APPROVED MINUTES
for
the Special Meeting
of the
BOARD OF REGENTS
on
MARCH 4, 1999

PEOPLE PRESENT:

Board Members:

Chairman Manuel A. Sablan, Regent Justice Ramon G. Villagomez, Regent Teresa I. Taitano, Regent Abelina Cing Cabrera, Regent Helen Abayare, Regent Vincent J. Seman, and Regent Fermin M. Atalig were present.

NMC Faculty and Staff:

Legal Counsel Jesse C. Borja, Esq.; Vice President Jack Sablan; Vice President Tee Abraham; Vice President Dr. Barbara Moir; Provost Roy Fua, School of Education; Malinda Matson; Roger Madriaga; David DLG Atalig; Kohne Ramon; Ramon S. Bush; Dr. Diana R. Greenough; Ray Mafnas; Cyndy Tice; Dr. Fred Hill; Alfred Johnson; Tomi Coleman; Janice Tenorio; Rik Villegas; and Mike Jenck. Julie Ulloa-Heath and Allen Cameron were present as recorders.

Others:

Daniel H. Nielsen, Special Advisor for Education Affairs; Jewel K. MacCarter; Sheila Amor, reporter, Saipan Tribune; Rene P. Acosta, reporter, Marianas Variety; NMC Retirees Antonio A. Santos. Bill Cabrera, Isidoro T. Cabrera, and Tony Atalig.

Roll Call: President McPhetres called the roll at 10:30 a.m. Six of the seven members of the Board of Regents answered “present,” thus constituting a quorum for the transaction of business. Chairman Sablan phoned that he would be 30 minutes late. In the absence of the chairman, Vice Chairman Justice Ramon G. Villagomez was the acting chair.

Agenda:

I. State of the College Address
II. FY 99 Budget for “All Others”
III. Ungraded Positions

I. State of the College Address: The State of the College Address is scheduled for March 5, at 10:00 a.m. in the Multi-Purpose Center, Susupe. Vice Chairman Justice Villagomez explained that by mandate of CNMI statute, a State of the College Address should be scheduled annually and be followed by a discussion with the public. The format calls for the convening of a meeting of the Board of Regents, the
Regent Seman asked the President if she could give the group a preview of tomorrow's address. The President responded that it cover the last 16 years, will look at the “products” of the school, the alumni and students, its programs, a financial summary, the NMC Master Plan, and present day issues confronting the College.

V.P. Moir asked if 12-month faculty should formally request administrative leave to attend the function. President McPhetres answered that this was a college function and a request for administrative leave was not needed.

**ACTION #1:** It was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved that faculty did not need administrative leave to participate in the State of the College public function on March 5, 1999.

**II. FY 99 Budget for “All Others”**: President McPhetres explained that at the last meeting, February 26, 1999, the Board had approved in concept a revision of the FY99 Budget. The Board did not go into details. The President introduced Budget Officer David DLG Atalig, who would explain the details of the revision. Mr. Atalig referring to document, already distributed to the Board members, entitled *FY 1999 Tuition and Fees Budget Breakdown*, explained that to make the revision the consent of the Board, and not the CNMI Legislature, was needed. He indicated that cuts had been made in the categories of Travel, Capital Equipment purchases, and Professional Development in order to add some $475,000 for personnel payroll.

President McPhetres Capital Equipment purchases have been curtailed, but not in the area of “Y2K” adjustment of the computer software needed by the Finance and the Admissions and Records offices. Mr. Madriaga announced that the hoped for $200,000 funding from the Department of the Interior has not materialized, and we must approach other sources. Mr. Alfred Johnson reported that the CNMI is also seeking funding for the “Y2K” problem, and has included NMC for $400,000. Mr. Daniel Nielsen indicated that Ms. Deborah Mills of the Department of the Interior was on Saipan 10 days ago and is also concerned about funds for CMNI “Y2K” adjustments.

