

Self Study Report 2010

INSTITUTIONAL SELF EVALUATION

STANDARD IVA

DECISION-MAKING ROLES AND PROCESSES

College of Micronesia – FSM

STANDARD IVA: DECISION-MAKING ROLES AND PROCESSES

The institution recognizes that ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization enables the institution to identify institutional values, set and achieve goals, learn, and improve.

STANDARD IVA1

Institutional leaders create an environment for empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. They encourage staff, faculty, administrators, and students, no matter what their official titles, to take initiative in improving the practices, programs, and services in which they are involved. When ideas for improvement have policy or significant institution-wide implications, systematic participative processes are used to assure effective discussion, planning, and implementation.

STANDARD IVA2

The institution establishes and implements a written policy providing for faculty, staff, administrative, and student participation in decision-making processes. The policy specifies the manner in which individuals bring forward ideas from their constituencies and work together on appropriate policy, planning, and special-purpose bodies.

STANDARD IVA2A

Faculty and administrators have a substantive and clearly defined role in institutional governance and exercise a substantial voice in institutional policies, planning and budget that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise. Students and staff also have established mechanisms or organizations for providing input into institutional decisions.

STANDARD IVA2B

The institution relies on faculty, its academic senate or other appropriate faculty structures, the curriculum committee, and academic administrators for recommendations about student learning programs and services.

STANDARD IVA: DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

A revised college mission statement, vision and values statements, and goals were approved by the board at its September 2005 meeting. Revised strategic goals were approved in March 2006.

One of the college's core values states: "We live in a community where collaboration, open-mindedness, respect, and support for each other help us achieve our mission." The college's organization and policy structures are designed to reflect this core value.

A major tool for implementing the strategic plan and integrating planning, evaluation, and resource allocation is the president's retreat which has been held in the spring for the past three years. Documents from these retreats show that faculty, staff, administrators, students, and community stakeholders from all six sites examined the progress made on various components of the college's strategic plan and brought forward ideas for institutional improvement. Minutes show that the results of retreat discussions and presentations were summarized and used by the Planning and Resources Committee. [IVA1]

The COM-FSM governance policy, approved by the board in December 2006, promotes a participatory governance environment for the development of policies and procedures constituencies and be guided by the college's value statements. . Its fundamental premise rests upon active and responsible involvement of all college employees and students. The policy defines the responsibilities of the president's cabinet, standing committees, sub-committees, and ad hoc committees. The membership of all standing committees represents the college community, some with responsibility to a particular constituency. All have a responsibility to ensure that communication is frequent, thorough, clear, and timely. This system of committees

and councils is designed to meet institutional needs and provide a conduit for communication within the system.

[IVA1; IVA2; IVA2a]

The Faculty/Staff Senate (FSS) was reorganized in 2008 to include all sites. According to FSS bylaws, one of the primary purposes of this organization is to serve as a forum to discuss and debate new and existing policies with respect to all issues affecting the college, especially those affecting faculty and staff. Article III Section 2 of the bylaws state that "[t]hrough its appointments of faculty and staff representatives to the College's standing committees and the other decision-making bodies, the Senate makes recommendations to the President and/or the Board of Regents. The Senate also can communicate directly to the President and/or Board of Regents." Per the governance policy FSS recommends members from the various employee categories to nearly all standing committees. The FSS president sits as a voting member on the president's cabinet. Minutes of meetings of the FSS Executive Committee, documents from FSS subcommittee meetings, and minutes from standing committee meetings confirm the active participation of FSS in the college's policy making process. [IVA2a]

Every student who is currently enrolled in the college as a full-time student is a member of the Student Body Association (SBA). According to Section III of the SBA bylaws, the purposes of this organization are to: present the views of the students to the administration and faculty of the college; recommend policies relating to student conduct and behavior; recommend improvements to policies; and recommend changes in the student related services. Like the FSS, the SBA appoints membership to nearly all standing committees. These representatives are responsible for bringing the SBA's interests and concerns to the attention of the standing committees and for bringing issues that are under consideration of the standing committees to the attention of the SBA. The SBA president sits as a voting member on the president's cabinet. [IVA2a]

