orientation are evaluated through a variety of means such as external scans, surveys, assessment instruments, college research, student focus groups and Program Review. It is evident that ongoing assessment, evaluation, and dialogue are occurring to help the College understand the needs of students and to measure the extent to which student learning and administrative unit outcomes are being achieved (II.B.3). For example, the needs of incoming students to the College are identified through surveys associated with the College Access Challenge Grant (CACG), a community collaborative effort designed to increase the enrollment, retention and success of students who are Native Pacific Islanders and/or from low-income families in the Commonwealth.

The College provides students on the main campus 100 computers designated for student use in labs and classrooms for a student population of slightly more than 1,000. A new student email system powered by Google Apps for Education is in place, and library resources are accessible through the web. The main campus in Saipan is Wi-Fi accessible. Although prospective students to the College on Tinian and Rota do not have the same level of access to technology as students on Saipan, College staff on Tinian, and to a lesser degree on Rota, work closely with staff on Saipan through the Start Smart and Cash for College Programs to provide essential matriculation and financial aid information and support for incoming students and their parents and their families coming to the main campus in Saipan (II.B.3.a).

The College supports an environment that promotes personal and civic responsibility in addition to personal development. Students are included in faculty and staff development workshops that

enable them to better understand the importance of promoting a campus environment that is student learning-oriented. NMC students attended a National Conference on Student Leadership held in Atlanta in 2010 and the Office of Student Activities and Leadership, in conjunction with the Associated Students of NMC (ASNMC), sponsored a Student Leadership Summit designed to engage students to address campus and community issues. Moreover, students participate in a wide range of College governance committees as voting representatives, including the Academic Council, Budget and Finance Committee and the PROAC (II.B.3.b).

Every student at the College is assigned a counselor or academic advisor who works with the student throughout his/her time at the College. Degree-seeking students pursuing the Bachelor's Degree in Education are assigned to instructional faculty in the School of Education for advising purposes. The Academic Advising and Retention Committee was formed in 2011 to evaluate the provision of academic advising services linked to improving student retention and graduation. Although it has not met regularly since it was formed, it is meeting regularly again.

Counselor and academic advisor training includes an Academic Advising Handbook that focuses on the role of the advisor, an advisor self-evaluation, characteristics of a good academic advisor, and the impact of financial aid on advising. In 2010, academic advisors participated in the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) National Conference. Moreover, counseling and academic advising services are evaluated annually through the Program Review process (II.B.3.c).

The College is effective at promoting programs and activities that support an appreciation of diversity. In addition to supporting annual events such as International Cultural Week and Charter Day, the College employs a wide range of tutors from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds, including Chamorro, Carolinian, Chinese, Filipino, Nepalese, and Korean. In October 2011, the Academic Council approved a College Success Course (BE 111) to be required in all degree programs. The course includes a focus on communicating effectively with people from diverse backgrounds (II.B.3.d).

The College uses Accuplacer for English and ESL Placement testing and includes an essay writing component to measure writing skills and determine placement levels of students. Essays are evaluated regularly by instructors in the Languages and Humanities (L&H) Department. Accuplacer results are analyzed by L&H faculty for the purpose of monitoring cut-off scores. The math placement test is a department-developed paper-based test that places students in a range of basic math to upper level math courses. Math placement data is collected and assessed regularly by the math faculty. Multiple measures, such as Advanced Placement Tests, are used to exempt students from either English or math placement tests (II.B.3.e).

The maintenance of student records was addressed in a Recommendation to the College in a Special Visit Team Report (April 13-14, 2010). The Recommendation referred to an Eligibility Requirement under the title Institutional Governance and Accountability and read as follows:

Security of student records has been compromised. It was reported that the Board Chair received a copy of transcripts of students' grades. Several of those interviewed assumed this was done anonymously; others claimed that it was done by someone who should not have had access to student records. At least one Regent expressed concern about the security of student records. The College does not meet this Standard.

The Dean of Student Services is responsible for the security and confidentiality of student records. The College maintains hard copies of student records in the Offices of Admissions and Records (OAR) and Student Financial Aid. Student discipline, student grievance, and student complaint records are kept in the Office of the Dean of Student Services. Electronic records can only be accessed by College personnel with appropriate clearances and authorizations based on criteria that are consistent with FERPA regulations. Student workers in these offices are restricted from access to these records: They are not provided pass codes to access electronic files.

The physical storage of hard copy records in the Offices of Admissions and Records and Student Financial Aid are located toward the rear of these offices. Records are stored in file cabinets that usurp functional space in both offices. Records are secured after both offices are locked; however, several file cabinets storing records in both offices need to have the locks on the file cabinets serviced, as these did not function properly. The records in the Dean of Student Services' office are secured in a cabinet that is properly locked. Current physical storage for hard copy files needs to be expanded and a records management plan which includes provisions for the destruction of out-of-date records needs to be implemented. The Dean of Student Services is pursuing a Board policy that will be consistent with federal regulations and will enable the College to destroy outdated records, thus creating more functional space for the Offices of Admissions and Records and Student Financial Aid (II.B.3.f).

The College has instituted a process to assess and evaluate outcomes that are guided by the Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC). Program Reviews for departments and programs within the Student Services division which involve the assessment and evaluation of student learning and administrative unit outcomes have been conducted annually. Each of these departments and programs identify resource recommendations that are aligned with written outcomes that are forwarded to the College Budget and Finance Committee, which consists of a group of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. This committee prioritizes requests for funding that ultimately lead to the allocation of resources.

Student support services departments and programs have been effective at fully participating in Program Review, the assessment and evaluation of student learning and administrative unit outcomes, and generating a record of dialogue that has engaged faculty and staff across the Student Services division to address the multitude of outcomes that have been identified. Since November 2011, the Student Services division faculty and staff have met regularly to address this Standard. These meetings have engaged staff and students in an ongoing dialogue focusing on student learning and administrative unit outcomes.

Each department and program participates in Program Review and submits student learning and administrative unit outcomes to be measured annually. The College has provided evidence that outcomes have been clearly identified, prioritized, and measured, and response plans are in place to move forward in continuing efforts to improve student learning and administrative unit outcomes.

The 19 Actionable Improvement Plans identified within this Standard are listed as outcomes to be measured in 2012 and beyond by departments and programs within the division. The alignment of these Actionable Improvement Plans with planning, evaluation, and assessment

efforts in Student Services, combined with the ongoing discussions between members of the division that focus on student learning and progress in achieving unit outcomes, is impressive. It is evident that efforts are in place to assess and evaluate outcomes for the purpose of continuous program improvement and that dialogue is occurring regularly that addresses this Standard (II.B.4).

Conclusions

The College demonstrates that students are at the center of strategic planning, assessment, and evaluation efforts that focus on student support services and student success. Student support services outcomes and assessment efforts are well documented through the PROAC, and ongoing dialogue between departments and programs is occurring on a regular basis. *The College has met Standard IIB.*

STANDARD IIC—LIBRARY AND LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES

General Observations

Since the time of the last comprehensive evaluation, the library has enhanced its services to ensure student and faculty information needs are met. It has expanded its resources, improved accessibility to these resources and enhanced the physical environment. Tutoring is not currently offered through the library but, rather, via Counseling Programs and Services and the English Learning Lab. Computer technology on campus is readily available to students in the form of open access and course-specific computer labs, wireless internet connectivity, and rental netbooks, this latter service provided by the library. Noteworthy is the inclusion of a mandatory library resources component in NMC's BE111 College Success Skills course, and the related fact that this course has become a requirement for all College degrees effective fall 2012. This addition augurs well for future graduates' information literacy. It suggests that despite recent library personnel cutbacks, the College and library are acting strategically to institutionalize information literacy skill development among its student body, and in cost effective ways.

The library is actively engaged in the process of data collection, organization, and analysis for the purposes of continual improvement. Library personnel regularly obtain feedback on the library's effectiveness via student surveys and e-mail dialogue with College faculty. The library endeavors to be responsive to this feedback in an effort to improve its services. Library personnel aim to accommodate student and faculty requests for additions to the collections and work to align its acquisitions with College instructional programs. An example of the former effort is the provision of student printing services at the library. Results of student satisfaction surveys have been generally positive over the past four years. The library has also made strides in the direction of providing more access to its services, in the form of additional seating and study space. Furthermore, it has significantly increased the security of its collections via the effective use of private grant and Federal funding.

Library staffing has declined since the time of the last comprehensive evaluation, suggesting it may be difficult for the College to sustain its current level of service, much less make continued improvements to it. The current Director of Library Programs and Services is a Master's of

Library Science (MLS)-holder and at the time of this writing a search is underway to fill another professional librarian position.

Limited work has been done on establishment and assessment of meaningful Student Learning Outcomes in the provision of library and other learning support services (LSS). The library's Form 1 involves the following Student Learning Outcome: "Students will be able to satisfy their information needs when utilizing the library resources." The student survey data included, while helpful, does not capture student learning.

The reliability of online access to library resources is also a concern. The library online catalog, <http://library.nmcnet.edu/>, was found to be intermittently inaccessible, thus raising the question of the consistency of services. This is of course of particular concern regarding students enrolled in the College's Distance Education course offerings. The online databases are provided by EBSCO and have experienced no outages.

Findings and Evidence

The library endeavors to be responsive to student and faculty information needs and is engaged in ongoing dialogue toward this end. Hard copy purchase suggestion forms are available to patrons, and requests for additions to the collections may also be made via the library website. Library personnel also solicit this input at campus assemblies, at library services presentations and via e-mail announcements. In response to this feedback the library continues to purchase new materials for the collection. Donated materials are also incorporated. Library staff aim to align requests with the academic programs of the College. Weeding of collections occurs in order to maintain currency and to economize on space. Student satisfaction surveys are collected on a regular basis--each semester or annually--and deficiencies in library collections are solicited in this way as well. In keeping with a related Actionable Improvement Plan, survey content has recently been modified with the aim of better elucidating students' needs (II.C.1.a).

Limited library services are offered to residents of the islands of Tinian and Rota. A library facility exists among College holdings on Tinian, integrated with a computer lab. No physical collections are available with the exception of a small one limited to on-site use. No service exists on Rota, though plans to cooperate with the public library there were shared, to be implemented in the event the College successfully resumes educational offerings to this island. Limited learning support services are available to the few Adult Basic Education students enrolled on Tinian. This dearth of information access on these islands is a consequence of the College's suspension of instruction in these spaces. Air pouch mail service and internet-mediated library access are envisioned as viable options to serve residents of these islands when broader educational offerings are resumed (II.C.1.a).

The library provides ongoing instruction to users of library and learning support services. Library workshops are offered to specific classes on a regular basis with most activity concentrated in the fall and spring semesters. Introductory and more advanced sessions are provided based on user abilities and needs. A significant, noteworthy related development is the inclusion of an information literacy module in the College's BE111 College Success Skills course and the fact that this course has become a requirement of all NMC degree programs. Student satisfaction with library services is gauged via surveys, but limited Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) assessment of learned information competency skills is occurring. To better

meet this Standard, the library should strategize about viable methods of information competency assessment and implement the same. The BE111 course may represent a suitable opportunity in this regard (II.C.1.b).

The College has demonstrated commitment to the improvement of library services as evidenced by the strategic deployment of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to help the library upgrade its Integrated Library System (ILS). The new ILS was activated in January of 2012 and more accurate circulation data is being generated. The library has also effectively utilized other sources of funding to enhance its physical environment. A donation from the University of Hawaii allowed for the recent addition of shelving space. Aesthetic enhancements to the library were recently made via use of private corporate funding. Seating has also recently been increased in the library from an approximate capacity of 70 seats to 90. The library contains three Personal Computers and loans three netbooks to students on as needed-bases. Wireless internet connectivity is available in and adjacent to the library. Printing services have also recently been introduced, and usage of these is high. This service was introduced in response to student satisfaction survey feedback and is a fine example of data-driven improvement. Usage of all of these services is tallied. A change machine was also added to the library, in order to more conveniently allow students to make change to use the coin-operated copy machine. Approximately 100 Personal Computers are available in other labs on campus. Counseling Programs and Services offers math, English, foreign language and discipline-specific tutoring (ten to sixteen tutors), and the English Learning Lab offers developmental English students tutoring in this area (six tutors). Counseling-based tutoring is provided by trained Student Ambassadors. It is a concern that these extensively used tutoring services are entirely grant-funded, and it is uncertain what the College's plans are should the grant funding end in time (II.C.1.c).

