

## **WSCUC Interim Report**

### **Name of Institution:**

Northern Marianas College

### **Person Submitting the Report:**

Dr. Brady Hammond, Accreditation Liaison Officer

### **Report Submission Date:**

March 6, 2017

### **Statement on Report Preparation**

The Interim Report was drafted by a cross section of institutional employees. This cross section was formed through the creation of four *ad hoc* committees. The focus of each of the four committees was one of the four recommendations in the July 7, 2014 Action Letter from WSCUC to the institution. Each committee had eight faculty and staff members from various divisions and departments at the institution. The committees each selected two co-chairs to create leadership within the *ad hoc* committees. This was to ensure that as each recommendation was researched; there would simultaneously be guidance at a “big picture” level with broader input.

The Interim Report was reviewed by the Board of Regents, the President, and key governance bodies including College Council, Academic Council, Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College for feedback before final submission to WSCUC.

### **List of Topics Addressed in this Report**

Recommendation 1: Faculty Roles and Development [CFR 2.4, 2.9, 3.2, 3.3, 3.10]

Recommendation 2: Research and Data-Supported Decisions [CFR 4.1, 4.2]

Recommendation 3: Assessment of Learning [CFR 2.2, 2.2a, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3, 4.4]

Recommendation 4: Student Success [CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13]

### **Institutional Context**

Northern Marianas College is a Land Grant Institution that was founded in 1981. Its focus continues to be ensuring student success and meeting the higher education and vocational training needs of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

With a campus on Saipan and instructional sites on Rota and Tinian, the College has developed a comprehensive set of academic programs and services that address the social, cultural and economic development needs of its island communities. Today, students are enrolled in credit programs that lead to associate degrees in liberal arts, natural resource management, nursing, business and business administration (with emphases in accounting, business management, and computer applications), criminal justice, and hospitality management, and bachelor degrees in education (with concentrations in early childhood education, elementary education, rehabilitation and human services, and special education) and business management. The business management degree was launched in 2014.

In addition to its credit programs, the College also offers non-credit, continuing education courses that are offered in various formats (online, short-term, accelerated, etc.) throughout the year. Since the College's establishment, over 3,000 students have been awarded certificates and/or degrees in programs offered or coordinated by NMC; more than 12,000 individuals have been served in the community through such programs as the Adult Basic Education, Continuing Education, and the Cooperative, Research, Extensions, and Education Service (CREES).

NMC has also had multiple changes in key personnel. The former president, Dr. Sharon Hart, requested leave from the college at the start of 2016. This leave extended to the completion of her contract. In February 2016, David Attao, Dean of Administration and Resource Development, became Interim President. At the same time, the BOR adopted Resolution 2016-02, which formally initiated the search for a new CEO. Following the president search process, the Board appointed Dr. Carmen Fernandez as president in October 2016. Additionally, the former Accreditation Liaison Officer, Amanda Allen-Dunn, resigned. Currently, Dr. Brady Hammond is the ALO. Lastly, the Board of Regents welcomed two new regents: Regent Michael Evangelista and Regent Irene Torres; the Board also elected Regent Evangelista to be the new Chairperson.

The most significant event, though, occurred on August 2, 2015, when Typhoon Soudelor passed directly over the island of Saipan. The storm dealt a major blow to the physical resources of the College as the 200 mile per hour winds left 19 of the 25 buildings on the Saipan campus with major damage. While reconstruction has been ongoing, the facilities are reopening with full functionality. Despite the extreme hardships forced on all institution stakeholders, NMC marshalled its resources and redoubled its commitment to quality education and extension. These efforts were rewarded in May, 2016, when the institution conferred 171 degrees to its largest graduating class ever.

As the spring 2017 semester begins, the College maintains its focus on quality and continues to seek to improve at every level through coordinated, data-driven efforts from every stakeholder.

## **Response to Issues Identified by the Commission**

### **Recommendation 1: Faculty Roles and Development**

#### *WSCUC Action Letter Recommendation 1:*

*In recognition of the critical role of the faculty in achieving its mission, the institution is urged to ensure that the faculty: (1) demonstrate collective ownership over the curriculum in service of effective student learning; (2) are provided with the necessary and budgeted resources and professional development to achieve these goals; and (3) can work within clearly defined role expectations and evaluative criteria aligned with their varied responsibilities to the institution. [CFR 2.4, 2.9, 3.2, 3.3, 3.10]*

#### **I. Collective Ownership**

In order to support collective ownership of the curriculum by the faculty, the institution has worked to effect changes at the organizational level. The key shift in this regard has been to restructure Academic Council (AC). As detailed in the Institutional Excellence Guide (IEG), Academic Council:

“...is a major governance body whose purpose is to assist the Dean of Academic Programs and Services, and to recommend to the President on all matters related to instructional programs and academic regulations. It reviews and offers recommendations on the quality of and continued need for various instructional programs and, as appropriate, offers advice on the deletion of

academic programs. It reviews and evaluates all Academic Program Learning Outcomes (PLO), General Education Outcomes (GEO), and Student Learning Outcomes (SLO). It works closely with [Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee] on all assessment and program review activities.” [CFR 1.2, 2.4, 4.1, 4.5]

In brief, AC is the body that acts as the gatekeeper for all curricular decisions, particularly with regard to outcomes. [CFR 2.4, 3.10]

In 2016, a transition was initiated to hand over AC entirely to faculty members to ensure that all curricular monitoring was driven by the faculty. In spring 2017, this transition was completed through the adoption of a proposal to modify AC membership, which put AC under the purview of the Faculty Senate. This adopted proposal restructured voting membership as noted in Table 1.1 (See Attachment 01-01 for complete document). [CFR 2.4, 3.10]

<b>Voting Members of Academic Council</b>
One (1) instructional faculty representative from each academic department (L&H, SMHA, SSFA, NUR, BUS, SOE)
Two (2) at-large instructional faculty representatives
Director of Learning Support Services
The Registrar
One (1) representative from Distance Learning Education
The coordinator/director from each of the Liberal Arts, Criminal Justice, and Natural Resource Management programs.

Table 1.1

Since the coordinators of the Liberal Arts, Criminal Justice, and Natural Resource Management programs are all faculty members, this means that of the 14 voting members on AC, 11 are faculty members. Further, it is stipulated that:

“The Chair of the Academic Council shall always be either a faculty representative or a Faculty Senate officer, and shall be nominated by the Faculty Senate. The chair is a non-voting member, except in instances of a tie among the voting members. The chair reports directly to the Faculty Senate, and the Faculty Senate can remove the chair for failure to fulfill his/her duties.” [CFR 2.4, 3.10]

This guarantees that the membership and leadership of AC are all faculty members. [CFR 2.4, 3.10]

To ensure that AC also clarifies its role in terms of assessment of curriculum at the planning level, AC has worked to revise and reimplement the existing Guide to Preparing Program Proposals and Course Guides, which, among other goals, serves to check that the learning outcomes within course guides are fully reviewed and vetted. One such element is the redefinition of the Assessment Measures section in each course guide, which has been renamed to the Assessment Measures for Student Learning Outcomes. This change was made by the faculty in an effort to better direct their assessment efforts, ensuring that direct assessment of student work is done in a way that produces evidence of outcome achievement. [CFR 2.4, 2.9, 3.10]

