

REPORT OF THE WSCUC TEAM
For Reaffirmation of Accreditation

To Northern Marianas College

October 25th - October 29th, 2021

Team Roster

Dr. Lui Hokoana - Chair
Chancellor

University of Hawai'i Maui College

Shannon N. Shank, MBA - Assistant Chair
Director of Enterprise Applications
California Institute of the Arts

Robert Underwood
Retired President
University of Guam

Peter Michell
Retired VP & CFO
Saint Mary's College of California

Yang Zhang
Director of Institutional Research
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Dr. Maureen Maloney
WSCUC Staff Liaison

The team evaluated the institution under the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and prepared this report containing its collective evaluation for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. This report and the Commission letter are made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

Table of Contents

Section I – Overview and Context

- A. Description of the Institution and its Accreditation History, as Relevant
- B. Description of Team’s Review Process
- C. Institution’s Reaccreditation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the Report and Supporting Evidence

Section II – Evaluation of Institutional Essays

- A. Component 1: Response to previous Commission actions
- B. Component 2: Compliance: Review under WSCUC Standards and compliance with federal requirements; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators
- C. Component 3: Degree Programs: Meaning, quality and integrity of degrees
- D. Component 4: Educational Quality: Student learning, core competencies, and standards of performance at graduation
- E. Component 5: Student Success: Student learning, retention, and graduation
- F. Component 6: Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program review, assessment, use of data and evidence
- G. Component 7: Sustainability: Financial viability, preparing for the changing higher education environment
- H. Component 8: Optional essay on institution-specific themes
- I. Component 9: Reflection and plans for improvement

Section III – Other Topics, as Appropriate (such as Substantive Change)

Section IV – Findings, Commendations, and Recommendations from the Team Review

Appendices

- A. Federal Compliance Forms
 - 1. Credit Hour and Program Length Review
 - 2. Marketing and Recruitment Review
 - 3. Student Complaints Review
 - 4. Transfer Credit Review
- B. Off-Campus Locations Review, as appropriate
- C. Distance Education Review, as appropriate

Section I – Overview and Context

A. Description of Institution and Accreditation History

Northern Marianas College (NMC) is located in the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). It was founded in 1976 and established as an official government entity by Executive Order by its Governor in 1981. The college's mission is "through its commitment to student learning, provide high quality, affordable and accessible educational programs and services for the individual and people of the Commonwealth." The main campus is located on Saipan with instructional sites on the islands of Tinian and Rota. The college offers associates degrees in Business, Business Administration, Criminal Justice, Fire Science Technology, Hospitality Management, Liberal Arts, Natural Resources Management, and Nursing. It also offers two bachelor's degrees, in Education and Business Management, as well as a number of certificate programs. According to the institutional report, NMC partners with other colleges and universities to provide students access to programs that include Framingham State University's Master of Education in International Teaching, the University of Guam's (UOG) Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, and the U.S. Army Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (SROTC), among others. As of fall 2019, total enrollment was 1,283 (*Institutional Report*).

In June 1985, NMC received its Initial Accreditation from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC); this accreditation was reaffirmed in 1990, 1996, and 2001. Due to workforce changes, and as the only higher education institution in Saipan able to respond to those needs, NMC wanted to offer a baccalaureate degree in education, but this offering was beyond ACCJC's scope. At that time, all regional accreditation in California, Hawai'i, and the Pacific for elementary, secondary and post-secondary education, was incorporated as the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). As a result of that relationship, the ACCJC and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities

(ACSCU), which was recognized to accredit undergraduate and graduate degree programs, agreed to jointly accredit NMC; ACCJC was the primary institutional accreditor and WSCUC was responsible for the baccalaureate degree. In 2001, the WSCUC granted Initial Accreditation for the baccalaureate degree program in education. NMC was jointly accredited from 2001 to 2013. In 2010, the ACCJC cited NMC for serious issues with autonomy from outside interference, financial management and integrity, and governance and accountability. In 2013, the ACCJC issued an Order to Show Cause, a decision to terminate accreditation unless NMC could show cause why such an action should not be taken.

Also, in 2013, the United States Department of Education (USDE) required WASC to un-incorporate and no longer allowed joint accreditation between the ACJCC and senior Commission. NMC withdrew from ACCJC accreditation in 2013 and began seeking accreditation with the senior Commission, now known as the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). NMC received approval to add the second baccalaureate degree in business management and was granted Initial Accreditation by WSCUC in June, 2014. On September 11, 2014, the USDE recognized NMC's change in accreditation from ACCJC to WSCUC.

After formal review of a complaint about NMC submitted to WSCUC in October 2015, a Special Visit was conducted November 30 – December 2, 2016 to investigate questions about NMC's adherence to the Standards of Accreditation. In light of WSCUC policy, the details of the complaint remain confidential. Based on concerns from that review presented by WSCUC staff, the WSCUC executive committee had identified the following lines of inquiry for the visit: appropriate autonomy from external entities (CFR 1.5); integrity and transparency in operations and demonstration of sound business practices (CFR 1.7); leadership reflecting integrity, high performance, responsibility and accountability (CFR 3.6); and an independent governing board exercising appropriate oversight of the institution (CFR 3.9; *WSCUC Independent Governing Board Policy*).

B. Description of The Team's Review Process

In March 2020, the team met in person in Alameda, CA for the Offsite Review (OSR) and reviewed the institutional report and related documentation provided by NMC. The scheduled fall 2020 in-person Accreditation Visit (AV) was rescheduled to fall 2021 due to the COVID-19 virus and its effect on the nation. The lines of inquiry from the OSR were sent and responses were received by WSCUC and the team in September 2021. The AV that was re-scheduled for October 2021 was modified to a virtual visit

C. Institution's Reaccreditation Report and Update: Quality and Rigor of the report and Supporting Evidence

The team found that the report was well-written, organized and transparent. It accurately portrayed the condition of the institution. It was clear to the visiting team that NMC personnel were passionate about their accreditation work and had included the entire college in producing the report.

After interviewing faculty and staff during the AV, the team learned that, during the development of this institutional report, NMC formed the Accreditation Reaffirmation Steering Committee (ARSC) that was composed of representatives of various college stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and administrators. In the aftermath of the October 2018 Super Typhoon Yutu, NMC's WSCUC staff liaison] reached out to the college's leadership team to assess the devastation caused by the typhoon and to discuss how the Commission could work with the college in moving forward with the accreditation process. In addition to extending the deadline for the college's Interim Report to WSCUC by three months, the staff liaison held a training via video conference with ARSC members to help the college develop its institutional report to the Commission and to prepare for both the Offsite Review and Accreditation Visit in 2020. Soon after that training, the staff liaison visited Saipan on June 19 and 20, 2019. The WSCUC staff liaison met with

members of the Board of Regents, the college’s leadership team, the Office of the Governor, and several other officials, to offer guidance and insight into WSCUC and its accreditation processes.