The library offers online access to its materials and electronic databases via its online library catalog, <http://library.nmcnet.edu/>. Internet connectivity to this portal was found to be inconsistent, which is a concern for all library users, and most particularly those enrolled in Distance Education courses and students residing on the neighboring islands of Tinian and Rota. In-person open hours are sufficient and are adjusted based on data on library use and faculty and student feedback. The library offers an extensive array of materials, including an impressive archival collection (approximately 48,000 items) and the Pacific Collection (approximately 8,000 items) focused on Micronesia and the Pacific. Library services also include the Curriculum Resource Center (CRC), a discipline-specific resource for students of the School of Education (SOE). The CRC was previously located at the SOE, but the College strategically relocated the CRC within the main library in order to realize cost reductions and operational efficiencies, e.g., consolidation of three service desks into two. Also contributing to this service streamlining was the strategic use of construction monies; these were recently deployed to build a physical passage from the Archives to the main library, whereas previously these spaces were separated. It should be noted that SOE faculty and students have voiced concern that the newly located CRC work space is too small to meet their needs. Library staff are endeavoring to be responsive to this concern by allowing SOE students to also utilize space in the Archives (II.C.1.c).

Library personnel are much reduced since the time of the last comprehensive evaluation. Though the process to refill one lost professional librarian position has begun, it is suggested that the College commit to maintaining a baseline level of library staffing moving forward. An

Actionable Improvement Plan is in place to help in this endeavor, and this includes peer review staffing analysis to better justify requests to hire (II.C.1.c).

The security of the physical space of the library and its collections is an area of significant improvement since the time of the last comprehensive evaluation, and now an area of great strength. To ensure security for library materials, two sets of security gates were installed at the main entrances/exits of the library and corresponding security strips were placed in library materials. In addition, alarms were added to all emergency doors of the building and cameras were added around the library facility. An Actionable Improvement Plan specifies the intention to continue installing security strips on new items and to add these to the archival collections, while bearing in mind the delicacy of those historical materials (II.C.1.d).

The library has no contracts with external entities related to the provision of other Library services (II.C.1.e).

The library utilizes student satisfaction surveys to gauge the adequacy of library services and resources. It solicits faculty input on potential additions to its collections via e-mail, and solicits the same of all visitors to its website. However, limited evidence is available demonstrating how these services help achieve Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) (II.C.2). *The College partially meets Standard II.C.2.*

Conclusions

Northern Marianas College provides sound library services and support to students and faculty, endeavors to optimize and expand shelf and study space for students, and is committed to the improvement of its operations via strategic and data-driven decision-making. The library has prioritized the security of its collections via the prudent utilization of external funding. It is also active in the participatory governance life of the College. The successful insertion of an information literacy component into what will be a required course of all degree program graduates (effective fall 2012) is impressive and an accomplishment which should reap benefits for many years to come. Like other areas of the College, Library Services is struggling with much diminished levels of staffing since the time of the last comprehensive evaluation. This area will need to be actively addressed to best ensure continual improvement in library services. It is unclear, based on the evaluation of Standard IIC alone, how effective complementary learning support services (LSS) are, as there appears to be minimal coordination of these with the library (rather, they are the purview of other academic areas and Counseling Programs and Services.) Library staff provide workshops and in-service training designed to increase information literacy skills among students. The library should actively assess Student Learning Outcomes with respect to information literacy as part of its regular Program Review process. Inclusion of related, targeted survey questions is one suggestion in this regard.

The College is to be commended for making the completion of a College Success Skills course a required component of all degrees, and the related inclusion of a mandatory library resources component in this course (effective fall 2012).

The College is to be commended on the notable enhancements to the security of library holdings which have been realized since the time of the last comprehensive review. Private and federal grant funding was effectively utilized to bring about these security improvements.

In spite of a decrease in staffing, the library is clearly committed to providing quality resources to both students and faculty to support the curriculum. The library should be commended for this and for their successful efforts in incorporating information literacy into the curriculum. The library has found ways to both increase efficiency and enhance service to students. Examples of this include the consolidation of the education collection into the main library collection and replacing print subscriptions with online database subscriptions. Such actions demonstrate thoughtful consideration of the needs of the students and faculty and reflection on feedback provided. *The College meets Eligibility Requirement 16, Information and Learning Resources and partially meets Standard II.C.*

Recommendations

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

STANDARD III: RESOURCES

STANDARD IIIA—HUMAN RESOURCES

General Observations

The Human Resources Office (HRO), with involvement of department faculty, department chairs and deans, is responsible for determining the qualifications of applicants. Jobs are advertised through the College website, listservs, government agencies, private agencies and off-site media such as HigherEdJobs.com. The HRO checks credentials for acceptability of accrediting agencies and verifies qualifications of applicants and newly hired personnel. Non-U.S. degrees are evaluated by NACES members.

There is no mention in the Self Evaluation or materials reviewed during the visit of the College's minimum educational qualifications for teaching college-level courses. There are currently eight job openings advertised on the College website: five faculty, one librarian, one director and one staff position. The math/physical science position requires a bachelor's degree. The Nursing position calls for a Bachelor's in Nursing with a Master's in Education; a Bachelor's alone may be considered depending on qualifications and experience. The common standard for teaching college courses is a master's degree or the equivalent. The other full-time faculty positions advertised require master's degrees. While the degrees of adjunct faculty are not included in the catalog, the personnel files of part-time faculty show various levels and degrees for specific courses taught. Regulations are not in place for minimum qualifications, nor are clear equivalency guidelines and processes for their assessment. The Position Justification Form does not include a section for establishing minimum qualifications. There is a lack of uniformity in the determination of basic qualifications for faculty.

The College's full-time staff, faculty and administrators are evaluated on an annual basis. There are also End-of-Course evaluations for faculty. Evaluation forms provided by the HRO for all fulltime personnel identify and rate areas of responsibilities and participation. The employee and supervisor discuss recommendations for professional development or improvement in performance. Interviews with faculty revealed that the annual evaluations do not always occur. Since all evaluations are processed manually, results for the End-of-Course evaluations are not given to the faculty in a timely manner; instead they are provided months after the course has ended leaving no opportunity to address needed improvements prior to the start of the following term.

As part of the annual evaluation of faculty and administrators, the Program Review and Outcomes Assessment (PROA) included with the evaluation form rates participation and effectiveness in producing and assessing course and program Student Learning Outcomes. It also rates participation in supporting the SLOs for General Education. There is a professional development plan at the end of the faculty evaluation form.

The College fosters ethical behavior through a Board of Regents (BOR) Code of Conduct policy. There is also a BOR Human Resource Policy and Administrative Procedure relating to employee discipline. The conditions of employment include a statement on professional ethics. Additional policies address Board and employee conduct, and there are Board procedures for suspension and termination.

The Self Evaluation indicates that the College continuously evaluates the effectiveness of the number and organization of its faculty, administrators and staff to support its programs and services. The College uses Program Review and enrollment to determine staffing levels with the division structure organizing administrative and support staffing. They have also used peer data to benchmark departments and staffing needs.

The number of full-time faculty has fluctuated in recent years from a high of 47 in 2006 to a low of 24 as listed in the fall 2012 class schedule. It stands at 32 after recent hiring. However, because enrollment since 2006 has increased significantly, it is a concern that even with recent hires the ratio of full-time faculty to students is currently not at the levels the College considers sufficient. The College should determine and sustain a ratio that supports its programs sufficiently.

Personnel files show that the full-time faculty possess the degrees listed in the catalog. A sampling of personnel files of part-time faculty showed qualifications similar to those of fulltime faculty. The Self Evaluation underscored the need for full-time faculty, indicating that nineteen college personnel volunteered to teach and were identified as Additional Duty (AD) instructors. The files also showed the AD instructors possessed at least a bachelor's degree.

Policies and procedures are developed and circulated for feedback and comments via the College's participatory governance structures and processes. The policies and procedures are applied equitably and consistently. All new employees are given an orientation with an HR representative at which policies and procedures are discussed. There is mandatory sexual harassment training within the initial employment period. BOR policies and procedures are available in electronic form or can be accessed in the HRO.

The Self Evaluation states that "Board Policies and Procedures make certain that fairness is kept in all employment procedures." Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) training is conducted on an annual basis. An EEO representative accompanies interview panels to ensure the hiring process is non-discriminatory. There were no Actionable Improvement Plans in this area.

Personnel records are kept in a secured, locked area within the HRO, as verified by a visit to the personnel document room. Employees can access and review their records through a login process and service window in the area during business hours. There is one door into the room and the personnel specialist is positioned to secure the room. The log-in process works well and shows a good amount of use by personnel. It was explained that the possibility of a fire and/or a typhoon is the reason for placing electronic copies of records in a fire/waterproof safe within the records room. The Actionable Improvement Plans for this Standard are appropriate.

The College claims to foster an appreciation of equity and diversity through its Board policies. The College also offers diversity-related programs, services and events. The College provides EEO/HR Training for most NMC employees and those in positions related to hiring.

The College tracks and analyzes its employment equity record through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). This data is used in developing interview committee compositions and in determining salary equity. The HRO uses the data in recruitment efforts.

Although relevant policies and procedures were not listed in the Self Evaluation or the evidence documents, review of the complaint/grievance files showed very few complaints or grievances related to treatment of personnel. There were no Actionable Improvement Plans for this Standard.

The College provides many opportunities for professional development (PD), as evidenced by the documents tally of professional development activities over the past two years. The College grants tuition waivers for its employees, and there is a department budget for professional development. Faculty and staff can request specific activities and a professional development plan is included in faculty evaluations.

Professional development activities are offered by the institution at the beginning of fall and spring semesters. The College provided two documents detailing professional development activities, one through IT Staff PD and the other through Library Staff PD. Teaching and learning needs are identified through performance evaluations, and a section in the evaluation forms identifies a professional development plan.

The College evaluates professional development activities through a variety of means including professional development plans and several evaluation forms. Evaluation results are used for future PD improvements.

The College assesses the use of human resources through its planning and Program Review processes. The HR office is structured as a program and completes Program Review and planning processes as such. HR staff verified the office's relationship to the institutional mission and goals in the planning and assessment processes. The College uses its Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee and the College Council to determine appropriate staffing levels for programs and services.

Findings and Evidence

The clarity and availability of criteria, qualifications, and procedures for selection of personnel were examined closely during the visit. It was confirmed through interviews with HRO staff that procedures for recruitment and hiring are in place and consistent with Commission Standards. Despite statements in the report suggesting the contrary, College faculty play an appropriate role in the selection of new faculty. Already in practice, the newly proposed HR Policies make it clear in writing that there is an appropriate amount of time allowed to prepare and approve interview questions during the hiring process. Faculty, including the department chair, participate in both the initial and final interviews, and are present to observe teaching demonstrations given by candidates. However, criteria for selection of faculty are unclear, and it was difficult to ascertain the minimum qualifications for various disciplines. According to HRO staff, the College is working very hard to fill faculty, administrative and other key positions. While the team agrees that filling vacant positions is paramount, it must be done in accordance with the Standards. Relevant HR procedures are in development to complement policies, but as separate documents. They were presented to College Council and recommended for approval during the visit. The Actionable Improvement Plans are appropriate and may help to streamline the hiring process, but more importantly, the College must develop clear criteria for minimum

qualifications and apply them consistently to all hiring (III.A.1 and 1.a). *The College partially meets Standards III.A.1 and III.A.1.a.*

The evaluation process should lead to improvement. However, the lack of timely feedback from End-of-Course student evaluations of faculty is an obstacle to using this assessment effectively in the assessment-improvement loop. While the Actionable Improvement Plan should be implemented, the College should address timeliness and efficiency of student input into faculty evaluations (III.A.1.b).

