PUBLIC SESSION

People Present
Board Members
Chairman Vicente N. Santos, Regent Manuel A. Sablan, Regent Helen H. Abayare, Regent John I. Schwarz, and Regent Teresa I. Taitano. Not present: Regent Justin S. Manglona because of illness.

College Staff and Faculty
President Agnes McPhetres; Vice President Tee Abraham; Vice President Jack Sablan; Vice President Barbara Moir; School of Education Provost Roy Fua; Jesse C. Borja, Esq., Legal Counsel; Comptroller Harris Lawrence; Faculty Senate President Ed Zehr; Tony Guerrero; David Atalig; Dr. Frederick Hill; Dr. Jack Angello; Randall Nelson; Phil Swett; Jack Peters; Lino Santos; David Cooper; Rosamond Rice; Tony Santos; Melody Actouka; and Vince Merfalen. Allen Cameron was present as recorder.

Others
Five members of the CNMI House of Representatives: The Honorable Frank G. Cepeda; Bernadita T. Seman; Heinz S. Hofschneider; Karl T. Reyes, and Manuel A. Tenorio; Irene Carlos and Kevin Castro, students; Sheila Amor, reporter, Tribune.

I. Opening Procedures

Roll Call: At 10:05 a.m. Chairman Santos called the meeting to order in the Board of Regents conference room on the As Terlaje campus, and asked the President to call the roll. As five of the six members of the Board answered “Present,” the President announced that a quorum was present for the conduct of business.

A. Welcoming Remarks by Chair: Chairman Santos welcomed all present, and in particular the Legislators from the CNMI House of Representatives. He thanked them for their continuing interest in the Northern Marianas College.

B. Review/Approval of Agenda
ACTION #1. It was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as presented.
C. Review/Approval of Minutes (Tab 1)
ACTION #2: It was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved to accept the minutes of the last regular meeting of the Board on January 30, 1998 as presented.

II. Fiscal Committee’s Report
A. Financial Statement (Tab 2)
Comptroller Harris Lawrence presented the Financial Reports for FY98 Operations and Vocational Education Payroll Costs to Date, followed by a Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for the four months ending January 31, 1998. In response to a question of Regent Sablan, Mr. Lawrence explained that P.L. 10-66 was not funded for 1997, and therefore no 10-66 funds were available to the College under the current “Continuing Resolution.” For the shortfall in 1997, Mr. Lawrence stated that the CNMI Administration made up the difference. Mr. Lawrence further explained the balance sheet, which will be certified.

III. President’s Report
A. Program Presentations
   1. Vocational Technical Education (Separate Folder)
B. P. L. 10-66 Budget (Tab 3)
C. Proposed Amendments to Higher Education Act (Tab 4)
Board Chairman Santos explained that the College had two important items to present to the Legislature, namely (1) P. L. 10-66 Budget (formerly 5-32), and (2) the proposed amendments to the Higher Education Act. President McPhetres explained how 10-66 funds are distributed among the different programs. Dr. Jack Angello, Director of Apprenticeship Trades, and Mr. David Cooper, Computer Technology Curriculum Writer, made video/computer presentations of their respective programs. Mr. Cooper noted a strong interest among NMC students to become proficient in the computer specialist field.

Congressman Heinz Hofschneider stated that he has found it frustrating that so few students from the Vocational Education program find their way into the private sector. He stated that he had the same problem with the Job Training Partnership Act participants (JTPA). JTPA has been successful in placing students in government employment, but has failed to win support in the private sector to accept responsibility for job trainees.

Regent Sablan proposed that Vocational Education concentrate on preparing students for admission to special technology programs which could provide computer technicians with U.S.-certified credentials in a particular field. Thus, he said, we can gradually reduce dependence on the present alien workforce.

Representative Hofschneider further noted that employment among the local population is heavily weighted in favor of government as against private sector employment. He spoke of the fact that NMC is obliged to offer remedial courses to prepare high school graduates for a proper college-level studies. President McPhetres stated that NMC and the Public School System signed a memorandum of
agreement (MOA), whereby the College would assist high school students prepare for timely admission to college-level courses in English, mathematics and health. Mr. Tony Guerrero, Dean of Professional Programs offered copies of the 149-page 1997 Annual Report for Public Law 5-32 to the Board members and the Legislators. He also presented charts of plans and artist's concepts of the seven-building complex of the future Business and Tourism Learning Center. The first five buildings would cost $8 million with two others planned for later construction. In response to Representative Hofschneider’s questions, President McPhetres said that a feasibility study was done by Washington State University which reported strong support for the training center regionally, not only for the CNMI. President McPhetres stated that plans have been laid to sponsor a fund-raising campaign to assist the construction of the facility.

When Representative Seman asked about the Marianas Visitors’ Bureau contribution to the program, approved five years ago, Vice President Abraham, a current member of the MVB Board, reported that she had learned that the funds are not as yet ready for transfer.

President McPhetres further noted that Representative Karl Reyes’ proposed legislation last year amending the Higher Education Act of 1997 had passed the House but not the Senate. Such legislation is needed, she said, that the College may achieve a number of beneficial results, including among others a more productive investment of NMC Foundation funds, an ability to float bonds and a change in NMC’s fiscal year to begin on August 1 to coincide with the academic year.

