

[White Paper] COM-FSM Quality, Sustainability, and Success: A Framework for Planning and Action

Whitepaper by COM-FSM President, Joseph M. Daisy, Ed.D.

Lihk me pwohng ah loahl soh

- *from Some Pohnpeian Proverbs*

I'm told that proverb translates as "Outside it is night but not inside." It was supposedly referring to one who could master himself in a difficult situation. We are in a difficult situation, but I believe we have the inner strength to become its master. In the short time as president, I learn and continue to learn each day, the ways in which the college is successful, and the ways in which the college needs to become stronger, more effective and efficient, and to improve, to ensure the academic and operational components of COM-FSM are of high quality.

In this regard, much of my education is in part thanks to you. Through our engagement and through our frank and candid discourse both the strengths and areas for improvement have been revealed. For your contribution to informing me as president, please accept my thanks. Only through continued reflective dialogue and communication with each other, and with our external constituents can we foster a culture of inquiry, a culture of assessment, and embed in our learning community a culture of continuous improvement.

As I continue to be honored to serve you as president, my service and my responsibility to lead this college depends on our commitment to work together to "confront our challenges and create our future." In the investiture remarks shared with you on February 6, 2012, it was my intent to provide the community with a pathway for the college to achieve the goals to which we aspire. Any good map needs clear markers. In this presidential white paper I am setting forth those markers to guide us along our way.

Our Mission and Our Future

The College of Micronesia-FSM is a uniquely Micronesian and globally-connected, student-centered institute of higher education committed to developing the Federated States of Micronesia into a stronger, more economically independent nation, one recognized as a leader in the Western Pacific region and across the globe. In order to fulfill that Mission the college must define its own vision for quality, sustainability, and success and thereby serve the FSM by providing an educated citizenry to ensure the nation's quality, sustainability, and success. To this end—and in order to refine, define, renew and establish new principles that will guide the college through 2025—we will together engage in a college and stakeholder-wide Vision Summit in August of 2012. This Vision Summit will begin the process of developing our new strategic plan: *Wasahn Kamarain: 2013-2017*.

The Work Begins Today

Now we must take up the hard work of those promises made. We must deliver on the promises that we make through our college's Mission. We must now operationalize our core values, the values to which we reaffirmed our commitment on February 6, 2012. This task we must achieve together. Please be mindful that "each of us, regardless of our position, yet because of our profound responsibility to this college and the students we serve, has a deep and abiding obligation to create its future."

Our Journey and Our Destination

This "presidential white paper" sets forth a roadmap of our work for the balance of this calendar year and more broadly for years to come.

First and foremost, we must take immediate steps to more fully comply with ACCJC/WASC standards and demonstrate the proficiency of our Institutional Effectiveness efforts.

The ACCJC Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness is a key tool to use in that effort. But we must strive to move beyond those standards, finding those best practice methods within higher education that are the best fits for our students and our circumstance here in the Pacific. We should also pursue other U.S. and international measures of assurance. Above all, we must maintain our focus on student success, our commitment to measuring of student outcomes and continuously improving student performance to meet the needs of the FSM.

Pride and Progress

We have not been standing still. Much work has been completed by the entire college community. We have seen the effective and fruitful work resulting from our relatively new participatory governance structure. We have witnessed a significantly improved level of participation in the deliberations of our college-wide committees. Our curriculum committees have reviewed and revised course syllabi and articulated student learning outcomes consistent with the ACCJC's Student Learning Outcomes Rubric. We have completed a number of other plans that address the college's needs, both present and future.

We have improved telecommunications capacity to support the work of governance committees; the college has completed phase one of its program prioritization; the Board of Regents and the college have improved the level of engagement of external stakeholders through quarterly (town hall style) community meetings; and we have established a physical resources contingency fund to address unanticipated needs.

For all that, we recognize the collective efforts of faculty, staff and administration and thank each and every one who has brought us so far in such a short time. These accomplishments have been meaningful and are a vital foundation for our ongoing quest for continuous quality improvement at COM-FSM.

Yet, while we acknowledge how far we have come, we still have much to do. While the efforts of the college to embrace the Standards of Accreditation as an integral part of the college's commitment to quality and to improvement is well underway, and planning began long before I joined you as president, the planning process needs further guidance and focus. This is most starkly evidenced by the ACCJC's most recent Action Letter.

