



**NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE  
BOARD OF REGENTS  
Regular Meeting of September 29, 2020**

**Minutes**

**I. Call Meeting to Order**

The regular meeting of the Board of Regents of the Northern Marianas College was held on Friday, September 29, 2020 in the BOR Conference Room, Saipan Campus in person and online (remotely) using the Zoom platform.

Regent Charles V. Cepeda., BOR Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. and called for roll of the members. Seven members were present and a quorum was established. Chairman Cepeda welcomed everyone to the meeting and also recognized Regent Michelle Lin Sablan who is the newest member on the Board of Regents and also thanked Regent Irene Torres for her continued service to the college.

**a. Roll Call**

Regents present in person:

Regent Charles V. Cepeda., Chairman  
Regent Jesse Tudela  
Regent Zenie P. Mafnas  
Regent Irene T. Torres  
Regent Michelle Lin Sablan

Regents present virtually:

Regent Elaine Hocog Orilla, Vice-Chairperson (Via Zoom, Rota Center)  
Regent Michaela U. Sanchez, Treasurer (Via Zoom, Tinian Center)

NMC College Staff/Faculty present in person:

Frankie Eliptico, NMC Interim President; Helen B. Camacho, Executive Secretary to the Board of Regents (Recorder).

Present virtually: Charlotte Cepeda, Dean of Learning and Student Success; Shelly Tudela, Interim Chief Financial Officer; Patricia Coleman, Interim Dean of CREES; Polly DLG. Masga, Human Resources Director; Raymond Muna, Prior Learning Assessment; Renedel Buno, Information & Technology; Jerome Ortiz, Information & Technology; Maria Aguon, Tinian Center Director; Manny Castro, Office of

Admissions & Records Director; Hedwig Hofschneider, Project Proa; Rachel Fusco, Capital Improvement Project Director; Dr. Virendra M. Verma, Scientist (Horticulture/Crop) CREES; Lisa HacsKaylo, Institutional Researcher; Arthur De Oro, Community Development Institute Director; Jesusa Atalig, Media Specialist III, Tinian Center; John Mithnoy, Administrative Assistant III, Information & Technology; Tayna Belyeu-Camacho, Program Lead-Family, Youth and Community Development. CREES; Geraldine Rodgers, Assessment Specialist, Office of Institutional Effectiveness; Michael Ogo, Aquaculture Extension Agent, CREES; Polly Omechelang, Extension Aide II; Dr. Randy Yates, Associate Professor, SPED; Joaquin Deleon Guerrero, Extension Aide III, CREES; Neda Deleon Guerrero, Career Office Manager; Dr. Laura Taylor, Associate Professor, SMHA; Charlene Masiwemai, School of Education Faculty; Viktoria Buniag, Research Assistant II (Aquaculture), CREES; Dr. Yunzi Zhang, School of Business Faculty; Becky Sablan, Executive Secretary to the President.

Others present virtually:

Tiberius Mocanu; BOR Legal Counsel; Mark Scoggins, NMC Legal Counsel; Justine Nauta; Allen Perez; Marites Yumul.

**b. Review and Adoption of Agenda**

**Action:** Regent Torres motioned to adopt the agenda, seconded by Regent Tudela. All members voted yes, the motion carried. The agenda was approved with no changes.

**c. Review and Adoption of Minutes**

The following minutes were submitted for review and approval:

- 1) December 12, 2019 regular meeting  
**Action:** Regent Torres motioned to adopt the minutes, seconded by Regent Sablan. All members voted yes, the motion carried.
- 2) February 14, 2020 special meeting  
**Action:** Regent Tudela motioned to adopt the minutes, seconded by Regent Torres. All members voted yes, the motion carried.
- 3) February 27, 2020 special meeting  
**Action:** Regent Mafnas motioned to adopt the minutes, seconded by Regent Torres. All members voted yes, the motion carried.

The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously approved and Chairman Cepeda moved on to the next item on the agenda.

