



NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE

Regular Meeting of December 12, 2023 **3:00p.m BOR Conference Room, Saipan**

Board Members: Regent Charles Cepeda (Chair); Regent Elaine Hocog-Orilla (Vice Chair); Regent Michelle Sablan (Member). Regent Irene Torres (member); Jeannie Mafnas (Member); Regent Jesse Tudela (Member); Regent William (Bill) Cing (Member).

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 12, 2023

In compliance with the Commonwealth's Open Government Act, adequate notice of this regular meeting was provided as follows:

- (a) On December 08, 2023, advance written notice of this regular meeting was posted in the Marianas Variety News and Views.
- (b) On December 08, 2023, a copy of this advance notice of the meeting was uploaded on the college's website at www.marianas.edu.
- (c) On December 08, 2023, advance written notice of this meeting was emailed to the College campus.
- (d) Any individual who has requested notice of this meeting has been forwarded a copy of the notice of such meeting.

I. Call to Order:

Chairman Cepeda called the Board of Regent's regular meeting to order on *Tuesday, December 12, 2023, at 3:00 p.m.* in the Board Conference Room of Northern Marianas College, Saipan. Chair Cepeda welcomed everyone to the meeting. Roll call is taken, with several Regents present and two absent. Various college staff and administrators are introduced and being present, including the president, vice-president, deans, directors, and faculty/staff representatives. There are also external guests from TRMA present.

(a) Roll Call:

Board Members: Regent Charles Cepeda (Chair); Regent Irene Torres (Treasurer); Regent Jesse Tudela (Member); Regent Michelle Sablan (Member); Regent William (Bill) Cing (Member).

Excused Absence: Regent Elaine Hocog-Orilla (Vice Chair); Regent Jeannie Mafnas (Member)
Five (5) members were present, a quorum was established.

NMC attendees: Galvin Deleon Guerrero, EdD (President); Frankie Eliptico (Vice-President of Administration and Advancement); Charlotte Cepeda (Dean), Student Services; David Attao (Chief Financial Officer); Polly Masga (HRO Director); Kevin Bautista (Director), President's Office; Becky

Sablan (Executive Secretary), President's Office; Vilma Reyes (Director), Office of Institutional Effectiveness; and Helen Camacho, Board Secretary (Recorder).

Attending Via Zoom: Lorraine Maui (Interim Dean), Academic Programs & Services; Dr. Randy Yates (Faculty Senate President), Faculty Senate; Jansen Sullivan (Administrative Manager), SMHA; Fermin Delacruz (Interim Director), Enrollment Communications Services; Velma Deleon Guerrero (Department Chair), SMHA and Program Coordinator, Liberal Arts; Lisa HacsKaylo (Institutional Researcher); Diana Hocog (Interim Director), Rota Center.

(b) Review and Adoption of Agenda

BOARD ACTION:

The December 12, 2023 regular meeting agenda was reviewed and adopted unanimously with a motion by Regent William (Bill) Cing, seconded by Regent Michelle Sablan. The agenda is adopted with no changes.

c) Review and Adoption of Minutes

- September 20, 2023 special meeting
- May 31, 2023 regular meeting

BOARD ACTION:

Here's a summary of the review and adoption of minutes, no discussion was noted. The minutes were adopted unanimously with a motion by Regent Irene Torres to adopt the September 20, 2023 and May 31, 2023 regular meeting, seconded by Regent William (Bill) Cing. After the adoption of minutes, the meeting moved to item number two on the agenda, which was public comments.

II. Public Comments

Chairman Cepeda confirmed that no requests for public comments were received for this meeting.

III. Reports from Standing Committees

- a. Finance Committee – No report.
- b. Audit Committee – No report.
- c. Human Resources – No report.
- d. Regent Nominating Committee – No report (vice-chair not present).
- e. Program Committee: Regent Jesse Tudela, program committee Chair informed the board that the committee met last Thursday and will be discussing two policies under new business.
- f. Facilities Committee: Regent Jesse Tudela, facilities committee chairperson informed the board that the committee met last Thursday and discussed the NMHC CDBG-DR classroom preliminary design. Further discussion on this design will be in the new business.
- g. Ad Hoc Committee – No report (vice chair not present)

The Program and Facilities committees have items that will be discussed later in the meeting under new business and will have a more detailed discussion later in the agenda.

