



# PPEC

Pacific Postsecondary Education Council

**Report to ACCJC**

Accrediting Commission of  
Community & Junior Colleges

**JULY-DECEMBER 2023**



# **American Samoa Community College**

## **Introduction**

The summer and fall of 2023 saw continuous movement forward as more opportunities for course enrollment were enhanced by technological improvements made. Faculty and staff received salary reclassification as mandated by the American Samoa Government (ASG). However, this increase in personnel costs has led to budgetary challenges becoming a major focus for the ASCC administration.

## **Enrollment**

Although the college saw a boost in enrollment during the Pandemic period, the College has experienced a decrease in its enrollment since the opening of borders to and from the territory. The Spring 2023 decreased by 27% and Summer 2023 by 33% from the 2022 academic year. ASCC's 2023 Fall enrollment has decreased by 30% from 1,310 students in 2021 to 909 students enrolled in 2023.

The College continually works on improving its programs and services to attract more students and increase the number of skilled workers in the territory. The strategies in the College's Institutional Strategic Plan (ISP) includes increasing the number of four-year degree programs, optimizing community partnerships by increasing MOUs annually by 3%, and increasing its enrollment in the Apprenticeship Workforce Development (AWD) program by increasing its course offerings by 5%.

## **Accreditation Updates**

ASCC continues to be accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), a division of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The President approved the College's 2023-2024 (2028 Institutional Self-Evaluation Schedule) Calendar prepared by the Accreditation Liaison officers to provide all internal and external constituencies a timeline of Accreditation internal tasks and action plans that the College will address during the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year. The approved Calendar also provides information on webinars and trainings hosted by ACCJC and will be referenced as part of the ASCC 2028 ISER and institutional review of the College's Mission, as required.

The President began a 3-year term as the PPEC representative to the ACCJC. ALO Sonny Leomiti was selected to the Nominating Committee of ACCJC.

## **Capital Improvements**

During fall 2023, a major capital improvement project got underway to extend and expand buildings utilized by the ASCC Nursing Department and Teacher Education Department. These structures date back to the 1960s but once completed will accommodate the increased demand for classroom and laboratory space in these respective areas of study.

The three major Capital Improvement Projects begun in 2022 continue to meet its project phases. Construction is complete on the new ASCC Cafeteria building, which will include office space on the second floor for the Admissions and Financial Aid Offices. The Career Technical Education (CTE) is in the final design phase, while the design plans are completed on the ASCC

Smart-Art and Community Higher Education Building (SACHEB) to proceed with the bidding for the construction phase.

### **Office of Institutional Effectiveness Partners in Data Voyage Project**

In September, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) formalized a partnership with the Data Voyage Project, an initiative with the long-term goal of increasing the number of Pacific Islanders in higher education. The project, organized by a consortium of academics from the US and the Pacific, has established working relationships with partners from wherever Pacific Islanders are known to live, with the aim of gathering data that clearly reflects the experience of Pacific islanders seeking higher education, in order that this experience can be improved upon. IE has made a long-term commitment to participate in the project, which will run through the end of 2024.

For ASCC's contribution, the approved Inquiry team will do research on improving transfer rates by investigating how well ASCC graduates navigate through the transfer process to other Post-Secondary institutions. This information will benefit the overall project to improve support for Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (NHPI) students in Post-Secondary Education and allow for ASCC to implement better practices for the improvement of its services for student transfer as stated in our mission.

### **ASCC Offers First-Ever Hospitality Courses**

A partnership between the ASCC Adult Education, Literacy and Extended Learning (AELEL) department and the American Samoa Visitors Bureau (ASVB) resulted in 11 participants being awarded their certificates on August 7th after completing the first courses in customer service and hospitality ever to be offered at the College. The ASVB developed the basic customer service applications and introduction to hospitality management courses to be accessible to anyone interested through AELEL, with students who successfully complete the courses earning Course Education Units (CEU). This collaboration aims to equip students with the essential skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the rapidly expanding hospitality industry. The initial success of this program marks a milestone for both ASVB and ASCC, as they strive to develop a robust, industry-aligned hospitality curriculum. Future Hospitality courses are currently being planned

### **ASCC Graduation**

ASCC will hold its Fall Graduation Commencement on December 15, 2023. There are a potential 135 graduates for degrees and certificates, with a first time Samoan Language teacher certification to be conferred for 5 teachers in the ASDOE. There are 7 potential graduates for the Bachelors in Education.

