

**ACCREDITING  
COMMISSION  
for COMMUNITY and  
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

*Western Association  
of Schools and Colleges*

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February 1, 2012

Dr. Sharon Hart  
President  
Northern Marianas College  
P. O. Box 1250  
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear President Hart:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting January 10-12, 2012, reviewed the Follow-Up Report submitted by Northern Marianas College, the report of the evaluation team which visited Monday, November 7 through Thursday, November 10, 2011, and the presentation by you and the Board chair. The purpose of this review was to assure that the recommendations made by the evaluation team were addressed by the institution.

The Commission acted to continue Northern Marianas College on **Probation**. The College is directed to demonstrate full resolution of Recommendations 3, 4, and 10 from the team report of 2010 and Supplemental Recommendations 1 and 2 from the fall 2011 evaluation team at the time of the next comprehensive review in **October 2012**. The external evaluation team that will visit Northern Marianas College will verify that the above recommendations are fully resolved and that the College fully meets the associated Accreditation Standards and Eligibility Requirements.

Probation is imposed when the Commission finds that an institution deviates significantly from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or policies or fails to respond to conditions imposed upon it by the Commission. The accredited status of the institution continues during the probation period. Probation is being continued for the deficiencies identified in the team report of 2010 which can be linked to deficiencies in 2006.

The Commission notes that Northern Marianas College is undergoing a comprehensive evaluation visit in fall 2012 while on Probation for failing to address deficiencies that were identified six years ago, at the time of the last comprehensive evaluation report. This is an extremely rare situation, and the Commission warns Northern Marianas College that the comprehensive review must provide substantive evidence that the college has fully addressed all of the deficiencies associated with the recommendations below or the Commission may take action to terminate accreditation.

**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 # 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)

**Supplemental Recommendation #1:** In order to meet Standards, the team recommends that the College expeditiously recruits a permanent Chief Financial and Administrative Officer while it formally reviews and specifies a process to monitor the Budget Progress Reports as part of a collegial system of financial management control mechanisms. (Standard III.D.2, III. D.2.d, IV.A.2.a.)

Regarding Supplemental Recommendation #1, the internal control issue and the discovery of unknown funds point to a weakness in the financial management system that limit the College's ability to make sound financial decisions. Information from the system is neither dependable nor timely. The recent dissolution of the Budget and Finance Committee, which the Self Study Report indicated played a central role in college budget processes, is a concern to the Commission. Therefore, the individual hired as chief financial officer must have government, finance, and accounting qualifications in order to continue to meet Accreditation Standards (III.D) and Eligibility Requirements 5-Administrative Capacity and 18-Financial Accountability.

**Supplemental Recommendation#2:** In order to meet Standards, the team recommends that a schedule and process for the review of all College Policies be developed and implemented. The process should ensure participation by all constituencies and include a clear procedure for the development of Policies and the process for submission for Board Approval. (Standards IV.A.2, IV.B.1.b-e)

Dr. Sharon Hart  
Northern Marianas College  
February 1, 2012  
Page Three

I 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. Northern Marianas College is being granted additional time to correct the deficiencies for good cause and must resolve the deficiencies identified in the 2010 report and linked to the 2006 team recommendations by **October 2012** or the Commission will be compelled to act to terminate accreditation.


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 report. This group should include campus leadership and the Board of Trustees.

The Commission also requires that the College make all reports and action letters available to students and the public by placing them on the institution's website. 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.

Finally, ACCJC staff is available to assist the College with consultation and advice on the recommendations identified above.

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

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.  
President

BAB/tl

cc: Mr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero, Accreditation Liaison Officer  
President, Board of Regents  
Mr. Douglas Dykstra, Team Chair  
Mr. Ralph Wolff, President/ACSCU/WASC  
Ms. Martina Fernandez-Rosario, U.S.D.E.