Section II – Evaluation of Institutional Essays

Component 1: Response to previous Commission actions

There were six recommendations from the 2017 Special Visit Commission Action Letter. An additional five recommendations were made in a 2017 Interim Report.

NMC was asked to pursue a broad institutionalized effort to ensure the digitization of, and access to, records, particularly those reflecting board of regent's appointments and length of terms, with specific dates of appointment and expiration. Furthermore, to facilitate ease of access and availability to the public, these digitized records were expected to be in a searchable format on the NMC website (CFR 1.7). As a result, the Board of Regents' appointments and length of terms, entitled "Regent Terms," can be found on the NMC website under "Our college", and college documents have been digitized into searchable PDFs using a local repository (CFR 1.7).

NMC was asked to ensure that the Board of Regents meeting minutes not only memorialized decisions made and actions taken, but included the rationale for all decisions and actions to fully capture this information in the public record (CFR 1.7). In response, the Board of Regents in 2016 began including a discussion of, and rationale for, each action taken in meeting minutes on the college website, with motions highlighted in bold typeface (CFR 1.7).

In the SV Commission Action Letter, it was recommended that NMC ensure the institution operated with appropriate autonomy; NMC was expected to actively pursue efforts to have the Board of Regents' nomination process become an official statutory procedure through legislation passed by the CNMI legislature (CFR 1.5). NMC responded by reporting that, in 2017, Public Law 20-26 was passed, which established a regent nominating committee and a process for the selection and appointment of regents to

the board (CFR 1.5). Board of Regents Policy 1005 was amended to include the nominating committee, in line with Public Law 20-26.

It was also recommended that the Board of Regents consider expanding or supplementing the Code of Conduct (BOR Policy 1014) to address issues of conflict of commitment, i.e., cases in which board members may be perceived to have divided loyalty between the NMC Board of Regents and either other boards or their employment in other parts of the government (CFR 1.5, 3.6). At its meeting on October 27, 2017, the Board of Regents adopted Policy 1017, entitled "Conflict of Interest and Commitment Code for Board of Regents and Employees." The policy amended Policy 1017 to add a provision to address conflict of commitment (CFR 1.5, 3.6). This new provision requires all board members and employees to complete and submit a Conflict of Interest and Commitment Disclosure Statement on an annual basis (CFR 1.5, 3.6).

In addition, it was recommended that the goals and objectives of the president, as mutually agreed to by the Board of Regents and the president, should be strategic and long-term, as appropriate to the institution's purpose as a higher education institution (CFR 3.6, 3.9, 4.6). At its meeting on October 27, 2017, the Board of Regents revised the president's annual evaluation form to include long-term goals and facilities improvements. However, with the nonrenewal of former president Carmen Fernandez's contract in August 2018, and the destruction of Super Typhoon Yutu and its disruption of the college's long-term facilities plan, the board will need to identify new strategic, long-term goals for the new, current president.

From the Special Visit Commission Action Letter, it was recommended that the Board of Regents reconsider the chief executive officer's (CEO's) two-year contract limit beyond the CEO's initial contract, because of the potential effect on performance and implications for recruitment, hiring, and retention (CFR 1.7, 3.6). With the previous college president no longer at the college, and current interim president in place, the Board of Regents will revisit the contract duration terms as a part of the presidential search process.

NMC also participated in an Interim Report review in the same year, where 5 recommendations were made:

- A bias towards action, i.e., to have a sense of urgency to move from envisioning to implementation of the many plans articulated in the Interim Report.
- An overarching institutional research strategy that is sustainable.
- Data and analysis to substantiate the value-added from the college's various student success initiatives.
- Evidence of how departments use data they say they need to improve the quality of education.
- Articulation of lessons learned from the program review audit and description of the status of the transition from this comprehensive annual effort to a staggered program review schedule.

Since the last WSCUC accreditation review in July 2014, the most significant changes have been the devastating impact of two major typhoons and a reorganization of leadership positions.

Two Major Typhoons. On August 2, 2015, a little over a year after WSCUC granted the college Initial Accreditation for its business management bachelor's degree, Typhoon Soudelor struck Saipan, the first of two major storms to directly hit Saipan in three years. A category 5-equivalent storm with 130 mph winds and gusts exceeding 160 mph, Soudelor destroyed many homes, knocked out power and water utilities for months, and caused over \$21 million in damage. At the college, Soudelor damaged 18 of the campus' 25 buildings, leaving many without roofs, and delayed the start of the fall 2015 term, which had to be compressed from 16 weeks into 12 weeks with an accelerated schedule. As discussed earlier, a little more than three years later, Super Typhoon Yutu struck. These typhoons introduced a new normal as the CNMI and the college grapple with the effects of global warming and work to build new facilities and infrastructure that can withstand future storms.

Changes in Leadership: The turbulence of two major storms has been mirrored by the figurative turbulence in key leadership positions at the college. Since the last WSCUC accreditation review in 2014, the college has seen the departure of two presidents, two accreditation liaison officers (ALOs), two directors of institutional effectiveness, and two chief financial officers. In early 2016, the NMC president left to take an executive position in a higher education institution in Eastern Europe. Soon thereafter, in October 2016, the Board of Regents appointed a new president who opted not to renew her contract when it ended in August 2018. Subsequently, the board appointed the vice president for administration and advancement as the college's interim president. In addition, in summer 2016, the ALO resigned from her position as the college's distance education director to take a position as principal of a local parochial school. She was subsequently replaced as ALO by the college's Languages and Humanities department chair. That ALO, in turn, resigned in July 2017 to accept a senior leadership position at another college in the continental United States, prompting the college to appoint the dean of learning and student success (LSS) as the new ALO, a position she continues to serve in. In July 2017, the college's director of the office of institutional effectiveness (OIE) resigned from her position. She was subsequently replaced in August 2018, and her replacement served until the end of the year. The college recently appointed a new director of OIE. In January 2017, the college's chief financial officer (CFO) resigned from her position. She was subsequently replaced in February 2017, albeit that person resigned in November 2019. NMC had hired a new CFO by the time of the Accreditation visit.

[Component 2: Compliance: Review under WSCUC Standards and compliance with federal requirements; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators](#)

STANDARD 1 - Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives.

STANDARD 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Institutional Purposes

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has demonstrated sufficient evidence of compliance with Standard 1.