## **COLLEGE OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

### **Introduction**

The College of the Marshall Islands (CMI) provides its community with access to quality, higher and further educational services, prioritizes student success through engagement in relevant

Academic, Career and Technical Education, and is a center for the study of Marshallese Culture. Current academic programs include a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education, five associate degrees, and 15 certificates. The college additionally offers workforce development, training for unemployed youth, and high-school equivalency programs. It has campuses at Uliga and Arrak (Majuro Atoll) and Ebeye (Kwajalein Atoll), centers on Wotje Atoll and Jaluit Atoll, and sites offering adult basic education and informal training on Enniburr (Kwajalein Atoll) and Kili Island, with plans to expand adult basic education to two more atolls.

## **General Updates**

The college is grieving the loss of its president, Dr. Irene Taafaki, who had a tremendous impact not only on CMI but on education throughout the nation. When she arrived in the Marshall Islands in 1994, as an ADB consultant, she developed what was then a new teacher training program at the college. Following this consultancy, she served as the Secretary of Education and later became the Director of the University of the South Pacific Majuro Center. At USP, she expanded both academic and vocational training programs. The RMI-USP Joint Program saw major increases in enrollment; over 250 students have now graduated from this program, most under her leadership. At USP, Dr. Irene also established the Jaki-Ed program that has elevated the status of Marshallese master weavers internationally and helped a new generation learn these traditional skills. When she joined CMI in 2020, Dr. Irene brought the weaving program to the college. It was also under her leadership that CMI formally embraced Marshallese values and that the college achieved its highest ever 150% graduation rate of 19%. Grants doubled from \$12M to \$24M. The Micronesia Center for Sustainable Transportation also moved to CMI. The resilience of the college community following her loss reflects the excellence of her leadership. Dr. Elizabeth Switaj, Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs since 2018, is serving as interim president, and a search for a new president is being conducted.

Workforce development training is a key area of growth for CMI. Trainings for several government ministries and agencies are in different stages of development and implementation. The first cohort of fisheries observers since Covid-19 completed their training this November. Of the thirteen trainees who completed the courses, five were women, which is the largest number in the history of the training program.

Efforts to improve college readiness are ongoing. The math transition program that currently allows graduates of the Public-School System (PSS) to enter directly into credit-level courses based on their scores in a course taken during their senior year of high school has now been expanded to its first private high school. Curriculum for a parallel English course, developed through a collaboration between CMI faculty and PSS teachers, was finalized this November for implementation in 2024.

As part of ongoing efforts to improve retention of women, the college's first training course on sewing reusable hygiene products was held. This activity is in response to a study of the gender

gap in first-year retention at CMI that found that 75% of women who do not continue into a second year reported that menstrual issues affected their academic performance. Another intervention from this study, regular women's bwebwenato sessions, continued into a second year. These sessions bring together students and employees to discuss the challenges they face while working with the college's master weaver, because traditionally in Marshallese society, weaving spaces are spaces in which women talk.

## **Enrollment**

Postsecondary enrollment for the Fall 2023 semester declined by 27% from the prior fall to 1,011, while new student enrollment declined 10% to 267. These declines are due in part to the reopening of the national borders leading to increased out-migration and to students enrolled during the 2022-2023 academic year being impacted by the arrival of Covid-19 in the Marshall Islands, which led to lower course completion rates and lower retention rates in turn. On the other hand, those students who have enrolled are enrolling more classes, a welcome change following a few years in which credits per student declined; for Fall 2023 the full-time equivalent total is 747, down only 14% from Fall 2022, and 17% of enrolled students are taking 15 or more credits. 55% of the student body is female and 45% male.

A total of 23 students have enrolled in the new entry-level maritime certificate programs that the college offered for the first time this fall: 15 on the pathway for deckhands and 8 for the engine room.