Regent Seman made a request for a comparison of this present budget with budgets of the recent past. He also expressed the wish to know where the cuts have been made and how much the cuts were. V.P. Dr. Moir expressed a question on how the revised budget reflects the recent College re-organization. The President offered an example for instance, tuition and fees income from Vocational Programs would go only into Special Accounts. Chairman Sablan and V. P. Abraham requested that the Comptroller provide a report on actual expenses to date.
Vice Chairman Villagomez requested that the Fiscal and Legislative Committee schedule a meeting with the President, the Vice Presidents and the Budget Officer on Tuesday, March 9, at 9:00 a.m. at the Board of Regents conference room.

Chairman Sablan mentioned two particular issues of concern: (1) the College Lab School, which he said was a constitutional issue, and (2) the 2+2 program. He suggested that more time be spent on the budget, stressing the need to comply with the format of the CNMI government. Considering the present economic situation, he asked that the budget submitted to the Governor be as slender as possible, and even then, we should expect further reductions.

Mr. Atalig stated that the budget call came two weeks before the required submission date, and since there was a reported 10.2% reduction in general revenues, the NMC budget according reduced its budget by the same 10.2%. Chairman Sablan expressed the doubt that the above figure forecast by the CNMI government will survive the test of time.

Vice Chairman Villagomez suggested that the budget issue had been covered thoroughly, and it was time to move on the last item of the agenda, the Ungraded Positions.

**III. Ungraded Positions:** Chairman Sablan stated that at the last Board meeting, February 26, 1999, after its executive session, passed the following Action.

(*From the minutes of February 26, 1999*) **ACTION #4:** It was moved., seconded and unanimously approved that Board request the Legal Counsel to research the legality of issuing a termination notice to all holding upgraded positions in the College. The termination notice would take effect after 90 days.

Chairman Sablan reported that the Board met yesterday and received a briefing from Legal Counsel Jesus C. Borja, Esq. Mr. Borja said today that the final legal opinion is yet to be reached. In the meanwhile the Chair proposed that we prepare ourselves for another cut in our allotment.

The Chair suggested that, as a result, some positions will be added and some dropped. Regent Seman was concerned that the Board is disclosing its intentions too soon before knowing the legal opinion. There have been rumors circulating in the community. Having met with the students himself, Regent Seman said that it was important not to alarm people.

Regent Justice Villagomez expressed his opinion that the idea of giving a 90-day termination notice was not practical. He was afraid of a serious reaction from the Accreditation Commission. Singling out an entire class of employees, the “ungraded,” was sure to create a negative impression. Regent Atalig asked what was the reason for issuing the notification in the first place.
Chairman Sablan said that he looked on the College as a community organization, as a family. The President, he added, can terminate anyone today, and the Board can terminate the President. He said he strives to be objective. Since the College is 80% dependent on the CNMI funding. It can in no way consider itself independent. If we have five people in an office where two would do the job just as well, the five are too many. On the matter of accreditation, he cannot say how the Accrediting Commission will react. The Internet carries all the reports of the oversight public hearings. The Chair added there was much in the hearings that bothers him. He would like the Board to work together as a family. He would like to have a commitment on manpower, and asked Regent Abayare as Chair of the Board’s Personnel Committee to examine every corner and every position in the College. He expressed frustration at the hearings because the legislators seemed to be targeting him.

Dr. Fred Hill expressed the faculty’s perception that this crisis will blow over, and six months from now, it will all be the same. Regent Seman said that the College is preparing for its self study and reaffirmation of Accreditation, and that it needs to get its house in order.

Chairman Sablan proposed that the College pay the 30% bonus it owes its recent retirees, four of whom are present at this meeting. In response, Comptroller Lawrence stated that the payments were dependent on the College receiving the money owed it from the CNMI Education Assistance for last fall. Since the college has received the money as of last week, the payments to the retirees will be made. He added that accrued annual leave had been paid the retirees.

Faculty Senate President Rik Villegas reported that some of the faculty members are disappointed that pay raises have not been forthcoming. He also said that newspaper accounts in the Commonwealth have made allegations that need to be explained by the administration, such as some higher officials giving themselves pay raises.

Adjournment: 11:45 a.m.