The Guide to Preparing Program Proposals and Course Guides establishes clear roles for faculty in terms of how voting members participate in and drive the curriculum process. The result is that the curriculum process is designed with the oversight of content-area experts. Further, some faculty members

on AC have already had curriculum development training. Most importantly, though, the above discussed membership changes allow this guide to effectively articulate the roles faculty have in the curriculum process (See Attachment 01-02). Since the membership modifications were only adopted at the end of fall 2016, a full assessment of the new roles has not been conducted, but is planned for fall 2017. [CFR 2.4, 2.9, 3.10]

Another strategy to increase faculty ownership over curriculum has been the increased inclusion of faculty members on the Planning, Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Committee (PROAC). As detailed in the IEG, PROAC:

“...is a major governance body and is an integral advisory body with respect to NMC’s ongoing efforts to improve the quality of instruction and support services through a systematic process of planning and assessment. The committee is tasked with building and sustaining a campus-wide culture of evidence and shall concern itself with matters relative to accreditation, assessment and with monitoring the fidelity of initiatives and other actions being implemented as recommended through program review, other means of assessment, and as provided in NMC’s strategic plan or other plans generated by the College. Articles and bylaws establish membership and responsibilities of the organization. PROAC makes recommendations to the Director of Institutional Effectiveness.” [CFR 2.7, 3.10, 4.1, 4.5]

While the official membership requirements have not changed in the same way as AC, the increased presence of faculty on PROAC is a key step in the rearticulation of faculty roles with regard to curriculum ownership. This is due to the fact that assessment of curriculum is the purview of PROAC. In effect, a pathway has been built between AC and PROAC to ensure that faculty members are involved in all parts of the curriculum process. The initiative to include faculty more firmly in the PROAC process was launched by the president in the spring 2017 semester, and it includes faculty workload compensation and additional opportunities for professional development. [CFR 1.2, 3.10]

## II. Resources and Professional Development

To support these faculty roles, and to boost curriculum knowledge and ownership in general, the institution has allocated resources for faculty and planned professional development to enhance their skillsets. The goal is to foster the growth of a curriculum mindset such that all faculty members are not only aware of their roles in the process, but will have the resources and training needed to perform in those roles. [CFR 3.3]

This is first evident in the budget planning conducted by the division of Academic Programs and Services, where each department was asked to compose a detailed list of professional development opportunities they would like their faculty to have. These opportunities include webinars, on-site training, destination training, conferences, and more. Table 1.2 shows the total proposed budget for academic department faculty and staff development in Fiscal Year 2017 was \$264,654. This budget covers all full-time faculty and targets opportunities to develop content-area knowledge, assessment skills, and other relevant areas. While resources for these proposals were not all granted due to ongoing recovery efforts from damages to the campus related to Typhoon Soudelor, the budget proposals are part of a 3-year funding proposal (See Attachment 01-03). [CFR 3.3]

The institution also dedicated substantial resources to hosting the 2016 Pacific Circle Consortium Conference on Saipan. This gave college stakeholders a variety of opportunities to learn about academic conferences as well as to network with higher education professionals working in the Pacific region. Faculty members wishing to attend the conference were funded by the institution. In addition, 10 representatives from NMC presented at the conference, with many of those presentations focusing on

curriculum and faculty development (See Attachment 01-04). Similarly, the institution is preparing to send a team of faculty to the 2017 WASC Academic Resource Conference. Lastly, the institution plans to host on-site training in fall 2017 for faculty by Amy Driscoll on course and program review. [CFR 3.3]

<b>FY 2017 Academic Department Budgets for Professional Development (in USD)</b>	
Office of the Dean	74,017
Business	71,500
Criminal Justice	8000
Liberal Arts	7565
Languages & Humanities	15000
Nursing	37,072
Science, Math, Health, Athletics	13,050
School of Education	40,000
Social Science and Fine Arts	5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>264,654</b>

Table 1.2

At a more fundamental level, the institution has also moved to boost salaries. For many years, there has been salary inequity at the institution such that faculty and staff who were hired more recently were earning higher salaries than faculty and staff who had been at the college for many years yet were performing the same jobs. Compounding the situation was the fact that the new hire salaries were simultaneously deemed non-competitive with industry standards. The result was the creation of an atmosphere that too often reduced available time for focus on curriculum and resulted in a high turnover rate. Salary adjustment became a key resource initiative to address these dual issues, especially giving its connection to strategic planning and allocation of resources. [CFR 3.1, 3.2]

In October 2016, after a lengthy and robust review process, the Board of Regents approved the Fiscal Year 2017 budget for the institution. A key element of this budget was an allocation of funds to pay for salary adjustments for faculty and staff. For more than a decade, employees had not received any salary increases. The new president, Dr. Fernandez, made this her top priority, and she made the salary increases happen within 30 days of her presidency. The president engaged the Faculty Senate and Staff Senates extensively and endorsed their recommendations to implement Phase I (see Attachment 01-05). [CFR 3.1, 3.2]

Phase II is in process now which involves a comprehensive classification and salary study to be implemented by the president after Board of Regents approval. The president vowed to identify funding for this second phase of salary adjustments and was able to achieve an additional \$1 million from the CNMI Legislature. [CFR 3.1, 3.2]

A key element of this budget was Phase I of salary adjustments. In this Phase, salaries for graded employees were adjusted to address inconsistencies between salaries for new employees and existing employees. The effect was largely a pay increase for employees. The goal of this Phase is boosting employee retention through salary equity. This phase was largely completed through the work of both the Faculty and Staff Senates. The aim is to create stronger continuity in curriculum ownership by lowering turnover rates and increasing faculty involvement. [CFR 3.1, 3.3, 3.10]

Phase II of the salary adjustment is in the process of being implemented and will focus on faculty classification, pay scale, and desk audits, in which the duties of all employees are audited and clarified. The first of those items has already been implemented with the adoption of Procedure 5011, Faculty Ranking, in October 2016 (see Attachment 01-06). Again, the aim is to improve faculty retention rates by

making salaries more competitive. The ideal timeline for implementation is one (1) calendar year. [CFR 3.1]

The immediate effects of the above have been positive. To more accurately measure the efficacy, retention and turnover rates are being monitored to see if there is a change. Additionally, exit interviews for departing employees are being examined to determine why employees leave, and if the salary adjustment has had any effect. [CFR 3.1]

### III. Roles and Assessment

Faculty members at the institution undergo multifaceted assessment that is both formative and summative. The three primary means of assessment are Annual Evaluations, Course Evaluations, and Peer Observations. [CFR 3.2]

The Annual Evaluation process is a comprehensive review process undergirded by the Handbook for the Evaluation of Instructional Faculty, which articulates a comprehensive, evidence-based review process that establishes development goals for faculty members. The timeline for evaluations is tied to contract anniversaries. The five goals of the evaluation process are to “increase institutional effectiveness,” “facilitate professional growth,” “improve communication,” “make informed decisions,” and “promote accountability.” The assessment criteria span four broad categories, which are “instruction,” “service to students,” “service to college and community,” and “professionalism and professional growth,” categories which also ensure effective student learning. Ratings in each category are given based on the compilation of evidence in a portfolio, many items of which directly relate to assessment. The robust nature of these categories permit faculty to be evaluated on their abilities to provide students with opportunities to achieve outcomes, as well as their roles and attending functions. In this way, evidence is collected and evaluated to ensure that faculty members are effectively performing in the roles they are assigned, whether those roles are at the instructional level, assessment level, or otherwise. To ensure that the assessments include actionable items, they feed into the Professional Development Plan (PDP). [CFR 3.2]