She said that the Senior/Junior Commission of the Western Association of School and Colleges (WASC) team would be coming to Saipan in late April or early May for its review of these matters and for the review of the School of Education. She said that her goal is to bypass “Candidacy” status and move right into an “initial accreditation”. NMC would need the legislation under the Amendments to Higher Education Act to achieve some of the above.

The Chair thanked the Members of the House of Representative who attended the meeting.

B. NMC Foundation Plan of Action (Information) Regent Schwarz stated that the meeting of the Foundation Board had been postponed from yesterday to next Thursday, March 5, and this matter would then be discussed.

At 12:25 p.m. the meeting recessed for lunch.

At 1:30 p.m. the meeting was resumed.

Transition Committee’s recommendations (Tab 5) Chairman Santos, speaking of the Transition Team’s recommendations, announced that he had written the Governor regarding recommendation #3, explaining that the
College would prefer not to restrict itself for audits by Deloitte and Touche, but to be able to refer audits to firms with experience in the finances of educational institutions. He also added that the Accreditation Commission also regularly supervised audits and finances.

President McPhetres stated that the College is working in accordance with its Master Plan. The President said that a Planning Committee has been formed to review the strategic plan and to recommend viable planning process for the College. The committee will also focus on the mission of the College, which NMC is required by the Commission to assess periodically. Regent Sablan suggested reducing the mission statement to its simplest terms, and then prioritize its programs accordingly. He favored at all times allowing the President flexibility. If a program goes beyond its budget, he said, that’s when it should come before the Board. With regard to facilities, he warned against putting up new buildings, but having no operating funds.

President McPhetres announced that an instrument is being developed for employer evaluations of former NMC students. NMC is also working on another instrument to review effectiveness of courses and programs.

E. Monthly Reports (Tab 6)

F. Travel Reports (January 2-31, 1998) (Tab 7)

IV. Old Business
A. MVB Commitment for Business & Tourism Learning Center (BTLC) Tab 8: President McPhetres stated that she will continue to follow up on this commitment. She has heard that the Comptroller of the MVB is waiting only for direction from the MVB Board before transferring the funds.

B. Accreditation Team Visit (Tab 9)
As stated earlier, this coming visit of the WASC Senior/Junior Commission will take place in late April early May. Dr. Moir, Vice President of Instruction, is coordinating the responses for the triennial report.

V. New Business
A. School of Education, College Lab School’s proposed expansion (Tab 10) President McPhetres announced that the College is planning on awarding bachelor degrees in Education with a specialty in Elementary Education (K-6th grade), not just with a specialty in Early Childhood Education. She is now coming to the Board to consider the expansion of College Lab School from Pre to 4th grade. She is also presenting to the Board the new CLS Handbook for their review and endorsement.

Regent Sablan stated that the “all others” category of the budget should be prioritized since he foresees no increase in funding from the CNMI due to the present slump in the economy. He proposed a working session during a “day of retreat” to consider decisions that would involve additional funds.
Regent Schwarz made the observation that if the Amendments to Higher Education Act become law, it will provide “not less that $1 million or 25%” for the School of Education (SOE). Then the income generated by the SOE will cover operations.

Provost Fua declared that the establishment of a School of Education for local teachers will account for savings to the CNMI in the long run, since it will eliminate the recruitment over 100 elementary teachers from the U.S. each year, including travel and housing. Regent Abayare proposed that the Board refers the issue of expansion of the College Lab School for further consideration by the Program Committees.

B. Library Expansion (Tab 11)
President McPhetres shared with the Board the two views of the floor plan of the expanded College Library as proposed by the library staff. President McPhetres said that the funds for this expansion comes from the College’s revenue. It part of the approved budget under “Construction/Renovation” for FY 98. The 1996 Accreditation Team noted among its recommendations the need for more library space. Ms. Rosamond Rice, Acting Dean of Learning Resources, stated that the floor plans allow for 1,000 feet more in book shelving space, and 30% more room for students, all at a cost of $70,000 for basic construction. The cost of the shelving can be defrayed by the FY99 budget. Ms. Rice also said there are plans for an on-line catalog for the entire CNMI.

ACTION #3: It was moved, seconded, and unanimously voted in favor of approving the library expansion as presented.

VI. Executive Session: The Board was in executive session from 2:45 to 3:05 p.m. Following the executive session, the following actions were taken:
ACTION #4: It was moved, seconded, and unanimously voted to confirm the appointment of Mr. Roy Fua as Provost of the School of Education.

ACTION #5: It was moved, seconded, and unanimously voted to approve the hiring of one librarian for Rota and one additional librarian for Saipan; to approve the hiring of a legal counsel, who would advise the Board of Regents and the President, and would also teach; and finally to hire replacements for the three vacated computer specialist positions.

VII. Miscellaneous: President McPhetres announced that there would be a special joint meeting of the NMC Board of Regents and the members of the Board of Education, depending on the response of the chairman of the Board of Education.

VIII. Adjournment: 3:10 p.m.