**II. Public Comment Period**

Individuals may orally testify on items on the agenda during the Public Comment Period. Written testimony is also accepted. Oral testimonies are limited to five (5) minutes. - None.

**III. NMC Executive Reports**

a. Finance Committee

The operations budget for Fiscal Year 2021 was shared with the finance committee where in their meeting led by Regent Tudela discussed the line items of the budget. The committee is ready to make its recommendation to the full board.

b. Audit Committee

None.

c. Human Resources Committee

Regent Sanchez informed the board that the committee met on Friday, September 25, 2020. The committee met and discussed Board Policy No. 5012 - Personnel: Furlough, Layoff and Reduction-in-Force. The committee is ready to make its recommendation.

d. Regent Nominating Committee

None.

e. Program Committee

None.

**IV. Old Business**

a. Tinian Leadership Request (NMC Property)

IP Frankie informed the board that this request was submitted by the Tinian Leadership. The request is for a parcel of land at the NMC Tinian Center that is currently being utilized for the NMC CREES Experiment Station.

Patty Coleman, Interim Dean of CREES provided an overview of the request. She indicated that the request came from the Tinian Mayors' Office for NMC to relinquish 5,000 square meters of land back to the Department of Public Lands (DPL). The primary purpose for the request is to build a new Civic Center. She went on to say that when Phase I of the project was completed, Typhoon Yutu came and knocked it down. In the last few months, the experiment station had undergone renovations and then the request came in from the Mayor's Office. A copy of the masterplan was shared with the board. Patty added that although the college acknowledges the needs of the Tinian Municipality, the college is seeking for the boards consideration in this matter and makes the following recommendation:

NMCs Recommendation:

- CREES' plans to provide programming to the Tinian community and infrastructure upgrades to the Tinian Experiment Station.
- CREES' animal husbandry (e.g. animal odors) effect the ambiance of the Veteran's Cemetery
- Consideration of Alternate Sites in Exchange
- Consideration of Reduction of Size

In response to a question from Regent Tudela, IP Frankie and Patty Coleman confirmed that there are no permanent structures presently on the parcel of land that is being requested. Regent Mafnas also asked about the impact this would have on the federal funds that the college received for the experiment station. Patty Coleman explained that the college does provide assurances to the funders that the land indisputably belongs to the college.

Chairman Cepeda asked if there is a possibility of identifying a different parcel of land. IP Frankie said that there has been mention but there hasn't been any confirmation of an offer in exchange for the property. Regent Sanchez asked the board to consider the request and also invited the board to do a site visit on Tinian. On the other hand, Regent Tudela noted a concern on how the parcel of land would be surveyed and allotted. He asked for legal counsel's interpretation of the proposal. Regent Torres described the process that the Department of Public Lands uses to amend a land designation and how it is a lengthy process.

Regent Orilla, BOR Vice-Chairperson shared her thoughts on the matter and explained that although she supports the request from the Tinian leadership she would like to see the following considerations:

- 1) Land distribution from 30,000sq. meters to 25,000sq. occurs legally and a land exchange is identified for NMC.
- 2) Ensure that NMC will not be faulted by the federal government for the projects in the event the property is transferred over to the Tinian Municipality.

Patty Coleman responded to a question from Regent Mafnas that an extension was requested and granted by the grantor primarily due to the COVID-19 situation. She also confirmed that if the exchange does not happen in a timely manner that there would be a possibility that the college would have to return some of the funding associated with the plan upgrades for the Tinian experiment station.

Regent Tudela recommended a plan of action as follows:

- 1) Obtain the Deed from the Department of Public Lands
- 2) Negotiate with the Tinian Leadership
- 3) Approve the exchange

After much discussion, the board requested IP Frankie to work with the Tinian Leadership on this matter. Chairman Cepeda called for a motion as follows:

**Action:** Regent Torres motioned to authorize Interim President Elitptico to enter into negotiations with the Tinian Leadership and Department of Public lands in regards to the letter dated November 19, 2019, seconded by Regent Tudela. All members voted yes, the motion carried.