IV. Old Business

None.

V. New Business

a. Artificial Intelligence Policy

Here's a summary of the discussion on the Artificial Intelligence policy. This is a proposed policy for AI, presented as a first reading to the Board of Regents. President Dr.G informed the board that the goal is to get ahead of the curve regarding AI use in higher education.

Key points made about AI:

- It presents both opportunities and challenges for organizations, including higher education institutions.
- It's a powerful tool that can help the institution, students, and community.
- It has already been used by leadership for articulating parts of their operations plan.
- There are concerns about potential academic integrity issues.
- The policy is intended to empower the institution to implement procedures, protocols, and best practices for ethical AI use.
- The policy includes a statement about AI use within the college, which addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion concerns.
- There's acknowledgement of a digital equity gap between haves and have-nots regarding AI access and use.
- The board is committed to ensuring students have access to current tools and technologies including AI.

This is a first reading, with further discussion expected at the next meeting and at the committee level. No immediate action was required on this policy at this meeting, as it was presented for awareness and initial review.

BOARD ACTION:

Regent Michelle Sablan motioned to table the AI policy for the next meeting, seconded by Regent Irene Tudela. For discussion, a second draft is requested at the next meeting and to reflect the comments made from the board. All members voted yes, the motion passed. AI policy is tabled for the next meeting.

b. Honorary Regents Policy

Here's a summary of the discussion on the Honorary Regents policy and the actions taken. President Dr. G presented on the policy and key points discussed below:

- Potential financial incentives for honorary regents (not for meeting participation, but for board activities in general).
- Consideration for honorary student, faculty, and staff regents.
- Alignment with practices seen at other institutions during ACCT conference.
- Concerns about past issues with similar policies and accreditation implications.

President (Dr.G) comments:

- The policy aligns with common practices in higher education and the 4th amendment regarding equity and inclusion.
- It aims to avoid past pitfalls by clearly excluding honorary regents from sensitive information (litigation, personnel records).

- Emphasis on not undermining the constitutional authority of the Board of Regents.

BOARD ACTION:

A motion was made by Regent Michelle Sablan, seconded by Regent Jesse Tudela. A question was raised about whether a new draft reflecting the committee’s comments would be available at the next board meeting. The board requested a modification of the honorary regent policy for further review and discussion at the next meeting. All agreed, the motion passed.

c. NMHC CDBG-DR Classrooms Preliminary Design

Here’s a summary of the discussion on the CDGG-DR classroom preliminary design.

Regent Jesse Tudela, facilities committee chair, informed the board about the design plans and the lengthy discussions regarding the proposals.

- 1) Two proposals:
 - One 2-story building with 16 classrooms
 - Two single-story buildings with 10 classrooms each (20 total)
- 2) The committee recommended the two single-story building option because:
 - It allows for future development at lower costs.
 - It provides infrastructure for future expansions.
 - It includes plans for internal roadways and parking.
- 3) Key points about the design:
 - Each classroom will be 900 square feet (larger than current 750 sq ft pods).
 - The buildings can be expanded both vertically and horizontally.
 - The design includes a network operations center in Building E.
 - The project aims to achieve LEED certification.
- 4) The design process involved extensive consultation with faculty and academic leaders.
- 5) Benefits of the two-building approach:
 - Allows for easier future expansion.
 - Environmental work would be completed, simplifying future construction.
 - Provides flexibility for growth.
- 6) Timeline and construction:
 - Estimated one-year construction time.
 - Buildings will be constructed simultaneously.
 - No contractor has been awarded yet.
- 7) Additional notes:
 - Landscaping, sidewalks, and parking are included in the project.
 - There was a specific request for Bermuda grass.
 - Environmental issues will not be an issue
 - Cost is \$17M.

President Dr. G informed the board that the decision represents a significant step forward in the institution’s infrastructure development, with consideration given to both immediate needs and future growth potential. The Pods are not adequate for classrooms; giving our room beyond the 32 classrooms. Dr. G also introduced Jaime Pangelinan from TRMA architect.

