



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

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January 17, 2003

Dr. Wayne Schmidt, President
College of the Marshall Islands
P.O. Box 1258
Majuro, MH 96960

Dear Dr. Schmidt:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on January 8 - 10, 2003, reviewed the Progress Reports and Audits submitted by College of the Marshall Islands in response to the Commission's letter of June 14, 2002, and other letters of that academic year requesting information about the fiscal conditions at the college. I regret to inform you that the Commission took action to place College of the Marshall Islands on probation and to request that the college continue work to correct the deficiencies noted in this letter.

A college is placed on probation when it fails to meet substantially the accreditation standards, the eligibility criteria, or policies of the Commission. The college's accreditation continues during the period of probation; however reaffirmation of accreditation is delayed until the college has made sufficient progress to be removed from all sanctions.

During the period of probation, the Commission will require reports from the college, and possible visits, at a minimum of every six months. Institutions are expected to correct deficiencies within a two-year period or the Commission must take action to terminate accreditation.

The Commission has placed College of the Marshall Islands on probation for the following reasons:

First, the Commission has found the College of the Marshall Islands to be out of compliance with Standard Nine: Financial Resources, including Sections A.4, B.1, B.2, B.3, and B.6. The Commission is therefore gravely concerned about the fiscal viability of the college, and urges it to make efforts to come into compliance with Standard Nine as soon as possible.

Second, the College has not yet addressed the concerns of the Commission regarding efforts to address English language curriculum and student learning outcomes.

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In 1997, the comprehensive evaluation team that visited College of the Marshall Islands recommended that:

5. (The College) Make significant progress on the development of a regular system of planning and evaluation for the programs of the college.

The Commission asked that the college respond to this recommendation in its Midterm Report submitted in November 1999. That Midterm Report subsequently indicated the college had discovered that students' low level English language skills made it difficult to prepare them for college level work in a reasonable amount of time. The Commission's action letter of January 28, 2000, asked for the college to supply addenda to its annual reports in 2000 and 2001 that "represent progress in addressing the low level English skills of students while maintaining the integrity of instructional programs." The college responded to this finding by developing a Developmental Education Program. The first addendum to the Annual Report, received in November 2000, stated the program had not been in place long enough to evaluate progress. The second addendum, received in May 2001, was similarly unable to report progress. The Commission requested a third addendum, due May 2002, and subsequently rejected as incomplete the report that the college submitted.

In its action letter of June 14, 2002, the Commission requested that the college submit a report on institutional progress in addressing English language curriculum and student learning outcomes relative to this ongoing college effort. That report is still outstanding. The Commission notes that testimony by President Schmidt indicates the college was unable to complete the report for the January 2003 Commission meeting due to the college's efforts to finish the Self Study.

The Commission requires that College of the Marshall Islands provide a Progress Report by May 1, 2003, which includes:

1. The final fiscal audit reports for 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002, a summative report from the college on all steps the college has taken to address the fiscal management problems it has identified through audits, as well as its plans for maintaining fiscal viability and educational quality as it resolves debts that result from the previous fiscal management practices. This report should describe how the college intends to come into full compliance with all of Standard 9.
2. A report on progress made in assessing the student learning results of the basic skills programs developed to address the English language deficiencies.

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The Commission notes that College of the Marshall Islands is also scheduled for a comprehensive team visit in February, 2003. The Commission will consider both the results of the comprehensive team visit and the Progress Report at its June meeting.

Lastly, the College is reminded that it is required to submit a substantive change report, and undergo a visit, prior to re-opening the Kwajalein Campus.

The Commission applauds the candor and honesty with which College of the Marshall Islands has reported on the unfortunate financial conditions it has discovered through audit procedures. The Commission found your presence at its meeting to be extremely helpful in understanding the College's condition. I wish to assure you and the College that Commission staff is willing to provide technical assistance and advice to assist the college in addressing its deficiencies in a timely manner.

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

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Beno

Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D.

cc: Board Chair
Accreditation Liaison Officer
Jim Castress, U.S. Department of Education, Region 9