January 31, 2008

Dr. Carmen Fernandez  
President  
Northern Marianas College  
P. O. Box 1250  
Saipan, MP  96950

Dear President Fernandez:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on January 9-11, 2008, reviewed the Progress Report submitted by the college and the report of the evaluation team which visited on Wednesday, November 7-Friday, November 9, 2007.

The Accrediting Commission is compelled to place the institution on Show Cause subject to Termination in January 2009 and to ask that Northern Marianas College correct the deficiencies noted. I also wish to inform you that under U.S. Department of Education regulations, institutions out of compliance with standards or on sanction are expected to correct deficiencies within a two-year period or the Commission must take action to terminate accreditation. While some of the listed recommendations identified as deficiencies were also noted by the year 2000 and 2006 visiting teams, the Commission has extended Northern Marianas College’s time to correct these deficiencies for good cause.

Show Cause is issued when the Commission finds that an institution is in substantial non-compliance with its eligibility criteria, 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 The Commission requires the institution to show cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn.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. If the loss of accreditation will likely cause an 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 accredited status of the institution continues during the period of the show cause order.

This action constitutes a public sanction as described in the Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions in the Commission’s Accreditation Reference Handbook. As such, the action will be noted on the Commission’s website.
The Show Cause is issued because the college has failed to adequately address recommendations issued by the Commission over the last several years and has remained unable to make progress in using student achievement data for regular assessment of educational programs. The institution’s fiscal fragility also raises Commission concerns about the long term viability of the college.

The Commission asks that the college submit a Show Cause Report by October 15, 2008. This will be followed by a visit by Commission representatives. The report and findings of the Commission representatives will be considered at the January 2009 Commission meeting. The Commission also asks that the College submit a Special Report by March 15, 2008 showing resolution of the findings reported in the institution’s most recent audit for FY 2006.

The Show Cause Report of October 15, 2008 is expected to demonstrate that the college has resolved the recommendations and concerns as identified by the 2000 and 2006 visiting teams, specifically:

**Team Recommendation 1:** 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.

**Team Recommendation 2:** 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.)

With regard to Recommendation 2, it is expected that the college will demonstrate that it has achieved the proficiency level on Program Review as identified in the Commission’s Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness. The Commission notes the institution has made no substantial progress in developing student achievement data and analyses to support its program reviews.
Team Recommendation 4: 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. (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.)

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 for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness by the time of the Progress Report.

Team Recommendation 5: 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., III.A.1., III.D., IV.A.1., IV.A.4, IV.A.4., IV.B.)

Team Recommendation 6: 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., III.B.2.a., III.B.2.b., III.D.1.a., III.D.1.b., III.D.1.c)

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

The Special Report, due March 15, 2008, should provide the Commission with information about what steps the college has taken to address each of the fourteen findings of the FY 2006 audit. The college should inform the Commission of any increases in staffing assigned to business services, as well as changes to procedures in business operations. The report should include copies of all policies and procedures manuals changed in response to the audit findings. The college is also advised that the Commission will need to receive the FY 2007 audit as soon as it is available.

The Commission is also aware of considerable pressure for the college to provide educational services on Tinian and Rota; however, it should be noted that the college will need to submit a Substantive Change Proposal prior to restoring any classes/programs at these two sites and this cannot be undertaken during the time the college is on sanction.

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 Trustees.
The Commission also requires that all reports be made available to students and the public. Placing copies in the college library can accomplish this.

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

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.
President

BAB/tl

cc: Dr. Debra Cabrera, Accreditation Liaison Officer
    Board President, Northern Marianas College
    Dr. Guy Lease, Team Chair
    Evaluation Team Members
    Ms. Linda Henderson, U.S. DOE