BOARD ACTION:

Regent Michelle Sablan motioned to endorse the NMHC CDBG classrooms preliminary design for a two separate 1-story building with 10 classrooms each, and for a potential to build up for a total of 10 more classrooms in the 2nd story future build, seconded by Regent Jesse Tudela. All members voted yes, the motion passed.

VI. NMC Executive Reports

(a) President's Report

Here's a summary of the NMC executive report presented by President Dr. G:

1) Facilities Update:

- The CRED building project is nearing 100% completion.
- The workforce development center and classroom buildings are progressing, with adjustments made to stay within budget.
- These projects are further along than many others in the northern area.

IT Infrastructure:

- As part of the facilities master plan, there's a focus on strengthening IT infrastructure.
- The college is migrating to a new student information management system.
- The new system will be more robust and user-friendly, allowing easier access to student information and improved data reporting capabilities.

Discovery Sessions:

- Sessions have begun with the firm that owns the new system.
- All college employees will be engaged in these sessions.
- The migration is expected to take 1-2 years.

Benefits of the New System:

- Improved access to student information for students.
- Easier generation of reports and data analysis.
- Better accessibility of information for stakeholders.
- Enhanced backup systems with cloud and local server redundancies.

Health Simulation Center:

- While not part of the master facility plan, there was a mention of improvements to the nursing labs and a health simulation center.

President Dr.G congratulated the team on these improvements, the report highlights significant progress in both physical infrastructure and digital systems at the college. The focus on IT infrastructure and data management systems suggests a forward-thinking approach to modernizing the institution's operations and improving services for students and staff.

2) Accreditation – A Team Updates

The team provided a report on the accreditation process for the college. The report includes the progress made in addressing the recommendations provided by the A Team. The presentation was given by various individuals, including President Dr.G, Dean Charlotte Cepeda, the accreditation liaison officer, and Kevin Bautista.

The report covers several recommendations, including:

Recommendation 1 (Strategic Plan and Facilities Master Plan)

Kevin reported that this recommendation is focused on the strategic plan and the college has already approved the strategic plan, the college leadership team is working on operationalizing it. The plan includes action steps, priorities, goals, and objectives.

The accreditation team commended the college on its facilities master plan, and the college is working on implementing it. The student center is currently under construction, and the workforce development center is about 50% complete.

Recommendation 2 (Institutional Excellence Guide): The revised institutional excellence guide has been sent to all college stakeholders, and the governance task force is working on addressing the latter part of the recommendation.

Recommendation 3 (Employee Recruitment, Retention, and Professional Learning Opportunities): The college is collecting data to address this recommendation and is working on updating minimum qualifications for faculty and procedures.

Recommendation 4 (President’s onboarding, development, and support): HR onboarding, introduction to NMC community, listening sessions, introduction through organizations.

Recommendation 5 (Information Technology): The college is proposing a restructuring of IT to provide academic support. The proposed rework includes three main areas; establishing responsibilities and purpose, providing support for academic programs, and improving operational efficiencies.

Recommendation 6 (Data Governance): The college is working on establishing a formalized governance structure for data and reporting. The data governance planning group is making plans to establish governance of the college in the coming year.

President Dr.G informed the board that the college is making progress in addressing the accreditation recommendations, but there are still some areas that need to be addressed. The presentation is providing an update on the college’s progress and is seeking feedback and input from the audience.

New Online Programs:

The college discussed about submitting a proposal for three online programs to the commission: the proposal includes:

- 1) Bachelor of Science in Business Management (BSBM)
- 2) Associate of Arts
- 3) Criminal Justice

The discussion mentions the following points:

- The first draft of the proposal is due on January 14, 2024.
- The anticipated submission to the commission is expected to be in January or February 2024.
- President G is concerned about the saturation of online programs and the need to adapt to the market.
- Dean Char sees an opportunity to offer other online programs and is open to exploring this option.

Regent Jesse Tudela suggests allowing students to graduate with a BSBM degree even if they miss one course, which would be offered the following semester. This could help address the shortage of staff or professors to offer the program year-round. Dean Charlotte Cepeda mentions that NMC allows students to participate in commencement exercises.