The evidence reviewed for constructive input and feedback in assessment of faculty performance and Student Learning Outcomes did not detail discussion regarding performance or SLO assessment. However, professional development activities do involve SLO assessment and discussions. The Instructional Faculty and Employee Evaluation forms clearly indicate that the College meets this Standard. There were no Actionable Improvement Plans in this area (III.A.1.c).

The College is addressing the concern about the low number of fulltime teaching faculty via its current efforts to hire new faculty. Data show that nineteen full-time personnel were hired between May and October 2012, including eight instructors. With the recruitment of more faculty in progress, it is clear that the College recognizes this issue and is addressing it aggressively (III.A.2).

In general, there are sufficient administrative and staff personnel. The College hired a new Director of Institutional Effectiveness during the visit. The Dean of Administration position was created and filled internally partly to address the need for a Chief Financial Officer. The position of Director, Financial Services/Chief Financial Officer is being advertised. The College reported that it was recently offered to a candidate, but the candidate declined the offer. The position has been upgraded and the search renewed (III.A.2).

During the visit, new HR policies and procedures were being proposed and sent to College Council as a first step in the approval process. These policies were approved and recommended by the Council. The policies cover internal management, equal opportunity/nepotism, grievances, and whistleblowers. The College has in place procedures on ethics and code of conduct, recruitment and hiring. Procedures were in the process of being separated from policies, fulfilling a much needed change. There were no Actionable Improvement Plans in this area (III.A.3, III.A.3.a, III.A.3.b).

The personnel demographics reflect the student body except for gender in faculty. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) report for fall 2011 shows 27 full-time faculty, 21 of whom are men, and 6 of whom are women; the student population is about 60 percent female. The location of the College and the level of salaries and benefits have made attracting qualified applicants very difficult. Applicant pools are very small and not diverse. Nevertheless, the College should increase efforts to recruit for and maintain gender balance among faculty (III.A.4, III.A.4.a, III.A.4.b, III.A.4.c).

Faculty and staff reported that there are ample professional development opportunities provided. There were no Actionable Improvement Plans for this Standard (III.A.5).

The College plans and implements many professional development activities to meet the needs of its personnel. There were no Actionable Improvement Plans for this Standard (III.A.5.a).

There were no Actionable Improvement Plans for Standards III.A.1.d, III.A.5.b, or III.A.6. The College meets these Standards.

Conclusions

The number of full-time faculty at the College has decreased significantly over the past six years. There seems to be a high ratio of administrators/managers and staff compared to the number of students and faculty, especially teaching faculty, and 25 percent of the staffing is supported through federal grants. There is evidence of a significant effort to increase the number of full-time faculty and to fill key administrative positions. There were nineteen personnel hired this past year, including eight faculty. The College successfully hired a Director of Institutional Effectiveness, and the team was able to include the new Director in interviews.

There are questions about the qualifications of the full-time and part-time faculty. Many graduate degrees of College faculty are in teaching or education. However, included among the new full-time new hires this year are several with graduate degrees. The College is moving in the right direction with its latest hiring. There are additional concerns about the qualifications of part-time faculty. Each department identifies minimum qualifications for faculty, but there are no college-wide criteria for doing so. Rather this is done independently by the deans and has resulted in some inconsistencies in these qualifications across the College.

Faculty, staff and administrators are evaluated annually, and faculty are also evaluated at the end of each course. This is very frequent and perhaps the College should be commended for this. With only two-year contracts offered, perhaps the frequency is appropriate. The College should improve its timeliness in providing student evaluation results to faculty in order to positively use these survey results as intended.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION #3: To meet the Standards and assure the integrity and quality of programs and services, the team recommends that the College develop, and consistently apply, clear criteria in determining qualifications for faculty (ER 13, III.A.1, III.A.2).

STANDARD IIIB—PHYSICAL RESOURCES

General Observations

Northern Marianas College provides sufficient physical resources to support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness. The planning for physical resources is consistent with the planning for other resources of the campus and it is integrated with other College planning. The buildings are old, but are very well maintained. The staff and students take great pride in their campus, and while they look forward to a day when new facilities can be provided, they understand that the facilities they serve them well.

Findings and Evidence

Safety and adequacy of the facilities to support the programs at Northern Marianas College (NMC) are acceptable based on observation of the College facilities and grounds and relevant evidence provided. The College primarily uses independent contractors and vendors to maintain the physical resources of the College. College staff in this area is limited to managers and technical support staff. In conjunction with the contracted services, the staffing to support the facilities is appropriate and reasonable. The expense of outside contractors is charged to the Tuition and Fees Operational Budget, which is the more stable and reliable budget of the College compared to the Appropriations budget (described in Standard III.D). Consequently, it is somewhat easier to project and count on the resources used for the maintenance of the College facilities even though the resources are still limited.

NMC maintains approximately 125,000 square feet, including 31 buildings on its As Terlaje campus. In addition, the College maintains four buildings on the Tinian site as well as one building on the Rota site. The team visited the Tinian campus in addition to the main campus at As Terlaje. While the College was established in 1981, most of the facilities date to 1960 and were part of the island's first major health facility. Therefore, many of the structures are relatively old. Being built primarily of concrete block, they are sturdy and will last a long time if maintained as they are currently. The team observed that the facilities were clean, well maintained, and provide sufficient space to support student learning programs and services (III.B.1.a, III.B.1.b).

The structures provide adequate space and amenities for programs of the School of Education, Business, Distance Education, Nursing, Language Arts, Humanities, Sciences, Math, Health, Athletics, Social Sciences and Fine Arts. There are forty-eight classrooms and four labs on the main campus. Various buildings also provide sufficient space for Student Services and Administrative Services. There is adequate parking to accommodate the College community, including sufficient space for the physically disabled. The team observed that the College modifies facilities to adjust to changing program needs of the institution. Rooms have been enlarged to accommodate larger class sizes, programs have been moved to rooms that more appropriately meet their needs, and Student Services departments have been moved to provide more space as those services expanded.

The institution developed a Facilities Master Plan (FMP) in 2009 and has, despite very limited resources, been allocating resources to address the FMP and the programmatic needs of the institution. Most of the funding allocated for these improvements comes from special apportionments and grants restricted for particular uses. For example, restricted funds have been provided to attend to the repair of roofs and the installation of efficient LED lighting. A camera security system has been expanded to improve safety, and a well is being constructed to provide non-potable water to reduce utility costs. The FMP describes a ten-phase plan to address the needs identified in the document. The initial phase begins with addressing the needs of the School of Education, library services, and student climate (student center). The College estimates that the initial phase of the plan will cost \$27 million. No funds have been identified to address the initial phase, but over recent years the College has been able to obtain some funding to repair, improve, and adjust existing spaces (III.B.1, III.B.1.a, III.B.1.b, III.B.2.a, III.B.2.b).

The College uses a maintenance management system to manage maintenance work orders. In addition, the College manages a preventative maintenance program as outlined in the College's

Operations and Maintenance Manual. The facilities are currently sufficient to meet Standard III.B. The College has identified an Actionable Improvement Plan to secure funding to address the anticipated need for additional roof repairs and to fund the ten-phase plan to accomplish the needs identified in the College's Facilities Master Plan (III.B.1.a, III.B.1.b).

The College adequately addresses the safety needs of its sites by the deployment of a manned security force twenty-four hours a day. The College provides for escort-to-car service. As noted above, the College uses a surveillance camera system that has been recently expanded using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. There are currently 33 cameras on the Saipan site that also provide for the recording of activities on DVRs. The Tinian campus uses eight cameras. The Rota campus does not employ the use of cameras currently, but the site is regularly patrolled (III.B.1.b).

The facility plans of the College are linked through the extensive Program Review process that follows the Program Review and Outcomes Assessment (PROA) Strategic Plan. This plan includes priorities and initiatives related to physical resources. Building condition assessment and facility needs have been further addressed in the FMP developed in 2010. In addition, the College conducts safety and security surveys that identify facility requirements. The maintenance staff has worked closely with the Academic Council and deans to provide input as to developing the annual and long-term maintenance program and about selecting projects to be completed. In addition, the College addresses equipment needs by gathering requests and data from Program Reviews and including the aggregate of these needs in a composite report prepared by the Maintenance Manager, to be considered as part of the budget process. This was one of the College's Standard III.B. Actionable Improvement Plans and it has been implemented. The College has recently participated in a Strategic Summit to engage in open dialogue among a variety of College and community stakeholders. The facility needs have been part of this discussion as well (III.B.2.b).

Conclusions

The College meets Standard III.B.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION #4: To improve upon Standard III.B, the team supports the College's Actionable Improvement Plan to continue to pursue resources to fund its Facilities Master Plan and to address anticipated program needs (Standard III.B.1.a).

STANDARD IIIC-TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES

General Observations

The College's decisions about technology services, hardware, and software are made through a combination of department Program Reviews, the Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC), and the Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC). Recommendations are made to the PROAC and then moved on to the Budget and Finance Committee for funding approval.

The IT department is currently going through a transition period. It is developing a new Operational Plan, Policy and Procedures document, filling identified staff vacancies, and working with a new department leadership structure. NMC has embraced technology and is currently working on revising the Operational Plan that will feed into the Strategic Plan, which will guide the College. Current IT goals include improving the utility of information technology, implementing the student Information Management System, launching the online learning center, and continuing to integrate technology with student learning (III.C.1).

The College uses a variety of technologies to serve the College community, including Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (MOODLE), www.nmcnet.edu, and the Integrated Library System (ILS). The IT department has provided training in fiber optics, Microsoft, Cisco, CompTIA Linux, Data Cabling, ETA, Lilly, Fiber Optics, VMWare, PowerCampus, SAGE, and Xerox DocuShare (III.C.1.b, III.C.1.d, III.C.1).

The Self Evaluation describes a need for additional staffing, including a Director of IT and other qualified IT staff. Equipment upgrades, staff training, and enhancements have also been identified as needs in the report (III.C.1.a).

The NMC Database Administrator maintains systems updates and provides training in the use of PowerCampus, a student-records software. Google Apps for Education is used to provide e-mail service for students. Identified training is provided by the IT department (III.C.1.b).

A review of the evidence indicates that the IT department follows a clear College decision-making protocol. Several College committees and processes are involved in the decision-making process, including the Strategic Planning Task Force (SPTF), Planning, Program Review, and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC), the Program Review process, College Council, Academic Council, and the Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC).

Findings and Evidence

The Self Evaluation describes an IT department that is in need of leadership and policies and procedures. The College is currently beginning a search for a Director of Information Technology who will provide leadership in revising the IT Operational Plan, Policy, and Procedures. The Self Evaluation also mentions that as a result of restructuring, the Dean of Administration now represents the IT department on the Management Team and on the Budget and Finance Committee. The Dean of Administration is a direct report to the College president. The Director of IT Services position serves as a non-voting member on the Academic Council (AC) and that membership on the AC assures technological support. The Self Evaluation also mentions that the Director of IT Services was a member of the Budget and Finance Committee. This assignment provided IT leadership in College decision-making related to providing technology to support the mission of the College.

A common theme throughout Standard III.C is the need to update the IT planning and decision-making processes to ensure that the College is using an approved policy and protocol to make IT decisions (III.C.1.d).

Technology support staff, capabilities, and equipment are not adequate to meet the current and future needs of the institution. This deficiency is illustrated by the need to hire a Director of IT and the need to enhance current technology capabilities. The College does recognize that in order to improve technology it needs to ensure adequate staffing and provide training that is mentioned in the Actionable Improvement Plan. The College also mentions the need to revise its IT Operational Plan, Policy and Procedures in order to provide a pathway for a stable, robust, and modern infrastructure and delivery of IT services and resources. A revised IT Operational Plan will create a future IT environment that will allow for communication, learning, training, and data sharing (III.C, III.C.1).

The College also recognizes that the faculty and staff have widely varying levels of technology skills. The College acknowledges the need to increase technology training for all College constituents so that they become familiar with the latest instructional and operational technologies (III.C.1, III.C.2, III.C.1.d, III.C.2).