Courses offered as eight-week modules have increased. This fall, 26% of the student body is enrolled in at least one. Courses offered in this format typically have higher completion rates.

## **Accreditation Update**

The college's standing Accreditation Steering Committee continues to prepare for the 2025 Midterm Report and to educate the college community about the new ACCJC standards, including through a matching game at the college's fall retreat on November 24. Participatory governance committees have continued the practice of having assessment against the standards as a standing agenda item, with all having now transitioned to the new standards and criteria.

## **College of Micronesia-FSM**

### *Accreditation Updates*

On June 16, 2023, COM-FSM received news from ACCJC that the Accrediting Commission acted to reaffirm its accreditation for seven years. Major findings and recommendations include:

### ***Commendations***

Commendation 1: The team commends the College for its policies, practices, and services that support its diverse personnel, particularly its strong support for professional development for all employees and their families, as an exemplar of its commitment to the success of the Federated States of Micronesia as stated in its mission. (I.A.3, III.A.12, III.A.14)

Commendation 2: The team commends the College for its strategic use of funding sources and the leveraging of financial resources, enabling the College to respond to student needs in a changing environment. (III.D.4)

Commendation 3: The team commends the College for its exemplary practice of outcomes assessment involving participation of the entire college, ranging across six campuses in four states and 1,700 miles of the Pacific Ocean. (I.B.1, I.B.2, II.A.3, II.A.16)

### ***Recommendations to Improve Quality***

Recommendation 1: To increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the College strengthen the integration of short- and long-term plans for the allocation of human, physical, technological, and financial resources to meet student needs in the post-pandemic environment. (I.B.9)

Recommendation 2: To improve effectiveness, the team recommends that the College strengthen its practices and systems for personnel evaluation and management as stated in the President's Workplan. (III.A.3, III.A.5)

The next report from COM-FSM will be the Midterm Report due on March 15, 2027.

In September and October, the ALO participated in the 2024 Accreditation Standards webinar that highlighted key changes in the Standards and expectations for institutions in the next cycle of accreditation.

### ***General Updates***

Enrollment for fall 2023 was 1,741 in headcount with 20,966 registered credit hours (or 1,747 full-time equivalent hours). Of the 1,741 headcounts, 299 were new students, 1331 were continuing students, and 111 were returning students.

On August 04, 2023 COM-FSM, Chuuk campus celebrated the completion of its first ever 5-week boot camp on basic trade skills training in the areas of Carpentry, Masonry, and Electricity in response to the need for CTE training requested by the Chuukese community and its

leadership. This response was an initiative brought on by the collaborative work of the Cooperative Research Extension (CRE) and the Instructional Affairs (IA) departments at COM-FSM. A total of 30 participants received certificates of completion.

The Center for Entrepreneurship (CFE) provided several workshops to the college community. In July, the Center hosted a six-week training program for Upward Bound students to provide skills development training that also included creating and maintaining a hydroponic system. In collaboration with Rutgers University and the Food and Agriculture of the United Nations (FAO), CFE brought alternative farming methods and greenhouse management experts to the college to train staff and students in August and in November. In September, the Center distributed 3,000 seeds to Our Lady of Mercy Catholic High School (OLMCHS), CTEC Campus, and to a researcher for the Australian National University. CFE also partnered with the International Office for Migration (IOM) on a project called 'Inspiring Women Advancement Through Collective Action' (IWA) where two workshops were conducted on sewing urohs en Pohnpei (Pohnpeian skirts) and bookkeeping basics.

The Personnel Audit commenced August 1, 2023 and will be completed by December 31, 2023. The Australian-based firm, Liz Bare Consulting Pty Ltd based in Melbourne, successfully bid for the project and the required fieldwork was undertaken in September and October. The Personnel Audit Report will be presented to the Board of Regents at their meeting on December 11-14, 2023 in Pohnpei.

The College has engaged with PowerSchool Group LLC, licensor of PeopleAdmin branded products and services to develop and implement an online HR System, which has a 12-month project timeline. The outcome of the project will result in the implementation of five modules as follows:

- Applicant Tracking System (ATS);
- Position Management (PM);
- Employee Records (ER);
- Performance Management (PerM); and
- Professional Learning (PL).

