

NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE  
SHOW CAUSE REPORT

May 31, 2011  
SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT



*Submitted to:*  
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges  
and the  
Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Northern Marianas College  
P. O. Box 501250  
Saipan, MP 96950  
Tel. (670) 234-5498  
[www.nmcnet.edu](http://www.nmcnet.edu)

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## **I. Statement on the Preparation of Report**

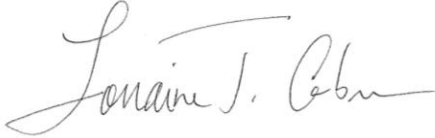
After receiving the January 31, 2008 Show Cause letter from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (the “Commission”), the Northern Marianas College submitted multiple reports that addressed the deficiencies noted in the letter, including the October 15, 2008 Show Cause Report and the April 1, 2009 Show Cause Report. At its meeting June 9—11, 2009, the ACCJC reviewed the April 1, 2009 Show Cause Report, the report of the April 20—23, 2009 Show Cause Visit Report, and information presented by college representatives. The Commission took action at the meeting to accept the report, remove Show Cause, and reaffirm accreditation. The Commission also acted to require a visit by Commission representatives following the submission of the October 15, 2009 Midterm Report.

At its January 2010 meeting, the Commission reviewed the College’s October 15, 2009 Mid-Term Report and the report of the evaluation team that visited the college in October 2009. The commission took action to accept the mid-term report. Due to receipt of information from Northern Marianas College and from Saipan, the Commission also took action to require a Special Visit to determine whether the institution was still in compliance with the following Eligibility Requirements and Standards: ER 3 - Governing Board, ER 4 - Chief Executive Officer, ER 5 - Administrative Capacity, ER 21 -Relations with the Accrediting Commission, and Standards I.A, III.A and IV.A and B.

An evaluation team visit was conducted on April 13—14, 2010. Based on the findings and report of the Special Visit, at its June 2010 meeting, the Commission took action to issue an order of Show Cause against the College for being 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. The Commission required the College to submit a Show Cause Report by October 15, 2010, to be followed by a visit of Commission representatives. The College submitted its October 15, 2010 Show Cause Report to the Commission, which was followed by an evaluation team visit on October 20—22, 2010. Based on the findings and report of the Special Visit, at its January 2011 meeting, the Commission took action to continue the College on Show Cause for being 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. This action was conveyed to the College by the Commission’s President, Dr. Barbara Beno, in her January 31, 2011 Letter to the College. The Commission required the College to submit a Show Cause Report by March 15, 2011, to be followed by a visit of Commission representatives. The College submitted its March 15, 2011 Show Cause Report to the Commission, which was followed by an evaluation team visit on April 13—14, 2011.

This supplemental report provides updates to the College’s March 15, 2011 Show Cause Report by describing and providing evidence of important developments that have transpired since the submission of the March 15, 2011. In particular, this report presents further actions taken that directly address all ten recommendations from the January 31, 2011 action letter from the Commission.

I certify that the contents of this report were prepared with considerable input and participation from the College community, including students, faculty, and staff members, as well as representatives of the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College, the Faculty Senate, and the Staff Senate.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Lorraine T. Cabrera".

Lorraine T. Cabrera,  
Interim President

## II. Executive Summary

Following submission of the March 15, 2011 Show Cause Report the April 13-14 Show Cause visit, Northern Marianas College (NMC) has continued its progress in seeking reaffirmation of its accreditation from the Accrediting Commission on Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). Since that visit, the College can report a number of major developments, including the hiring of a qualified chief executive officer. These developments reinforce the conclusion that NMC has experienced significant changes in its culture and performance with regard to accreditation. The nature of these changes suggests that they will persist.