Section 5.0 of the governance policy stipulates that each state campus is to institute the following extension of standing committees: management council, curriculum committee, student services committee, and personnel committee. The state campus director is to serve as the chair of the management council. The responsibilities of the management council include that of the planning and finance committee, and membership includes the director, instructional coordinator, student services coordinator, fiscal officer, FSS president, SBA president, and a faculty or staff representative depending on whether the FSS president is a member of the faculty or staff. These state campus committees are to appoint at least one representative to the main standing committees. Representatives on these committees have responsibility for bringing the state campus faculty, staff, and students' interests and concerns to the attention of the main standing committees and for bringing the issues that are under consideration of the main standing committees to the attention of the state campus community. As noted in the President's Update, logs of travel activities, and trip reports, administrators and staff travel to campuses to deliver training, assist with the implementation of various procedures, meet with local leadership, monitor progress, and listen to the college community including the students. [IVA1]

The Curriculum Committee, comprised of the vice presidents, directors, campus instructional coordinators, National campus division chairs, faculty representatives, and a student representative, advises the president on matters relating to programs, curricula, and academic

policies and procedures, and provides oversight and assists with setting the agenda for the Learning Resources Committee, which functions as a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee. The Learning Resources Committee has responsibility for developing or revising policies and procedures for learning resources and making recommendations for improvement of library and learning support, archives, and audio-visual services. Membership on this committee includes directors, a library representative, an audio-visual representative, campus librarians, two faculty appointed by the FSS, and two students. The Student Services Committee advises the president in all matters relating to student services, including student support services, the quality of life of residence hall students, and the well-being of all students. This committee also promotes student awareness of and participation in the decision-making process of the college and provides oversight and assists with setting the agenda for the Financial Aid Committee. Members of the Student Services Committee include the vice president for student services, the directors, campus student services coordinators, other student services representatives, two FSS representatives, and two students.

STANDARD IVA: SELF EVALUATION

A Standard IV survey was administered during the spring of 2009. Separate instruments for faculty, staff, government, parents, business, and community were used. The Standard IV survey, however, suffered severe limitations with no results from the Chuuk, Kosrae, or Pohnpei campuses and therefore the survey reflects only the opinions from the National and Yap campuses. A total of 26 faculty, 62 staff, 162 students, 52 government workers, 39 parents, 28 business persons, and 27 “others” completed the survey on which they offered their opinions on the college, college administration, and the Board of Regents.

Item 1 on the Standard IV survey states: “I understand COM-FSM’s institutional goals and values.” Of the faculty respondents, 88.5% agreed with the statement, while only 7.7% disagreed. An even higher level of agreement was noted in the staff respondents’ results with 91.1% indicating agreement and 1.6% indicating disagreement. Similar percentages were realized in the student survey data. Although community respondents also indicated agreement with Item 1, a significant percentage of respondents checked “I don’t know.” It appears there is a need to provide information on the college’s goals and values to the community.

According to the preliminary results from an October 2009 satisfaction survey, the item “I am satisfied with the college’s mission and goals” rated a high positive response among the faculty and staff.

Items 2,4,5,7,and 8 of the Standard IV survey focused on ascertaining faculty and staff perceptions as to their role in governance and achieving the college’s goals, opportunities to participate in institutional planning, involvement in bringing forth ideas for institutional improvement, and exercising a voice in establishing institutional policies, planning, and budget development. Results of the survey indicate that approximately 70% of the faculty and staff feel they are provided opportunities to participate in planning. A slightly lower percentage (60%) of the faculty and staff feel they are involved in bringing forth ideas for institutional improvement and have an important and clearly defined role in the college’s governance. Approximately 60% of the staff respondents agreed with Item 8, “I exercise a substantial voice in institutional

policies, planning, and budget that relate to my area of responsibilities and expertise.” However, only 46.3% of the faculty agreed with Item 8, while 46.1% indicated disagreement. One respondent commented, “No one listens to faculty.” Another commented, “I do not get feedback from whatever I contributed,” while another commented, “Administration frequently makes unilateral decisions without involving/consulting/soliciting faculty input/experience/expertise.” One staff respondent expressed concern regarding the actual implementation of the plans that are developed. Although faculty and staff agree that opportunities for involvement in the college’s governance are made available, there is a need to provide feedback when contributions are made, especially to the faculty.