## ***Cooperative Research Extension (CRE) Projects***

CRE continues to support and provide ongoing programs and activities with the community. The Aquaculture Program includes aquaculture research on valuable species such as sea cucumber, giant clams, and rabbitfish. The Climate Change Program addresses climate change issues and challenges in regards to food security and livelihood opportunities. The Swine Improvement Program increases awareness and knowledge of the contribution of swine to family and community food security. Youth Programs offer a wide range of activities for youth such as handicrafts, sewing, and counseling. Other projects include a collaboration with the Italian Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea to enhance water security and climate-resilient food systems for the displaced atoll population in Yap funded by the project under the Italy-Pacific SIDS Climate Cooperation Program. The project's timeline covers March 2023 to February 2026. A project funded by the Green Climate Fund through the Micronesia Conservation Trust focuses on enhancing the food security of vulnerable households by introducing climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices. The project aims to train the trainers in CSA and poultry management and covers a timeline between October 2021 to December 2026.

Finally, in a health and well-being initiative sponsored by the COM-FSM Office of the President, the “Biggest Loser” Challenge took place from August 1 – December 1, 2023. The CRE teams at all six campuses worked with the nurses and health professionals to conduct ‘weigh-in’ and ‘measurement’ sessions for all employees and students who participated. Prize money was offered for the first three places in each campus. The Challenge focused on three areas as follows:

- To conduct a comprehensive survey to collect baseline data.
- To increase the knowledge and awareness of the COM-FSM community in healthy food choices, nutrition and physical activities and the importance of drinking enough water.
- Conduct-focused educational activities to target audience (at least 70% of participants) will be moving towards ideal BMI by December 1, 2023.

The winners represented all sections of the COM-FSM community with 2 faculty members, 9 staff, 4 students and 3 cadets placed in first, second and third places.

## **Guam Community College**

### ***Introduction***

Since its inception through the Community College Act of 1977 (as amended by Public Law 31-99 in 2011), Guam Community College continues to fulfill its mission to be a leader in career and technical workforce development, providing the highest quality, student-centered education and job training for Micronesia. GCC serves as Guam's State Agency for Career and Technical Education under the United States Vocational Education Act of 1946 (and subsequent



amendments). As a multi-faceted, public, career and technical education institution, the College currently offers one (1) bachelor degree, 26 associate degrees and 18 certificates. GCC delivers postsecondary education on campus in fall and spring semesters and during summer. Off-site, the College primarily delivers secondary career technical education at six Guam public high schools, as well as short-term, specialized training at local businesses. Additionally, GCC offers adult education programs and services, namely English as a Second Language, Adult Basic Education, High School Equivalency preparation and testing, and Adult High School Diploma.

### ***General Updates***

Enrollment for the Fall 2023 semester decreased by approximately eleven percent (11%) to 1,533 students when compared to the enrollment in the prior year Fall 2022 semester. When compared to the enrollment ten years ago in Fall 2013, the Fall 2023 semester enrollment dropped by approximately forty-four percent (44%).

The Fall 2023 College Assembly was held at the new Multi-Purpose Auditorium with faculty, administrators, and staff in attendance. Sessions included GCC's Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) Update by each Standard Committees; Institution Set Standards Update; Sexual Harassment training; Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) training; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training; Title IX training; Accreditation Standards Break-Out Sessions; and an information session on West Care Services.

Since June 2021, the College offered thirty-three (33) bootcamps in various areas including construction, ship repair, truck driving, information technology, medical home health aide, engineering technician, HVAC, certified nursing assistant, medical code and billing, diesel mechanic, bus driving, childcare and cybersecurity. The total number of bootcamp completers since June 2021 is 382. The number of bootcamp completers employed with an employer sponsor is 274. Truck Driving Bootcamp IV and V, Bus Driving Bootcamp II and III, along with Ship Repair Bootcamp XI are on-going. Construction Bootcamp IV and Ship Repair Bootcamp VII were completed last September 30, 2023 while Childcare Bootcamp V were completed last July 14, 2023. Ship Repair (Cabras) Bootcamp IX and X were completed last October 21, 2023.