- The NMC Board of Regents has successfully completed this lengthy process with the announcement on May 26, 2011 that Dr. Sharon Hart has accepted an offer to become NMC's president, effective July 5, 2011. As Dr. Hart was one of the original finalists recommended to the Board by the Presidential Search Committee, the successful conclusion of this search in trying circumstances is a testament to the dedication of Board members in sustaining the process for hiring a qualified chief executive.
- In addition, the NMC recently appointed Rogelio Madriaga as the Chief Financial and Administrative Officer (CFAO). As a former CFAO who meets the qualifications for the CFAO position, Mr. Madriaga has sustained the work of his office by working with programs and the College's leadership to plan for future reductions in government appropriations.
- As part of its efforts to sustain financial integrity and responsible management of its financial resources, the College has worked with the U. S. Department of Education (ED) and the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to resolve audit findings. As a result of these efforts, the College recently received a program determination letter (PDL) from the ED that states that 20 audit findings from FY 2005 to FY 2009 are determined resolved with no liability for questioned costs. NMC also recently received a letter from the USDA that states "that the College has implemented appropriate corrective actions to resolve the 2009 audit findings." The letter also notes that the USDA expects "to issue our Management Decision Letter by April 15, 2011, which will serve as our Final determination on the status and resolution of the 2009 audit findings."
- On May 2, 2011 the College held the first of what will be regularly scheduled quarterly meetings between its representatives and members of the CNMI legislature, in this case with the Senate Committee on Education. These meetings will inform legislators about the College's accreditation status, financial needs, programmatic updates, and the impact of pending legislation. Such meetings will promote the kind of healthy dialogue that will sustain the College's constitutional autonomy.
- The Board of Regents continues its own program of Board development and has created a full-year calendar of training activities, including a planned summer retreat to coincide with the arrival of the new president.
- The new template and timeline established for program review will strengthen the link between planning, performance and NMC budget decisions.
- In other important developments, NMC held a Strategic Planning Summit on May 17, 2011. The faculty-initiated additions to the course evaluation form were institutionalized. The work of the Accreditation Reaffirmation Team has continued and reflects widespread and improved understanding of accreditation processes and requirements.

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### III. Responses to ACCJC January 31, 2011 Show Cause Recommendations

***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)***

In the period since that visit, the College has sustained its effort to maintain productive and appropriate relations with the CNMI government. NMC has engaged with the members of the legislature by scheduling quarterly meetings to inform legislators about the College's accreditation status, financial needs, programmatic updates, and the impact of pending legislation. These meetings will keep the legislature abreast of developments at the College and promote the kind of healthy dialogue that will sustain the College's constitutional autonomy. The first meeting between the College leadership and the Senate Committee on Education took place on May 2, 2011.

***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)***

The College has maintained consistent and frequent communication with the Commission, particularly on matters that are reported in the local media and need clarification and/or corrections. The most recent example of this is a May 23, 2011 email message from Interim President Lorraine T. Cabrera to the Commission's president, Dr. Barbara Beno, regarding local media reports about public statements made at the May 20, 2011 meeting of the Board of Regents.

The deeper understanding of accreditation requirements and broad-based participation in accreditation processes were noted in the report of the April 2011 visiting team. The work of the Accreditation Reaffirmation Team (ART) has continued beyond the date of the April 13-14 Show Cause visit and typifies the changed culture on campus regarding its relations with ACCJC.

***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)***

The College continues its commitment to link planning, program review, budgeting, and resource allocation. The College's Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC) and the Planning, Program Review Outcomes and Assessment Committee (PROAC) recently adopted a timeline and program review (Form 3) template. The timeline and the program review template define

how program review will inform budgeting and resource allocation decisions to be made in August this year. As the timeline reflects, this process will empower the College to use the results of program review to make strategic budget and resource allocation decisions that directly link to the College's current strategic plan. PROAC also adopted procedures to guide its work in reviewing Form 3 submissions. These steps will not only improve the College's program review and planning processes, but will also help the College prepare for anticipated budget cuts for FY 2012 as well as the expiration of funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF).

***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)***

As part of the College's ongoing efforts to sustain financial integrity and responsible management of its financial resources, the College has worked with the U. S. Department of Education (ED) and the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to resolve audit findings. As a result of these efforts, the College recently received a program determination letter (PDL) from the ED that states that 20 audit findings from FY 2005 to FY 2009 are determined resolved with no liability for questioned costs. The resolution of these findings is based, in part, on NMC's implementation of certain corrective actions.

NMC also recently received a letter from the USDA that states "that the College has implemented appropriate corrective actions to resolve the 2009 audit findings." The letter also notes that the USDA expects "to issue our Management Decision Letter by April 15, 2011, which will serve as our Final determination on the status and resolution of the 2009 audit findings."

These communications from the ED and the USDA demonstrate that the College has resolved 2009 and outstanding findings from previous fiscal years.