#### b. Presidential Search Update

Interim President Eliptico recited the board resolution for the presidential search. A copy of the resolution was shared with the board. In summary, the presidential search process will follow the following:

- Declaration of a vacancy of the position of President
- Development of a succession plan
- Development and update of the job description
  1. Minimum education and experience
  2. Minimum professional qualifications
- Description of Duties
- Methods of evaluation
- Compensation & Benefits and other required documents
- Development of a detailed ad for publication
- Identify methods of advertising
- Establish the Presidential Search Timeline

Regent Sablan and Regent Orilla thanked IP Frankie for all his hard work and dedication to the college. Regent Orilla said that because this a big responsibility for the board, the board owes it to the college to move forward with the presidential search and perhaps they should discuss the timeline and composition of the search committee at its next meeting.

After much discussion, the board took the following action:

**Action:** Regent Torres motioned to adopt the presidential search resolution, seconded by Regent Sablan. Regent Tudela also agreed to proceed with the resolution and discuss the composition at its next special meeting. All members voted yes, the motion carried.

## **V. New Business**

### **a. FY2021 Operations Budget Request**

Regent Tudela informed the board that the committee met and reviewed the proposed FY2021 Operations Budget request. Regent Tudela deferred to IP Frankie for his presentation of the request.

IP Frankie presented the FY2021 Operations Budget request (copy is the board packet). The report captures the college's expenses and revenues. He went on to say that the college has maintained a very prudent financial management position and shared some of the great accomplishments the college has been able to make despite the back to back disasters. The operations budget request before the board is a result of the many meetings and wonderful debates that came out of the Budget and Finance committee (BAFC) with various departments across the campus.

Interim Chief Financial Officer Shelly Tudela surmised the request and sought the board's approval of the FY2021 Operations Budget request noting a total budget ceiling of \$4.8 Million in projected revenues. She also noted that the budget ceiling of \$4.7 Million in their packet doesn't line up because the college may need some wiggle room to anticipate some retraction or reduction in fees which are normally required in a face to face setting when classes go virtual. Additionally, the college also included a budget for the Board of Regents in this year's budget because of the anticipated reduction. The reason for this inclusion is so that the board's operations and training needs are covered.

IP Frankie thanked the hard work of the leaders of the Budget and Finance Committee for their work in hearing all of the departments and helping with allocating the resources. He pointed out two things: 1) the possibility that enrollment may be impacted is still a real possibility 2) the budget for the appropriations is still not finalized (the legislature is still in conference committees). Furthermore, the college's allocation from the appropriations funds all of the personnel and whatever shortfall that occurs may need to be addressed in the tuition and fees budget and therefore the college may have to make some modifications given that there is that possibility of a reduction.

Chairman Cepeda asked for the board's help by advocating for assistance from the legislature. With no further discussion, Regent Tudela offered the following motion.

**Action:** Regent Tudela motioned to approve the FY2021 Operations Budget, seconded by Regent Sablan. All members voted yes, the motion carried. The FY2021 Operations Budget is hereby approved.

b. Board Procedure Amendment: Meetings Via VTC and Other Modes

IP Frankie indicated that the Board Secretary worked on this policy along with the Board's legal counsel. He deferred to Helen and Tiberius Mocanu, legal counsel.

Helen Camacho, Board Secretary informed the board that the college seeks for its consideration to amend the board procedure and to renumber it correctly. She explained that Board Policy 1015.9 was listed as a policy and that it should be listed as a procedure to Board Policy 1015. Included in this request would also allow board members to attend meetings remotely as well as executive sessions.

Tiberius Mocanu, BOR Legal Counsel also added that other agencies are adopting similar policies to be able to do these sessions via different modes of communication. He also mentioned that there were some concerns brought up about how these meeting modes might not be so secure and the probability of our sessions being hacked. Counsel Tiberius explained that hacking into our system requires technical expertise to be able to accomplish such a thing. With there being no further discussion, Chairman Cepeda requested for a motion.