The PDP is designed to target the three areas of Professional Improvement, Professional Enhancement, and Career Development (See Attachment 01-07). Otherwise stated, each faculty member is to develop short, medium, and long term goals. Given the scope of the annual review, the PDP necessarily involves refining the faculty roles as they relate to instruction, assessment, and other vital areas. The efficacy of this process will be determined once a full cycle of the reimplementation has been completed, which will be in Spring 2018. Initial anecdotal evidence from faculty suggests that this process has already increased awareness of curriculum ownership. [CFR 2.8, 3.2, 4.1]

Course Evaluations have long been the bedrock of faculty assessment (see Attachment 01-08). They are implemented approximately two thirds of the way through every course, and they are utilized to discern a variety of data points regarding instructor effectiveness. Further, once the evaluations are conducted and collated, the results of the evaluations are discussed between the faculty member and their supervisor. These discussions then further inform the professional development process. Given the importance of these evaluations, the evaluations themselves are reviewed for efficacy. To that end, they are the subject of an ongoing review process within Faculty Senate. [CFR 3.2, 4.1, 4.5]

The final process for assessing faculty is peer observation. This method was selected in place of peer review due to the fact that the institution has not had a full-time Director of Human Resources until just recently. One of the initiatives the new director will work on in concert with Faculty Senate is building a proper peer review process to augment the peer observation. This is expected to be piloted in fall 2017. [CFR 3.2, 4.1, 4.5]

In terms of the peer observation, the institution has embarked on a standardization initiative to ensure that faculty observation is fair, effective, and equal across all academic departments. A key document in achieving these three goals has been the Peer Observation and Assessment of Teaching resource book developed by Bill Robertson for the University of Texas at El Paso and later updated for the University of Albany. This book establishes very clear criteria for different types of peer observations. [CFR 3.2, 3.3]

The initial use of this document has been to restructure intra-departmental peer observations using the methods detailed in the handbook such that the classroom observation is preceded by a meeting in which the faculty and observation team discuss the upcoming class, and is followed by a debriefing. As the templates from the document used for the observations show, the aim of this process is to conduct a formative, not summative, review (see Attachment 01-09). In short, it is designed as a system to promote pedagogical reflection and improvement. In this regard, it focuses on enhancing faculty involvement in the curriculum at the course level. Both this observation and course evaluations are strongly integrated in the annual evaluation and development plan processes. [CFR 2.9, 3.2, 3.3]

#### IV. Next Steps

With the implementation of such broad spectrum changes, the most important action to be taken is to assess the efficacy of each intervention. For instance, Academic Council will conduct a self-study over the course of the next year. In January 2018, they will assess their performance over the previous year and amend their processes according to the results. Similarly, the Academic Programs and Services division will assess the peer observation process at the end of the spring 2017 semester with interventions and alterations to the process to be implemented in the fall 2017 semester.

### **Recommendation 2: Research and Data-Supported Decisions**

WSCUC Action Letter Recommendation:

*The Commission expects NMC to continue to develop its research infrastructure in order to track and analyze key quality metrics and to support decision-making at all appropriate levels. Qualified persons with requisite skills in obtaining, analyzing, and disseminating critical data should be appointed to oversee these functions. [CFR 4.1, 4.2]*

#### I. Research Infrastructure

Decision-making processes at Northern Marianas College rely upon data. This is evident at the policy level of the institution, which mandates the data to be collected at the institution for decision-making purposes (See Attachment 02-01). Traditional methods of data collection and analysis have been in place for years, but as data needs increase and the data become more complex, those methods are no longer sufficient. To that end, NMC has been working to build and clarify its Institutional Researching infrastructure. [CFR 4.1, 4.2]

Currently, the institution has expanded its personnel dedicated solely to IR in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to four (4). This includes a newly created Program Manager position, whose responsibility it is to oversee program assessment projects. When including employees across all divisions with key IR responsibilities, there are thirteen (13) total. Further, these positions function in key connective capacities to ensure that the other bodies and all stakeholders are mobilized toward IR (See Attachment 02-02). The bolstering of personnel for IR has not been solely related to IR within the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. [CFR 4.1, 4.2]

To help ensure that processes and services to matriculate and transition students successfully into the college are prioritized, Student Services has created two new administrator positions, the Director of Enrollment Services and the Director of Learning Support Services. These positions were designed to initiate a data distribution and use loop which targets improving student outcomes. [CFR 4.1, 4.2]

The Director of Enrollment Services oversees many of the processes relating to PowerCampus, an Enterprise Resource Planning solution by Ellucian and the primary database solution for the institution. Specifically, this position is designed to curate PowerCampus data by managing personnel and resources directly interacting with the database. This position will produce reliable data packages. For example, this position oversees scheduled data entry into the institutional database. The entered data is used for many purposes, including the tracking of multiple Key Performance Indicators. As such, this position collates data packages, which will then be disseminated across the campus to requesting stakeholders, who use the packages to facilitate their own decision-making processes. One key destination for such packages is the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Table 2.1 shows data that office collects, which is then disseminated to academic programs; this is the OIE reporting pipeline, which will be discussed in Recommendation 3. All of these functions are intended to assess the program review processes. Another example of data distribution and usage would be the other newly created position, the Director of Learning Support Services. [CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.5]

The Director of Learning Support Services was created to receive some of the data packages mentioned above and use them to structure support interventions. For instance, one data package distributed will be student completion rates in courses. If certain trends are identified in the packages such as lower achievement rates in the math curriculum, this position can direct their resources to arrange interventions to target such needs. One example of this was the recently hired adjunct instructor in English to provide writing support to students. This position was created and filled in response to an identified need for stronger writing supports. [CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.5]

It is important to note again that the structuring of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness discussed above is designed as an additional monitor of the efficacy of this process. In that way, all of the processes have been developed to provide feedback to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, which assesses the processes themselves. This multi-tiered data system, which is monitored as it functions, is designed with closing the loop as its key focal point. To ensure that the technical element of this process functions, the institution has an inter-divisional committee, the PowerCampus Data Group, which focuses on assessing the use of PowerCampus at NMC, and expanding its functionality. The constituents for the Group are from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the Office of Admissions and Records, Information Technology, and the faculty. The membership was designed to ensure that key decision-making bodies have input into the database solution used by the institution. [CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.5]

<b>OIE Reporting Pipeline Data Package Components (distributed every fall semester to academic departments)</b>
Course Completion Rates
Retention Rates (Term-to-Term)
Progression to Next Course/Level
Program Completion (for developmental programs)
Degrees/Certificates Awarded and Completion Rates
Transfer Rates to Four-Year Institutions
Graduation Rates (disaggregated by program, gender and race/ethnicity)
Annual / Semester enrollment trends (disaggregated by gender and race/ethnicity)
Advising assignments (load)