Next Steps

We have further still to go to demonstrate to ourselves and to the ACCJC that we have reached the Proficiency level of Institutional Effectiveness in the areas of program review, planning, and student learning outcomes. Once that is accomplished we must maintain our recent momentum and move rapidly to achieve the Continuous Quality Improvement level. We must re-dedicate ourselves to reaching these goals through the following steps:

1. Formally assessing our recent round of planning, program review, and SLO efforts to demonstrate that we have completed a full planning cycle.
 - Conduct an immediate and comprehensive assessment of the most recent Strategic Plan, its components, processes, and outcomes. This assessment will inform our on-going planning work and must be completed by the end of May 2012, with recommendations for action by COM-FSM governance bodies and stakeholder groups and must then be reported to the ACCJC before its June 2012 meeting.
 - Complete a review of the status of Student Learning Outcomes at COM-FSM. That review will form the basis of a report due to the ACCJC in October 2012 and also serve as an important evidentiary base for our Master Plan for Integrated Assessments (MPIA), which will include broad, purposeful institutional dialogue about SLOs, the alignment of course SLOs with program and degree SLOs, and special emphasis on authentic assessment.
2. Insuring that we engage in an ongoing, robust and purposeful dialogue about institutional effectiveness. That discussion must be based on evidence and informed by widely disseminated, data-informed analyses.
 - Complete the current dialogue about institutional effectiveness, communications and governance, especially by revising our recent communications survey (April), re-issuing it (April 2012), engaging the college community in a review of its results May 2012, and implementing recommended changes (June – August 2012).
 - Put in place the recommended changes as we begin the new academic year next fall. By December 2012 we should have the next round of assessment in the form of a follow-up communications survey. Then the cycle will begin again as we will have closed the second assessment loop.
 - Engage all stakeholder groups in a continuing cycle of dialogue based on the findings of our assessments.
3. Engaging in a systematic and regular review of the allocation of resources to assure that we fulfill our mission and maintain institutional effectiveness. In light of the significant financial constraints we face as a result of the JEMCO decrement, more than ever before it will be essential for us to integrate our finances with our planning process. An ongoing, transparent financial planning process which informs our integrated planning process will

enable us to prioritize our broad educational objectives and effectively deploy our human, physical, technological and financial resources.

- Review immediately the alignment of our operational and financial plans for FY 2013 and if necessary re-prioritize these plans. We must also carefully review the financial resources in our plan implementation through FY 2015.
 - Institute program reviews for all non-academic areas beginning in FY 2013 and link the results of academic and non-academic program reviews to resource allocations that will achieve our institutional learning outcomes.
4. Maintaining a focus on student success and improving student outcomes Provide ongoing, regular, and structured opportunities for a purposeful and robust dialogue about student learning.
- Fully align Student Learning Outcomes with those at the program and institutional levels.
 - Provide evidence of ongoing and systematic assessment of Student learning Outcomes and use that evidence for continuous quality improvement.
5. Setting concrete goals to reach Proficiency level for all three ACCJC Institutional Effectiveness Rubrics by December 2012 and Continuous Quality Improvement level by Dec. 2013
- Assure that results of all program reviews are integrated into institution-wide planning by August 2012.
 - Assess, review, and refine program review processes by August 2012.
 - Assure that Learning Outcomes are specifically linked to program reviews by December 2012.

Our Future in Our Hands

On February 6th, 2012 we joined together for the first time. We reaffirmed our commitment to teaching and learning, our commitment to research and scholarship, our commitment to the mission, and our commitment to our core values.

Let us continue this journey with dedication and focus to confront our challenges and create our future; a future ensuring quality, sustainability and success for COM-FSM, the students we educate and the nation we serve.

This we will do, and in this we will succeed. To succeed, we must all work to ensure that we are upholding the mission of the college and working toward the collective vision that we set for the institution. We must assess and continuously improve our institution's quality and work to achieve greater success of our students.

We will undertake this work together. We must all participate. We must communicate well. This is the job that has been entrusted to us by our community and our nation of behalf of our students and their families.