In 2013 the Northern Marianas College's Board of Regents, president and stakeholders developed its current mission statement and vision statement. The Mission statement for NMC is "Northern Marianas College, through its commitment to student learning, provides high quality, affordable and accessible educational programs and services for the individuals and people of the Commonwealth." (CFR 1.1)

The NMC Academic Freedom policy states:

The primary responsibility of the academic community is to provide for the enrichment of intellectual experience. Essential to the realization of this ideal is a free and open academic community which takes no ideological or policy position itself. The responsible academic community welcomes those who do take an ideological or policy position and jealously guards their right to do so. Conflict of ideas cannot occur unless there is opportunity for a variety of viewpoints to be expressed. Toleration of what may be error is an inescapable condition of the meaningful pursuit of truth. The academic community must be hospitable even to closed minds and it must welcome the conflict of ideas likely to ensue. Academic responsibility to provide opportunity for expression of diverse points of view generates academic freedom. (CFR 1.3, 1.4)

In a meeting with the NMC Board of Regents the group provided evidence that NMC does not experience interference in substantive decisions by external entities. The Regent's examples were the transparency of hiring their new CEO and a new regent nomination process. See also CFR 3.9. (CFR 1.5)

NMC publishes pertinent aggregated information on their public-facing student webpage, including information on learning and assessment, student engagement opportunities, academic program review, retention and graduation rates. (CFR 1.6)

As detailed in CFR 3.4, NMC demonstrates integrity and transparency in its operations as demonstrated by the adoption and implementation of sound business practices and by conducting regular financial audits. NMC provided the visiting team a copy of its policy related to Student Grievances and Complaints. In a meeting with the Dean of Student Learning and Student Success the procedure to handle student complaints was discussed and specific examples were given to demonstrate that their process has integrity. (CFR 1.7)

In meetings with the Board of Regents and Administration it was clear that NMC was committed to the WSCUC accreditation process. One of the regents commented: "WSCUC helps NMC be a better institution for our students." As mentioned in the introduction of this document, NMC requested a special visit by WSCUC to obtain advice in preparing for their accreditation cycle despite the devastating effects of Super Typhoon Yutu. (CFR 1.8)

STANDARD 2 – Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has demonstrated sufficient evidence of compliance with Standard 2.

The institution provided adequate evidence of having achieved educational objectives through their core functions in spite of facing many difficult circumstances, which have been outlined. These circumstances included not only the recent Covid 19 pandemic, but two major typhoons and an extended period of administrative uncertainty at the highest levels. This uncertainty made it difficult to attend to the educational objectives of the college in an orderly fashion. However, the ongoing commitment of faculty, the emplacement of interim leadership, and a committed staff kept the institution stable, operating and meeting basic educational objectives.

The basis for any careful analysis of programs and the measurement of success is dependent upon a consistent and reliable system of collecting and analyzing data. Institution-wide progress, program assessment and student evaluation all depended upon “nerding out on data”, as expressed by the new president. The systems in place showed great promise and there was a strong effort to find the right and qualified individuals for institutional research, information technology, and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The lack of permanence in staffing these efforts made it difficult to consistently assess the quality of teaching and learning in terms of institutional goals and objectives. This was acknowledged by the college in institutional reports. There was an underlying culture of evaluation at the course and program levels, but the cultivation of that culture at the institutional level needed to be addressed.

Educational Programs: As reflected in the NMC catalogue, the institutional report, and the institutional excellence guide, the educational programs outlined by the college were appropriate in content, standards of rigor, and applicable standards. Under the slogan, “Start Smart-Finish Wise,” the college offered baccalaureate degrees in business and education as well as a series of associate degrees. (CFR 2.1). The degree programs and options listed for education and business were appropriate for the size of the community served. The programs reflected a coherent philosophy. Entry requirements were specified and levels of achievement were specified in capstone courses as well as professional testing. (CFR 2.2) For education, this included Praxis I and II testing for basic skills and subject matter. For nursing, NCLEX test results provided evidence of a successful program. (CFR 2.5, 2.6) A unique feature was a capstone course requirement for all associate degree programs. The Course SO 297 – Current Issues in CNMI ensured that all students examined the social, political, and economic dynamics of the island society that they inhabit.

In the implementation of these educational programs, there were seven General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs). These were imbedded in the six core courses required of each student. (CFR 2.2a, 2.3)

At the program and course level, Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's) were identified for each course and coordinated at the program level. (CFR 2.3) The role of faculty in deciding the SLO's was extensive and outlined in the Faculty Handbook and institutional report. The Academic Council is primarily focused on ensuring that the SLO's for each course are reviewed by other faculty for consistency with broader program and institutional objectives. (CFR 2.4)

The review of programs was a part of a systematic process overseen by the Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee. Commonly referred to as PROAC, this process has experienced difficulties in implementation due to administrative uncertainty and a complicated system that is now being simplified. The Nichols 5 Column Model was being altered to a revised Accountability Management System closely aligned to GELO's, PLO's and SLO's. Ensuring that this is successfully managed and implemented will be critical to the success of assessing educational programs. (CFR 2.7)

Community Outreach, Scholarship and Creative Efforts: Scholarship, research, and creative work are encouraged in courses and programs, but are not the central focus of the institution at this point in its development. By its presence in the community, businesses, organizations, and government agencies called upon individual faculty members and student groups to work on baccalaureate-level research projects and artistic projects. The Cooperative Research Extension Education Services (CREES) provided Land-Grant extension and research services to all three islands in the CNMI. The Community Development Institute assisted the community by providing specialized, non-degree training and action research. (CFR 2.8) The college plans on developing a defined research agenda in education, business, and natural resources.

Student Success and Learning: Students at NMC were given direct and personal assistance through a comprehensive system of tutoring and support services. Academic progress was monitored through an Individualized Degree Program (IDP). Each student was tracked by an academic advisor and given an array

of support services. Data suggested that these services provided evidence of timely progress towards degree completion. (CFR 2.10)

Students were informed about services and requirements through orientation and individual tutors who made personal contact with each student (in person and digitally). Information about programs, transfer opportunities and academic preparation were readily provided and accessible through online sessions, the website and required meetings with academic advisors.

Specialized student services were provided for a number of groups. Students who were experiencing academic difficulties were identified and offered tutoring. Students in non-degree English courses were supported through the English lab. International students and students with disabilities also had specialized assistance. Indigenous (Chamorro and Carolinian) students were given special assistance through Project PROA. Career counseling and job placement services were provided in keeping with the institution's commitment to each student and the broader community. (CFR 2.12, 1.13)

Co-curricular activities continued, but were limited by the Covid 19 pandemic. A renewed emphasis on student activities and engagement needs to be provided. (CFR 2.11) Another area that needs specific attention is assistance to students for transfer to other institutions. This part of student choice and autonomy had not been given appropriate attention in NMC documents. (CFR 2.14)

STANDARD 3 – Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has demonstrated sufficient evidence of compliance with Standard 3.