Table 2.1



As noted above, the primary database solution implemented at NMC for its credit-bearing and non-degree unit courses is PowerCampus. It features a robust set of features that draws upon highly customizable fields targeting key post-secondary metrics. While NMC has used this solution since 2002, self-studies have shown that the inputting processes were not reliable. In conjunction with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Accreditation Liaison Officer, the data entry process has been revised by the Director of Enrollment Services. This revision delegated duties to personnel to ensure timely and effective data entry which can be packaged and disseminated as discussed above (See Attachment 02-03). [CFR 4.1]

Another upgrade to the research infrastructure is a return to outcomes tracking software. Previously the institution had used TracDat to monitor outcomes. Given the importance of institution-wide outcomes tracking, the decision was made to re-adopt a software solution. A committee was formed to review the current field of solutions. The committee determined that the best solution for the current needs of the institution is TaskStream due to its ability to concisely and effectively track outcomes assessment, program review, and accreditation elements. This solution will be adopted in Spring 2017 with training and full implementation taking place by Fall 2017. This schedule is designed to dovetail with the PowerCampus data inputting processes noted above. The TaskStream implementation will provide institutional stakeholders a central database which can be accessed to ensure that data is tracked and analyzed. Assessment of the initial implementation is planned for the end of Fall 2017. [CFR 4.1, 4.2]

The total effect of this redesigned and expanded process has been to produce pathways that “close the loop.” These pathways and the stakeholders involved collect and distribute data, utilize that data to inform decision, and track the outcomes in formats that are available to all institutional stakeholders. More importantly, the loop is also designed to allow information to travel in multiple directions such that stakeholders further down the line can provide feedback to those distributing data. The result is that the loop is dynamic, allowing feedback and decisions to not only affect student outcomes, but to also affect the process itself. [CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.5]

Given the scope of this planned system for the collection and use of data, assessing it will be a necessarily complex process. In addition to assessing each individual component using the traditional outcome measures, a more holistic evaluation is planned. This evaluation will involve the Dean of Academic Programs and Services, the Dean of Student Services, the Director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, and faculty. This evaluation will take place at the end of each academic semester. The goal is to ensure that the data pathway is functioning as intended, and that key data are reaching those who need them. [CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.5]

### III. Next Steps

The next step is to assess the newly implemented processes. This is a broad spectrum step, as it will involve assessing all tiers of data collection and dissemination at the institution. Further, because there have been multiple interventions at this level, those individual assessments will need to be collated to determine the overall efficacy of new pathways. Thus, individually assessing each element of the pathways articulated above is essential. Lastly, by assessing these processes, the institution is effectively assessing its program review infrastructure.

### **Recommendation 3: Assessment of Learning**

WSCUC Action Letter Recommendation:

*Building on the assessment infrastructure developed to date, the Commission expects the faculty to implement program-level assessments in support of periodic and effective program reviews. Toward this end, the faculty need to ensure that learning outcomes in all programs, including for General Education, are progressive and lead to the desired levels of culminating competency at or near the time of graduation. [CFR 2.2, 2.2a, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3, 4.4]*

#### **I. Program-level Assessment**

One of the key priorities for the institution has been the development of program-level assessment in service of “closing the loop.” When NMC transitioned to being accredited solely by WSCUC, a target date of September 2015 was set for the initial submission of program review documents, with the assessment of those documents to follow. This timeline was set so as to provide programs with ample time to recalibrate their processes to WSCUC Standards. However, the arrival of Typhoon Soudelor greatly disrupted all institutional functioning. As the recovery efforts continued, the timeline was adjusted as the improvements above were implemented. The initial submissions for the current round of Program Review were collected in December 2016 by OIE. The goal in assessing program review has been to advance the process beyond the initial phase of the WASC Program Review Rubric. Thus, the institution has focused on developing five key areas of assessment for Program Review, which are Required Elements of Self-Study, Process of Review, Planning and Budgeting, Annual Feedback on Assessment Efforts, and the Student Experience. [CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5]

Currently, the institution is engaged in extensive self-study processes. For example, PROAC requires all programs to submit documentation that learning outcomes have been assessed by each program. These faculty-developed outcomes are selected by each program and comprise a staggered schedule of assessment such that all outcomes are regularly assessed through direct assessment of student work by faculty using a document called Form 1 (see Attachment 03-01). The institution is currently between the developed and highly developed stages of self-study. [CFR 2.4, 2.7, 4.1, 4.3]

Quality of student learning at NMC is evaluated from multiple vantages. While course evaluations and peer observations of instruction provide indirect assessment of student learning from internal and external bodies, practices such as the Form 1 are used to directly assess student learning. Similarly, the faculty-led General Education Committee, which is discussed below, also directly assesses learning. To support direct assessment, an archive of student work is being built with the initial stages of a benchmarking project taking place. One of the aims of that project is to compile exemplars of student work to streamline the direct assessment of learning. By the end of Spring 2017, the General Education Committee will produce recommendations for all academic programs based on the general education curriculum. The review schedule is already created by PROAC (See Attachment 03-02A and Attachment 03-02B). [CFR 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4]

The institution has also required programs to use the review process to inform both planning and budgeting. To submit the requests for the 2017 budget, each division and program was required to align its needs with the institutional Strategic Plan. The process of alignment was done over a series of meetings wherein programs worked with faculty to produce strategic allocation proposals, which were then evaluated by chairs and directors before ultimately making their way to the Budget and Finance Committee. The result was an Operations Plan which connected academic program strategic planning with resource allocation. The professional development planning mentioned in Recommendation 1 was part of this process (see Attachment 03-03). While the funds were disbursed in this fashion for the current

fiscal year, the need for resources to rebuild the campus after the typhoon limited the awarding of funds. For that reason, assessing the efficacy of this disbursement is challenging since it does not represent a normal cycle of funding. That said, the 2018 budget planning process will see the loop figuratively closed as what assessment was conducted will inform the next cycle. This “closing of the loop” will be monitored at the program-level by each program and institution-wide by PROAC. The goal of the multi-tiered approach is to enhance both accountability and improvement. The timeline for this is tied to the fiscal year. [CFR 4.5]

One project that has been initiated is the Office of Institutional Effectiveness reporting pipeline. Through consultation with leadership and faculty in the Academic Programs and Services Division, it was determined that relevant data needed to be more directly and regularly reported to the APS Division, so decisions could be made with a broader scope of knowledge and evidence. In essence, data are needed to close the loop for program review. To that end, APS has been working with OIE to develop parameters for a periodic report from OIE that would provide APS with data that is essential to improving outcomes. A preliminary template has been developed for annual data reporting. The report is to be released when faculty return each fall, so each department can use it to develop yearly plans (see Attachment 03-04). [CFR 4.1, 4.3]

Another key element of program review is student feedback on their experiences at the institution. One way this is already assessed was noted by the 2014 Visiting Team from WSCUC, which observed that the most comprehensive longitudinal study of the student experience at the institution was the Course and Instructor Evaluation form given in every course. However, they also noted that there is not clear evidence of this information being used to effect change in academic or program-level decision making processes. As noted above, these evaluations are now being used as part of the annual evaluation process. [CFR 2.5, 2.9]