The Center for Student Involvement offered student activities this Fall semester. A GCC Campus Tour was offered for new and potential students prior to the start of the fall classes. The Fall New Student Orientation was held last August 14, 2023 and information was provided by Admissions and Registration, Counseling, Financial Aid, Accommodative Services, Student Support Services, Reach for College and Student Organizations. The Meet the President session was held last October 18, 2023. GCC President Dr. Mary A.Y. Okada provided an overview of the College's upcoming accreditation review. The Need to Lead Student Conference was held last September 29, 2023. The conference was well attended with students participating in skills-shops to build up on important knowledge that benefits their ensuing ventures and team building activities. The Fall Festival Tour of the Pacific (was held). The event was organized by the

Center for Student Involvement (CSI) with participation by the different student organizations. The newly renovated Student Center canopy was utilized for this event.

GCC President Dr. Mary Okada was presented with a certificate of appreciation by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Guam Homeland Security/Office of Civil Defense for her significant role in establishing the first Disaster Recovery Center for typhoon Mawar. GCC was the first to open its facility to the community and lead the recovery of the Typhoon Mawar survivors.

The Lumina Foundation featured GCC on its Inside Out: Community Colleges Far and Wide series. The series take a closer look at the unique and innovative approach to Higher Education across the nation. According to the foundation, GCC which is steeped in history and culture has a strong Workforce. “There’s never been a stronger sense of community in college. Guam Community College might be far from the mainland United States, but its faculty and staff are working tirelessly to improve opportunities close to home.” --- Lumina Foundation

### *Accreditation Updates*

The GCC’s Institutional Self Evaluation Report (ISER) is currently being developed. The first draft of the College’s response to standards 1-4 was submitted to the Accreditation Liaison Officer for review and feedback. GCC’s ISER report is due to the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2024.’

## **Palau Community College**

### *Accreditation Updates*

Palau Community College has been an accredited institution under the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC-WASC) for 46 years. First attaining accredited status in 1977, PCC has maintained this status, with the most recent reaffirmation taking place in 2023, as noted below.

Following the visiting team’s site visit on March 15 to 17, 2023, the Accrediting Commission met on June 07 to 08, 2023 to review the College’s Institutional Self Evaluation Report along with the Team Report. On June 15, 2023, the Commission informed PCC that it had “acted to Reaffirm Accreditation for seven years”. In its June 15 letter the Commission commended the college for its ongoing commitment for institutional effectiveness. There were no compliance requirements and zero recommendations for improving institutional effectiveness. The college will be submitting its midterm report on March 15, 2027.