A review of the evidence also indicates that the technology support and capability for the Tinian and Rota campus sites is adequate to meet current needs. Reliable internet connectivity will need to be ensured for Distance Learning students on these neighboring islands, once that instructional delivery mode is formally resumed (III.C.1).

Conclusion

NMC is focusing on improving IT services and processes to ensure that technology planning is integrated with institutional planning. The College has identified several Actionable Improvement Plans that will provide IT services with a blueprint to move forward to improve college-wide technology services. Lack of trained staff and finances are limiting factors. As the technology needs on campus have increased, the staffing levels for IT have diminished, resulting in a lack of adequate planning, leadership and training in the department. *The College meets Standard III.C with areas for improvement noted.*

Recommendations

See RECOMMENDATION #1, Standard IIA.

RECOMMENDATION #5: To improve upon Standard III.C, the team recommends that the College complete its review and revision of the IT Services Operational Plan, Policy, and Procedures and fill identified IT staff vacancies with qualified personnel (III.C.1, III.C.2.a, III.C.1.d, III.C.2).

STANDARD IIID—FINANCIAL RESOURCES

General Observations

The financial resources of Northern Marianas College are limited but sufficient to support learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Resources are planned, budgeted and distributed so that they resources support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. The financial resources of the campus are managed

in such a way as to support the financial integrity of the institution and provide for both the short-term and long-term needs of the campus. The financial planning process has been integrated into the campus and district's institutional planning process (III.D.1.a).

Findings and Evidence

The College's financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Like many public institutions, the College depends on government sources of funds that can be volatile depending on the current state of the economy in general and the regional economy specifically. NMC is located on three small islands whose resources are heavily dependent upon the financial health of the Commonwealth which is itself dependent upon the strength of the local economy and support from the federal government. As such, the College faces a fair degree of uncertainty. Nevertheless, the College has demonstrated an acute ability to navigate and manage the institution's finances with integrity and stability.

Although the Commonwealth has experienced severe economic hardship due to the loss of the garment industry and a depressed tourist industry, the College has been able to sustain its relative level of governmental support. Enrollment has been increasing in recent years resulting in improving tuition and fee revenues. The management of the College actively pursues legislative support for the College. A proactive effort in recent years resulted in timely legislative intervention to increase the College's funding and to qualify it for federal stimulus funds. The College has formed a good working relationship with the legislature and provides the legislature with relevant data to demonstrate the value of the College and to promote the needs of the institution. The president provides the legislature with regular reports and informs the Board of Regents about current legislation at every regular Board meeting. The Board of Regents opines and takes a stand on all legislation that may impact the College and the educational health of the region. Maintaining a close relationship with government and politically elected officials has been a major point of emphasis to help bolster the financial integrity and stability of the institution.

Knowing that the financial stability of the institution is quite dependent on government resources, it is of utmost importance for the College to allocate resources in a manner that supports the educational program while maintaining an ability to adjust to financial and economic exigencies that may arise. The president of the College addresses this issue in her White Paper, and she instituted changes to the institution's decision-making process that sustain the linkage across mission, goals, Program Review, and both overall planning and financial planning, while addressing pressing current fiscal realities. Further, day-to-day operational matters as well as long-term planning have been enhanced by the recent hiring of a Dean of Administration, the establishment of Financial Status Reports and the assignment of additional review of financial plans to the Management Team (III.D).

The institution does examine its mission, but the ability to change the mission has been limited by the fact that the mission of NMC had long been embedded in the CNMI Constitution. A recent ballot initiative to change the CNMI Constitution gave the NMC Board of Regents authority to review and modify the mission. The initiative and relevant dialogue regarding the mission is demonstrative of the overarching importance of the College to the economic and social well-being of the Commonwealth. Having had the mission so closely associated with the

government has provided a practical impetus to the legislature to provide ongoing funding for NMC. In an era when the local government's revenue source has declined by 55% since 2006, maintaining a strong link between the College's PROA Strategic Plan and goals of the Commonwealth is very beneficial to the College and the students it serves. The College has created an External Relations department that engages in outreach and marketing efforts and also assumes responsibility for keeping the government informed about NMC. Governmental relations and active efforts of the College leadership to inform the legislature of the College's value to the CNMI and of its financial needs have resulted in the College maintaining a substantial level of financial support despite the entire budget of the CNMI being on the decline. Maintaining the strong linkage between the Commonwealth government and the College is critical for NMC in sustaining adherence to Standards of fiscal stability that permit it to address the institutional needs guided by the PROA Strategic Plan. It is evident from discussions with faculty, staff, management and legislators that there is a heightened awareness of the improved relationship between the government and NMC (III.D.1.a).

The College has been following its well-established processes for planning and budgeting which maintain a strong linkage between the two. The planning process is extensive and well documented. Since the arrival of the current president, the College has instituted a number of changes to enhance the current processes further and to ensure that plans are aligned with the fiscal realities in a timely manner. The president's White Paper is often mentioned as a catalyst for some adjustments to existing processes and decision-making. The president uses the Management Team, which includes non-management representation, to inform her of College needs and activities, and for her to inform the College of related decisions. Members of the Management Team are members of other participatory governance committees as well. The use of the Management Team and other adjustments to the governance process will be reflected in the planned revision of the Institutional Effectiveness Guide published in 2008. In addition to the governance process being adjusted, the College has made personnel changes to lead the implementation of a strengthened financial reporting mechanism and system to better inform the College community and decision-makers. The publication of Fiscal Status Reports (FSRs) provides management and financial decision-makers with relevant and timely information to better sustain the fiscal integrity of the College. One area of significant importance is the planned change of allocating resources from natural, or object, codes to the more strategic functional method. This is more in line with the programmatic emphasis of Standards and also provides better alignment with institutional data comparisons maintained by the federal government. This planned change should help the College improve upon and exceed the Standards (III.D.1.b).

The planning processes in place at NMC carefully examine the programmatic needs of the institution and proceed in a way that ensures that the mission and goals of the institution continue to be reflected in those plans. The nature of the process focuses primarily on long-range needs of the institution. The short-range needs are adequately addressed in the process of review instituted more recently by the president of the College. The process was instituted to ensure that fiscal realities and economic exigencies are addressed in a timely manner to sustain the financial integrity of the institution. Long-range planning is evidenced by the institution's Educational Master Plan, the PROA Strategic Plan and the Facilities Master Plan. Program Review focuses a great deal on long-term planning. The institution's long-term liabilities, such as debt obligations, health benefits, building maintenance and the like are incorporated into the plans of the institution. The ability to address some of these long-range plans, such as building

new facilities or addressing deferred maintenance, is tempered by financial constraints. Nevertheless, the College has demonstrated deference to long-range plans by allocating limited short-term resources to help address those needs. The Actionable Improvement Plans focus on identifying funding for long-term needs and demonstrate that the institution is aware of requirements to sustain its adherence to ACCJC standards. Short-term constraints have compelled the College to adjust its operations. The College has carefully examined the past few years' data and specifics regarding the minute details of operational costs of the institution. For example, the Dean of Administration could quote the cost of electricity per hour for operating individual offices and classrooms. Examples of operational adjustments that have been made include the increase of minimum class size, adjusting facilities to accommodate more efficient learning, completing capital improvements that reduce the use of electricity and water, cost sharing with federal programs, and the consolidation of common institutional purchases. The processes that are in place are iterative in nature to make sure that long-term needs are balanced by short period review processes, and that short-term adjustments are adequately reviewed by constituent groups. Before budget documents are finalized, they must undergo review by NMC's participatory governance structure (III.D.1 c. III.D.1.d).

The College has a dual budgeting process that aligns with the respective sources of the funds. One budget is the Operational Budget that uses the Tuition and Fees sources of funds. This amount has consistently grown in recent years, along with enrollment, and is currently about \$4 million. The other budget is the Appropriations Budget, which is funded from local government sources. This budget includes funding to support full-time positions. The latter budget is developed and submitted to the CNMI government for approval. It is this budget that requires the strong leadership of the College to advocate for the needs of the College in poor economic times. The leadership has been very successful in obtaining the support needed, and the funding required for the programs at NMC. The Operational Budget has become the budget that is used to cover any periodic shortfalls in the Appropriations Budget. In order to facilitate the interrelationship between the Operations Budget and the Appropriations Budget, the recently hired Dean of Administration plans to prepare the Operations Budget sometime before the Appropriations Budget. This sequencing will enable the College to better prepare to advocate for its needs, as supported by the Appropriations Budget. In this way, the College is improving the fiscal stability of the College.

The financial integrity of the College has been of considerable concern to previous teams and the subject of several Recommendations. The current team has examined the evidence to determine whether the College is adhering to matters of internal control and fiscal management to ensure that the institution can adequately address the College's mission, goals and strategic plans. A review of the College's independent audits over the past three years confirms that the College has no audit exceptions in recent years and that the audits are unqualified. There have been findings, even repeat findings, but they are not of the kind identifying a material weakness or a material financial adjustment. The institution addresses all findings, and in some instances requests and receives clarification and determination from federal agencies. These determination letters from the federal agencies have been communicated to the independent auditor. Personnel hires and position duty revisions have enhanced fiscal management. NMC has instituted various fiscal reporting improvements, is investigating the feasibility of acquiring a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, and has made operational changes to improve upon the College's high degree of financial credibility, accuracy and appropriate allocation of resources. The College's current fiscal reporting mechanism is thorough and timely. Evidence of the

effectiveness and timeliness of its reporting includes the fact that the institution has been able to make mid-year adjustments based on the accounting and reporting of revenue-to-budget variances. Such adjustments have included operational changes to reduce adjunct faculty expenses and utility expenses in a timely manner, and so sustain the fiscal health of the College (III.D.2.a, III.D.2.b, III.D.2.c).

The College's financial management of short-term and long-term debt as well as auxiliary activities, fundraising and grants, follows the financial management processes of its general fund, and those required of the donor agencies. The College does not take part in student loan programs and, consequently, there is no assessment or review of student loan defaults. The audit findings are viewed and responded to each year in a timely manner. In addition, the institution has sought several federal agency determination and clarification letters due to some of the independent findings. Appropriate adjustments to College procedures and policies have occurred as a result. An area of concern to the College is the current status of the CNMI's retirement program. Employees hired before 2007 are on the Defined-Benefit (DB) program; those hired after 2007 are on the Defined-Contribution (DC) program. The DB program has serious funding issues, which have caused some employees to retire or leave so as to immediately secure some money from the retirement fund. The situation has created a staffing concern, more than a financial concern, for the College (III.D.2.d, III.D.2.e, III.D.3.f).

The College has demonstrated its commitment to fiscal stability by maintaining sufficient ending balances and maintaining a positive cash flow. Evidence shows that the College Board of Regents maintains an industry-standard reserve policy that has been adhered to by the College. The level of fiscal reserve is 5%. Further, the policy of the Board is to add to the reserves each year and sustain them at a sufficient level as the budget increases. The College has an effective fiscal reporting and monitoring system that provides for effective oversight of all finances, including grants, auxiliary activities and externally funded programs. Contractual matters are managed through the Procurement and Property Management Office which follows the Procurement and Property Management Manual. Agreements are further reviewed by the College president, Dean of Administration, and legal counsel (III.D.3.a, III.D.3.b, III.D.3.c, III.D.3.d, III.D.3.e, III.D.3.g).

The College regularly reviews financial management practices and makes improvements accordingly. The Budget and Finance Committee regularly looks at improving efficiency and consolidating operational efforts to save funding. The financial management of the College and departments is regularly reviewed as part of the budget development process and also the fiscal monitoring process during the fiscal year. Further, the College engages an external audit of its accounts and records annually. The College responds to the audit and the audit findings in a timely manner and has demonstrated that some policies and procedures have changed as a result of the annual review process, such as changes in the procurement process, to ensure that College practices are even stronger than those required by federal agencies (III.D.3.h).

