

AGENDA ITEM 10c

Policy on Communications

RECOMMENDED DIRECTIVE: The Board hereby approves the proposed policy on communications.

DISCUSSION: Despite having a Communication Plan in place since 2010, the college had endured two cycles of review by ACCJC that suggest the plan has not had the desired effect. This analysis occurs in the context of the college facing a short deadline for finally resolving its accreditation issues. The approach here was two-pronged: 1) to evaluate the existing Communications Plan as part of an effort to close that loop; 2) to assess the college’s status in resolving ACCJC Recommendation One.

Carrying out the approach involved using Survey Monkey to design instruments that would measure opinions on the existing Communications Plan, as well as on matters related to the ACCJC Recommendation. In addition, a review of the current Communications Plan, supplemented by extensive on-site interviews and meetings, produced consulting opinions on both matters. This combined approach resulted in seven primary recommendations and several secondary recommendations.

It seems clear after this review why the ACCJC has retained Recommendation One through at least two cycles of review and why it comes first in the order of recurring recommendations. The characteristics of “participatory governance,” “purposeful dialogue,” and “institutional effectiveness” are closely linked in the Commission’s eyes. They have consistently noted over the years that these characteristics have not been broadly or deeply embedded at COM-FSM. The two surveys on communications, as well as consulting observations in meetings and in reviews of college documents affirm the Commission’s historical stance, but also affirm that conditions have indeed changed for the better.

The current Communications Plan was approved in 2010. Despite noble sentiments expressed in its front matter, both in its development and in its structure, it was a reflection of the essentially hierarchical governance in place at the college. As such, it never had broad acceptance at the college, and it contained a number of characteristics that would limit its effectiveness.

Subsequently, and through the college’s participatory governance structure a new Communications Policy has been developed and is being presented to the Board of Regents for review and consideration for approval.

ACTION TAKEN:

VOTE:

_____ Approved as presented

_____aye _____nay _____abstain

_____ Approved w/ modifications

_____ Disapproved

_____ Deferred to a later meeting

DATE: _____



College of Micronesia-FSM Policy on Communications

Background

The 2010 Communications Plan was an effort to respond to a recommendation from ACCJC to develop and strengthen “purposeful dialogue” at COM-FSM. Yet the recommendation persisted through two further cycles of ACCJC review of Follow-Up reports and remains in effect as the College faces a significant review in 2013. In April of 2012 the college began an evaluation of the Communications Plan through a comprehensive survey followed by the summary report and analysis of that survey: *Purposeful Dialogue at COM-FSM*. In May campus constituencies gathered to discuss the findings and recommendations of that report. In September of 2012, all those activities were updated in *Strengthening Purposeful Dialogue at COM-FSM*, and the College is now poised to move forward on those findings and recommendations.

The ACCJC Recommendation 1 links “purposeful dialogue” with “participatory governance,” and the existing plan reflects a focus on communication activities at the administrative level. The recent significant changes in governance reinforce a participatory rather than a hierarchical governance structure. A Communication Policy based on participatory governance is now needed to align these two elements and assure that “purposeful dialogue” is widely and deeply implemented at COM-FSM. This new Board of Regents *Policy on Communication* supersedes the previous policy that was approved in 2006.

Policy on Communications

In order to align the twin concepts of “participatory governance” and “purposeful dialogue,” the Board of Regents of the College of Micronesia-FSM hereby establishes this general policy governing communications. This policy shall apply to all employees and students at the institution and shall be in effect concurrent with the COM-FSM Strategic Plan: 2013-2017. The tenets of this policy are the following:

- Purposeful dialogue within an institution is not merely a goal but also a reflection of the institution’s values, culture and modes of governance.
- Purposeful dialogue must evidence civil discourse, respect for differences and freedom of expression.
- While the president is the public face of the institution and speaks for it in that role, purposeful dialogue is an everyday activity that must be tied to the Mission and Strategic Plan in terms that are measurable and active at all levels of the institution.
- Purposeful dialogue at COM-FSM must be multi-directional, of high quality, and subject to evaluation based on specific goals and objectives.

- Responsibilities for strengthening purposeful dialogue must be clear at institutional, program, unit and individual levels.
- Purposeful dialogue must address the challenges presented by cultural diversity and geographic separation at COM-FSM.
- Resources devoted to strengthening purposeful dialogue should accrue through normal planning and assessment activities.

Implementation and Evaluation

The steps below reflect a substantially new approach for developing and sustaining purposeful dialogue at the College. The president shall assume primary responsibility and accountability for implementing this general policy and to that end shall direct and ensure that the following steps be taken:

Goals for achieving purposeful dialogue shall be explicit in the *COM-FSM Strategic Plan: 2013-2017*.

- By no later than 2016, the College shall ensure that all COM-FSM policies and procedures are accessible, current, clearly presented to all stakeholders to whom they apply.
- By no later than 2016, the College shall establish and maintain a central database of these documents.
- By no later than 2014, the College shall develop an annual calendar for the production and review of its major public documents, including the Catalog and the Web site. The College shall ensure the accuracy, accessibility and timeliness of all public documents and representations.
- By no later than 2014, the College shall develop within all program reviews explicit criteria and protocols for assuring that purposeful dialogue are evidenced within those reviews.
- By no later than 2014, the College shall incorporate within all Terms of Reference documents protocols for strengthening purposeful dialogue. Adherence to the protocols shall be included in all committee self-evaluations.
- By 2014, the College shall develop guiding principles and protocols for implementing the strategy across the institution in terms of both *internal* and *external* communication. The College shall publish these principles and protocols, with advice on their implementation.
- Through its governance bodies and administrative units, the College shall adopt such subsidiary policies as deemed necessary to achieve full implementation of this general policy on communications.

The president shall report annually to the COM-FSM Board of Regents and to all COM-FSM stakeholders the progress in implementing this policy.