Faculty and Staff: The institutional report describes the challenges that NMC faces in recruiting and retaining qualified and diverse faculty and staff. The report indicates that the educational demographics of

CNMI's population (only 3% of the population possesses a graduate degree per the 2010 U.S. Census) has meant that the college has had to recruit many full-time faculty and senior administrators from off-island. Recruiting off-island most often results in the hiring of faculty and senior administrators who do not reflect the ethnic or racial characteristics of the college's student body. Hiring off-island is also complicated by the relative isolation of the CNMI and the resultant high costs of travel to other parts of the world. Self-described and statistically verified non-competitive salaries, two recent typhoons, restrictive federal immigration policies, and the Covid-19 pandemic have further challenged NMC's ability to recruit and retain faculty and staff.

Interviews with senior administrators, faculty, and staff described efforts to improve the recruitment and retention with a focus on improving diversity within the full-time faculty. Efforts cited include a draft strategic plan goal that focuses on "cultivating our employees" by offering competitive compensation and benefits, embracing a growth mindset in personal and professional development, and facilitating collaboration and engagement across the institution. Other planned efforts included providing research and expanded educational opportunities for faculty and staff so that they can pursue advanced degrees without leaving the CNMI to do so. These planned efforts would likely benefit faculty and staff who are longer term/indigenous residents of the commonwealth whose ethnic and racial profiles reflect those of the NMC student body (CFR 3.1).

A review of the faculty handbook, human resources policies and procedures for staff, faculty and staff, evaluation forms, faculty and staff contracts, and interviews with faculty and staff, indicate that policies, practices, and evaluation systems appear to be in place, although evaluations may not be consistently administered across the institution. There also appears to be some professional development opportunities available for faculty and staff, although these opportunities have not been consistently funded or available per the interviews with faculty and staff. Interviews with staff also indicated the

importance of educational and professional development opportunities to help ensure that staff members are better qualified for the positions they hold and/or aspire to (CFR 3.2, 3.3).

Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources: NMC has demonstrated a history of financial stability with clean audits, consistent reserves, and a relatively diverse revenue mix. Over the last five years, net tuition and fees accounted for 24% of revenues, with CNMI appropriations accounting for 31% of revenues and federal funds (including Title IV student financial aid) accounting for 44% of revenues.

Audited financial statements for the fiscal years ended September 30, 2016 through September 30, 2019 show that the net position (net assets) of NMC has grown incrementally from \$22.9 million to \$23.7 million. This occurred even after incurring \$0.8 million of typhoon damages during the fiscal year ended September 30, 2019.

Unaudited internal financial reports for the fiscal years ended September 30, 2020 and September 30, 2021 indicate that the net position of NMC declined to \$21.4 million and \$21.3 million, respectively. These reductions in net position were attributed to the continuing extraordinary costs associated with typhoon recovery and the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, including reductions in the base appropriations received by the college from the commonwealth. The tourism-based economy of the commonwealth, it was noted, was devastated by the typhoons and pandemic, which severely reduced its tax revenues.

Interviews with senior administrators and members of the Board of Regents indicate that a combination of austerity measures, including reduced working hours, and various federal grant funding sources, allowed NMC to remain financially viable during the past three fiscal years. Also, NMC experienced enrollment increases in each of the last three fiscal years. Finally, increased enrollment in fall 2021 and a NMC appropriation of \$8.2 million for the current fiscal year ending September 30, 2022 should allow NMC to rebuild its net position (CFR 3.4).

NMC appears to have a well-documented operating budget process that includes review and prioritization processes by a budget and finance committee with representation from all areas of the college. The committee's work in prioritization of budgetary resources is informed by strategic goals (CFR 3.4).

NMC property and facilities were extensively damaged by Super Typhoon Yutu on October 24, 2018, with 80% of the Saipan campus totally destroyed resulting in the demolition of 22 campus buildings. To complete the fall 2018 semester, NMC held classes at a local high school on a staggered schedule that included evenings and Saturdays. With the assistance of FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Saipan campus was reopened on February 20, 2019 using temporary classroom tent structures/pods and the conversion of office spaces into classrooms.

NMC recently completed the development of a comprehensive facilities master plan that included input from internal and external stakeholders and is focused on achieving 13 strategic goals. The facilities master plan will guide the phased rebuilding and future development of the college and an adjacent commercial neighborhood with the design and construction of buildings that are flexible in use and resilient in construction and operation to help ensure building integrity and functionality during future typhoons. The initial implementation phase of the facilities master plan will be funded by \$97.2 million in federal funding that has been secured by NMC to construct up to six new buildings.

The college's information technology (IT) is also experiencing a major overhaul with a focus on increasing data capacity, expanding wireless connectivity, and upgrading the computer equipment utilized by faculty and staff to support remote learning and work capabilities, including smart classrooms. These upgrades are being funded by federal CARES funds and the governor's education stabilization fund. Also, the new facilities plan includes a goal to program the campus for technological advancement. (CFR 3.5)

Interviews with faculty, staff, and students verified the need for the rebuilding of the college's physical plant. The interviews also verified the need for the continued improvement of the technology infrastructure at the college. Finally, the interviews highlighted the need to fill key IT positions, procure and implement necessary software packages, contract for consulting assistance as needed, and better prioritize the work of the IT department in supporting critical functions such as data gathering and analysis needed for decision making processes, quality assurance processes, and institutional learning and improvement (CFR 3.5, 3.7, 4.1,4.2, 4.3).

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes: NMC recently hired a new president, who started on July 1, 2021. In November 2020, NMC also hired a chief financial officer, who had previously served as dean of administration from 2012 – 2014. Although recently hired, the president and the members of the senior administration are engaged, and have the confidence of the Board of Regents (CFR 3.6, 3.8).

The team notes that the new president recently shared his vision for the future of the college. His video-formatted vision includes short and long-term goals to inform future budget and planning efforts, including the development of a new strategic plan that is in draft form and is expected to be finalized in December 2021.

Interviews with the president, senior administrators, and the Board of Regents indicate that participatory governance structures and broad stakeholder feedback were used to inform the development of the new facilities master plan. The interviews also indicated that the input and feedback from the development of the facilities master plan was utilized to develop the draft strategic plan goals. Finally, the interviews indicated that additional community input and feedback would be sought in the development of strategies to implement the draft strategic plan goals once adopted (CFR 4.6).

