



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

10 COMMERCIAL BOULEVARD
SUITE 204
NOVATO, CA 94949
TELEPHONE: (415) 506-0234
FAX: (415) 506-0238
E-MAIL: accjc@accjc.org
www.accjc.org

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January 31, 2011

Ms. Lorraine Cabrera
Interim President
Northern Marianas College
P. O. Box 1250
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear President Cabrera:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting January 11-13, 2011, reviewed the Show Cause and Closure Reports submitted by the college reviewed the report of the evaluation team which visited Wednesday, October 20-Friday, October 22, 2010. The Commission also received a supplemental report from the College dated December 28, 2010, and heard the comments of the College Representatives, Interim President Lorraine Cabrera, Board Chair Maria Paz Younis, and Accreditation Liaison Officer Galvin Deleon Guerrero.

The Accrediting Commission acted to continue the College on Show Cause and require that Northern Marianas College submit a Show Cause Report by **March 15, 2011**. This will be followed by a visit of Commission representatives.

Show Cause is issued when the Commission finds that an institution is in substantial non-compliance with its Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or policies or when the institution has not responded to the conditions imposed by the Commission. The Commission requires the institution to show cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn. In such cases, the burden of proof will rest on the institution to demonstrate why its accreditation should be continued. The accredited status of the institution continues during the period of the show cause order.

The Show Cause is continued for the following reasons: Northern Marianas College is not in compliance with Eligibility Requirements or Accreditation Standards in three key areas: institutional autonomy from outside interference, institutional financial management and integrity, and institutional governance and accountability. Specifically, the College is out of compliance with Eligibility Requirements 3, 4, 5, 17, 18 and 21 and significant parts of Standards I.A, I.B, II.A, II.B, III.A, III.D, and IV.B. While the College has done some work to address these compliance issues, none of them have yet been completely and sustainably resolved. The College's Show Cause Report of fall 2010 did not provide adequate evidence that the institution has fully complied with Commission Accreditation Standards and completely resolved the deficiencies noted by the April 2010 team.

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The Show Cause Report must demonstrate that the College fully meets all of Standards I.A, I.B, II.A, III.A, III.D, and IV.B, fully meets Standard II.A.7.a., and Standard II.B.3.f., and has resolved the specific deficiencies referenced in all of the recommendations made by the April 2010 Special Visit Team as identified in the Commission's action letter of June 30, 2010, and repeated in this letter. The report should provide explanation and evidence of how the institution *meets the Standards and Eligibility Requirements noted above and in addition, what it has done to resolve the recommendations noted below.* The failure of the College to demonstrate in its report full compliance to Commission Standards will require the Commission at its June 2011 meeting to take action to terminate accreditation.

Recommendation # 1

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, Standard IV.B.1.a, IV.B.1.c)

Recommendation # 2

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)

Recommendation # 3

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)

Recommendation # 4

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. (ER 18, Standard III.D.2, III.D.2.a, III.D.2.d, III.D.2.e)

Recommendation # 5

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)

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Recommendation # 6

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)

Recommendation # 7

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)

Recommendation # 8

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)

Recommendation # 10

To meet the Standard the team recommends that governing board engage 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)

Since the loss of accreditation will likely cause the institution to close, during the show cause period, the institution must make preparations for closure according to the Commission's "*Policy on Closing an Institution.*" The Commission's records indicate that the College has developed procedures for closure and an agreement with Guam Community College for a teach-out of its courses and programs. Northern Marianas College should notify the Commission immediately in the event that the agreement with Guam Community College is ended for any reason.

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I have previously sent you a copy of the Evaluation Team Report. Additional copies may now be duplicated. The Commission requires that you give the report and this letter appropriate dissemination to your college staff and to those who were signatories of your college report. This group should include campus leadership and the Board of Regents. The Commission also requires that all reports be made available to students and the public. Placing copies in the college library can accomplish this. Should you want the report electronically to place on your website or for some other purpose, please contact Commission staff. The Follow-Up Report will become part of the accreditation history of the College and should be used in preparing for the next comprehensive evaluation. Should you want an electronic copy of the report, please contact Commission staff.

On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express continuing interest in the institution's educational quality and students' success. Professional self-regulation is the most effective means of assuring integrity, effectiveness and quality.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.
President

BAB/tl

cc: Mr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero, Accreditation Liaison Officer
Board President, Northern Marianas College
Dr. Douglas Houston, Team Chair
Ms. Martina Fernandez-Rosario, U.S.D.E.