Another expansion to track program review is the introduction of Student Town Halls, hosted by the Associated Students of Northern Marianas College (ASNMC). These meetings are designed to offer students an opportunity to provide direct feedback to key institutional stakeholders on issues relating both to their programs of study and the institution itself. This increase in the dialogue between students and stakeholders should augment the traditional modes of collecting information about the student experience at NMC. The first Town Hall has been scheduled for March 2017. It will be moderated by the leadership of ASNMC and the president. Feedback forms to be reviewed by ASNMC and the Office of the President will be distributed at the conclusion of the event. Further, a debriefing on the event will be held to determine how best to amend the process for the next Town Hall. This information will be utilized in the program review process at all levels. [CFR 2.5, 2.6]

The student experience is also being tracked by the reimplementation in spring 2017 of the Student Satisfaction Inventory from Ruffalo Noel Levitz, which the college has implemented three times previously. Previous iterations have seen changes to physical resources by enhancing campus safety measures, and to advising as a result of low inventory scores. By using a nationally recognized evaluation instrument, the program review process can draw upon the Inventory to more effectively gauge the student experience as each program assesses and improves its offerings. Part of the planning process for the deployment of the Inventory includes a schedule for dissemination of results (see Attachment 03-05). [CFR 2.5, 2.6]

## II. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

The assessment of learning outcomes is an ongoing priority for NMC. As detailed above, diverse measures have been implemented to ensure functional and productive assessment. One such avenue is the transition to a faculty-led Academic Council discussed in Recommendation 1. Also noted above, data

and personnel solutions have been implemented to help transform the processes of assessment. [CFR 4.1, 4.2, 4.3]

One key function of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness has been to regiment these processes by building staggered assessment schedules for all programs. The foundation of this schedule is faculty-led assessment of individual courses using the Nichols & Nichols 5-column model of assessment focusing on evaluation of student work; further, it is driven by course-level outcome assessment within each program. Despite the comprehensive approach toward assessment, it was determined that the General Education curriculum needed to be additionally evaluated. [CFR 4.1, 4.2]

A full review of the GE curriculum was conducted in 2009 with the GE Student Learning Outcomes changing substantially. That review saw the previous nine (9) SLOs expanded into the current fourteen (14) (see Attachment 03-06). As noted in the Initial Accreditation Pathway B report from the WSCUC Visiting Team in 2014, this type of review must be regularly conducted. The goal of the institution in the current accreditation cycle is to reimplement that type of review with the ultimate aim of raising the General Education curriculum above the initial phase on the WSCUC General Education rubric. [CFR 2.2, 2.2a, 2.3, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3, 4.4]

The GE Committee that had previously led to key developments in 2009 was largely inactive in recent years due to a focus shift onto other elements of accreditation. The College restarted the committee in Fall 2015 with a new charter and membership. Following the participatory governance structure, the committee was designed as a recommendation body focusing on developing and implementing assessment plans for general education. The committee membership includes faculty, directors, and coordinators from all academic programs (see Attachment 03-07). The GE Committee has focused its work in this accreditation cycle on evaluating SLOs, aligning the outcomes and curriculum, developing and implementing an assessment plan, and disseminating and using the results of those assessments. All of this is done by way of directly assessing student work to produce recommendations (See Attachment 03-08). [CFR 2.2, 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3, 4.4, 4.7]

The initial action of the GE Committee was to take stock of where GE at the College stood. That involved assessing the status of the College in terms of the WSCUC GE Rubric categories to determine how best to proceed in terms of developing them. As part of this review, the General Education Committee first looked at the SLOs produced in the previous review. [CFR 2.2, 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6]

The GE Committee used Bloom's Revised Taxonomy from Iowa State University to evaluate the SLOs. It was determined that outcomes were sufficient to reasonable, appropriate, and provided a clear sense of how students could demonstrate learning. However, the committee also recommended that all SLOs be reviewed as some seemed difficult to assess, a supposition that has been demonstrated in assessment of student work. As more evidence is compiled, the Committee recommends reviewing and revising each outcome with particular attention to differentiating between 2-year and 4-year levels of achievement. To facilitate the collection of evidence and the assessment of that evidence, the GE Committee recommended the adoption of the AAC&U VALUE rubrics as a means of assessing performance towards the SLOs. [CFR 2.2, 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6]

As noted in the Initial Accreditation Pathway B Report, there are six courses that are part of the General Education Curriculum. These courses are College Success (BE 111), Fundamentals of Speech Communication (CO 210), English Composition I (EN101), Personal Health (HE150), Intermediate Algebra (MA132), and Current Issues in the CNMI (SO 297). An analysis of the course-level outcomes for each course has led the GE Committee to determine that WSCUC Core Competencies are covered in them (See Table 3.1). [CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7]

<b>Core Competency</b>	<b>Courses &amp; SLOs</b>
Information Literacy	BE111, CO210, EN101, HE150, SO297 (SLOs 4.1, 4.2)
Oral Communication	BE111, CO210 (SLOs 5.1, 5.2)
Written Communication	BE111, EN101, SO297 (SLOs 7.1, 7.2)
Critical Thinking	BE111, CO210, EN101, HE150, SO297 (SLOs 1.1, 1.2)
Quantitative Reasoning	MA132, SO297 (SLOs 6.1, 6.2)

Table 3.1

Next, the GE Committee sought to determine how the SLOs aligned with Program-level Learning Outcomes (PLOs). The GE Committee developed a feedback form that was distributed to each academic program. The goal of the form was to have each faculty align its PLOs with the SLOs. In so doing, the GE Committee was then able to determine how the broader SLOs mapped onto the individual curricula at the College. As shown in Table 3.2, the majority of the fourteen (14) SLOs are present in the degree programs offered at NMC (see Attachment 03-09 for a more detailed analysis). This demonstrates not only the fact that credential-bearing programs at NMC provide opportunities to achieve General Education SLOs, but also that all five core competencies are addressed. [CFR 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.7]

<b>SLO</b>	<b>% of Degree Program</b>	<b>Core Competency</b>
SLO 1.1	100	Critical Thinking
SLO 1.2	100	Critical Thinking
SLO 6.1	100	Quantitative Reasoning
SLO 2.2	91	-
SLO 4.1	91	Information Literacy
SLO 5.1	91	Oral Communication
SLO 5.2	91	Oral Communication
SLO 7.2	91	Written Communication
SLO 3.2	91	-
SLO 3.1	82	-
SLO 2.1	82	-
SLO 7.1	82	Written Communication
SLO 6.2	73	Quantitative Reasoning
SLO 4.2	73	Information Literacy

Table 3.2

One of the key objectives for the GE Committee has been to develop a more deliberate sequence for the SLOs across the GE courses. This would see the identification of concepts being introduced, developed, and ultimately mastered, following the approach to GE assessment advocated by Mary J. Allen (2006). By sequencing the SLOs in the GE curriculum this way, students will have the appropriate opportunities to develop the skills that support each outcome by the time they graduate. Further, a GE pathway will be visible to all students, enhancing their meta-knowledge of the process. Lastly, a sequenced GE curriculum would lend itself readily toward a sustainable assessment process. Table 3.3 below shows that current GE courses are not yet aligned in a curriculum where competencies are Introduced (I), Developed (D), and Mastered (M). This deliberate sequencing provides built-in structure to the progression of these competencies such that the “cafeteria menu” style of GE is avoided, and proper GE pathways are established and communicated. [CFR 2.2, 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3, 4.5]