Agendas and minutes from the Board of Regents' meetings, as well as interviews with members of the board, indicate an independent, engaged, diverse, supportive, and committed group of regents. Evidence of past presidential evaluation by the board was also provided via interviews with the board as well as the intention to evaluate the new president after his first six months in office. Finally, the board has been focused on using best practices including evaluation of meetings, professional development activities, and a statutory nominating process (enacted in 2017) for regents that ensure broad stakeholder engagement (CFR 3.6, 3.9).

Interviews with faculty, along with a review of NMC documents (faculty handbook, institutional excellence guide, faculty senate constitution, and academic council bylaws and meeting minutes) provided evidence of academic leadership by the faculty. Examples of academic leadership included examples of the various ways faculty provided feedback on academic matters ranging from communicating with department heads to participation on various academic (academic council, faculty senate, and program review and outcomes assessment committee) and institutional (college council and budget and finance committee) governance bodies.

The team notes that the previous interim president appointed a multi-constituent governance review task force on April 16, 2021 to review and revise the NMC institutional excellence guide that addresses participatory governance, planning, assessment, and budgeting at the college. Interviews with various members of the campus community indicate that review is likely to further affirm the academic leadership of the faculty at NMC (CFR 3.7, 3.10).

STANDARD 4 – Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement Quality Assurance Processes

Quality Assurance Process (CFRs 4.1)

The team's finding, which is subject to Commission review, is that the institution has demonstrated sufficient evidence of compliance with Standard 4.

Program review used to be managed through OIE, but the frequent turnover of OIE directors these past few years resulted in a lack of leadership that would have otherwise ensured consistency for data collection and other tasks needed for program review. The college then designated the Dean of Learning and Student Success (LSS) as the acting chair of the Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC), which is the lead committee for the college's program review efforts. The college utilizes the Nichols & Nichols five-column model for its program review process, which emphasizes achieving measurable results and actionable strategies. PROAC members -- mostly composed of faculty members -- serve as reviewers for both academic and non-academic programs. They use rubrics to evaluate and mentor the programs to explain the committee's feedback, which enables the college to identify areas for improvement and further support.

In terms of evidence of the college's assessment and data collection, the college collected data from sources such as the Noel-Levitz Survey, course evaluations, and student achievement data, to help faculty and program directors make continuous improvements. The college also implemented a course assessment plan and established procedures for proposing new programs and curriculum. Certain academic programs, such as nursing, education, and business, have more rigorous capstone assessments as well.

However, as NMC identified in the institutional report and as the team noticed during the visit, program review at NMC has three main challenges: leadership; process; and data. When the college experienced frequent turnover in the OIE director position, the dean of LSS was designated as the acting chair of PROAC, but other responsibilities of the dean made it difficult to provide focused leadership for

PROAC. In terms of data collection, due to lack of coordination, multiple offices conduct similar data collections, which often results in duplication and confusion.

To address the challenge of voids in program review leadership, the college recently hired a new OIE director and tasked the new director to lead and streamline NMC's program review process. The president of the college frequently meets with the OIE director and requests that OIE's priorities go towards simplifying and streamlining the program review process. The college also hired a full-time assessment specialist to assist the OIE director in this task. The OIE director now serves as the chair of PROAC, working closely with OIE staff members, the PROAC committee, and academic programs. Together, they clarify and locate needed data and work to make their program review process more efficient. The college is now more equipped to work towards a systematic and institution-wide program review process, which is identified as an area of growth in the institutional report.

Institutional Research Capacity (CFRs 4.2) The institutional research and data analysis capacity has been identified in previous Commission Action Letters (CALs). In the Commission Action Letter dated July 2, 2014, WSCUC expected NMC to develop a research infrastructure and appoint qualified personnel to oversee data-supported decisions. In the Interim Report Action Summary dated June 6, 2017, WSCUC urged NMC to establish "an overarching sustainable institutional research strategy." During this visit, the review team also found evidence of necessary improvements similar to what was included in the previous Commission Action Letters.

Currently, the database administrator publishes two out of the three main data reports on NMC's website: the Student Achievement Data, with close collaboration with the institutional researcher; and the Enrollment Dashboard. The third report, the Citizen Centric Report, is managed by the president's office. The IT office and some other operational offices share data reporting responsibilities or help to respond to

data inquiries not addressed by the OIE office. It is common for multiple offices on the campus to collaborate in compiling data for reporting purposes, but it usually happens when the college develops new reports, or the report needs highly specialized knowledge such as financial aid and human resources. It is uncommon for IT and operational offices to produce reports on a regular basis because it is not their core function. Reports such as the student achievement data and enrollment census are usually prepared by the Office of Institutional Research, or OIE, where NMC's institutional research (IR) function resides.

Additionally, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness relies heavily on the IT office to extract data, which is another uncommon practice in higher education. Preparing and revising an institution's snapshot of data files requires collaborative effort between IR, IT, and other data steward offices. Once the snapshot data is available, the common practice is for IR to extract data files and conduct necessary data merging and analysis for various reporting purposes.

Insufficient and unsustainable data reporting capacities could result in data bottlenecks that hinder an institution in its key activities and initiatives such as assessment, program review, strategic planning, grant preparation, accreditation, and more. These bottlenecks could also distract operational offices from their core functions if they must fulfill various data requests, which ultimately affects an institution's operational efficiency.

NMC recognized in its institutional report that the college needs to consolidate the data collected by multiple offices, eliminate duplicate efforts, and provide a centralized data bank for all college programs. The college filled the vacant OIE director's position in April 2021 and is in the process of recruiting a second institutional researcher and hiring work-study students for extra help. The new OIE director now leads the PowerCampus Data Group and meets with them regularly to work towards their goal of making consistent and accurate data more accessible to college stakeholders.

The interviews with OIE, IT, OAR, and a few other key data stakeholders indicate that a lot of current resources, institutional knowledge, and powerful data software can be utilized to develop a standardized and centralized data reporting infrastructure to efficiently address the college's data needs. To be specific, the college has: already purchased a powerful data reporting tool (Argos); an institutional researcher with long term institutional data knowledge; several dedicated IT staff members who have already been heavily involved in data reporting; many knowledgeable officers from different fields who know their data well; and a new OIE director who now chairs the PowerCampus Data Group and provides leadership in data collection, consolidation, and reporting. These are all necessary and valuable resources that will help improve NMC's IR capacity to create and support a standardized data reporting structure, which also shows that the college is heading in the right direction.

Institutional Learning and Improvement (CFRs 4.1-4.7). Interviews with the president, deans and directors, faculty and staff indicate that the college has a shared understanding of using data for continuous improvements and has been working towards that direction through multiple strategies. Some strategies include expanding the OIE's staffing, collaborating to improve data quality and reporting efficiency, and streamlining the assessment and program review process.