The College has processes in place that systematically assess the institution's use of resources and assess that such use is consistent with the financial plan. Assessment occurs on a regular and systemic basis at the program level as part of the Program Review and assessment process to ensure that program plans and goals are effectively addressed (III.D.4).

Conclusions

The College meets Standard III.D.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION #6: To improve upon Standards III.D and IV.A, the team recommends that that the College, in order to ensure clarity in the governance structure, revise its governance structures, and that the Institutional Excellence Guide be updated on a continuous basis as changes occur (Standard III.D.2.g, IV.A.2).

STANDARD IV: LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

STANDARD IVA—DECISION-MAKING ROLES AND PROCESSES

General Observations

Northern Marianas College has developed an inclusive participatory governance model after reviewing the results of a survey collaboratively developed between the Governance Review Task Force (GRTF) and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE). Recommendations of the GRTF led the president to enact recommendations in March 2012 to broaden the scope of participation by college constituents. This Task Force is in the process of reviewing existing governance committees that are defined in the College's 2008 Institutional Excellence Guide. Staff, faculty, and students participate in governance committees and on the Board of Regents as honorary non-voting members. In July 2011, the College hired its current president, who meets with managers and other participative governance groups.

The College communicates with College constituents through its website, e-mails and other College materials/publications and has included specific communication about its accreditation efforts on its homepage. There is a Board policy to evaluate governance and decision-making (Board of Regents Policy 200.1).

Findings and Evidence

Both Board of Regents Policy 200.1 and the 2008 Institutional Excellence Guide address the use of a collegial model for decision-making. Constituency groups of the College participate in its governance committees: the College Council, the Budget and Finance Committee, the Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee, the Academic Council, the Faculty Senate, the Staff Senate, and the Associated Students of NMC. Faculty, staff, and students demonstrate an active role in the participative governance process at the College (IV.A.1).

In 2011, because of concerns from the interim president regarding the lack of communication among College constituents, a Governance Review Task Force (GRTF) was convened. The GRTF collaborated with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to develop a Governance Evaluation Survey Instrument to obtain feedback from instructional faculty, non-instructional faculty, staff and students in the areas of democracy, transparency, effectiveness, accountability and mission in the College's governance committees. GRTF members report that the Task Force continues to meet to review the College's governance structure and to make recommendations for improvement in individual committee structures, membership and bylaws. To obtain input for these recommendations, individual Task Force members are assigned to sit in on governance meetings, talk to committee members and then bring feedback to the Task Force. Thus far, the GRTF has completed its review of the College Council and recommended both a decrease in membership from 22 to 11, to better reflect the college constituency, and a revision of bylaws. This restructuring has been approved by the Management Team and shared with the other governance committees. The Task Force will continue to meet to review the structures, purposes and effectiveness of those governance committees that have not yet been reviewed. The College stated in its Actionable Improvement Plans for this Standard that it aims to make governance body and committee meeting minutes available in a timelier manner and to update the NMC website. The visiting team found sample minutes from various governance committees;

however, the weekly PROAnews on the College's website has not been posted to since July 31, 2012. The team supports this plan (IV.A.1).

The governance model used by NMC is designed to direct communication through committees. The Management Team serves as the primary advisory body to the president on all matters pertaining to the College and executes decisions and procedures issued by the president. The College Council, which is the College's main participative governance committee, guides the participation of constituents in annual budgeting, strategic planning and facilities planning, and provides access to financial information. The Budget and Finance Committee is responsible for reviewing, approving and advising the president on all financial matters. The Planning, Program Review, and Outcomes Assessment Committee is responsible for accreditation, assessment and overall Program Review activities. The Academic Council provides assistance on course and program outcomes and assessments. Each of the major College constituents has its own representative committee: the Faculty Senate, the Staff Senate, and the Associated Students of NMC. The leaders of these groups participate on other governance committees and are responsible for both disseminating and collecting information to and from the groups they represent (IV.A.3).

In addition to their participation on the various governance committees, each of the Senates has an elected, non-voting representative (typically the president of each group) that serves as an honorary member of the Board of Regents. Board policies provide for these Honorary Regent positions for staff, faculty, and students: Board Operations: Honorary Student Member Policy No: 1003; Board Operations: Honorary Faculty Member Policy No: 1004; and Board Operations: Honorary Staff Member Policy No: 1030. Each of these policies states that each Honorary Regent has a one-year term, is to receive Board materials, and participates in Board discussions during Board meetings and on Board subcommittees. These Honorary Regents provide written reports to the College president, who includes these in her report to the Board. Honorary Regents cannot make or second motions, nor can they vote. However, it was proposed that the Honorary Regents have voting privileges and participation in closed sessions, extended to them. The Board of Regents considered and declined both proposals (IV.A.2).

The College has a 2008 Institutional Excellence Guide, which describes the participatory governance structure and membership of the committees. Faculty, administrators, students and staff are clearly included on committee membership rosters. The College reports that the Guide will be revised by the Governance Review Task Force. Recently, the GRTF, during its governance review process, developed a flow chart to visually show the interrelationships of the governance structure at the College. It has been reported that a draft of the flow chart has been presented to the Management Team for review but has not been presented to the Faculty Senate. There are faculty concerns that no current written documentation exists which reflects the revised governance structure at the College; in fact, it was reported that Faculty Senate goals include the Senate's need to look into the "no more shared governance concern [related to the role of Faculty Senate]." This concern surfaced several months after a written analysis (June 25, 2012) was presented by the GRTF in an effort to clarify the roles and overlapping of membership between the Management Team and the College Council. According to Task Force members, the GRTF will remain operational until all of the governance committees have been reviewed. The College reports that upon completion of all restructuring, the 2008 Institutional Excellence Guide will be revised to reflect the new governance model. The College stated in its Actionable Improvement Plans for this Standard that it will continue efforts to better define and

communicate the roles and duties of the governance bodies, effectively disseminate this information to all constituent groups, and evaluate proposals to implement standards for tenure and for rank advancement of faculty. The team supports these plans (IV.A.2.a).

An example of participatory governance having a direct role in College decision-making can be seen in the resource allocation process. The College has documented a modified budget process to improve the flow of information, and in turn improve the linking of institutional planning, financial planning, resource allocation and monitoring. Departmental staff and faculty determine a budget (prioritize funding) that links their Expanded Statements of Institutional Purpose to their yearly operational plans, institutional priorities, the PROA Strategic Plan 2008-2012 and the College mission. These same plans are reviewed by respective department deans, who submit recommendations to the Budget and Finance Committee, which then forwards recommendations to the Management Team, which then proposes a revised budget to the president. Revisions to the budget are routed in the reverse order to apprise groups of changes. Once the president approves the budget, it is submitted to the Board of Regents for approval. This budget document becomes the College's spending guide for the fiscal year (IV.A.1).

The College has developed 2011-2012 Goals and Objectives that align with the PROA Strategic Plan 2008-2012. It is the Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee, along with the College Council, that ensures that faculty and staff participate in program planning, review and evaluation, and that all units are represented in the process (IV.A.1).

The Board of Regents Policy 206 states that "All policies are to be discussed within the College's shared governance bodies, which will, in turn, submit input to the president for review and consideration." The Institutional Excellence Guide developed in 2008 contains definitions, clarifications, guiding principles, and descriptions and roles of shared governance groups as well as committee compositions and timelines. In 2012, the president enacted recommendations from the Governance Review Task Force that included promoting wider and more balanced governance participation, removing the president from all governance committees, and tasking the president with initiating planning efforts and then routing them through the governance process (IV.A.2, IV.A.3). The College stated in its Actionable Improvement Plans for this Standard that the 2008 Institutional Excellence Guide be revised to reflect recent changes made to the College's governance model.

The largest group of faculty representation at the College is the Faculty Senate, which provides routine input regarding policies, planning, curriculum, budget and other related issues. Faculty Senate leaders are also part of the membership of the Management Team (Senate President), College Council (Senate President), the Board of Regents (non-voting; Senate President) and the Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (Senate Vice President). Each faculty contract contains statements of faculty responsibility, which include the duties to develop and review the curriculum, as well as properly assess learning. The Academic Council (composed of Department Chairs) is responsible for overseeing the recommendation of curriculum issues (guides, syllabi, and course content, objectives, and delivery). The College requires that each faculty member assesses course completion and persistence by analyzing student achievement data. Faculty are responsible for using various evaluation methods for course-level assessment. Faculty use information from Program Advisory Councils to help assess whether their programs are meeting the needs of the community. In 2011, the Evaluation Committee of the Academic Council was created to review and evaluate the two-year Staggered

Course Assessment. The College recognizes the need to align the Program Review schedule with the academic calendar in order to allow faculty to participate more in the process. Faculty Senate members did express concern that decisions regarding class size were made over the summer when faculty are typically not on campus. The College did not state Actionable Improvement Plans for Standards IV.A.2.b and IV.A.3 (IV.A.2.b, IV.A.3).

The Self Evaluation stated that, in November 2011, the College president dissolved the Budget and Finance Committee; however, meetings with College representatives reveal that in February 2012 the College merely shifted the reporting lines of the BAFC from the College Council and direct influence of the president to the Dean of Administration, the College's chief financial officer. Further discussions with College staff revealed some confusion regarding the history of the BAFCs formal existence. However, it was agreed that this committee did not convene for a period of time. Membership structure of the BAFC includes faculty, staff, deans, directors and a student. The College is also relying heavily on the president's White Paper to provide direction in the management and allocation of financial resources. A new Financial Plan is being drafted, but no timeline was provided (IV.A.2.a, IV.A.3).

The College has included the reaffirmation of accreditation as Goal 5 in its 2011-2012 Goals and Objectives. A new Integrity and Ethics Board of Regents Policy 906 states that:

The Northern Marianas College and any individual or entity acting on its behalf shall exhibit integrity and subscribe to and advocate high ethical standards in the management of its affairs and all of its activities. This will include matters with students, faculty, staff, the Board of Regents, external agencies and organizations, and the general public.

In a 2011 presentation, "Communication," the president of the College addressed the importance of honesty and integrity in the College's dealings with external agencies and the Accrediting Commission. However, in the Self Evaluation the College indicates several times that its inability to develop new programs (including the creation of a 100% online Distance Education program to better meet the needs of Rota and Tinian students), and inability to meet workforce needs are the result of ACCJC sanctions. While the team recognizes that ACCJC sanctions at this time prevent the College from bringing forward substantive change documents that are necessary for new program development, it encourages the College to move forward with assessment and planning of these endeavors as suggested in several of its Actionable Improvement Plans. By doing so, the College will be able to move forward with implementation upon removal of Commission sanctions (IV.A.4).

The College provides information regarding accreditation actions and status on the College website. Also, the College has presented workshops for all constituencies, including the Board of Regents and students, in an effort to promote awareness of and engage participation in accreditation activities. The College stated in its Actionable Improvement Plan for this Standard its intention to promote increased awareness of the value and necessity of demonstrating honesty and integrity in dealings with external agencies and the Accrediting Commission by continuing to embed accreditation training in all biannual professional development workshops. The team supports this plan (IV.A.4).

According to the Institutional Excellence Guide adopted in 2008, the PROA-SP and the Ops Plan are reviewed periodically in order to confirm progress as planned or to report variances. The Ops Plan is monitored and reported on each quarter of the academic year. The PROA-SP is

reviewed and reported on annually, consistent with the academic calendar. In addition, it is stated that College Council and administration convene an annual planning summit. Review processes for other governance committees are not discussed in the document. In the summary section of the Guide it is stated that the Guide, in addition to the Planning Handbook, Budget Process Manual and SLOCIP, shall be reviewed on an annual basis at the conclusion of each planning cycle. Any recommendations for improvement will go through the governance process (IV.A.5).

The College uses a variety of evaluation instruments. For example, Program Advisory Councils are responsible for program evaluation; the Academic Council oversees and evaluates course assessment and instructor evaluations; PROAC evaluated Cycle 3 of Program Review in 2010 and took action based on recommendations; the Office of Institutional Effectiveness conducted a Governance Evaluation Survey in 2011; and various departments conduct student surveys. The College's employee evaluation system was implemented in 2005, and the College's evaluations are current. The Board evaluates its meetings on a monthly basis as stated in Board of Regents Policy 1024, Board of Regents Self Evaluation (IV.A.5).

