



**ACCREDITING  
COMMISSION  
for COMMUNITY and  
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

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June 30, 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 June 8-10, 2011, reviewed the Show Cause Report submitted by Northern Marianas College, the Show Cause and Special Visit report of the evaluation team which visited on Wednesday, April 13-Thursdays, April 14, 2011, the College Supplemental Report, and the College's testimony provided at the Commission meeting.

The Accrediting Commission took action to remove the College from Show Cause, impose **Probation**, and require Northern Marianas College (NMC) to submit a Follow-Up Report by **October 15, 2011**, that should address all issues from the previous Show Cause order as noted below. That report will be followed by a visit of Commission representatives.

Probation is issued when the Commission finds that an institution deviates significantly from the Commission's eligibility criteria, Standards, or policies, or fails to respond to actions and conditions imposed by the Commission. The accredited status of the institution continues during the probation period.

The College's Show Cause Report and the Team Show Cause and Special Visit Report of spring 2011 did not provide adequate evidence that the institution fully complies with Commission Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards and has sustainably resolved the deficiencies noted by the April 2010 and the October 2010 teams. The College Follow-Up Report due October 15, 2011, must provide adequate evidence to demonstrate that NMC has addressed the recommendations contained in the Show Cause Reports, sustainably resolved the deficiencies, and that it meets Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards. The College must also respond to the Commission Concerns 1 and 2 as noted in this letter.

Northern Marianas College must respond to the 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 must **demonstrate** that it

- meets Eligibility Requirements 3, 4, 5, 17, 18 and 21;
- has addressed the recommendations noted below, resolved the deficiencies, and now meets Accreditation Standards; and
- has resolved the concerns raised in Commission Concerns 1 and 2.

**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)

Ms. Lorraine Cabrera  
Northern Marianas College  
June 30, 2011  
Page Three

**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)

**Commission Concern #1**

The Commission noted several breaches of Eligibility Requirement 21. For example the College failed to comply with the Commission directive to maintain the confidentiality of the contents of the Show Cause and Special Visit Team Report until the Commission disclosed its decision in the Action Letter by making the outcome of the Report public in an email from the president's office. The Board of Regents continually uses the press to raise sensitive college matters, including naming short-listed applicants in the presidential search process. The College failed to bring to the evaluation team's attention pending legislation that could impact the College's autonomy, and to submit its Annual Report and Annual Fiscal Report in a timely fashion. The Commission reiterates that the Eligibility Requirements must be met at all times and failure to comply with ER 21 in itself is sufficient reason for the Commission to act to impose a sanction, or to deny or revoke accreditation.

Ms. Lorraine Cabrera  
Northern Marianas College  
June 30, 2011  
Page Four

**Commission Concern #2**

The Commission also noted that the Team Show Cause and Special Visit Report mentions distance education offerings and services at Tinian and Rota. The quality of the delivery systems used to provide education at Tinian and Rota has previously been questioned by the Commission Action Letter of January 31, 2007 Commission Recommendation #1: *“Northern Marianas College must take appropriate steps to insure that the delivery system used to provide instruction to Tinian and Rota is completely reliable and works at all times, or discontinue offering classes via telecommunications. The College must also detail how it intends to provide educational services, including instruction and support services, that ensure the education obtained on the Tinian and Rota sites is the equivalent of that obtained on the main campus and meets all accreditation requirements”*. The College must include in its Follow-Up Report due October 15, 2011, an overview of actions taken to resolve the deficiencies identified in Commission Recommendation #1 from the Action Letter of January 31, 2007, and the sustainability of the action taken as of October 2011 and explain how it complies with Standards II.A.2 and II.A.2.d.

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 a copy on the college website can accomplish this. Should you need the report electronically to place on your website or for some other purpose, please contact Commission staff. The Show Cause Report will become part of the accreditation history of the College and should be used in preparing for 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  
Mr. Ralph Wolff, President, ACSCU  
Dr. Steven Kinsella, Team Chair  
Ms. Martina Fernandez-Rosario, U.S.D.E.