

**COLLEGE OF MICRONESIA - FSM
BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY
SUMMARY REPORT**

August 2015

**COLLEGE OF MICRONESIA-FSM
BOARD OR REGENTS SELF-ASSESSMENT
SUMMARY
AUGUST 3, 2015**

This Self-Assessment comprises eleven criteria, each of which addresses an area of major board responsibility which explored in the COM-FSM Board development workshop of August 2012. Based upon AGB criteria, they are:

- Institutional Mission
- Academic Governance and Educational Policies
- Institutional Planning
- Board/Chief Executive Relationships
- Physical Plant
- Financial Management
- Financial Support
- Board Membership
- Board Organization and Performance
- Board Relations with Key Constituents
- Accountability to the Public

The assessment results report findings of thirty-nine (39) best practices where the Regents' self-assessment indicates a clear consensus that they are meeting the specific criterion. There are also nine (9) recommendations for future action to make the Board even more highly effective.

CRITERION 1: INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND GOALS

Findings:

The College's Mission is integral to the well-being of the FSM. In relation to this criterion the Board's overall performance been very good.

The mission has been reviewed in the past three years.

There is some doubt that it is well understood by FSM citizens.

Recommendation:

The current Mission Statement has been a useful guide to the board, faculty, and administration. It should be a continued focus for college initiatives in the future.

CRITERION 2: ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE AND EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

Findings:

Academic programs are aligned with the mission and the Board exercises appropriate authority. In relation to this criterion the Board's overall performance been very good.

The Board believes it could better understand student learning outcomes and also that there could be better collaboration and communication between the faculty and administration on academic issues.

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CRITERION 3: INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING

Findings:

The planning process is ongoing and comprehensive. In relation to this criterion the Board's overall performance been good.

The college community is adequately involved in the planning process.

The Board is involved in the planning process in appropriate ways.

Recommendation:

The Board should continue to receive regular reports on the planning implementation and schedule.

CRITERION 4: BOARD-CHIEF EXECUTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Findings:

The Board has delegated requisite and appropriate authority to the President to lead and manage the institution. In relation to this criterion the Board's overall performance been good.

There is a good relationship between the Board & the President that is characterized by mutual respect.

The president appropriately respects the Board's ultimate authority regarding policy.

The Board publicly supports the president when he must make difficult decisions affecting people and programs.

Recommendations:

With considerable turn-over of Board membership it is important to recognize that Board-Chief Executive relations are always a work in progress. Opportunities to enhance timely and appropriate communications should be explored. Recent initiatives to standardize reporting formats and timelines are a best practice example (see also Criterion 9).

Opportunities to share perspectives, priorities, and aspirations should be encouraged. The Board's current initiative to create a new two-year action agenda is a positive example.

The Board should complete its review and approval of the Presidential assessment process.

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CRITERION 5: PHYSICAL PLANT

Findings:

The Board receives regular reports on the uses and condition of the physical plant. In relation to this criterion the Board's overall performance been good.

The Board is satisfied that maintenance programs are adequate and maintenance is not being unreasonably deferred.

The Board appropriately delegates physical plant decisions to staff.

The Board considers the aesthetic attractiveness of the campuses and its impact on student recruitment.

Recommendation:

As a board in transition, the Regents should familiarize themselves with the College's Faculties Master Plan, its timetable, and JEMCO financing opportunities.

CRITERION 6: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Findings:

The Board recognizes its fiduciary responsibility for prudent fiscal management. In relation to this criterion the Board's overall performance been good.

The Board has sufficient information to make sound budget decisions.

The Board receives regular financial reports providing comparisons of income and expenditures for the same period in the preceding fiscal year.

The Board requires that changes in an existing program or a new program requiring substantial additional funding come to the board.

Board oversight of finances allows the administration sufficient flexibility to operate efficiently.

Recommendations:

The Board should consider developing a method to meet privately with the external auditors to review finances, findings and any concerns.

Some Regents would like to see financial reports further in advance of meetings.

The Board should become thoroughly familiar with the changing risk management environment and obligations of U.S. affiliated higher educational institutions.

CRITERION 7: FINANCIAL SUPPORT

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Findings:

A board has the responsibility to see that financial resources are generated from a variety of sources so that the institution can meet its mission. In relation to this criterion the Board's overall performance been encouraging..

The Board is actively engaged in advocacy for public resources.

The Regents enjoy a credibility and rapport with FSM's government for the purposes of obtaining an appropriate share of public funds and adequate funding of the College.

Recommendations:

The Regents should consider the role of personal and non-public fund raising for the College.

College and university foundations provide an increasingly important vehicle for soliciting and managing gifts. In pursuing this best practice relationship, the Regents should be well-informed of the special requirements pertaining to U.S.- based 501 (c)3 foundations and non-U.S.-based colleges.

CRITERION 8: BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Findings:

An effective board has a balance of board member skills, knowledge, and experience for informed decision making. In relation to this criterion the Board's overall performance reflects the major transitions it is going through.

There is not consensus among the Board that its composition is sufficiently diverse to reflect the broad backgrounds, interests, and perspectives of the citizens of FSM served by the College.

The Board membership is influential in the cultural, economic and political life of the Federates States of Micronesia.

The Board has sufficient understanding of the academic culture, institutional organization, personnel and budget matters of the College.

The Board is able to enhance public confidence and trust in the governance of the College and has a satisfactory means of communicating its membership needs to the FSM Cabinet when applicable.

The Board has an orientation program and an established process of continuing education for its members.

The Board respects the principle of avoiding partisan politics in their decisions, including their responsibility to be independent of political influence from the appointing authority.

The Board has a statement on board ethics or expectations regarding board conduct and participation and has adopted an effective conflict-of-interest policy.