The College's Board of Regents Policy 201, Monitoring College Effectiveness, stipulates that the Board of Regents monitors College effectiveness in meeting Board policies. Monitoring is to be done in a way to permit the Board to focus on planning the future direction of the College, its campuses and its programs (IV.A.5).

The previous visiting team observed a high degree of overlap in the membership of the major campus governance/advisory groups, which resulted in the formation of a Governance Review Task Force (GRTF). In 2012, the president enacted recommendations from the GRTF that included promoting wider and more balanced governance participation, removing the president from all governance committees, and tasking the president with initiating planning efforts and then routing them through the governance process. In June 2012, the GRTF released an analysis of the Management Team and College Council to clarify the difference between these bodies. This document states that the College Council serves as the representative voice of governance, deliberating mostly on policy proposals, and that the Management Team serves primarily as the president's cabinet, which executes decisions and procedures issued by the president. In addition, the document indicates that it should be noted that the Management Team is not a formal governance body of the College. The College stated in its Actionable Improvement Plan for this Standard that it will continue to evaluate the College's governance and decision-making structures and processes. The team supports this plan and advises that the College continue to clarify the roles and functions of its governance committees and clearly communicate these to all College constituents (IV.A.5).

Conclusions

Northern Marianas College has improved in its inclusion of faculty, students and staff in the governance of the College as well as in development of these processes. In addition, the College has focused on linking Program Review and outcome assessment to resource allocation. However, there is still work to do:

The 2008 Institutional Excellence Guide needs to be revised. It appears to contain references to Board of Regents policies that no longer exist and it no longer reflects the existing governance model of the College. Roles of individuals and committees need to be clarified and better

communicated to all College constituents. Despite the changes and improvements to the College's governance model, some members of the College community have expressed confusion about how decisions are made and how various constituencies participate in that decision-making. A complicating factor is the provision for Honorary Regents, which represent their constituent groups directly to the Board of Regents.

The Governance Review Task Force also noted that the Management Team is composed mostly of deans, directors and managers that report directly to the president. This group serves primarily as the president's cabinet, advising the president on decisions and procedures executed by the president. In contrast, the College Council, composed of representatives from the faculty, staff, students and administrators, has served as the representative voice of governance which deliberates mostly on policy proposals. The GRTF released a June 2012 analysis distinguishing the roles and functions of these two major bodies--the Management Team and the College Council--but the visiting team observed that confusion among College groups about these roles still exists.

The faculty expressed concerns about their level of participation in academic issues. Faculty are represented by Department Chairs at Academic Council (curriculum approval body) meetings. Faculty have expressed concern over their shrinking participation in the governance model revisions.

Recommendations

See RECOMMENDATION #6, Standard III.D.

STANDARD IVB--Board and Administrative Organization

General Observations

The Board of Regents (BOR) is a seven-member body appointed by the Governor of the CNMI and ratified by the legislature. Among the appointed members are a resident of Tinian and a resident of Rota, one from Carolinian descent and one woman. Three additional non-voting Honorary Members are each elected by the College's Faculty Senate, the Staff Senate, and the Associated Students, respectively, as specified in Board policy. The Board of Regents has responsibility for establishing policies through a collegial process.

The BOR has policies in place reflecting the intent to act as a whole once a decision is reached and the BOR's role to advocate for the institution and protect it from outside influence (IV.B.1, IV.B 1.a).

The BOR has established a number of policies consistent with the College mission. The policies address the quality, integrity and improvement of programs and services and supporting resources. The mission statement has until recently been part of the Commonwealth constitution, leaving the College unable to revise it as needed. An initiative to authorize the College to control its mission statement passed in a recent election. It is anticipated that the College will update its mission to better reflect the Commonwealth needs and better align with Accreditation Standards now that it has the authority to do so (IV.B.1.b).

Under the Commonwealth Constitution, the BOR is specifically empowered to “control the college’s affairs.” Board policy 1008 reflects that the BOR is responsible for the educational quality, legal matters and financial integrity of the College. Its charge is to “set the goals and general direction of the College, and to approve policies in pursuit thereof.” This Standard is addressed through the president’s written reports and oral summaries presented to the BOR on program highlights, student achievement data and peer comparison studies (IV.B.1.c).

BOR policies are in place stating the size, duties, responsibilities, and structure of the Board of Regents. Board policies are publically available on the College website. Operating procedures are contained in the same document with each policy (IV.B.1.d).

Policies are being renumbered and are undergoing review and revision. A six-year cycle for regular review has begun (IV.B.1.e).

The BOR has a new-member orientation program and presented a long list of training sessions that have been conducted to ensure the Board understands its role as a policy-making body. Board policy requires a system of staggered appointments by the Governor to ensure continuity in leadership (IV.B.1.f).

The Board has in place a policy for regular self evaluation. Best practices for governing boards was the topic of a recent training session conducted by reputable outside consultants. A self evaluation was conducted in November 2011 utilizing an instrument developed by a consulting firm. In addition, Regents complete a survey to assess each Board meeting and their performance during it (IV.B.1.g).

The Board has a conflict of interest policy, an ethics policy and censure rules for members who do not adhere to those policies. The code includes requirements for members to identify blood and other relationships. It also includes a prohibition on lobbying other Board members outside of meetings (IV.B.1.h).

The Board has participated in accreditation training sessions and development of the Self Evaluation and other required reports, and has provided input and other feedback that has been included in the reports (IV.B.1.i).

The College has had four presidents (two permanent, one acting, and one interim) since the last accreditation visit in 2006. The Board has policy and procedures for selecting a president and for evaluation. Also in policy is the delegation of authority to the president for the College operation (IV.B.1.j).

The president has control of the College operation and most decisions, excepting those which she has delegated to her administrative team. She oversees the planning and budgeting processes and the assessment of institutional effectiveness through College committees designated for that purpose. The president has organized the administrative structure to meet the needs of the College (IV.B.2, IV.B.2.a).

The president has continued with the planning process established by her predecessor. Evaluation and planning processes rely on a variety of external and internal data, and planning processes are integrated with resource planning.

College goals for 2012-2013 have been lifted from the 2008-2012 Strategic Plan and continued until a renewal of the plan is completed. This updating process began shortly before the External Evaluation Visit in a campus planning forum conducted by an outside consultant (IV.B.2 b).

The president is responsible for implementation of all statutes and polices and for ensuring that institutional practices correspond to the College mission and policies. She controls budget and expenditures through College committees designated for those purposes. The president communicates with the communities at large (IV.B.2.c, IV.B.2.d).

Findings and Evidence

The BOR offered several examples of working as a whole on behalf of the College. For instance, they have supported and been successful in advocating for the government to provide a larger share of its budget to the College. The president and members of the Board identified examples of successful efforts to protect the College from undue influence, including one example of an attempt to change the name of the College, a move which the College community opposed. The BOR was successful in advocating against the change. An instance when a single Regent did not at first support the decision of the whole was described, but upon other Regents and the president bringing attention to the matter, the Regent complied (IV.B.1.a).

The College president reports regularly to the BOR on a variety of data and institutional performance topics. Evidence presented suggests that the Board is aware of the performance of the College. Although the College is required to submit a report of its expenditures to the legislature annually, the Self Evaluation provides examples of BOR action taken to ensure the financial stability and integrity of the College (IV.B.1.c).

Board Policies #100.01 and 1008 specify the required structure of the Board of Regents. Operating procedures exist, although in some cases they are embedded in policies. The College is in the process of separating policies and procedures as part of the review cycle and has completed some sections. A list of policies to undergo this process was presented to the team (IV.B.1.d).

The BOR is working to act in a manner consistent with its policies. Several instances where the Board acted in a manner not consistent with its policies were identified during the evaluation visit. However, in each case the behavior was described as corrected once the Board was reminded to perform within its policies and role. For instance, Regents communicating directly with staff despite policy to the contrary was described as rampant a little over a year ago; now it is described to have diminished by an estimated 95 percent. The team supports the Actionable Improvement Plan identified by the College to ensure that the BOR continues to review and update its policies (IV.B.1.e). *The College partially meets Standard IV.B.1.e.*

While the Board has a provision for staggered terms, in actuality they are not presently staggered. The staggered terms have drifted as a result of delays in appointing replacement members who fit specific requirements. Although vacant some time prior to the external visit,

the seventh Regent seat was filled on the last day the visiting team was on campus. The team supports the Actionable Improvement Plan to work with the CNMI Governor to ensure staggered appointments (IV.B.1.f).

Although Regents expressed a clear intention to perform a comprehensive self evaluation based on the information gained during recent training sessions, one has not yet been undertaken. The current practice of the BOR completing an evaluation of each meeting is helpful, but there is a need to assess how the Board performs/functions as a body (IV.B.1.g). *The College partially meets Standard IV.B.1.g.*

Since the CNMI is a small community, there are many blood relations employed by the College. The Board avoids conflict of interest personnel decisions by not taking a role in the approval of such actions. Those decisions are primarily made by deans.

Although no examples of violations of conflict of interest policy where censure was applied were identified, a code to address this possibility is in place (IV.B.1.h).

Interviews with the BOR demonstrated that Board members have good knowledge of the accreditation process and concern that the College satisfy Commission Recommendations and meet Accreditation Standards. The BOR participated in the assessment for and development of Standard IVB of the Self Evaluation through an ad hoc Regent committee, were apprised of the report content throughout its writing and approved the Self Evaluation Report prior to its submission. In a meeting with legislators, they too demonstrated understanding of the gravity of the College's accredited status and evinced a strong desire to support the evaluation process (IV.B.1.i).

Through a variety of means, the president has taken steps to inform the BOR of its role as a policy-making body and its responsibility to avoid interfering with the operation of the College. Despite these efforts, there is evidence to suggest that the Board and the College community do not have a clear understanding of the distinction between functioning at the policy and procedural levels, respectively. The most obvious example of this misunderstanding is the long-standing, policy-driven presence of College employees operating at Board meetings as Honorary Regents. The Self Evaluation states that the Honorary Regents are elected by their respective constituent groups and charged with obtaining input on Board policy from these groups, some of which is supplied in writing and included in the president's report. However, the Honorary Regents also sit at the table with the appointed Regents and participate fully in discussion of policy issues. When the team interviewed the Honorary Regents, they stated their role was to advocate for their respective constituencies during Board discussion. An Actionable Improvement Plan states that the Honorary Regents should undergo the same training designed for Regents newly appointed by the Governor. While it is appropriate that the constituent groups have input into policies that impact them directly, that input is provided for through the various governance bodies described in Standard IV.A. The Board's role to represent the public beyond the College community is not widely understood. The minutes reveal that the Board recently entertained and decided against awarding a vote and participation rights for closed session to the Honorary Regents. The Faculty Senate is particularly supportive of the Honorary Regent concept and has advocated for both of these privileges. Upon observing a Board meeting, a previous team concluded that staff actions seemed to encourage Board micro-management. Taken together, these actions call into question whether the Board has a clear understanding of

its role as a policy-making body representing the public and how that differs from the role of the College and president to implement policies and operate the College.

Although the College has a number of collegial governance bodies and a stated decision-making process through those bodies, the existence of Honorary Regents suggests that the College Council does not truly act as the advisory group to the president. In discussions with the Regents, the Honorary Regents are expected to provide additional information directly to the BOR outside the decision-making path. Despite Board policy stating that the president is solely responsible for the operation of the College, staff and faculty serving as honorary board members offer a second avenue for advice to the BOR, one that bypasses the president. Including non-appointed Regents in BOR meetings and discussions has the potential to undermine the ability of the president to meet the responsibilities for which she is held accountable.

Even though the team heard that there is dissatisfaction with the policy to have Honorary Regents, no Actionable Improvement Plans regarding this issue were identified in the Self Evaluation.