**Action:** Regent Tudela motioned to adopt Board Procedure 1015.1, seconded by Regent Torres. All members voted yes, the motion carried.

c. Board Policy No. 5012 -Personnel: Furlough, Layoff and Reduction-in-Force

Regent Sanchez, Human Resources Committee presented Board Policy 5012 regarding furlough, layoff and reduction in force. A copy of the proposed amendment to Board Policy 5012 was also shared with the board.

**Action:** Regent Sanchez motioned to approve the changes to Board Policy 5012, seconded by Regent Orilla. In response to Regent Tudela's question, IP Frankie explained that the college has general personnel policies that do not specifically address how reduction in force should be implemented. He

emphasized that this request is to prepare the college should it come to that point. After much discussion, all members voted yes to approve the recommendation, the motion carried.

At this time, Chairman Cepeda called for a short break. Chairman Cepeda called the meeting back to order and proceeded to the next item.

## VI. Executive Reports

### a. Report of the Interim President

IP Frankie highlighted some updates by sharing a powerpoint presentation called “Building and Strengthening the CNMI’s Workforce.” A copy of the powerpoint was also provided in the board packet.

### b. Program Feature: Enrollment Services

Manny Castro, Director of Enrollment Services provided an overview of the role the division plays at the college. He highlighted the key elements of Enrollment services’s primary function which is to recruit, admit and serve a diverse student population. He also shared the key services that its department handles to include recruitment and outreach, registration, testing, records, student information system, FERPA compliance and of course the Commencement Exercise. Manny also shared the structure of the division and the challenges that they face as a department. Aside from the recruitment events, there are also a lot of student engagement activities that take place at NMC. A short video was also shared with the board.

### c. COVID-19 Update

IP Frankie shared the latest COVID-19 update and how NMC is preparing for the Spring Semester. Back in March 15, 2020 we saw in the region the first COVID-19 cases (Guam). A few days later, on March 18, 2020, NMC had Virtual Drills for NMC classes. On March 23, 2020, NMC migrated all of its classes to virtual format.

### d. Fall 2020 Update

- Health Fall Taskforce

Hedwig Hofschneider, Project Proa Director informed the board that a Healthy Fall Task Force was formed to prepare for the fall semester and to also address the needs of the college. The staff and faculty came together to come up with the recommendations to include a campus entry procedure and an emergency plan. A copy of the recommendations was shared with the board. IP Frankie also indicated that on June 15, 2020 employees began returning to NMC. NMC students also began returning to campus July 1, 2020 but on a pre scheduled appointment only.

- NMC Fall 2020 Update

IP Frankie shared the NMC Fall 2020 enrollment (headcount) table.

### e. NMC Austerity Measures

IP Frankie shared the austerity measures that were implemented in FY2020 and also sought the boards assistance to help bring the college back to a normal work week:

- 1) Reduction of work hours
- 2) Leverage available federal resources
- 3) Restrict travel
- 4) Restrict hiring of nonfederally funded positions
- 5) Restrict fund allocation to departments
- 6) Restrict workstudy expenses

f. Capital Improvement Projects Update

Rachel Fusco, CIP Director provided an update of the ongoing CIP projects at the college, namely:

- 1) Demolition (Buildings A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, Q, R, S)  
Status: Funded through the USDOE and the project is ongoing. Estimated completion date is January 11, 2021.
- 2) NMC Facilities Master Plan (FMP)  
Status: RFQ issued earlier in the year and beginning negotiations with the top rated firms. A facility planning group was formed to collaborate closely with the firms. The proposed master plan will be shared with the board for approval when it is ready.
- 3) NMC Student Center  
Status: Funding has been secured through the U.S. Department of Education and we hope that in a month or two when the master plan is further along, then we can proceed with the A&E design.
- 4) NMC Building V Renovation (Phase I)  
Status: Funded through the Governor's CIP Office using OIA funds, this project involves the warehouse space being converted into offices and classrooms by constructing a second floor. The estimated completion date is January 25, 2021.
- 5) NMC Workforce Development Center  
Status: The workforce development center will house the Nursing program, Business program and the Center for Training and Innovation. We are currently waiting on the official notice of award.
- 6) Center for Research, Extension, and Development (CREES Building)  
Status: The CREES building will house classrooms, laboratory, assimilation labs, food science and agriculture labs, computer and instructional rooms. This is also pending the formal notice of award.
- 7) Classroom Buildings (2)  
Status: NMC submitted a request to fund 32 classrooms and laboratory as a priority project under the CDBG-DR; the application is under review by HUD and should be approved by December 2020; anticipating funds will be ready by January 2021.
- 8) Plant Biotechnology Laboratory  
Status: Funding is available for the plant biotechnology laboratory but due to the increase of construction costs on the island, it is anticipated that funds will not be available and to explore additional funding opportunities.