Led by the OIE director and composed mainly of faculty members, the Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC) provides feedback and recommendations for improvements to both academic and non-academic programs through program review. PROAC also advises the college to allocate extra resources to programs or areas that need support.

In addition, faculty are involved in analysis and the improvement of teaching and learning by participating in assessments and program review activities. They also participate in the biennial professional development discussion and deliberation of effective teaching practices. Through these

faculty engaged activities, information collected from faculty are used to inform improvements in course guides, class scheduling, and section offerings. Additionally, information collected through course and instructor evaluations are shared with faculty to help improve teaching strategies.

To involve stakeholders in the strategic planning process, NMC hosted a Strategic Planning Summit and participated in the CNMI Education Summit. NMC involved various stakeholders, including alumni and employers, to gather information for improvements, and some programs have used employer and alumni surveys. The nursing program conducted a graduate employer survey that provides helpful feedback for improvement. NMC also serves as an active member of the strategic workforce development board, which addresses the workforce needs of the CNMI. They engaged representatives from the hospitality, healthcare, education, and law enforcement industries in NMC's strategic planning process through a panel discussion about how NMC students meet workforce needs. The college wants to incorporate input from both summits into the next strategic plan.

These are all good practices of using data for continuous improvement. However, as stated in NMC's institutional report and the "Review under WSCUC Standards" document, many assessments and program review activities seem to be siloed and uneven. The college's continuous improvements require sufficient, reliable, and timely data easily accessible by campus decision makers. Interviews with college leadership, faculty, and staff indicate that the college lacks a systematic approach to collecting, reporting, and using data, and that the inefficiency of producing data affects the college's ability to use data for continuous improvements. For example, the college's last attempt to conduct a campus-wide program review a few years ago failed due to lack of data support. Some other frontline business improvement and academic technology requests were also not addressed or delayed due to IT resources being pulled to address data reporting needs. The college's efforts at expanding the OIE office and hiring a new OIE

director enable the college to better address those issues and needs in both program review and data reporting capacity.

Component 3: Degree Programs: Meaning, quality and integrity of the degrees

The college offers programs that prepare students for employment, for transfer to other post-secondary institutions, and for general enrichment and lifelong learning. The college has established six institutional learning outcomes that serve as the foundation of its degree programs – Knowledge, Skills, Creativity, Intellect, Communication, and Analysis. These six components define the competency each graduate is expected to have upon receiving a degree from NMC. All NMC students will have taken a capstone course prior to graduation. The capstone class reinforces academic learning with real life / practical learning. In addition, all NMC graduates are required to take a course on current issues in the CNMI, which means all NMC graduates will understand current issues impacting the CNMI.

In its institutional report NMC states:

While program review has not been systematic nor institution-wide since the last accreditation review, a culture of program review has persisted at the program level. Many academic programs use the results of routine and periodic program assessments to inform decision making about curriculum, resources, and overall effectiveness. This culture of program review is evidenced by the continued use of two key program review and assessment tools by all academic programs: Form 1 and Form 2. Form 1 is a formative program-level assessment that utilizes the Nichols and Nichols five-column model to focus a program's evaluation on achieving measurable results. Form 2 is a summative evaluation of the program that will include retention and graduation rates, etc. Form 2 will also provide programs an opportunity to reflect on their challenges, accomplishments, and future needs. In 2017 All NMC programs did an assessment.

As stated in CFR 2.7, due to leadership changes in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, program review has not been as robust as it should be. NMC should put the necessary resources into OIE to maintain a consistent program review process. In interviews with staff who are involved with program review and data gathering the visiting team noted areas of concern with how data was being gathered. For example, the OIE director was not able to gather data independently and relied on IT to gather data. This issue is likely caused by a lack of resources and expertise due to NMC isolation. A possible solution to this issue is hiring consultants to look at the current IR and IT functions at NMC to improve program assessment and review.

In 2017, the college's GE Committee led all academic programs in revising their respective course guides and syllabi to clearly embed the college's General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs) into every course. Course GELOs were further aligned with all course Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) to ensure that all college courses and programs supported a shared set of learning competencies upon student graduation.

Component 4: Educational Quality: Student learning, core competencies, and standards of performance at graduation

NMC is committed to student learning by ensuring that all its graduates leave the institution with core competencies. NMC has seven General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs) to assess student learning for all students: critical thinking; humanities; citizenship and society; technology and information literacy; oral communications; quantitative and scientific reasoning; and written communication. These GELOs are aligned to the WSCUC's core competencies. The NMC GELO's are embedded in every degree program via six required courses for all NMC graduates.

For individual students, the Starfish program, software that creates an on-line student success environment, is used to identify problems during the course as identified by faculty members. Students are

provided with early intervention activities, including tutoring as an option. On a broader level, students are assessed on an individual student tracking matrix, which also results in referrals.

For degrees in education and nursing, there are standardized licensure instruments like PRAXIS and NCLEX, which assist the programs in understanding their effectiveness. Other degree programs rely on capstone projects that integrate the program, but do not provide specific data on student learning and achievement.

Closing the gap in student achievement is evaluated through a series of assessment cycles for the GELOs, SLOs and PLOs. The responsible committees assess data from course completion rates, testing of students in communication and mathematics courses, and capstone courses, in order to make adjustments. These assessments result in adjustments in course requirements and in SLO's and PLO's. Program and course adjustments are made via NMC's form 2, which proposes program changes based on assessment.

Component 5: Student Success: Student learning, retention, and graduation

NMC defines student success in the context of connection and contribution, in addition to the expected attributes for this region of learning, to connect to the broader community in ways that contribute to the social, cultural, and economic vitality of the CNMI.

In the area of connection, NMC notes that living on small, isolated islands with limited resources has engendered a culture of communal help and solidarity especially given the aftermath of the 2015 and 2018 typhoons. NMC's academic program graduation requirements require students to work with industry-related communities. An example of this is the nursing program requirement of clinical hours in the local hospital and clinics. This value is one that is practiced by students and all at the college.

In the area of contribution, NMC students are expected to participate in authentic and meaningful ways in important local, regional and national issues by completing a research paper or group

presentation, and are encouraged to participate in a civic project. There are several opportunities for these kinds of things. Such activities allow them to contribute to the workforce with skills and creativity that affect the overall success of those in the CNMI.

In reviewing the institutional report and during interviews with staff, it was noted that one of the larger outreach efforts is NMC's Start Smart Seminar. NMC secured funding from the U.S. Department of Education College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) to increase the number of students in higher education. The grant is aimed at addressing the low rate of Bachelor Degree holders in CNMI -- 18% versus all US citizens. NMC conducts outreach to connect with high school seniors and share the benefits of going to college. This initiative has grown and now reaches high school juniors and includes roundtable discussions about planning for college, tutorials on completing college applications, and financing for college. A workshop called Cash-for-College informs students in the step-by-step process of completing the FAFSA financial aid form. Among many other initiatives, the Cooperative Research, Extension, and Education Services (CREES) partners with government and non-profit organizations to allow NMC students to assist in island summer camps and develop leadership skills.