The team supports the Actionable Improvement Plan to repeal policies that cross over into procedures and recognizes that these policies are in the process of being addressed (IV.B.1.j). *The College partially meets Standard IV.B.1.j.*

The president has delegated the responsibility for all personnel hiring, except those that report to her directly, to the administrator who oversee the area in which the hire occurs (IV.B.2). The team urges the president to take a significant role in hiring faculty and administrators to ensure consistent quality across NMC personnel (IV.B.2).

The College administration is organized to meet the needs of the College. However, of concern is whether the staffing levels are sufficient to sustain the College. There are vacancies in the positions of Director of Financial Services/CFO, IT Director, and the Admissions & Records Director. The team recognizes the aggressive efforts to hire qualified administrators, noting that the Director of Institutional Effectiveness position was filled during or directly prior to the visit (IV.B.2, IV.B.2.a).

With the exception of the implementation of Board policies in relation to the distinction of the Board and College roles in decision-making, the president has ensured that the College follows external statutes and regulations as required (IV.B.2.c).

There is evidence that the president participates in a variety of venues and interacts with members of the CNMI legislature. She is active in a number of community and regional organizations (IV.B.2.e).

Conclusions

The College meets this Standard with the exceptions of fully implementing a comprehensive Board self evaluation process and of distinguishing between the role and responsibility of the BOR to make policies and the president to have full responsibility and authority to implement and administer Board policies and to also be accountable to the Board for the operation of the College. By extending Board membership to staff and faculty elected by and representing

College constituents, the authority of the president is in question. *The College meets Standard IV. B, with the exception of IV.B.1.e, IV.B.1.g, and IV.B.1.j, which it partially meets.*

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION #7: To improve upon Standard IV.B, the team recommends that the College continue to update board policies, in particular, the board self evaluation policy, and implement this policy on a regular basis (Standard IV.B.1.e, IV.B.1.g).

RECOMMENDATION #8: To meet the Standards, the team recommends that the Board and the president assure that Board policies consistently distinguish between their roles, of the Board as a policy-making body and the president as responsible for the operation of the College, and improve the understanding of the College community regarding the responsibility of the president in advising the Board. Specifically, the team urges the College and Board to reconsider its policy of having Honorary Regents, who are elected to represent some College constituent groups, participate in direct discussion of policy issues during Board meetings (Standards IV.A.2, IV.B.1.a, IV.B.1.j).

STATUS OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS January 2007 – February 2012

ACTION LETTER February 1, 2012

Recommendation #3: *integrated planning*--To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standard, the team recommends that the college integrate financial planning with institutional planning and ensure that fiscal resources are adequate to support student learning programs and institutional effectiveness so that financial stability is maintained. (Eligibility Requirement 17, Standard III.D.1.a).

Integrated financial/institutional planning and maintenance of financial stability were priority recommendations in previous Accreditation reports. The previous team found that the College had partially met the recommendation, but that the program and budget planning nexus had become uncertain with the dissolution of the BAFC.

The College places extreme attention on integrating financial planning with institutional planning as evidenced by the policy, practice, and forms used in budgeting, financial monitoring, and making adjustments to account for fiscal constraints that occur through the academic year. It continues to use its Institutional Excellence Guide developed in 2008 as the key guide to participatory decision-making. The College's Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC) puts together composite reports to assist in the program decision-making process linking program need to resource allocation. The College adjusted its Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC) so that it might better respond to more urgent and relevant financial exigencies and to the President's White Paper. While planning places strong emphasis on program review and institutional dialogue regarding the needs that link to the institution's budget, the President recognizes the need to respond quickly and affirmatively to financial circumstances that may occur. The President, therefore, has adjusted the process to include the review of the President's Management Team to ensure that the day-to-day operational and fiscal needs appropriately align with the institutional priorities.

The College is committed to the adhering to its four-phase financial management process that emphasizes the linking of program and institutional planning to its financial plan. The phases include: 1-Planning and Interlinking of Plans, 2-Resource Allocation, 3-Program and Service Delivery, and 4-Assessment and Evaluation. The President is well aware; however, that these phases, in the context of a participatory governance structure, require significant time to accommodate sufficient institutional dialogue and the decision-making process as outlined in the College's Institutional Excellence Guide. Accordingly, to ensure that the financial integrity of the institution is not compromised, the President has instituted additional management processes that ensure alignment of plans with current financial realities. In short, the President recognizes that adherence to Standard III.D.1 must not result in failure to adhere to Standard III.D.3. ***The College has met this Recommendation.***

Recommendation #4: *financial integrity*--To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standards, the team recommends that the college assure the financial integrity and responsible use of its financial resources and ensure that the financial management system has appropriate control mechanisms and widely disseminates dependable and timely information for sound financial decision-making. The College must also correct noted audit findings (Standards III.d.2, III.d.2.a, III.D.2.d, III.D.2.e).

The College has responded to this recommendation by establishing a new accounting software system and financial status report. The College is endeavoring to share financial data in a timely manner, via monthly budgetary status reports, quarterly budget reports, and encumbrance reports, with and from its various constituencies. These improvements have allowed the college to adjust its budget and resource allocation processes. The College's internal control and compliance measures are examined via annual audits. These controls have improved continuously since 2007. A Dean of Administration has been employed is temporarily serving as the chief financial officer. The PROA Strategic Plan 2008-2012 shows a link between planning and resource allocation. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation #10: BOR role and conduct--To meet the Standard the team recommends that the governing board engage in training on the proper role and conduct of regents, general governing board relations and practice, college policy and Accreditation Standards and Commission Policy and adhere to its role in establishing policy and strategic-level decision-making; in accordance with its own policy (Standards IV.B.1, IV.B.1.b, IV.B.1.e, IV.B.1.j, IV.B.1.h).

In the Self Evaluation, the College lists a large number of training sessions that have been conducted since 2008 to ensure the Board understands its role as a policy-making body. Regents have also participated in training on Accreditation Standards and Commission policies from February 2010 to April 2012. The team observed that the Regents exhibited a good understanding of their role. The College should act to provide training for members of the College Community to ensure a broad-based and consistent understanding of the distinct roles of the Board and the College. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Supplemental Recommendation #1: CFO--In order to meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College expeditiously recruits a permanent Chief Financial and Administrative Officer while it formally reviews and specifies a process to monitor the Budget Progress Report as part of a collegial system of financial management control mechanisms. (Standards III.D.2, III.D.2.d, IV.A.2.a).

Regarding Supplemental Recommendation #1, the internal control issue and the discovery of unknown funds point to a weakness in the financial management system that limit the College's ability to make sound financial decisions. Information from the system is neither dependable nor timely. The recent dissolution of the Budget and Finance Committee, which the Self Study Report indicated played a central role in college budget processes, is a concern to the Commission. Therefore, the individual hired as chief financial officer must have government finance, and accounting qualifications in order to continue to meet Accreditation Standards (III.D.) and Eligibility Requirements 5--Administrative Capacity and 18--Financial Accountability.

The president has assessed the structure of the fiscal area of the College, has restructured the Chief Financial and Administrative Officer position into a Dean of Administration position, and has moved a current employee into that position. The President determined that current staff possessed the requisite experience, knowledge, and abilities to satisfy this Recommendation. The Budget and Finance Committee has been reactivated. The dissolution of the BAFC had been a concern of the previous Team and was noted in their Recommendation #3. Further, the Dean initiated the issuing of Financial Status Reports (FSRs) to provide decision-makers with timely financial information.

Although the College has received unqualified audits and there has been no identification of material weaknesses, the previous Team noted and the College President agreed that material weaknesses could develop or occur without the proper oversight and leadership to ensure that knowledgeable and skilled accounting and finance staff were effectively used to protect the resources of the institution. Since the hiring of the Dean of Administration, the College reports that there has been substantial improvement to assure the ACCJC and others that the Standards are met. Financial information dissemination has been improved.

To improve further upon the institution's response to the Team recommendations and to ensure that meeting Standard III is sustained, the College has committed to recruiting and hiring a Director of Financial Services/Chief Financial Officer to complement the Dean of Administration and strengthen the College's financial practices. Still further, the College has commenced investigating the purchase of a new Enterprise Reporting System to improve upon its system of providing an integrated registration, financial, human-resource data and reporting system.

One of the previous team's concerns was whether the College has adequately addressed the issue of repeated audit findings. There have been repeated findings previously with regard to some financial matters. None appear; however, to rise to the level materiality. Indeed, the College has sought and has clarification and affirmation of remaining in good standing with the federal granting agencies. A review of the past audits indicates that even those findings that have been repeated do not represent findings of material weakness, and the related amounts questioned are not material. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Supplemental Recommendation #2: *policy review*--In order to meet Standards, the team recommends that a schedule and process for the review of all College Policies be developed and implemented. The process should ensure participation by all constituencies and include a clear procedure for the development of Policies and the process for submission for Board Approval (Standards IV.A.2, IV.B.1.b-e).

The board has established a 6-year cycle of review of its policies and identified policies that are procedural in nature for particular attention. A list of policies with embedded procedures was supplied to the team during the visit. The College is moving quickly to review and revise its policies. Those revised to date are appropriate. The Board should promptly address policies that provide for Honorary Regents in order to assure that policy is in place to guide institutional understanding of governance roles. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

ACTION LETTER, June 30, 2011

Recommendation 1: *autonomy*--To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standards the governing board should exercise its authority to govern the college and protect the college from undue influence by the Commonwealth government including the government's ability to line-item dictate the college budget. The governing board should act autonomously to govern the college free from indirect interference by Commonwealth governor or members of the legislature; this will defend the college from the vagaries of changes in political power (ER 3, Standards IV.B.1.a, IV.B.1.c).

The College has taken actions to ensure that it has autonomy from the Commonwealth government. In 2011 the Board enacted a resolution affirming its autonomy (BOR Resolution 2011-03). The president and members of the Board have continued to meet regularly with members of the legislature and their staff to successfully advocate for fairly consistent funding

from the Commonwealth government despite a sharp decline in the total budget available. The Commonwealth budget acknowledges the president authority for College expenditures. Although the Commonwealth retains authority regarding the overall appropriation to the College, the current team verified again that it does not have line item or staffing control.

The team also verified that the Board has been protecting the College from undue influence. The Standard IV committee cited the example of the legislature forwarding a proposal to change the name of the College. Upon determining the view of the College community, the BOR lobbied successfully against the change. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation 2: following Commission policies--To meet the Eligibility Requirement, the team recommends that the college ensure that Commission policies are followed at all times and that the institution respond to Commission requests truthfully and accurately (ER 21).

This recommendation stems from actions of the previous president. The previous visiting team reviewed the steps the College had taken to address this issue and determined that it had been resolved. The current team found the current president, staff, BOR, and members of the legislature to be well versed in Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, and related Commission policies. They were well aware of the gravity of the current accredited status of the College and anxious to show their conscientiousness in meeting the requirements and satisfying all Commission recommendations. The only negative comment referring to Commission actions suggested that the College's inability to meet the employment needs of the community was the fault of Commission sanction. Upon investigation it became clear that these comments concerned the fact that the College cannot submit the Substantive Change Proposal needed to start new programs while it is on sanction. The College was advised to begin the planning processes for such programs in order to be prepared should sanction be lifted (See Standard IV.A.). *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation 3: integrated planning—This Recommendation was carried forward to February 2012.

Recommendation 4: financial integrity--This Recommendation was carried forward to February 2012.

Recommendation 5: hiring a CEO--To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standard, the team recommends that the governing board immediately initiate a search and hire a qualified chief executive officer (CEO) and ensure that the CEO has full-time responsibility to the institution and possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies (ER 4, Standard IV.B.1.j).

The BOR enlisted the services of a professional search firm that specializes in finding community college CEO's. The result was the hiring of a president with over thirty years in community colleges and extensive administrative experience including nine years as a college president prior to going to NMC. The president was offered and accepted a two-year contract, the norm for all employees of Northern Marianas College. The president's contract ends in June 2013.

The team verified that the president has full-time responsibility to the College and that the BOR has assigned and adhered to its policy delegating full responsibility and authority to her to implement policies and for the operation of the College. *The College has met this*

Recommendation.