Recommendation:

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The Regents should develop an index of desirable demographic attributes for the Board in order to provide guidance to future appointments.

CRITERION 9: BOARD ORGANIZATION AND PERFORMANCE

Findings:

An effective board periodically and thoughtfully reviews board responsibilities and performance. In relation to this criterion the Board's overall performance been good.

The Board meetings include appropriate and sufficient supporting information, but would appreciate more timely distribution of materials advance of the Board meetings.

The number and length of Board meetings is sufficient to properly take care of the board's governance responsibilities.

The Board has a formal, written set of bylaws that help guide its responsibilities, organization, and actions. The by-laws have been recently reviewed.

The Board has processes in place for assessing its performance. The Board believes that assessment of individual board performance before reappointment could be improved.

Board meetings are well conducted, i.e., informative, engaging and action oriented. However, there is indication that a committee structure could help the Board conduct its business more efficiently and allow for better constituent representation.

Recommendations:

Continue to refine the emerging current practice of developing a regular cycle of Board reports with consistent reporting formats and dashboards.

Consider if a committee structure could facilitate more efficient Board operations and better involve constituents groups.

CRITERION 10: BOARD RELATIONS WITH KEY CONSTITUENCIES

Findings:

A measure of the board's success is the quality of its relationship with its many constituencies. In relation to this criterion the Board's overall performance been good, but it is desirous of improved performance in this area.

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The Board has policies on academic freedom and faculty responsibilities as well as faculty grievance procedures.

The Board maintains good relationships with key elected and appointed officials in concert with the president.

The Board is not satisfied that it is in touch with alumni/alumnae and their expectations for and perceptions of the College.

The Regents believe that public officials could be better informed about the College's contributions and benefits to the FSM.

Recommendations:

The recently established practice of holding alumni receptions in conjunction with regional Board meetings should be continued. The recent staffing of a position to support alumni affairs should be assessed. Progress towards establishing an Alumni Association should be monitored.

The College should consider further expanding and formalizing its efforts to engage in "friend-building" on all of its campuses in addition to the national campus.

The Board might wish to explore appropriate and effective means of communicating with and seeking advice from faculty leaders while respecting the president's office and responsibilities.

CRITERION 11: ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE PUBLIC

Findings:

The Board can be a valuable channel for interpreting the college to the community and for bringing the perspective of the community and the marketplace to the campus. In relation to this criterion the Board's overall performance been good, but it is desirous of improved performance in this area.

The Board maintains a good balance between advocacy (of the institution's needs) and accountability (serving the needs of FSM).

The Board has the confidence of the majority of the people and organizations external to the institution (e.g. business and private sector leaders, the schools, and government).

The Board keeps FSM citizens and leaders well informed about COM-FSM activities, educational perspectives, and plans.

Recommendation

The Board is not satisfied with its role in promoting the public image of the College to the wider community and might consider developing a structure to make use of citizen advisory committees. Options to consider implementing include:

- A Board of Visitors
- State campus level advisory boards
- Instructional/Program Advisory boards
- Parent advisory groups

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Summary of Recommendations:

The COM-FSM Board of Regents is undergoing a major transition in membership and leadership. Planning for leadership transitions at a college or university is a governance imperative of the highest order. Planning and executing smooth leadership succession is vital to college or university fulfilling its mission. It is a product of effective governance and provides an opportunity to deepen board engagement and focus on institutional vision. It is a critical time in an institution's history to be intentional about good governance, collaboration, and assessment.

The following recommendations are based upon the Regent's 2015 self-assessment. It is hoped that they serve as a template for future action.

1. The current Mission Statement has been a useful guide to the board, faculty, and administration. It should be a continued focus for college initiatives in the future.
2. The Board should continue to receive regular reports on the planning implementation.
3. With considerable turn-over of Board membership it is important to recognize that Board-Chief Executive relations are always a work in progress. Opportunities to enhance timely and appropriate communications should be explored. Recent initiatives to standardize reporting formats and timelines are a best practice example (see also Criterion 9).
4. Opportunities to share Regents' perspectives, priorities, and aspirations should be encouraged. The Board's current initiative to create a new two-year action agenda is a positive example.
5. The Board should complete its review and approval of the Presidential assessment process.
6. As a board in transition, the Regents should familiarize themselves with the College's Faculties Master Plan, its timetable, and JEMCO financing opportunities.
7. The Board should developing a method to meet privately with the external auditors to review finances, findings and any concerns.
8. Some Regents would like to see financial reports further in advance of meetings.
9. The Board should become thoroughly familiar with the changing risk management environment and regulatory obligations of U.S. affiliated higher educational institutions.
10. The Regents should consider the role of personal and non-public fund raising for the College.
11. College and university foundations provide an increasingly important vehicle for soliciting and managing gifts. In pursuing this best practice relationship, the Regents should be well-informed of the special requirements pertaining to U.S.- based 501 (c)3 foundations and non-U.S.-based colleges.
12. The Regents should develop an index of desirable demographic attributes for the Board in order to provide guidance to future appointments.
13. Continue to refine the emerging current practice of developing a regular cycle of Board reports with consistent reporting formats and dashboards.
14. Consider if a committee structure could facilitate more efficient Board operations and better involve constituents groups.
15. The recently established practice of holding alumni receptions in conjunction with regional Board meetings should be continued. The recent staffing of a position to support alumni affairs should be assessed. Progress towards establishing an Alumni Association should be monitored.
16. The College should consider further expanding and formalizing its efforts to engage in "friend-building" on all of its campuses in addition to the national campus.
17. The Board might wish to explore appropriate and effective means of communicating with and seeking advice faculty from leaders while respecting the president's office and responsibilities.