Core Competency	EN101	CO210	HE150	MA132	BE111	SO297
Critical Thinking	X	X	X		X	X
Information Literacy	X	X	X		X	X
Quantitative Reasoning				X	X	X
Oral Communication		X			X	
Written Communication	X				X	X

Table 3.3

Another element the GE Committee has been working on is the differentiation between 2-year and 4-year general education. As noted in the Initial Accreditation Pathway B Report, 2-year GE curricula are not sufficient for 4-year programs. To that end, the GE Committee has been actively exploring options to expand the curriculum map to incorporate pre-existing avenues that address the more comprehensive needs of students in 4-year programs. As listed on the Individualized Degree Plans, students are afforded a great amount of autonomy in selecting their own courses in the 4-year general education curriculum. The committee is currently reviewing the course guides for courses in this curriculum to better determine how to sequence them. Given the intricate nature of the existing 4-year degree plans and the repercussions even small changes can have, the institution is proceeding with great care, as all changes must be evidence based and data driven. For that reason, the GE Committee is working with both 4-year programs to best determine how to develop 4-year curricula that mesh with degree capstones. [CFR 2.2a, 2.3, 4.4, 4.7]

### III. Next Steps

The primary focus as the institution moves toward the Mid-Cycle Report and beyond will be to strengthen the assessment of learning processes at the college. The goal is to increase the ratings on the relevant WSCUC rubrics. One of the key elements will be benchmarking results across the institution and disseminating those results in a useable format. This will allow more detailed action plans to be developed, as the changes rendered by interventions in assessment can be measured more precisely. Further, the reporting that benchmarking enables will permit the creation of more detailed impact statements. Those elements are important because they can ultimately be used for budgeting and planning at the program level and, by extension, the division level.

In terms of specific timeframes, the benchmarking deadline for the first four SLOs being analyzed is to be Spring 2017. This will allow interventions conducted in Fall 2017 to have operational data. For changes in General Education, review is ongoing. The Fall 2017 goal is to have a functional archive of student work which can be used to conduct a full analysis of all fourteen SLOs following a staggered schedule. The timeline for that full review is Spring 2019. One of the key objectives is to sequence General Education at both the 2-year and 4-year levels.

### Recommendation 4: Student Success

WSCUC Action Letter Recommendation:

*While taking into account the challenges associated with an open admissions policy, the institution is urged to pursue diligently initiatives designed to increase the number of students who complete a degree program at NMC. This will be essential with the development of several new bachelor's-level degrees and their associated demands for persistence and achievement. [CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13]*

## I. Completion Initiatives

Ensuring timely completion rates has been an ongoing challenge at NMC. The institution has taken a variety of approaches to this issue and has implemented a series of initiatives designed to directly and indirectly improve completion rates. The key initiatives undertaken have focused on developmental education and placement testing, college readiness and dual enrollment programs, attendance, and international students. [CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13]

## II. Completion Initiative 1 - Developmental Education and Placement Testing

As other institutions around the nation have discovered, students placing into developmental courses have a more difficult pathway toward degree completion. A study looking at the academic outcomes of first-time students seeking associate degrees at NMC by Herman, Scanlan, and Carreon (2016) determined that students placing into developmental courses have much lower completion rates than those who place into credit-bearing courses. For students placing into credit-bearing math versus developmental math, completion rates were 45.5% and 14.4% respectively. For students placing into credit-bearing English versus developmental English, completion rates were 31.5% and 8.6% respectively. The disparity in these numbers emphasizes the need for comprehensive student support at the developmental level. One method for improving student success at the developmental level has been through assessment and modification of the placement process itself. [CFR 2.10, 2.13]

In 2014, NMC began a testing partnership with the CNMI Public School System (PSS). This partnership was designed to provide support to students at PSS since more than 55% of PSS high school graduates enroll at NMC within one year of graduation. The testing was initially given to seniors and juniors to provide a diagnostic evaluation to PSS instructors so they could develop instructional interventions to improve college readiness. Simultaneously, the testing produces a wealth of data and evidence that can be utilized for benchmarking and more by both institutions. [CFR 2.10]

As a result of this early intervention testing and the results it produced, NMC amended the testing process. One such change was the migration from computer-based testing to paper-based testing since the local schools did not always have the requisite computers or Internet bandwidth to complete the tests. Other adjustments include a push for fewer test takers per session and the development of comprehensive pre-test instructions to better contextualize the test for students. All of these changes were based on elicited feedback and assessment of the process. The college is still processing and analyzing data trends to see how these interventions have worked. [CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13]

Another major change to placement testing was a complete revision of the scoring process for English placement tests. The Languages & Humanities faculty at NMC made the decision to move from the WritePlacer ESL test to the standard WritePlacer test. This shift was coupled with a faculty-led norming session in which the WritePlacer scores, which are algorithmically scored by Accuplacer, were matched to the learning outcomes in the English program to determine appropriate cut scores. The result was the development by the faculty of an in-house rubric that is used to more accurately place students into English courses when they enter the college. The results so far have yielded very useful data. For instance, while it was believed that English students needed the most support with writing, test results have revealed that there is a stronger need for reading support. This has led to efforts to acquire comprehensive reading supports (see Attachment 04-01). [CFR 2.4, 2.10, 2.13]

The largest change to the developmental program was the integration of reading and writing courses. Traditionally, developmental English courses at NMC were divided into reading and writing tracks. After extensive research conducted by the Languages and Humanities faculty, it was determined

that best practices in developmental education point toward integrated skills courses. To that end, the previous 4 courses across 2 tracks were condensed to 2 courses in 1 track (see Attachment 04-02). The fall 2016 data produced by these courses regarding students achieving outcomes are still being compiled and analyzed. That analysis will feed into the assessment cycle to determine how best to adjust and improve the courses. [CFR 2.4, 2.10, 2.13]

Following the Baltimore ALP model, one proposed change to the curriculum has already been the inclusion of a co-requisite first-year English course to aid students who are just below the cut score for placement into college English. At the recommendation of a faculty committee, additional placement instruments were explored to determine how best to determine which students would be eligible for co-requisite courses. The initial option explored has been the expansion of the Accuplacer testing suite to include the Sentence Skills test. The revised placement levels would be compared with the Sentence Skills results to determine if results on the Sentence Skills test correlated to writing placement levels. A score of 5 or higher on the WritePlacer test will automatically put a student in college-credit English; a score of 4 may do so pending faculty review. However, as Chart 4.1 shows, students receiving a score of 5 on the WritePlacer test scored between 40 and 110 on the Sentence Skills test while students receiving a score of 4 scored between 30 and nearly 120. The lack of a linear relationship between the two suggests that there is not a strong enough correlation of scores to use the Sentence Skills test as a means of co-requisite placement. Alternate methods of using this data are currently being considered. [CFR 2.4, 2.10, 2.13]