Recommendation 6: *administrative staff*--To meet the Eligibility Requirement and Standards, the team recommends that the college ensure that the administrative staff of the college has the appropriate preparation and experience to provide administrative services; this includes the college chief executive. The governing board should delegate the authority to college administration to operate the college and hold the administration accountable for institutional effectiveness and for adhering to adopted policies and governance processes (ER 5, Standards III.A.3.a, IV.B.1.j, IV.B.2.a, IV.B.2.b, IV.B.2.c, IV.B.2.d, IV.B.2.e).

The team found that the College had been working steadily and rapidly to fill administrative vacancies. After a period of instability, the College has reached equilibrium with just a few positions remaining in the search process. Since the last visit, the College has filled the following positions: the President, the Dean of Academic Programs and Services, the Dean of Student Services, the Director of Human Resources/Legal Counsel, and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness. The College has restructured the positions of the Chief Financial and Administrative Officer and the Dean of Community Programs and Services into a new position, the Dean of Administration. The College is still advertising for several other key positions, including a Director of Financial Services/Chief Financial Officer and a Director of IT. The Board has been advised to review the practice of providing two-year contracts to administrators and faculty, especially to the president, in the interest of improving the internal stability of the College. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation 7: *broad-based planning*--To fully meet the Standards, the team recommends that the college restore ongoing, collegial, self-reflecting dialogue about the continuous improvement of institutional processes. The college should provide evidence that planning is broad based and offers opportunities for input by appropriate constituencies (Standards I.B.4, I.B.6).

The team found a planning process that is elaborate and well established. The 2008 Institutional Excellence Guide clearly outlines the process of planning, tying allocation of resources to the process. It also establishes the link matching budget increases or reductions to an evaluative process. The financial resources of Northern Marianas College are limited but sufficient to support learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Resources are planned, budgeted and distributed so that the resources support the development, maintenance, and enhancement of programs and services. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation 8: *faculty professionalism*--To meet the Standard, the team recommends that the college ensure that faculty distinguish between personal conviction and professional views and that information is presented fairly and objectively (Standard II.A.7.a).

Board policy 3001 Professional Ethics addresses faculty professionalism. Upon hire and at the beginning of each academic year, each faculty member is given a statement of Professional Ethics and Academic Freedom and Responsibility. In addition, college faculty are engaged in training sessions on professional teaching. Students are also asked to respond to three questions regarding the information presented and discussed in every course. Responses will be used for further professional development sessions. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Recommendation 10: *BOR role and conduct*--This Recommendation was carried forward to February 2012.

Commission Concern #1: *following Commission policies*--See response to Recommendation 2 above.

Commission Concern #2: *Tinian and Rota*--This Concern was carried forward to February 2012.

ACTION LETTER, January 31, 2011

Recommendation 1: *autonomy*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2011.

Recommendation 2: *following Commission policies*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2011.

Recommendation 3: *integrated planning*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2011.

Recommendation 4: *financial integrity*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2011.

Recommendation 5: *hiring a CEO*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2011.

Recommendation 6: *administrative staff*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2011.

Recommendation 7: *broad-based planning*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2011.

Recommendation 8: *faculty professionalism*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2011.

Recommendation 10: *BOR role and conduct*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2011.

ACTION LETTER, June 30, 2010

Recommendation 1: *autonomy*--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2011.

Recommendation 2: *following Commission policies*--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2011.

Recommendation 3: *integrated planning*--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2011.

Recommendation 4: *financial integrity*--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2011.

Recommendation 5: *hiring a CEO*--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2011.

Recommendation 6: *administrative staff*--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2011.

Recommendation 7: *broad-based planning*--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2011.

Recommendation 8: *faculty professionalism*--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2011.

Recommendation 10: *BOR role and conduct*--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2011.

ACTION LETTER, February 3, 2009

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

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

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

The PROA (Planning, Program Review, Outcomes, and Assessment) process is guided by a participatory governance committee, PROAC, with membership that includes an academic dean, five faculty, the Faculty Senate president, and representatives from Tinian and Rota. The College has followed this planning process for planning and program review discussions for three cycles, beginning in 2008. It has incorporated a timeline and program review forms and provides for resource allocation. Planning summits in 2010, 2011, and 2012 have included all campus constituents in an effort to develop and update long-term plans for the College. The PROA process is well integrated into the College processes and is working well. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

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

The PROA (Planning, Program Review, Outcomes, and Assessment) process, guided by the PROAC, is a well established College process which has led Program Review discussions for three cycles, beginning in 2008. Three evaluation and process forms, 1, 2, and 3, are used as tools to assist the College in linking its resource allocation with its program evaluation process, and together provide for a comprehensive cycle of planning, review, and resource allocation. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

ACTION LETTER, June 30, 2008

Team Recommendation 1: *planning processes*--This Recommendation was carried forward to February 2009.

Team Recommendation 2: *evaluating programs*--This Recommendation was carried forward to February 2009.

ACTION LETTER, January 31, 2008

Team Recommendation 1: *planning processes*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2008.

Team Recommendation 2: *evaluating programs*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2008.

Team Recommendation 4: *SLOs*--The team recommends the college complete the cycle of developing, measuring, analyzing, and discussing student learning outcomes, and acting on the findings, as part of a continuous effort of improvement. With regard to Recommendation 4, it is expected that the college will have achieved the Development Level on student learning outcomes as identified in the Commission's Rubric of Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness by the time of the Progress Report. (Standards I.B.1, II.A.1.a, II.A.1.b, II.A.2, II.A.3, II.A.5, II.A.6, III.A.6, III.B.2.b, III.C.2, III.D.3, IV.A.5, IV.B.2.b).

The self evaluation suggests and the team verified that the College has met this milestone and has kept pace with the Commission SLO timeline. The visiting team was able to verify through documentation that since the 2006 accreditation visit, NMC understands Program and Student Learning Outcomes and how these processes link with institutional planning. There is a sense of collegial and coordinated efforts to work together as evidenced by program or departmental-level meetings, Academic Council, and Management Team meetings. There is campus-wide awareness and support of these efforts which is evident in the documentation of 100 percent of courses having Student Learning Outcomes and 100 percent documented Program Learning Outcomes for programs. Interviews and other evidence validate that the College the results of assessment are used to make improvements (Form 1), and the College can point to numerous examples of course and program improvements resulting from implementation of Student Learning Outcomes. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Team Recommendation 5: *employee evaluation*--The team recommends the college implement the employee evaluation processes that are in place in a timely and formal manner in order to assure the effectiveness of its human resources and encourage improvement (Standards II.A.2.a, II.A.1, III.D, IV.A.1, IVA.4, IV.B).

The College formally evaluates its full-time staff, faculty and administrators on an annual basis. In addition, there are also end-of-course evaluations for faculty. Evaluation forms provided to the team for all full-time personnel identify and rate areas of responsibilities and participation. The employee and supervisor discuss and apply recommendations for professional development or improvement in performance. Since all evaluations are processed manually, results for the end-of-course evaluations are not given to the faculty in a timely manner and reduce their value in addressing improvements. The College should improve its turnaround time for providing results of student evaluations to faculty. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Team Recommendation 6: *facilities*--The college should pursue funding to renovate or replace aging buildings with facilities that are appropriate to meet the current and future needs of the college (Standards III.B.1, III.B.1.a, III.B.1.b, III.B.2.a, III.B.2.b, III.D.1.a, III.D.1.b, III.D.1.c).

The institution developed a Facilities Master Plan (FMP) in 2009 and has been allocating resources to address the FMP and the programmatic needs of the institution. Most of the funding allocated for these improvements comes from special apportionments and grants restricted for particular uses. The FMP describes a ten-phase plan to address the needs identified in the FMP. The initial phase begins with addressing the needs of the School of Education, library services, and student climate (student center). The College estimates that the initial phase of the plan will cost \$27 million. No funds have been identified to address the initial phase, but over the recent years the College has been able to get some funding to repair, improve, and adjust existing spaces. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Eligibility Requirement #5 Administrative Capacity: *sufficient staff*--The institution has sufficient staff, with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose (ER 5).

The president determined that current staff possessed the requisite experience, knowledge, and abilities to satisfy this recommendation. The Budget and Finance Committee has been reactivated. Financial information has been improved. The College continues a search for a Director of Financial Services/Chief Financial Officer who would report to the Dean of Administration, but the Dean has been assigned the responsibility of Chief Financial Officer. The position of Director of Institutional Effectiveness has also been filled. Remaining open is the position of Director of Information Technology. The College is planning to fill this position. The College is aggressively addressing staffing needs. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

ACTION LETTER, June 29, 2007

ER 5: *sufficient staff*--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2008.

Commission Recommendation 2: *BOR training* Commission Recommendation #2: The governing board of Northern Marianas College must undergo sufficient training in accreditation requirements of the ACCJC (Standards IV.B.1.f, IV.B.1.i).

The College lists an array of board training sessions in which the Regents have participated. The team verified that the Board members participated in several Accreditation training sessions from February 2010 to April 2012. In addition, new Board members are required to view Accreditation Basics as part of their orientation. *The College has met this Recommendation.*

Team Recommendation 1: *planning processes*--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2008.

Team Recommendation 2: *evaluating programs*--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2008.

Team Recommendation 3: *suspension of Distance Education*--The college should provide quality assurance for instructional programs at distant sites and instruction through distance modalities. If alternative means of delivering equitable access to quality instruction is not available when technology fails, the college should suspend distance

education at remote centers until new connectivity is established (Standards II.A.1.b, II.A.2, II.A.2.d, II.C.1, II.C.1.a, II.C.1.b).

In spring 2008 the College followed this recommendation by suspending distance education courses to Tinian and Rota. Unfortunately, now in 2012, the College has not established a comprehensive alternative method of supplying higher education opportunities to this segment of their population. Although the College has met this recommendation, new connectivity has not been established at remote centers. The College is not meeting its mission to provide post secondary education for the citizens of the Commonwealth. ***The College has met this Recommendation. See Recommendation 1 in the October 2012 External Evaluation Report.***

Team Recommendation 4: SLOs--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2008.

Team Recommendation 5: employee evaluation--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2008.

Team Recommendation 6: facilities--This Recommendation was carried forward to January 2008.

ACTION LETTER, January 31, 2007 (last Comprehensive)

ER 4: CEO--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2007.

ER 5: sufficient staff--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2007.

Commission Recommendation 1: Tinian & Rota discontinuation and access--Northern Marianas College must take appropriate steps to ensure that the delivery system used to provide instruction to Tinian and Rota is completely reliable and works at all times, or discontinue offering classes via telecommunications. The College must also detail how it intends to provide education services, including instruction and support services that ensure the education obtained on the Tinian and Rota sites is equivalent of that obtained on the main campus and meets all accreditation requirements.

The College reports and the team verified that it suspended academic instruction at Tinian and Rota in spring 2008 and has not resumed credit instruction since that time. Since the legal charge of the College and its mission state that the College provides postsecondary educational opportunities for the Commonwealth as a whole and for the people of the Commonwealth, the College must find a means to provide specific opportunity to the residents of these islands to access higher education. At this time, a small number of students (25) are recruited and move to the main island to attend credit classes. Although obsolete video teleconferencing units were replaced and upgraded on Tinian and Rota in 2012, the College reports that it does not offer credit programs on these islands. While the College describes its intent to offer programs "100 percent online" to serve students on Tinian and Rota, there is no plan outlining this action. The Board is scheduled to review and approve a Distance Education Policy in December 2012. NMC is exploring online and distance education platforms to deliver instruction. Equivalent instruction at off campus sites continues to be postponed. ***The College has not met this Recommendation. See Recommendation 1 in the October 2012 External Evaluation Report.***

Commission Recommendation 2: BOR training--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2007.

Recommendation 1: *planning processes*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2007.

Team Recommendation 2: *evaluating programs*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2007.

Team Recommendation 3: *suspension of Distance Education*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2007.

Team Recommendation 4: *SLOs*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2007.

Team Recommendation 5: *employee evaluation*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2007.

Team Recommendation 6: *facilities*--This Recommendation was carried forward to June 2007.