NMC could benefit from expanding these programs to reach younger high school students so that they are in the pipeline longer and have time to understand what it may take to apply, get admitted and find funding for college. Students should be prepared in all ways so they are successful once they matriculate. This will greatly assist in retaining students.

NMC has noted in the institutional report that the graduation rate for the two-year degree is 19%, which is slightly less than the comparable national rate of 22%. For four-year degrees, the gap is considerably wider, with the college's graduation rate at 14% compared to the national rate of 26%. However, graduation rates for both the two-year and four-year degree programs are improving, as noted

in the report. NMC used the WSCUC Absolute Graduation Rate (AGR) to show a more inclusive picture of how students are succeeding in the graduation space at NMC. These data show results for the college from 2010 through 2017. Per the institutional report, the AGR eight-year average is currently 30.6%.

Component 6: Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program review, assessment, use of data and evidence

NMC has set educational objectives and learning outcomes that are aligned with the general education learning goals and are consistent with the mission of the college. Faculty led the development of student learning goals, and both student-learning and program-learning outcomes are available in course guides and syllabi. NMC created a course assessment plan and established procedures for proposing new curriculum and programs. Some programs participate in semester reviews, annual program level assessments, and collect data from different constituents to inform continuous improvement. All academic programs are subject to systematic program review. Some programs, like nursing and education, include stakeholders' feedback through surveys or advisory councils. Evaluation tools such as rubrics, capstone courses, and entry and exit exams are used to demonstrate whether graduates are achieving stated program learning outcomes. The college has used some survey tools to gather feedback from students, reporting and publishing student achievement data that tracks retention and graduation rates for both associate degree programs and bachelor's degree programs (CFR 1.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4).

Interviews with the campus community indicate that the college has a shared understanding of using data for improvements. The college also recognized in its institutional report and review under WSCUC Standards that data collected by multiple offices need to be consolidated and both its data collecting and reporting procedures need to be standardized. The college implemented new strategies to strengthen the data management and reporting capacity, such as further expanding the OIE office and

creating a new data management committee to identify data stewards and improve data quality. The college also has a shared understanding that it is important to streamline its program review and establish a campus-wide program review process. The college leadership has prioritized simplifying and streamlining the program review process for the new OIE director.

The team acknowledges the college's efforts at reestablishing leadership in program review through the hiring of a new OIE director, who now leads the Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee. PROAC continues to help both academic and non-academic programs improve. The team acknowledges the college's efforts at streamlining data management and reporting through the PowerCampus Data Group, which has drawn collaborative efforts across the campus to improve the quality and efficiency of data reporting. The PowerCampus Data Group is also led by the OIE director and aims to ultimately build a comprehensive data reporting system that provides consistent and reliable data, accessible to faculty and staff, while also helping to inform decisions at all levels of the college. The college is working towards creating better processes and more data reporting capabilities that equip the college for continuous improvement.

Component 7: Sustainability: Financial viability, preparing for the changing higher education environment

Financial Sustainability: As detailed in an earlier section (Component 2) of this report, NMC has demonstrated a history of financial stability with a diverse revenue mix that is, on average, only 24% dependent on net student tuition and fees. Also, the college has been able to secure federal and CNMI funding to offset the impact of typhoons and the Covid-19 pandemic, including \$97.2 million in federal funding for the rebuilding and future development of the college. Finally, the college has been able to incrementally increase total fall headcount enrollment from 1,070 in fall 2016 to 1,322 in fall 2021, despite typhoon and pandemic related challenges.

Also, as detailed previously in this report, NMC is dependent on the CNMI for, on average, 31% of its revenues. This percentage of dependence on the CNMI links the college to the financial health of the commonwealth, which has recently been buffeted by typhoons, the Covid-19 pandemic, federal immigration restrictions, and federal trade policies.

The team notes that appropriations to NMC from the CNMI had grown incrementally through the fiscal year ended September 30, 2019, to a level of \$6.1 million, as documented in the college's audited financial statements. The college received reduced appropriations for the fiscal years ended September 30, 2020 and 2021, but will receive an appropriation of \$8.12 million for the current fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, with additional federal pass-through funds expected from the commonwealth.

Interviews with members of the senior administration and Board of Regents verified the college's financial dependence on CNMI and acknowledged the role that the college has and will play in being an engine for economic growth and the social and cultural vitality of the commonwealth. Examples cited included the economic development, social, and cultural goals in the facilities master plan and in the draft strategic plan (CFR 4.6, 4.7).

The interviews also revealed plans to lower the college's dependence on CNMI and its annual appropriations processes. Strategies under consideration include estate planning initiatives, increasing tuition, recruiting more off-island students, developing and/or exchanging campus properties for revenue generating commercial uses, assisting in the development of a commercial neighborhood adjacent to the campus, securing a guaranteed minimum level of appropriations from the commonwealth without need for annual legislative action by the CNMI, expanding grant writing, and pursuing expanded fundraising efforts, including the revitalization of the NMC Foundation Board (CFR 3.4).

Alignment with Institutional Priorities: NMC has a history of strategic planning that is aligned with its mission and vision. The most recent strategic plan covered five years and expired in 2020.

The appointment of a new president a few months ago (July 1, 2021 start date), and the articulation of a new vision for the future of NMC in August 2021 by the new president, appear to set the stage for the institution's next strategic plan, which is currently being reviewed in draft form and focused on seven goals. The vision statement/video provides an outline of the stakeholder-inclusive and somewhat data-informed process that yielded draft strategic plan goals for the next three to seven years. The vision statement/video also outlines some high level short and long-term goals that are reflected in the draft strategic plan goals.

Interviews with various members of the campus community indicate excitement and support of the facilities master plan and the draft strategic plan goals. There is also a sense that the ambitions reflected in these planning efforts are realistic, but that progress needs to be made to buoy the morale of the campus and CNMI communities that have endured many hardships over the last four years (CFR 3.4, 3.5, 4.6, 4.7).

Higher Education Environment and Institutional Response: NMC has historically been focused on how it can meet the higher education needs of CNMI so that the local economy can thrive in a very competitive global environment and support the community. This symbiotic relationship is evidenced by the college's curricular offerings and its numerous community service programs, including the cooperative research, extension, and education services that support CNMI's agricultural industry.

