

**MID-CYCLE VISIT
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**WESTERN CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

FOR

NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL

480 South San Miguel Street

Talofofo, Guam 96915-3540

Archdiocese of Agana

March 20-23, 2011

Mid-Cycle Visit: April 1, 2014

Visiting Committee Member

**Rev. Thomas J. Elewaut, Chairperson
San Buenaventura Mission**

I. Introduction

Founded in 1968 by the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) in the southern village of Talofoto, on the island of Guam, Notre Dame High School serves both young women and men primarily from the southern and central villages with a 96% Catholic enrollment reflecting the religion demographic of the island. In 2009 the school became a Sponsored Institution by the SSND community to better support the school's mission centered on preparing students to be Spiritually Oriented, Academically Prepared, and Globally Concerned. NDHS assesses student achievement and mastery of learning by analyzing results from the SAT, AP, SAT-10 and the University of Guam Placement Tests for English and Math. Analysis and disaggregation of these assessments has supported the implementation of several honors and AP courses. The administration, curriculum committee and faculty frequently review benchmark results to assess student academic mastery and learning needs.

Since the 2011 WCEA/WASC visit, Notre Dame High School has made significant developmental progress in four key areas:

Organization for Student Learning: initiated and developed collegiate and vocational awareness programs whereby students have submitted 237 college applications and were awarded more than \$800,000 in scholarships in the past two years. Use of Skype has facilitated significant increase in college recruiter interviews with students. Aggressive marketing and increased merit scholarships and financial need assistance attracts more students to apply for admission to NDHS.

Curriculum and Instruction: All content areas in the curriculum are now aligned with Archdiocesan standards, ESLRs, and Core Curriculum standards with 21st Century skills for higher education. Course requirements for each grade level are now aligned for advancement to the next level of instruction and prerequisites are now set for advancement. Cross-curriculum mapping is developed in several areas; one example of the success of this initiative enabled students to achieve superior results in a regional completion. To better meet the instructional needs of the students the Block Scheduling was changed in 2011-2012 to give equitable credit hours in all subjects.

Support for Student Spiritual Growth and Development: The school realigned responsibilities for its Catholic mission so that all stakeholders are better informed of the goals of the ESLRs and implementation of programs that support the school's mission. Furthermore, measures to integrate faith development across the curriculum are now in place. Cross-curriculum mapping supports further integration so that all academic disciplines support and help sponsor faith growth initiatives.

Resource and Development: Since the last VC report significant support is garnered to support the mission of NDHS both in monetary gain and equipment to support student learning.

The follow-up process reflects the awareness and input from all stakeholders who annually collect data and assess targeted goals. The End of Year report on school progress provides the foundation to revise the Action Plan as needed. The Administration assumed responsibility for overseeing the progress of the Action Plan and preparation of the Mid-cycle visit with collaboration from Faculty and Staff who provided analysis of the progress and goals achieved since the last visit. The final analysis was reviewed by all constituents of school leadership responsible for implementing the mission of NDHS.

The Action Plan was revised in the spring of 2012 with input and committee representation from administration, faculty and staff. All components of the Progress Report have been reviewed by the Board of Directors, SSND Central-Pacific Province, and school-wide constituents via scheduled meetings and presentations.

II. School's Progress on Critical Areas for Follow-up within the Action Plan

The 2011 WCEA/WASC Visiting Committee identified four schoolwide areas for follow-up. Additionally departmental and content area recommendations have been admirably addressed demonstrating NDHS's desire to take seriously the need to ensure a quality program that supports student learning.

1. *The Curriculum Review Committee work with the faculty in developing content standards in all curricular content areas that are aligned with national and archdiocesan standards to ensure that students are adequately prepared with 21st Century skills for higher education.*

Following the 2011 VC Report, the Curriculum Review Committee met with all the Department Chairs to plan schoolwide improvement to align NDHS standards with 21st Century skills. Initially, Department Chairs identified courses within their departments that implemented 21st Century Skills. A Faculty Development Day was devoted to further review existing examples of 21st Century Skills curriculum and write similar strategies for each course. In the spring of 2012 the Curriculum Review Committee met with the Department Chairs to develop and ensure that all courses include 21st Century Skills. By April of 2012, a syllabus template (available for review on the website) was formalized to include identification of 21st Century Skills within each course offered at NDHS. Examples of the success of this goal include cross-curriculum mapping that showcased students' mastery of mathematics, physics, computer science and art in their design and testing of bridges (competition) whereby teams earned first and second placement and in the Science Fair where students utilize standards from math, science, Speech, Composition and Technology Education in the write up and research in the projects. During student interviews it was apparent that this goal is operative in the daily learning environment with additional examples communicated.