On the student version of the Standard IV survey, students consistently rated their involvement highly resulting in 80 - 85% agreement. It appears that students perceive that they have a significant role in the way the college plans for improvement, that they have important part in the governance of the college, and that they are extended opportunities to actively involve and participate in leadership and governance of the college. Notable is the 89.4% of the students who agreed to Item 6 on the student survey that states, “I understand COM-FSM policies, rules, and regulations.” External stakeholders (parents, government personnel, and members of the business community) rated student involvement with similar high levels of agreement.

In the spring of 2009, members of the COM-FSM Board of Regents were interviewed to gain their perceptions on a variety of issues related to Standard IV. In response to the question “What mechanisms (policies) does the Board have in place to ensure faculty, staff and students have input into policies,” one member pointed out that the board rotates its meetings to allow regents the opportunity to visit the state campuses. During these visits time is set aside to meet with faculty, staff and students at each campus. Two other members added that the board holds public hearings and meets the students, parents, and the college community on issues affecting the college.

Faculty respondents on the Standard IV survey expressed 84.6% agreement with Item 6, “I participate in committees of the college,” while 79% of the staff respondents expressed agreement with the same item. Although there appears to be a rather high level in involvement in the work of the college’s committees, one respondent commented, “Committee work is a waste of time, the committee’s decisions and recommendations are ignored.”

In response to Item 5 on the student version of the survey, “I understand how college committees work,” 54.3% of the subjects expressed agreement, 25.4% expressed disagreement, and 20.4 % indicated “I don’t know.” There appears to be a need to establish a mechanism to involve students in the work of the various committees of the college.

When asked to respond to external stakeholder survey Item 5, “I understand how college committees work,” 46.8% expressed agreement as against 53.2% who indicated disagreement and neutrality. One subject pointed out, “I cannot say I agree on the survey because we the community never know what’s going on.” There appears to be a need to more fully inform the community regarding the college’s governance structure.

In response to Item 9 on the faculty survey, “The college clearly communicates its policies on governance procedure,” 42.3% of the faculty expressed agreement, but a fairly significant number of the respondents (57.7%) indicated disagreement, checked “I don’t know,” or left the item blank. According to one faculty respondent, “Although there is so-called organizational structure, but the protocols are not properly observed nor are constituents discouraged from by-passing people in order to communicate to higher levels of the organization.” Another faculty respondent commented, “There is minimal communication between admin and faculty.”

On the same item (Item 9), 66.2% of the staff expressed agreement. However, staff comments from the survey indicated continued concern regarding communication at the college. One staff respondent commented, “Communication does not reach all division on the campuses,” while another commented, “Strongly recommend that communication be improved at all levels within the system.” A third staff member commented,

Communication is still a big problem although it is viewed to be much better nowadays. It still needs improvement. We need the communication plan done to include mechanics for communicating within the college.

STANDARD IVA: PLANNING AGENDA

- The college will finalize, implement, and evaluate its communication improvement plan. Such plan will include mechanisms to enhance communication throughout the system between and among the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students as well as the constituencies served by the college in the community with particular emphasis on providing feedback on the college’s decision making process as well as enhancing communication within the various divisions of the college. The Vice President for Administrative Services will assume the primary responsibility in the finalization, implementation and evaluation of this plan which will be implemented by the end of January 2010. Such efforts will be evaluated no later than one year from the time of implementation.
- The Vice President for Student Services will develop, implement, and evaluate a mechanism for increasing the level of student participation in the college’s committees.

STANDARD IVA3

Through established governance structures, processes, and practices, the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students work together for the good of the institution. These processes facilitate discussion of ideas and effective communication among the institution’s constituencies.

STANDARD IVA3: DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

One of the primary recommendations from the spring 2004 comprehensive visit deals with the need for clearly administered responsibility across instructional, student services and learning resource centers at all six sites.