Chairman Cepeda clarifies that the commission submission is only for the online programs.

3) CFO Report

The following is a summary and discussion about the college's finances and budget. President Dr. G informed the board that CFO Dave and his team have been very busy with year end reports. CFO Dave Attao provided an update on the college's financial status including:

- The college has received \$4 million in appropriations and is working on the close out year end reports before the end of the calendar year.
- The college has collected \$1.5 million in operations funding and is expected to collect an additional \$900k in January, leaving \$2.6 million to be collected in the fall, spring, and summer.
- The college is planning to free up resources to apply to grants and other funding opportunities to offset shortages.
- The college is working to resolve issues with a \$1 million grant from CEDA, which is being held up to issues with the MOA with
- The college is also working to resolve issues with a \$87k bill for a building project and is pending an additional \$200k in funding.
- The college is proposing to use funds to address facilities needs and is waiting for legislative updates on pending funding requests.
- Regent Tudela inquired about the funds from the Saipan & Northern Islands Legislative Delegation (SNILD)

CFO Dave mentioned that the president will provide an update on the college's legislative priorities and pending funding requests. The discussion is focused on the college's finances and the need to manage funds effectively to address various needs and priorities.

4) Legislative Update

The following updates on legislation and potential impacts on the college. President Dr. G and Kevin Bautista provided an update on various bills and legislation that could affect the college, including:

- A construction tax bill that would impose an additional 50% tax on construction activities over \$250k, and the potential for earmarking some of that funding for NMC construction cost and contingencies.
- Two bills that could potentially divert scholarship funding and educational tax credits away from the college, including a bill that would establish a scholarship program for international students and another bill that would include the college in the list of eligible recipients for educational tax credits.
- The current budget situation, which is contingent upon the legislature and the administration ensuring that funding is available to bring in new programs.
- National legislation, including the inflation reduction act and the bipartisan infrastructure act, which could provide new grant programs for the college.
- A bill was recently signed into law, which charges access fees for infrastructure construction over \$1 million, and the potential to amend that law to include NMC in the list of eligible recipients.

- The bipartisan workforce act, which would provide grants for short term workforce programs, and express support for that bill to ensure that the college is included.

The discussion focused primarily on the potential impacts that these bills and legislations have on the college, and the need to track and monitor them to ensure that the college is prepared to adapt to the changes.

VII. Miscellaneous Items

- a. ACCT National Legislative Summit – February 04-07, 2024
- b. Governance Leadership Institute (GLI) – February 29 to March 01, 2024

Several discussions and plans regarding the upcoming ACCT National Legislative Summit scheduled for February 4-7, 2024. The focus is to ensure that board members and key stakeholders are strategically involved to maximize the effectiveness of the summit.

Key points include:

- Encouraging members of the Board of Regents to attend the summit to strengthen connections with Congress and community support.
- A strategic approach to the summit, including coordinating meetings with important partners and foundations that advocate for specific communities, like Pacific Islanders.
- Plans for a Governance Leadership Institute set for February 29 to March 01, 2024, to engage boards from across the region.
- Discussions on the logistics and funding for participation in these events, ensuring accessibility for all members involved.
- Chairman Cepeda will attend the committee meeting in D.C on Feb 03.

VIII. Executive Session (At any time during the scheduled meeting, the Board of Regents may be required to enter into executive session to discuss matters deemed privileged and confidential)

No executive session needed.

IX. Upcoming Board Activities

- a. Upcoming Events / Activities

Plans for a retreat for the Board of Regents were discussed, which is aimed at addressing various challenges and fostering better relationships among board members. Here are the key points from this discussion.

- 1) Retreat Planning: A retreat is proposed for early January to reflect on past experiences before engaging in the Governance Leadership Institute (GLI). This session will focus on open discussions to improve collaboration and communication within the board.
- 2) Agenda Development: Helen and Kevin will work together to create an agenda for the retreat, ensuring that all relevant topics are covered.

X. Adjournment

BOARD ACTION:

The meeting concluded with a motion made by Regent Tudela, seconded by Regent Sablan. The meeting ended at 4:31p.m and holiday greetings were exchanged among the members and college attendees.