2. *The School Sisters of Notre Dame Milwaukee Province and the NDHS administration articulate and refine the role and function of the Board of Directors in the overall organization and operation of NDHS.*

The Central Pacific Provincial Council for the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the Board of Directors (BOD), and the NDHS Administration worked throughout the school year 2011-2012 to develop the Corporate Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation. The Bylaws were reviewed and further drafted by the BOD and NDHS Administration with commentary provided by the SSND Central-Pacific Province. Further communication ensued with the BOD and NDHS Administration with the Provincial Council for the SSND to finalize the Corporate Bylaws and the Articles of Incorporation. This process culminated in the filing of the Corporate Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation with the Guam Department of Revenue and Taxation in May of 2012. Reaching the goal set forth by the Visiting Committee in this Area of Growth has allowed NDHS to clarify and make transparent the governance within NDHS. This process helps clearly define the organizational chart for the entire school community in all aspects of school development. It is recommended that NDHS publish these documents on the school website.

3. *The SSND Province and the Administration engage all school stakeholders in a schoolwide strategic planning process to develop goals and direction in the major areas of finances, facilities, curriculum and development.*

A Strategic Planning Committee was formed in the fall of 2011 with membership serving as chairs for four sub-committees on curriculum, facilities, finances, and development. Subsequently sub-committee members were identified and meetings calendared. Mission, vision, and priorities were identified and developed by each sub-committee. The Mission of the Strategic Planning Committee is “to sustain and promote the growth, development and welfare of Notre Dame High School and its students, establish and maintain an effective relationship between Notre Dame and the community, and provide an environment that supports the achievement of 21st Century teaching and learning.” The creation of this committee has helped articulate and chart the direction of the school as well as provide all stakeholders the opportunity to be invested in the development of a clean, safe, healthy, and nurturing school environment. While ongoing, this process is communicated on the school website and annual progress report to all stakeholders.

4. *The administration and the Director of Mission Advancement work with the faculty and students in developing a process to assess and validate students’ personal internalization of the ESLRs.*

A graduation requirement ePortfolio presentation for all seniors was piloted for select members of the class of 2013. Seniors are tasked to design and develop a presentation using a technology tool to showcase how they have internalized the ESLRs. The ePortfolio program was presented to the students as a viable assessment tool that combines the ability for creative expression and the incorporation of technology. During SY 2012-2013 an ePortfolio department and event guidelines was drafted to begin an ePortfolio pilot program with a select number of students, and assess/adjust the ePortfolio guidelines based on the results from the pilot group. This process is further developed for the class of 2014 with ongoing assessment and implementation in the next three years and into the future. While students could easily articulate the ESLRs, only one of the four students interviewed during the VC Visit was aware of the ePortfolio process.

Schoolwide Action Plan

Initially NDHS aligned its Action Plan to the four Critical Areas for Follow-Up identified by the 2011 WCEA/WASC Visiting Committee. With substantial progress made in the past three years, the Action Plan has been refined since the last self-study visit to reflect progress and newly identified issues with delineated action steps that clearly identify objective strategies, responsible persons, implementation timeline, demonstration of progress achieved, reporting mechanisms and progress monitors. The Action Plan lacks a budget financial component that would facilitate much of the planning.

The present Action Plan focuses on newly identified areas for growth: Catholic Identity, Curriculum and Instruction, Student Progress, Development and Resource Management. The NDHS has in place personnel, structures and resources to effectively implement its Action Plan.

III. Commendations and Recommendations

A. Commendations:

Notre Dame High School has effectively addressed the four critical areas for follow-up from the 2011 WCEA/WASC Visiting Committee. Furthermore, the school is making significant progress in addressing departmental and content area recommendations demonstrating

NDHS's desire to take seriously the need to ensure a quality program that supports student learning.

The role of the Central Pacific Provincial Council for the School Sisters of Notre as a Sponsor Institution is a major force ensuring the viability of NDHS. Appropriate delineation between the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the NDHS Board of Directors and the establishment of the Corporate Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation strengthens oversight of the school for the future.

By all measurable standards, NDHS has in place an Action Plan that clearly identifies areas for improvement to ensure support structures that will facilitate students to be adequately prepared with 21st Century skills for higher education.

B. Recommendations:

It is the opinion of the VC chair that Notre Dame High School has given adequate consideration to the critical areas for follow-up contained in the 2011 accreditation report. The school designated the Administration as the Leadership Team responsible for carrying out its functions in a timely manner and, from all indications, will continue to function during the next three years.

While it may be the purview of the school Administration, the VC chair suggests that school committees include the role of students in a more meaningful way as stakeholders in the process of school improvement.