After the receipt of the recommendation from ACCJC, the college immediately convened an all campus meeting which resulted in a revised organizational chart for review and approval of the board at its September 2004 meeting. Training on the organizational changes was conducted for

all sites on December 13, 2004, at the National campus. From January to April 2005 implementation plans were developed by the state campuses and submitted to the president. Changes in existing job descriptions, descriptions for new positions, revised committee assignments, and other structural changes were implemented to support the new organizational chart from July to October 2005.

Trip reports show numerous site visits to all state campuses and FMI by the vice president for instructional affairs (VPIA) and vice president for student services (VPSS) throughout the remainder of 2005. Travel logs and trip reports show that such visits continue to be made to all campuses by administrators on an ongoing basis.

Details of the development, documentation and implementation of the revised organizational chart can be found in the ACCJC progress reports of October 15, 2004, March 15, 2005, March 15, 2006, and in the midterm report of March 15, 2007. A formal evaluation of the college's organizational structure was carried out during February and March 2007 through the use of an institutional survey and focus groups conducted during the National campus staff development day and the president's retreat. A report of this evaluation was published and disseminated in June 2007. A further evaluation of the revised organizational chart was conducted within the Department of Administrative Services in 2008.

A second major recommendation from the 2004 comprehensive visit focuses on the need for enhanced communication in the system. In specific response to this recommendation, a communications working group was established, a series of evaluations of the organizational chart have been made, and the adoption of decision and communication grids was recommended to improve the flow of communication. A log of campus visits documenting communication is being maintained. Technology has been deployed to assist in communication including a voice-over-internet protocol (VoIP) phone system (SIS) linking all sites. A new student information system assists in the flow of student records information among the six sites. An on line forum has been established to pilot the use of forums as a way to improve student and staff communication among the campuses.

In March 2006 the board adopted a communications policy in response to the findings of a communications survey conducted in 2005 and 2006. This policy contains specific communications pathways and calls for development of a communications improvement plan.

STANDARD IVA3: SELF EVALUATION

On the 2005 communication survey, approximately 60% of the respondents indicated that they have a good understanding of what goes on at the college. A similar percentage was reported in the summary of the 2006 follow-up survey. Respondents were asked to indicate how they would like to receive information. Results show that a little over 60% indicated they preferred the use of e-mail with newsletters and meetings coming in between 40 and 48% respectively. Respondents indicated that they would like to receive more information about the long-term plans of the college and course offerings, with information about committee work coming in as a last choice.

In March 2009 members of the Board of Regents were asked if information about the college's performance was readily available to the board, the faculty, the staff, the students, and the community. Generally, the members of the board indicated that information is provided through the college's administration and that information such as monthly updates, test data, and audit reports was readily available. However, they also indicated that more information sharing is desirable.

Item 10 on the Standard IV survey states, "The college has effective communication." Only 30.7% of the faculty respondents agreed with this statement, while 69.2% disagreed. Of the staff respondents, 58.1% agreed with the statement, while 40.4% disagreed. Of the students surveyed, 67.9% agreed, while 14.2% disagreed in response to the same question.

Although the March 2009 follow-up report cites an increase in volume of VoIP connections, many times the parties connected are unable to hear one another clearly enough to communicate effectively. It is hoped that once the undersea fiber optic cable is laid and connected in early 2010, enhanced internet connectivity will improve this means of communication. Comments on the Standard IV survey from faculty included a concern that the degree/level of communications from college leaders to faculty and staff is not matched by corresponding feedback from "down-up." Another faculty respondent commented that there is minimal communication between the administration and faculty and that the administration frequently makes unilateral decisions without consulting faculty.

Survey comments from staff respondents included: "Need more communication among staff, faculty and the president;" "Communications do not reach all divisions on the different campuses;" "Communications are still a big problem, although it appears to be much better nowadays;" "A communications plan is needed, and with it a definition of what communications should be among College levels and its stakeholders;" and "Strongly recommend that communications be improved upon at all levels, within the system."

Among the comments provided by business community respondents on the survey were: "I really do not know much about COM-FSM" and "I think the College needs to improve on the provision of information to the general public." A government respondent commented that the college "should inform the general public as well as parents [of students] regarding tuition breakdowns of students."