Interviews with members of the Board of Regents, members of the senior administration, faculty, staff, and students indicate a continuing desire for NMC to be an engine for economic growth and the social and cultural vitality of CNMI as reflected in the recently adopted facilities master plan and the draft master plan goals. This desire comes with a keen awareness that the future health of NMC is linked to the future health of the CNMI (CFR 4.7).

Component 8: Optional essay on institutional specific themes

Component 9: Reflection and plans for improvement

The 8th and 9th components of a WSCUC review are optional and, as such, NMC elected not to write an essay about any other particular institutional specific themes.

Section III – Other Topics (such as Substantive Change)

NMC has not submitted any substantive change requests for review since being granted Initial Accreditation in 2014. Similarly, any other topics beyond the WSCUC structure of review have already been integrated within the requisite Standards and Components.

Section IV – Findings, Commendations, and “Recommendations

Commendations: The team commended Northern Marianas College for the following:

1. The hardships endured and the incredible efforts employed to quickly respond to the devastating effects of super typhoon Yutu in October 2018.
2. A timely, comprehensive, and effective response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. Resilient faculty, students, and staff who persevered through the “storms” of geopolitical uncertainty, socioeconomic disruptions, and climate change and the impact these storms have had on the college and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands.
4. Establishing and fostering a stronger and more supportive relationship with the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI), both with the executive and legislative branches.
5. The development of a new comprehensive facilities master plan to guide the rebuilding and future development of the college, along with securing \$97.2 million in federal funds for the initial implementation of the plan.

6. Management of limited financial resources reflected by low debt, stable financial reserves, and growing enrollment.

Recommendations: The team identified the Following recommendations for further development:

1. Conclude and implement a new strategic plan in a timely fashion to guide the college over the next three to seven years, as well as implement the recently adopted facilities master plan. (CFR 3.5, 4.6, 4.7)
2. Conclude the work of the governance review task force in a timely fashion to ensure consolidation and clarity of NMC governance structures, insist on streamlined efficiency, affirm effective academic leadership by faculty, and focus on institutional excellence. (CFR 3.6, 3.7, 3.9, 3.10)
3. Develop approaches to implement the draft strategic goal, “cultivate our employees,” ensuring the recruitment, retention and ongoing professional development of sufficient, qualified, and diverse faculty and staff. (CFR 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)
4. Provide substantial and continuing support for the president, leveraging best practices in onboarding and development, to help the president achieve a focused set of initiatives early in the president’s tenure. (CFR 3.1, 3.3, 3.6)
5. Empower and resource IT to reorganize and refocus the department in ways that establish clear responsibilities and business processes, provide support for academic programs, and improve the college’s operational efficiencies. (3.5, 3.6, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)
6. Establish a standardized and centralized data reporting infrastructure with a sense of urgency to efficiently produce mandatory reports and provide consistent and reliable data that are accessible and inform decisions at all levels of the college. (CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4)

Appendices

The report includes the following appendices:

A. Federal Compliance Forms

1. Credit Hour and Program Length Review
2. Marketing and Recruitment Review
3. Student Complaints Review
4. Transfer Credit Review

B. Off-Campus Locations Review, as appropriate

C. Distance Education Review, as appropriate

Federal Compliance Forms

1. Marketing and Recruitment Review Form

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution’s recruiting and admissions practices.

Material Reviewed	Questions and Comments: Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this table as appropriate.
**Federal regulations	<p>Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>Comments: The Northern Marianas College Academic Catalog for 2019 – 2023 https://www.marianas.edu/media/resource%20documents/2020/2019-2023%20Academic%20Catalog.pdf and the Northern Marianas College website https://www.marianas.edu/ provide evidence of compliance with various federal regulations related to the recruitment of students including those related to the Higher Education Act,</p>
Degree completion and cost	<p>Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>
	<p>Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>
	<p>Comments: The Northern Marianas College academic catalog and website provide access the graduation requirements for each degree program. In addition, the website provides information on the cost of attendance https://www.marianas.edu/cost-attendance as well as a net price calculator to determine the overall cost of attendance https://www.marianas.edu/net-price-calculator</p>
Careers and employment	<p>Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>
	<p>Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>
	<p>Comments: The College’s Career Center provides information to students about employment opportunities as well as job placement and graduate tracking services.</p>

*§602.16(a)(1)(vii)

**Section 487 (a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third party entities for their success in securing student enrollments. Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

Review Completed By: Peter A. Michell
 Date: October 25, 2021

A. TRANSFER CREDIT REVIEW

TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulations*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices accordingly.

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Please enter findings and recommendations in the comment section of this column as appropriate.)
Transfer Credit Policy(s)	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? YES
	Is the policy publicly available? YES If so, where? https://www.marianas.edu/admissions
	Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? YES
	Comments: The institution's website indicates that transfer credits are only accepted from accredited institutions. This information was verified with the admission's director during the visit.

*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that--

(1) Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and

(2) Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

Review Completed by: Yang Zhang

Date: 10/28/2021



3 - STUDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW FORM

Under federal regulation*§602-16(1)(1)(ix) WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution’s student complaints policies, procedures, and records.
(See also WSCUC Senior College and University Commission’s Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy.)

Material Reviewed	Questions/Comments (Enter findings and recommendations in the Comments sections of this table as appropriate.)
Policy on student complaints	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Is the policy or procedure easily accessible? If so, where? 1. NMC BOR Policy 4008 - Student Grievances/Complaints 2. NMC Procedure 4008.1 - Student Grievance/Complaints
	Comments: Northern Marianas College, in accordance with federal and local laws, is committed to a policy against any illegal, arbitrary, or unreasonable discriminatory practices. NMC Procedure 4008.1 was revised and approved in August 2019 and was uploaded onto the NMC website in December 2019.
Process(es)/ procedure	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
	If so, please describe briefly. Northern Marianas College is committed to provide its students an opportunity to resolve complaints alleging discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, medical condition, ancestry, marital status, citizenship, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Prior to filing a grievance, the student may contact their department head, counselor, or dean for assistance with an informal resolution. Attempts to resolve the matter informally should be initiated within thirty (30) days. If an informal resolution is not reached, a formal grievance may be filed within sixty (60) days using the Student Grievance Form with the Office of the Dean of LSS, formerly known as the Office of the Dean of Student Services.
	If so, does the institution adhere to this procedure? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Records	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, where? Records of student complaints are located at the Office of the Dean of LSS.
	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If so, please describe briefly: Northern Marianas College tracks and monitors student grievances through the Office of the Dean of LSS.
	Comments: Northern Marianas College maintains all records of student grievances filed. All paper records are tracked and monitored by the dean of LSS. There have only been 6 complaints in the past 5 years.

*§602-16(1)(1)(ix)

See also WASC Senior College and University Commission’s Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy.