



**ACCREDITING
COMMISSION
for COMMUNITY and
JUNIOR COLLEGES**

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June 30, 2003

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

Dear President Schmidt:

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, at its meeting on June 11-13, 2003, reviewed the institutional self study report and the report of the evaluation team which visited College of the Marshall Islands on Tuesday, February 18-Thursday, February 20, 2003. The Commission also received testimony from you and Trustee Wilfred Kendall at the meeting, as well as from Dr. Robert Harris, Chair of the visiting team. After deliberation, the Commission acted to continue the college on Probation with a requirement that the college submit a Progress Report. The Commission requests a **Progress Report by November 1, 2003** on the items described below. The Progress Report will be followed by a visit by Commission representatives.

Probation is issued when the institution fails to substantially meet or exceed accreditation standards, the eligibility criteria, or policies, or fails to respond to actions and conditions imposed by the Commission. This action requires institutional reports and visits at a minimum of every six months. During the probation period, the accredited status of College of the Marshall Islands continues but reaffirmation of the institution's accreditation is delayed until all sanctions are removed. The Commission is required by the U.S. Department of Education not to allow deficiencies to exist for more than two years.

Furthermore, the Commission acted to warn College of the Marshall Islands that should it not come into *full compliance* with all Eligibility Requirements as noted in the Team Report on pages 5 and 6 and make *significant progress* toward meeting the team's major recommendations noted on pages 6 - 8 of the Team Report, the Commission will place the institution on Show Cause at its January, 2004 meeting. The importance of immediate appropriate action cannot be emphasized enough. The College of the Marshall Islands is significantly out of compliance with Commission standards and the quality of its education is at serious risk.

The College *must* act to address the following Eligibility Requirements of the Commission:

5. Administrative Capacity: The College has had extensive turnover of management staff, and several positions have been vacant for a year or more.

13. Student Services: The College has not been able to maintain accurate information about student grades and fees.
14. Admissions: The College does not apply admissions policies consistent with its Mission that specify the qualifications of students for its programs.
16. Financial Resources: The College has not been able to maintain accurate information about its financial resources and that has undermined the College's efforts to provide sufficient financial resources to support its mission and educational programs, and to assure its financial stability.
17. Financial Accountability: The College did not undergo an external financial audit by a certified public accountant for five years. During this period, there was an embezzlement of \$640,000. The 1996-97, 1997-98, 1998-99 and 1999-2000 independent audits contained 10 or more findings of material weaknesses that were reported in all of these audits.

Furthermore, the College must make significant progress in addressing the major recommendations, as follows:

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

4. The Team strongly recommends that the College engage in a broad-based, effective, systematic and integrated educational, financial, physical, and human resources planning supported by institutional research. (Standard 3A.1, A.2, A.3, A.4, B.1, B.2, C.1, C.2, C.3; Standard 7A.1; Standard 8.5; Standard 9A.1)
5. The Team strongly recommends that the College establish regular processes and a systematic approach to the planning, development, implementation, and monitoring of its educational programs. (Standard 4A.1, A.4, B.1, B.2, B.3, B.5, B.6, D.1, D.6)
6. The Team strongly recommends that the College establish clear learning outcomes for its educational programs and courses. The College should address more fully its stated mission to provide remediation and developmental programs and services for its students particularly in view of its student demographics. (Standard 4A.1, B.3, B.5, D.2, D.3)
7. The Team strongly recommends that the College devote necessary resources to immediately implement the planned student information system that will allow for the accurate, and timely collection and storage of student data for institutional research and planning purposes. (Standard 2, 2.1; Standard 5, 5.2, 5.5, 5.9; Standard 3A.1, A.2, B3, C.1, C.2, C.3; Standard 4A.1, A.4, A5, D4)