***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)***

At the time of the April 13-14 visit, the ongoing search process for a new chief executive officer had not run its course. The NMC Board of Regents has successfully completed this lengthy process with the announcement on May 26, 2011 that Dr. Sharon Hart has accepted an offer to become NMC's president, effective July 5, 2011. As Dr. Hart was one of the original finalists recommended to the Board by the Presidential Search Committee, the successful conclusion of this search in trying circumstances is a testament to the dedication of Board members in sustaining the effort to hire a qualified chief executive.

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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)***

The College recently appointed Rogelio Madriaga as the Chief Financial and Administrative Officer (CFAO). As a former CFAO who meets the qualifications for the CFAO position, Mr. Madriaga has sustained the work of his office by working with programs and the College's leadership to plan for future reductions in government appropriations.

With the appointment of Mr. Madriaga as the CFAO, the College now has only one administrative position vacant, the Director of Information and Technology, for which interviews are currently underway.

***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)***

The College is moving forward with its commitment to link planning, program review, budgeting, and resource allocation. The College's Budget and Finance Committee (BAFC) and the Planning, Program Review Outcomes and Assessment Committee (PROAC) recently adopted a timeline and program review (Form 3) template. The timeline and the program review template will facilitate the process by which program review will inform budgeting and resource allocation decisions. As the timeline reflects, this process will empower the College to use the results of program review to make strategic budget and resource allocation decisions that directly link to the College's current strategic plan. PROAC also adopted procedures to guide its work in reviewing Form 3 submissions. These steps will not only improve the College's program review and planning processes, but will also help the College prepare for anticipated budget cuts for FY 2012 as well as the expiration of funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF).

On May 17, 2011, the College also convened a Strategic Planning Summit, in which the College's Strategic Planning Task Force launched a year-long collaborative process to develop the next five-year strategic plan for the College.

Another example of ongoing, collegial, self-reflecting dialogue is taking place with the Learning in Communities (LinC) initiative, which is bringing faculty, staff, and administrators from multiple academic and student support services programs together to discuss and plan a concerted, coherent approach to student learning. The College completed its first cohort learning community consisting of developmental English and Drama in the Spring 2011 term. Post assessment and results from the Online Survey of Learning Communities tool substantiate that learning communities at the College have been extremely successful. The students reported

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improved learning in the linked courses, and strongly recommended that more courses be offered through this mode of instruction. LinC has thus scheduled eight courses in the Fall 2011 term for participation in the program: Basic Nursing Concepts and Skills and Acting; Developmental English and Acting; Pre-Algebra and College Success; Beginning Algebra and Introduction to Computers.

***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)***

At its March 18, 2011 meeting, the Academic Council took action to add three new questions to the end of term course/instructor evaluation form:

- The instructor presented information fairly and objectively.
- The instructor spent class time on issues or topics related to the course.
- The instructor promoted thoughtful discussion based on course material and not personal opinion.

These new questions, which will be posed to every student in every course, will help the College meet ACCJC Standard II.A.7.a by providing clearer data on the extent to which instructors distinguish between personal conviction and professional opinion. The data can be used at the instructor level for professional growth plans or progressive discipline, at the program level for professional development planning, and at the institutional level for continuous quality improvement.

***Recommendation #9: To meet the Standard, the team recommends that the college maintain student records securely, and confidentially and that it publish and follows established policies for release of student records. (Standard II.B.3.f)***

The Office of Admissions & Records continues to lead training on FERPA and NMC policies concerning student records. OAR staff facilitated a training session on April 1st for new employees and adjunct faculty and again on April 11th for NMC work-study students.

The Records Management Work Group continues to meet regularly to articulate policies for record maintenance, disclosure, storage, retention, and disposition. The RM Work Group has indicated the need for the establishment of a compliance committee to monitor adherence to established policies once implemented and quarterly thereafter.

***Recommendation # 10: To meet the Standard the team recommends that the 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)***

The NMC Board of Regents' new Board Training and Development Committee chair is currently working on finalizing the training calendar for the next year. This will include the retreat planned for the summer, to coincide with the hiring of a new president.

The orientation of the Board's newest member, William Torres, was conducted on May 4, 2011. He was also provided a copy of the Board manual that includes Board operations policies, organizational chart, financial audit, and other important College documents.