



College of Micronesia – FSM Fiscal & Accreditation Summit 2014 Report

Institutional Research & Planning Office
Department of Institutional Effectiveness and Quality Assurance
rschplanning@comfsm.fm
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On August 6 and 7, 2014, a Fiscal & Accreditation Summit was held in the practice gym of the FSM-China Friendship Sports Center on the College of Micronesia – FSM's National Campus in Palikir, Pohnpei. One hundred sixty-eight participants including faculty, administrative, and student services staff from all campuses, as well as Board of Regents members attended the intensive two-day series of workshops and discussions. To broaden understanding across the colleges, follow up mini summits were conducted at Chuuk, Kosrae and Yap campuses in August and September 2014. Sandy Pond Associates provided technical support for the college wide summit.



Figure 1. President Joseph M. Daisy and Sandy Pond Consultants

The core of the fiscal component of the summit focuses on two case studies. The case studies provided data and information for the “College of the Whimsy Isles (CWI)”. Small working groups examined institutional data related to student learning and student engagement at an institution facing stringent budget constraints. The outcomes of the two working sessions were to develop skills and abilities in the following areas:

- Analyzing and interpreting multiple sets of financial and related institutional data in the context of a college’s Mission and its stated purposes;
- Using those analyses to identify issues that require action;
- Reaching consensus on the relative importance of those issues;
- Selecting an issue for action;
- Developing a one-year action plan to address that issue within the context of a defined and limited budget;
- Communicating results of the activity to the larger group.

While CWI is a fictional institute, its design was broadly based on COM-FSM. The scenario presented CWI in the context of accreditation reports that indicated concerns over the college’s financial stability and its ability to demonstrate that academic achievement was keeping pace with its Mission and Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs). CWI is composed of three different campuses. It is experiencing enrollment decline and changes in Pell Grant eligibility that might have

additional impact on potential enrollment. CWI has also instituted a hiring freeze and a 2% across the board budget cut for the coming year. The use of a fictional institutional similar to COM-FSM allows participants to develop skills related to real issues facing the college, but in a neutral context.

Case study 1 focused on student achievement and engagement. Data for case study 1 included an institution profile of CWI, its mission, demographics, student completion and retention, student achievement, and engagement for its three campuses. Participants reviewed data sets on enrollment; student learning outcomes by program at course, program and institutional levels; and summary results for the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)¹. Intense discussions were a hallmark of the small group working sessions. Action planning based on the scenario required participants to clearly define the issue, identify supporting data, list action plan goals, and define key action plan activities. The case study required consideration of what additional data requirements were need, developing criteria for success, identifying possible barriers to completing the activity, needed resources, and planning for purposeful dialogue.



Figure 2. 2 Faculty, Chuuk campus dean and comptroller working on CWI scenario



Figure 3. Small group reporting to the summit their findings and recommendations

Reporting the findings and recommendations of the small groups was both an exciting time and quite informative. The consultants provided an overview of promising ideas and some of their observations on the sessions. For case study 1, promising ideas included conducting program-by-program audits to determine why there were disparities in outcomes at different levels (course/program/institutional), a greater coordination by faculty of syllabi/assignments across courses in programs, and determining the cause/effect dynamics of achievement issues and retention (especially in the fall-to-fall and fall-to-spring cycles). For enhancing student engagement, promising ideas included continue

administration of CCSSE to compile data trends, including an academic program orientation during new student orientation with focus on career paths, offering more co-curricular activities, and creating a trained group of peer advisors.

The second CWI case study centered on trends in new student enrollment, retention, credits and completion data. Promising ideas coming out of this case study included creating a formal enrolment management function that includes outreach to high schools and social institutions, improving college marketing techniques; improving understanding of why students attend college;

¹ CCSSE is a US national survey instrument that COM-FSM participated in spring 2013 and 2014.

exploring new programs that fit student and national needs; and thinking “outside the box” about new sources of revenue.

The Sandy Pond consultants also provided observations regarding their perceptions of working group’s discussions and areas where skill development can improve implementation:

- Conducting more frequent information based discussions about what is going on with student achievement,
- Developing a common understanding of how to coordinate improvement against outcomes,
- Developing skills in costing out improvement projects,
- Expanding role of faculty in improving student engagement,
- Improving understanding of the components of enrollment management and differentiate its roles, and
- Developing a shared understanding of terms (budget, enrollment as revenue, etc.) to improve discussions and planning.



The college’s accreditation liaison officer (ALO) conducted the Accreditation component of the summit 2014.

Figure 4. College ALO, Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Quality Assurance, Frankie Harriss

Outcomes for the Accreditation component of the summit included:

- Demonstrate awareness new employees need to complete the *ACCJC Online Accreditation Basics Course*.
- Demonstrate awareness of the overall accreditation process for the year.
- Get to know your writing team chair(s) and teammates.
- Demonstrate awareness of the major components of the Self Evaluation Report.
- Demonstrate awareness of your general roles and responsibilities within your writing team.
- Demonstrate ability to locate ACCJC Manuals from both the ACCJC website and the COM-FSM website.
- Demonstrate application of the *Formatting and Style Sheet* rules to edit text.
- Demonstrate ability to critically reflect on Standards for an honest self-evaluation.
- Have fun!



The accreditation component was highly interactive with both small and large group working sessions. Critical elements were to ensure common understanding of the process for developing the college self-evaluation report and critical timelines. Emphasis was placed on understanding the roles of the ALO, standard team chairs, and writing team members. Practice sessions acquainted participants with formatting and style elements of the self-evaluation and the importance of dialogue across the college.

Figure 5. Accreditation small group discussion session

The ALO facilitated mini summits at Chuuk, Kosrae and Yap (including FMI) campuses in August and September 2014 with the same outcomes as identified for the college wide summit.

Supporting documents for the college wide summit and mini summits are available on the Accreditation and IRPO websites:

- College of the Whimsy Isles case study 1
- College of the Whimsy Isles case study 2
- Accreditation component PowerPoint
- Attendance listings for college wide summit and mini summits
- Evaluations from participants of college wide summit and mini summits
- Self-evaluation working teams
- Links to accreditation documents, manuals, and standards