g. Accreditation Update

IP Frankie provided an update on the ongoing accreditation efforts of the college. He shared the timeline with the board on what has occurred after the college submitted its Institutional Report on January 2, 2020. An offsite review was conducted between the college and WASC Senior via videoconferencing where they shared their initial assessment of the college after the January 2, 2020 IR report submission. They also added some Lines of Inquiry. The Lines of Inquiry are items that they would like to ask us when they arrive for the visit. The visit was supposed to be occurring this year but that has been postponed for October 2021.

The Lines of Inquiry also included the presidential leadership and the status of where the board is in terms of the presidential search and other items such as governance, strategic planning, faculty and staff, financial sustainability, physical and technological resources, culture of evidence, data support decision making, student success and how is NMC responding to the COVID pandemic. WASC Senior also commended NMC for its resiliency, efforts in workforce development, managing limited financial resources, capstone assessments, external partnerships and student success.

In closing, IP Frankie indicated that the college has already begun engaging in discussions on how to address the Lines of Inquiry in preparation for the visit in October 2021.

#### h. CFO Report

##### 1. NMC FY2019 Audit

Shelly Tudela, Interim Chief Financial Officer provided an update on the status of the FY2019 Audit. A six month extension was granted by the Office of Management and Budget which will allow the college to upload the audit by December 31, 2020. The work continues with the auditors with an anticipated date of completion of November 2020.

#### i. Legislative Update

Frankie M. Eliptico, NMC Interim President (handout circulated). The tracking sheet for all legislations that affect NMC is listed on the table. The most urgent matter that is pending with the legislature is the budget.

#### j. Commemoration of NMCs 40th Year Anniversary

IP Frankie shared with the board that NMCs 40th Year Anniversary is coming up and there will be a whole year of activities commemorating this special anniversary. A list of activities is forthcoming and to be expecting large and small events throughout the year.

Chairman Cepeda thanked IP Frankie for the report and the board is looking forward to the anniversary events. He also asked IP Frankie to prioritize lifting the austerity measures.

### VII. Election of Officers

#### a. Chairperson

Regent Torres nominated Regent Cepeda to serve as Chairman of the Board, seconded by Regent Sablan. There were no other nominations, the nomination closed and Regent Cepeda will continue to serve as Chairman.

b. Vice-Chairperson

c. Treasurer

Regent Orilla opened the nominations for Vice-Chairperson, seconded by Regent Sablan. All members agreed to keep the same officers. Regent Orilla will continue to serve as Vice-Chairperson and Regent Sanchez will serve as BOR Treasurer.

### **VIII. BOR Committee Structure**

The BOR Committee structure was revised to include Regent Sablan. She replaced former Regent Evangelista.

**IX. Executive Session** (At any time during the meeting, the Board of Regents may be required to enter into executive session to discuss matters deemed privileged and confidential).

### **X. Miscellaneous**

In response to Regent Tudela's inquiry, IP Frankie explained that most of the activities are fundraising activities to generate revenue and requested the board for their help with the events for the 40th Year Anniversary. Chairman Cepeda thanked IP Frankie for all his efforts and hardwork for the college.

**XI. Executive Session** - None.

### **XII. Adjournment**

**Action:** Regent Torres motioned to adjourn, seconded by Regent Tudela. All members voted yes, the motion carried.