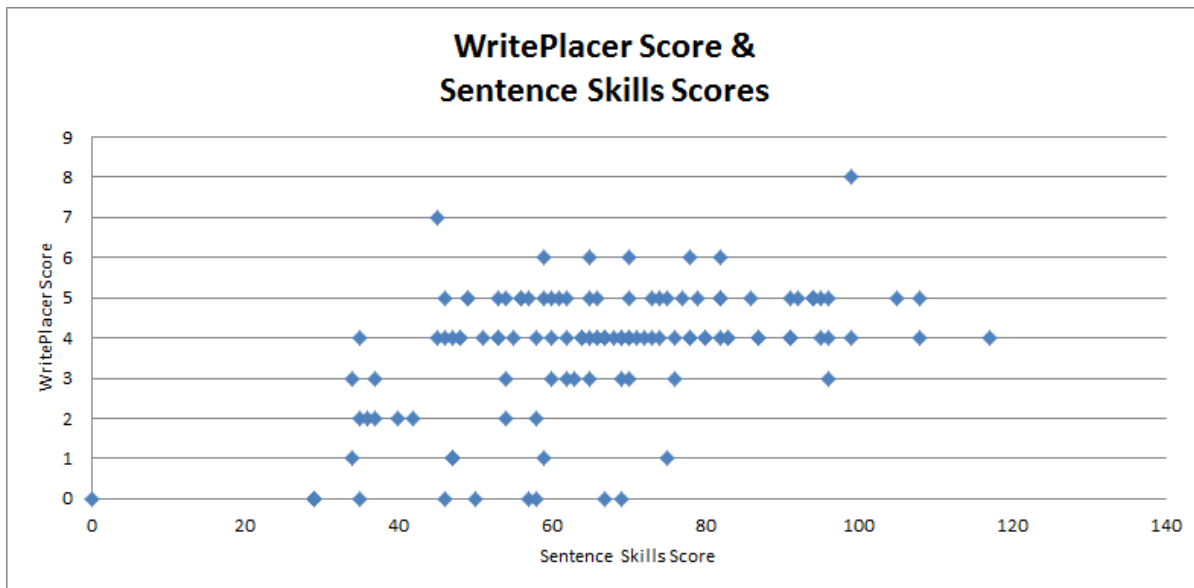


Chart 4.1

### III. Completion Initiative 2 - College Readiness and Dual Enrollment

Multiple initiatives have been completed or are currently underway to create opportunities for students to earn college credit while still completing their secondary education. In April 2016, the Academic Council adopted a new Advanced Placement (AP) Course Equivalency Guide to realign AP test score equivalencies across all subject tests with comparable courses offered at the college. This action was taken since research conducted by faculty and staff showed the previous AP equivalencies were not in alignment with national standards (see Attachment 04-03). The adoption of the researched best practices should permit more opportunities for students to earn college credit upon admission to NMC, thus expediting their time to completion. [CFR 2.10, 2.13]



NMC has also worked toward creating a dual-enrollment program with PSS. The program, called the Adilanto Concurrent Enrollment program (ACE), articulates strategic support initiatives, including a mentorship program, to help students enter college as first-time freshmen with up to 30 college credits. While the program is still being actively developed, it will definitely include career pathways intended to allow students to earn college credit toward an Associate’s degree in Liberal Arts. As such, ACE participants will be placed in one of twelve career pathways within the first term of enrollment. They will also be provided with a visual map and dedicated advisor and mentor to monitor and track progress toward satisfying both diploma and degree requirements. A key part of the program will be data collection and assessment. [CFR 2.10, 2.13]

#### IV. Completion Initiative 3 - Attendance

One of the persistent contributors to low completion rates has been low attendance. For that reason, the institution has prioritized projects and initiatives that help students maintain high classroom attendance. [CFR 2.10, 2.13]

To bolster this process, the institution is seeking to improve its attendance tracking. Tracking options via the pre-existing student information system, which is PowerCampus, have met with limited success. A pilot project was launched in 2016 to track data, but faculty involved in the study found the options to be user unfriendly and too cumbersome to be practical. A similar project was conducted within the Languages and Humanities department which tracked overall trends in classroom attendance. This process was much more user friendly and yielded actionable data, shown in Chart 4.2. This data will be used by multiple divisions to help faculty and staff target particular periods for more direct intervention to retain students during the semester. It is hoped that future iterations of this data gathering will be more robust, include all programs and courses, and deepen the metrics gathered to allow for disaggregation of data. [CFR 2.10]

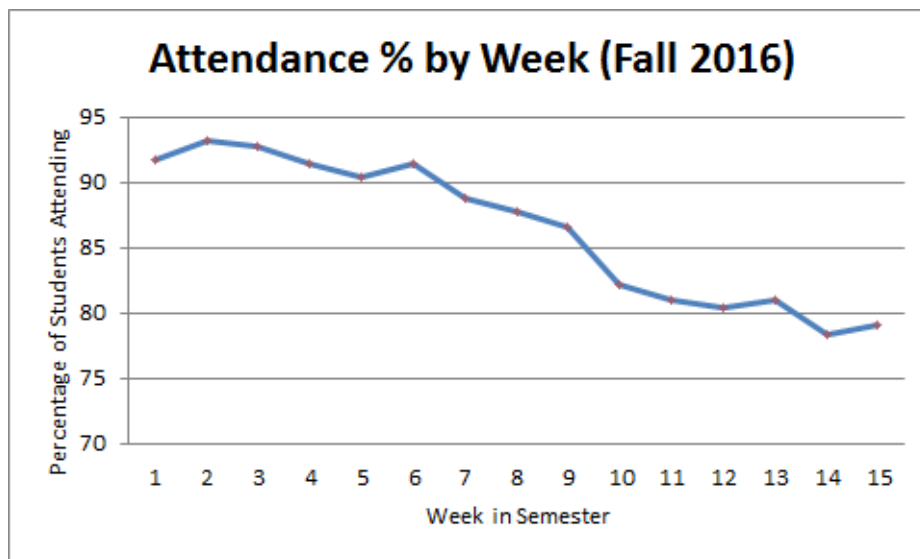


Chart 4.2

Another method used to promote attendance is the Early Intervention Program. In this program, the faculty members work with the counseling office to identify students who are not attending classes or who are having other academic issues. Faculty members submit a form which allows counseling to direct their efforts toward productive intervention (see Attachment 04-04). The efficacy of this program is still being analyzed; however, some immediate feedback has already produced changes within the program.