### ***College Program Highlights***

- The PCC family extends its dearest condolences to Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) and Dean of Academic Affairs Ms. Deikola Olikong's family and friends for her untimely passing on November 1, 2023. She brought so much love and joy during her tenure here. Ms. Deikola Olikong joined Palau Community College on April 4, 2005 as a Counselor. On June 30, 2006, she became an Interim Director of Student Life, and after a month, she became the Director of Student Life until January 1, 2010. From this date forward, through hard work and dedication, she became an Assistant Professor with limited term as an Education Instructor until August 2011. In that same year, she was reassigned as an Assistant Professor/Instructor advancing as Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO). Later, she became the Director of the Institutional Research & Evaluation Office (IREO). With a strong work ethic and hardworking skills, she was appointed as Acting Dean of Academic Affairs. In 2021, Ms. Olikong became the Dean of Academic Affairs. Ms. Olikong was an active and determined leader working toward improving student success, institutional improvement and the fulfillment of PCC's mission. She was laid to rest on Friday December 1, 2023 in her home state of Peleliu, Palau.
- On July 28, 2023 PCC President Dr. Patrick U. Tellei appointed members to the Accreditation Steering Committee (ASC) for the next accreditation cycle 2023-2030. In that appointment, he also appointed two (2) employees who would be serving as Assistant Accreditation Liaison Officers (AALO), namely Ms. Derbei Meyar a full-time faculty, and Ms. Johvanna Yaoch, a former full-time faculty and long-time president of the Faculty Senate Association who now works as the College's Computers Systems Analyst. Ms Meyar will be AALO focusing on Academic Programs and Services and Ms. Yaoch will be AALO focusing on Non-Academic Programs and Services. Their contact emails are [derbeim@palau.edu](mailto:derbeim@palau.edu) and [johvannay@palau.edu](mailto:johvannay@palau.edu), respectively. With the untimely passing of ALO Deikola Olikong, the two AALOs will work alongside Vice President for Administration & Finance and former Chair of Standard III Mr. Jay Olegeriil as has been taken over the role of ALO for the College until such time that the College appoints a new accreditation liaison officer. Mr. Olegeriil's email is [jayo@palau.edu](mailto:jayo@palau.edu).
- On October 19, 2023, the University of Hawaii at Manoa and Palau Community College signed a Memorandum of Agreement (Articulation Agreement) on Transferring Credits. A student who completes an Associate of Arts degree based on a baccalaureate-oriented sequence at PCC, and whose program of study has met both PCC graduation requirements for an Associate of Arts and the UH-Manoa transfer credit guide, will be accepted with junior standing and will have satisfied the General Education requirements for the UH-Manoa, minus the completion of Language and Focus designation classes. Students transferring to UH-Manoa who have not completed an Associate of Arts degree

will be given General Education credit for all articulation courses, but many not be granted junior standing upon matriculation.

- In September of this year, the University of Hawaii at Manoa, College of Education, Department of Curriculum Studies and the Outreach College signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Palau Community College regarding Pacific Master of Education in Curriculum Studies (PACMED). The Master of Education Degree in Curriculum Studies (MEd CS) focuses on culturally responsive leadership and place-based STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) program which support educator leaders around the Pacific in creating interdisciplinary curriculum for their students. Participants will demonstrate their proficiency with STEAM academic content, writing, and culturally responsive instructional strategies for all grade levels and subject areas in a standards-based portfolio as the master's project. Candidates began taking classes this fall 2023 and will graduate after five consecutive semesters, after attaining 30 total credit hours of coursework, including summers, with an accredited UH-Manoa master's degree. The first cohort of 15 students in this program is very fortunate in that it is fully funded by the Palau National Government.
- The College new Health Science building is currently under construction. The three story building will accommodate much needed nursing program and regional medical training programs and initiatives. The construction of the building was awarded to NECO Construction, a local construction company with years of experience and expertise in both commercial and residential structural building.
- On September 20, 2023, Palau Community College Student Services held its induction ceremony for Board of Trustees- Student Trustee, Associated Students of Palau Community College (ASPCC) and ASPCC Senators. Inducted at the ceremony was Student Trustee, ASPCC President Elect, ASPCC President-Elect Elect, Secretary Elect, Treasurer Elect, Sophomore Representative Elect (2), Freshmen Representative Elect (2), Republic of Palau Student Organization President Elect, Republic of Marshall Islands Student Organization President Elect, Pohnpei Student Organization President Elect, and Yap Student Organization President Elect.
- The Republic of Palau's 11<sup>th</sup> Olbiil Era Kelulau (national congress) has ratified the extension of the College of Micronesia (COM) Treaty. Hence, the Treaty has now been extended for ten (10) years ending in 2033.
- The College has begun the process of writing its 15-Year Master Plan 2025 – 2039. A Steering Committee was appointed in early 2023 and has started working on the plan. Initially chaired by the late ALO Ms. Deikola Olikong, the Committee Vice Chair Mr. Tchuzie Tadao, Upward Bound Math & Science Program Director, has now stepped up

and will be leading the committee as it works to put together the College's Master Plan to be reviewed by the College President and the Board of Trustees for approval before implementation.

- On November 22, 2023 Palau Community College held its Annual Thanksgiving Endowment Fundraising and was able to raise \$55,767.11, and anticipates to raise over \$200,000 for 2023 when all donations and contributions are collected. The College thanks all its donors, big and small, for their contributions to the only institution of higher learning in the Republic of Palau.