STANDARD IVA3: PLANNING AGENDA

- See Standard IVA: Planning Agenda Item 1

STANDARD IVA4

The institution advocates and demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with external agencies. It agrees to comply with Accrediting Commission standards, policies, and guidelines, and Commission requirements for public disclosure, self-study and other reports, team visits, and prior approval of substantive changes. The institution moves expeditiously to respond to recommendations made by the Commission.

STANDARD IVA4: DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Since the time of the last comprehensive evaluation visit, the college has demonstrated honesty and integrity in its relationship with the ACCJC by immediately attending to areas of concern expressed in recommendations, submitting all required reports on time, and filing substantive change reports prior to implementing significant changes at the college.

STANDARD IVA4: SELF EVALUATION

Although the follow-up report submitted in October 2008 was rejected by the commission, a revised follow-up report submitted in March 2009 was approved. Records of communication with the commission, submission of required reports, and submission of substantive change reports provide evidence that the college has made every effort to advocate and demonstrate honesty and integrity in its relationship with the commission.

STANDARD IVA4: PLANNING AGENDA

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STANDARD IVA5

The role of leadership and the institution's governance and decision-making structures and processes are regularly evaluated to assure their integrity and effectiveness. The institution widely communicates the results of these evaluations and uses them as the basis for improvement

STANDARD IVA5: DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

The college conducted five primary studies since the implementation of the revised organizational chart in 2004. The first of these studies was a communications survey conducted in the spring of 2005 with a follow-up communications survey conducted in the spring of 2006. A survey on the effectiveness of the organizational chart was conducted in February of 2007 with a further evaluation of the effectiveness of the revised organizational chart conducted within the Department of Administrative Services in 2008. Items regarding communication and governance were included on the Standard IV survey, and an institution-wide satisfaction survey was conducted in October 2009.

Findings from the communication surveys and first evaluation of the organizational chart were disseminated to the college community and used as a basis for improvement.

For example, in response to survey findings, a communications working group was created by the president in 2006 to develop a communications improvement plan that identified formal communication pathways and their corresponding procedures. According to the March 2009 follow-up report, recommendations and findings from the group were incorporated into the

development of the governance policy, developing of decision grids to improve understanding of the decision-making processes at the college and the development of the institutional assessment plan. Further, the work of the group led to the use of standardized institutional surveys, standard committee minutes reporting form, standardized use for the VOIPin committee meetings, and guidelines for use of communication technologies. Terms of reference for each standing committee were finalized during the past two years. Minutes of committee meetings show that discussions during this process prompted a critical review of the roles and responsibilities of each committee.

STANDARD IVA5: SELF EVALUATION

A summary of results and comments on the 2005 and 2006 communication surveys and the Standard IV survey is included under the self evaluation section of Standard IVA3. above. According to the 2007 report on the revised organizational chart survey, 71% of the respondents felt that the chart had improved communication flow, both ways, between employee and supervisor. Of the respondents, 55% agreed that the chart had improved their awareness of the college, 74% agreed that the chart had helped clarify to whom the respondent reports, while 51% felt that the chart had provided them with the opportunity to participate in decision making.

Results of the 2008 evaluation of the organizational chart by the Department of Administrative Services showed that the college had developed, documented, and implemented an organizational structure for administrative responsibilities across the six sites that addressed issues of continuity in administrative services. Also, the 2008 evaluation report cites some improvement in coordination of activities. However, this report also cites less improvement in clarity and consistency of decision making across all six campuses. The report further cites a concern for the level of training provided to implement the new administrative structure and the lack of attention to the development of structures (policies, processes, procedures, etc.) that would support implementation of the new structure.

Preliminary results of the October 2009 satisfaction survey indicate that faculty and staff appear to feel informed about the activities the college undertakes, are aware of the areas where they can find information about the college, and have sufficient information about what is going on at the college. Rated poorly, however, were the items that state, "The college publicizes its decision making," and "Different divisions at the college communicate effectively." There appears to be a need to enhance the awareness of the college's decision making processes among the faculty and staff and to improve communication among the various divisions within the college.

STANDARD IVA5: PLANNING AGENDA

- See Standard IVA: Planning Agenda Item 1