One such change has been the introduction of a “contact initiative.” This initiative is responding to the fact that many student records include outdated contact information, making it very difficult for the early intervention counselors to contact them. As such, the initiative is an information campaign to make students aware that updated contact information is important and can easily be updated by the students themselves. [CFR 2.11, 2.13]

#### V. Completion Initiative 4 - International Students

Given the proximity of the institution to other Pacific Islands, and mainland Asia, the student population includes many international students. Given the additional language and cultural supports these students often need, the college has worked to enhance support services for them. [CFR 2.13]

One change has been the modification of College Procedure 4002.1, which was adopted on September 24, 2014 (see Attachment 04-05). This modification redefined the conditions international students must meet in order to be identified as degree-seeking students. This was supplemented by the requirement of TOEFL and IELTS scores for international students. Although the college remains an open enrollment institution, these changes were designed to discern more accurately the English language abilities of non-native English speaking students. The goal is to provide students with more appropriate placements into programs of study in the English Language Institute. This effectively separates them from degree cohorts to accurately track time-to-completion for different populations. [CFR 2.10, 2.13, 4.1]

Another major change was to have the International Student Counselor/Coordinator serve as the primary academic advisor for F-1 visa students. This was done to ensure that F-1 visa students have a staff member dedicated to helping them transition academically and culturally to the institution while simultaneously maintaining their visa status. These supports include curricular supports, such as academic tutoring for students, and extracurricular supports such as the creation of a “Signature Event Series” designed to promote community, culture, and language. Feedback forms from the initial event have already been processed, and the information collected has already been used to tailor the subsequent events. [CFR 2.10, 2.11, 2.13]

#### VI. Next Steps

In order to enhance student services, one of the key directions the institution is taking is to open more avenues and opportunities not only for students to provide feedback, but to see how that feedback is utilized. This aim is directly informed by feedback solicited from students in which they have indicated a sense that the input they provide is not used and that assessment questions have no impact on courses. In short, the institution is aiming to increase the visibility and transparency of the Student Success assessment and improvement cycle.

In addition to items noted above such as student town hall meetings, questionnaires for student focus groups are being developed to elicit feedback on key review processes and instruments such as the Course and Instructor Evaluation. The timeline for this change is that evidence is gathered by the end of the Spring 2017 semester, so changes can be implemented in Fall 2018. That implementation will be monitored again in the following Spring semester with implementations again in the Fall. As with all changes and improvements in this report, the focus is on planned sustainability.

The advantage of building a focus group dynamic here is that once the infrastructure is in place, those structures can then be utilized to elicit feedback on different aspects of the student experience. Thus, as the initial steps will be to look at program-level improvements, the process itself will also be monitored. This will be an ongoing improvement process with checkpoints evaluated during each semester.

## **Identification of Other Changes and Issues Currently Facing the Institution**

The most significant change since the 2014 WSCUC visit for initial accreditation has been the monumental impact of Super Typhoon Soudelor, an event which devastated the main campus of the college. The typhoon introduced many hardships and delayed the implementation of numerous key processes and projects as the institution was forced into an extensive recovery period.

Those struggles, however, catalyzed unified efforts to rebuild and strengthen the tangible and intangible elements of the college. These efforts were tremendously advanced by the appointment of a new President, Dr. Carmen Fernandez, in October 2016. The presence of a permanent CEO at the college has permitted the institution to progress on many fronts that were previously stalled including renovations of physical spaces as well as salary adjustments, which are described above in Essay 1.

Another key change for the institution has been the improvement of the local economy. The new President has been key in availing of newly available, and much needed, resources. These resources have already been used to improve campus facilities, to adjust salaries, and to plan campus expansions to bring the campus into the 21st century with renovations that will make the institution not only a leader in the Pacific region, but a top competitor nationwide.

## **Concluding Statement**

The issues raised by the Commission all point toward a need for an enhancement of the evidence-based mindset at the institution. In the responses to each issue, it should be clear that the focus is firmly on strengthening the soft infrastructure at the college to ensure that data and evidence are collected and used to inform development and change. This position is solidified by the college president's motto and practice: "Data-driven, evidence-based decision making for continuous quality improvement."

For example, in Recommendation 1, the salary adjustment initiative was only completed after both Faculty and Staff Senates conducted extensive research on the subjects. Even then, the changes implemented are coupled with evaluation measures to gauge their effectiveness. The same is clear in more academic areas.

In Recommendation 3, one of the key changes initiated was the identification and adoption of externally recognized rubrics to provide reliable and valid measures of General Education. What's more, the adoption of rubrics from multiple organizations, in this case WASC and AAC&U, has provided both micro and macro guidance on the subject. This double lens approach affords a more robust means of evaluating processes, to ensure that the decision-making bodies have as much evidence available to them when those decisions are rendered. More importantly, this multi-faceted approach is useful even beyond the use of rubrics.

One of the key pieces of data collected for Recommendation 4 was the attendance numbers. These data are valuable because they can be used in so many different ways. For instance, student services can use the information to plan interventions and counseling services on an evidence-based timetable. Similarly, faculty are able to change the ways they work with their students or structure their courses so as to better anticipate certain periods of higher attrition. This point also illustrates two key impacts of this process.

The first is that evidence must be used by the institution as part of a larger, sustainable review process. While the institution has always used evidence, the engine of improvement has not always progressed beyond one cycle. The result has been the introduction of progressive and productive ideas without proper plans to assess their implementations or efficacy. In responding to the issues highlighted

in the action letter, processes of collecting evidence and planning based on that evidence have all been initiated with short and long term goals in mind. More specifically, a key component of every process created has been sustainability beyond one review cycle.

The second key impact of this process has been a major increase of both data sharing and collaboration at the institution. The report writing process alone is testament to this as stakeholders from across the college worked together to develop interventions to respond to the issues raised in the Action Letter. Then, as those interventions were implemented, the evidence gathered was shared with different governance bodies and stakeholders. Thus, a key committee like PROAC has membership comprising a broad-spectrum of college stakeholders and provides key feedback to other institutional bodies. This exchange of evidence and information has been a crucial change to the data-driven environment that the college is migrating towards, and it is one of the central points of focus as the institution looks ahead to establishing a sustainable culture of continuous quality improvement.

## **List of Appendices**

### Recommendation 1

- Attachment 01-01 Modifying Academic Council Membership proposal
- Attachment 01-02 Guide to Preparing Program Proposals and Course Guides
- Attachment 01-03 3-year Professional Development Budget
- Attachment 01-04 Pacific Circle Consortium Presentation List
- Attachment 01-05 Faculty Senate Salary Research
- Attachment 01-06 Procedure 5011
- Attachment 01-07 Professional Development Plan Templates
- Attachment 01-08 Course and Instructor Evaluation template
- Attachment 01-09 Peer Observation Template

### Recommendation 2

- Attachment 02-01 NMC Strategic Plan and Objectives Policy
- Attachment 02-02 Institutional Research Organizational Charts
- Attachment 02-03 KPI Schedule for data entry

### Recommendation 3

- Attachment 03-01 Form 1 Program Review template
- Attachment 03-02A Program Review Calendar
- Attachment 03-02B 3-Year Program Review Cycle
- Attachment 03-03 Operations Plan for Academic Programs and Services
- Attachment 03-04 Office of Institutional Effectiveness Reporting Pipeline template
- Attachment 03-05 Student Satisfaction Inventory schedule
- Attachment 03-06 General Education Student Learning Outcomes
- Attachment 03-07 General Education Committee charter
- Attachment 03-08 General Education Committee Recommendations
- Attachment 03-09 General Education Outcomes aligned with Program Learning Outcomes
- Attachment 03-10 Initial Curriculum Map for 4-year General Education

### Recommendation 4

- Attachment 04-01 Placement Test analyses
- Attachment 04-02 English Placement flow chart
- Attachment 04-03 Advanced Placement credit chart
- Attachment 04-04 Early Intervention Form
- Attachment 04-05 Procedure 4002.1