8. The Team strongly recommends that the College begin an immediate review of the Student Services program with clearly developed program expectations and outcomes, and that data be collected to substantiate the claim that student needs are being identified and met. (Standard 4A.1, A.4, A.5; Standard 5, 5.1, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.9, 5.10)
11. The Team strongly recommends that the College develop a comprehensive and systematic evaluation process that assesses effectiveness and encourages improvement for each employee group. (Standard 7B.1, B.2, B.3)
12. The Team strongly recommends that the College update policies and procedures in the 1998 Personnel Manual, and ensure consistency of application throughout the College and among all employee groups. (Standard 7A.2, D.1, D.3)
13. The Team strongly recommends the College develop and implement a consistent faculty hiring process that adheres to established criteria based on subject knowledge, effective teaching, and the mission of the College. (Standard 7A.1, A.2, A.3)
14. The Team strongly recommends the College develop and implement staff development plans to provide faculty and staff with continued professional development and training so that all employees are prepared to carry out their job responsibilities. (Standard 7A.1, C.1, C.2)
15. The Team strongly recommends that the College develop a comprehensive facilities and capital outlay plan that includes all sites, links justification and need to the educational program, and provides evidence of broad based participation in planning. (Standard 8, 8.1; Standard 9A.3)
18. The Team strongly recommends that the College establish a systematic review process that results in the timely implementation of improvements of the physical condition of all facilities, paying particular attention to correcting dangerous, substandard, and unhealthful conditions observed throughout the campus. (Standard 8, 8.3)
19. The College complete the financial audits for 1999-00, 2000-01, and 2001-02; develop a plan to eliminate all findings and material weaknesses; and remain current on an annual basis as per the College of the Marshall Islands Act. (Standard 9A.1, A.2, A.4, B.1, B.2, B.3, B.6, C.1)

26. The Team strongly recommends that the Board of Regents adopt broad institutional policies and appropriately delegate the responsibility to implement these policies. The Board of Regents should establish a regular process and systematic approach to the development, implementation and evaluation of all College policies, the evaluation of the President, and the self-evaluation of the Board, in order to ensure the consistency and quality of the educational program and College services at all College sites. (Standard 10A.1, A.2, A.3, A.4, A.5, B.3, B.4, B.6)
27. The Team recommends that the College develop a process and oversight system that will ensure faculty and staff representation on all key committees that impact the quality and continuity of the academic programs and related services. (Standard 10A.1, B.7, B.8, B.9)

In addition, the Commission notes, as does the Team Report, that the Board of Regents of the College of the Marshall Islands includes a member of the faculty. Commission standards require an "independent" board that is capable of acting in the best interests of the college. The presence of a faculty member on the Board poses a conflict of interest for the Board. The Commission requires the College to address this matter immediately.

Finally, the Commission notes that College of the Marshall Islands submitted a number of reports and additional information in the form of appendices to the Commission between the time of the team visit and the June 2003 Commission meeting. The College is reminded that Commission policies permit the College to submit a letter with supporting documentation if the College disagrees with the team report, but that Commission procedures do not provide time for adequate review of voluminous additional reports and supporting documents.

Thus, the College is encouraged to complete its work and include all relevant documents in the Progress Report. Therefore, the Progress Report prepared for November 1, 2003, should provide explanation on *all* of the college's progress since the team visit in spring 2003.

The Commission acknowledges that College of the Marshall Islands has a significant challenge to meet if it is to retain accreditation with the ACCJC. The Commission urges the College to seek and obtain technical assistance to develop policies, procedures and practices, and to train staff, in order to respond to the Commission's requirements. The Executive Director of the Commission may be able to provide some assistance locating technical assistance.

I have previously sent you a copy of the evaluation team report. Additional copies may now be duplicated. The Commission requires you to give the self study, the team report and this letter dissemination to your college staff and to those who were signatories of your college self study. This group should include the campus leadership and the Board of Trustees. The Commission also requires that the report and the self study be made available to the public. Placing copies in the

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college library can accomplish this. Should you want the report electronically to place on your web site or some other purpose, please contact Commission staff.

The comments contained in the Review Committee Report represent the observations of the evaluation team at the time of the visit. The Commission reminds you that an institution may concur or disagree with any part of the team report, but we do expect that the report will be used to improve the educational programs and services of the institution.

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, Ph.D.

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cc: Board President Wilfred Kendall
Dr. Ira Hecht, Accreditation Liaison Officer (with Team Report)
Dr. Robert Harris, Team Chair
Mr. Jim Castress, Area Manager, Department of Education Region 9