



CMI

BOARD OF REGENTS

College of the Marshall Islands

Accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges

P.O. Box 1258
Uluga Campus

Tel: (692) 625-3394/3291/4931
Fax: (692) 625-7203
Email: bor.regents@cmi.edu

Regular Board of Regents Minutes - Approved September 2, 2024

Members Present

Chairperson Kathryn Relang
Regent Salome Andrike
Regent Marie Maddison

Vice Chair Julius Lucky
Regent Joe Lomae
Regent Kino Kabua

Regent Benjamin Wakefield
Regent Jelton Anjain
Student Regent Wilmer Joel

Member Absent/Excused

Regent Melet Jatios

Regent Nimata Nakamura

CMI employees in attendance:

Dr. Elizabeth Switaj, Interim President

Stevenson Kotton, Vice President for Administrative and Business Affairs

Dr. Adedayo Ogunmokun, Vice President for Land Grant

Kelly Sebastian, Executive Officer/Executive Secretary for the CMI Board of Regents (ESBOR)

The meeting was called to order @ 9:08 AM

Agenda Items

1. Opening prayer & Roll call and call to order
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Selection of Vice Chair
4. Review of the last BOR meeting minutes - Online Approval
 - 4.1. May 27, 2024
 - 4.2. July 15, 2024
5. Board Chair Report
6. Student Story
7. President's Report & Accreditation Update
 - 7.1. Updates on ACCT, APAFS, and Dr. David Newnham's Arrival
 - 7.2. Kwajalein Campus Update
 - 7.3. CMI Performance Scorecard
8. Standing Committee Reports
9. Report and Recommendations/Approvals/Action
 - 9.1. Resolution to Confer Degrees, Certificates, and Diplomas
 - 9.2. Proposed Amendments to CMI Act
 - 9.3. Purchasing and Accounts Payable Policy & Resolution
 - 9.4. Wapepe & Resolution:
 - 9.4.1. Climate Change Wapepe



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- 9.4.2. Equitable Student Success Wapepe
- 9.4.3. Community Engagement Wapepe
- 9.5. Budget for FY25 (Budget Portfolio)
- 10. Matters for information
- 10.1. Joint Research Works between KRISO and CMI
- 11. BOR request for future items and information
- 12. Executive Session

Minutes

1. OPENING PRAYER, ROLL CALL, AND CALL TO ORDER

Chair Relang commenced the BOR meeting and asked VPLG Ogunmokun to open the meeting with a prayer. Chair Relang officially called the meeting to order at 9:08 AM.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Regent Kabua made a motion to approve the Board's Agenda. Regent Lomae seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

3. REVIEW OF THE LAST BOR MEETING MINUTES

- 3.1. The minutes for the Board of Regents meetings held on May 27, 2024, and July 15, 2024, were [approved](#) online.

4. BOARD CHAIR REPORT

- 4.1. Chair Relang welcomed the new Student Regent, Wilmer Joel, to his first Board meeting and thanked the Board members who attended the budget hearing on behalf of the entire Board, along with Interim President Switaj and VPBAA Kotton for their leadership of the college.
- 4.2. Chair Relang's Update:
- 4.3. Dr. David Newnham's contract has been officially signed.
 - 4.3.1. Dr. Newnham will assume the role of President on October 1st.
 - 4.3.2. The HR Director and SLT are assisting Dr. Newnham by providing the requested information and organizing housing and travel for him and his partner.
 - 4.3.3. Interim President Switaj will provide more details on Dr. Newnham's arrival and welcome plans.
 - 4.3.3.1. Interim President Switaj reported that the exact arrival date for Dr. David Newnham is not yet confirmed, but plans are in place to meet him at the airport.
 - 4.3.3.2. An inauguration event is likely to be held at the campus on October 1st, his official start date.
 - 4.3.3.3. The Board is encouraged to attend to present a united front.
 - 4.3.4. Chair Relang thanked those involved in the contract negotiation process.
- 4.4. Chair Relang thanked Regent Kabua, VPBAA Kotton, Interim President Switaj, and the staff for preparing the APAFS training in July.



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- 4.4.1. The training focused on investment, fiduciary responsibilities, and leadership.
- 4.4.2. The November APAFS meeting in Manila will be at a master's level, and priority for attendance will be given to those who attended previous sessions, as the advanced level is challenging without the beginner's level.
- 4.5. Chair Relang informed the Board about the upcoming 2024 ACCT Leadership Congress is scheduled from October 23–26, 2024, in Seattle, Washington.
 - 4.5.1. Board members interested in attending are encouraged to notify the Board as soon as possible.
 - 4.5.2. The interim President Switaj reported that CMI and COM-FSM will jointly present at the ACCT Leadership Congress.
- 4.6. Chair Relang provided an update on a recent meeting with Kwajalein leadership, mainly Senator Kitlang Kabua.
 - 4.6.1. She noted delays in progressing the Kwajalein campus and emphasized the need to expedite the process due to recent developments affecting Marshallese workers on the base.
 - 4.6.2. Chair Relang stressed the importance of addressing this issue and working together to make progress on the agenda. Discussing some of the workforce development initiatives, and I've linked there a flyer about that presentation.
 - 4.6.3. The Interim President Switaj reported that the plan for the Kwajalein campus has changed from building on the old hospital site to using the current hospital site while a new hospital is built on the old site. This could allow faster setup.
 - 4.6.3.1. A team will assess the site, and trailers or retrofitting the current building may be possible for a quicker and cheaper solution.
 - 4.6.3.2. Improved facilities are expected to address challenges with enrollment and retention, especially in construction trades and automotive service technology programs.
 - 4.6.3.3. The registered apprenticeship approach is being explored, allowing students to work while attending classes and earn more as they progress. Discussions with contractors are ongoing
 - 4.6.3.4. Regent Kabua reported receiving a letter from USAG-KA indicating the recruitment for 173 open positions.
 - Seven job fairs were held, including one in Majuro, though its location was unclear.
 - The government has 30 days to respond. No qualified Marshallese candidates were found, which is concerning.
 - Regent Kabua stressed the importance of continued efforts between RMI, the U.S., and contractors on labor opportunities.
 - CMI and NTC play a key role in training.
 - A letter was sent to USAG-KA addressing recruiting concerns and processes.
 - 4.6.3.5. The Interim President Switaj requested that the list mentioned by Regent Kabua be shared with CMI and also asked if there was anyone specific from the RMI side who should be included in discussions with the contractors.



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- Regent Kabua emphasized that it is acceptable to share the listing and that communication must go through USAG-KA, as direct contact with the contractor is not permitted.
- 4.6.3.6. The Interim President Switaj reported that students enrolling in our programs can receive up to 50% of their program credits through recognition of prior learning by demonstrating their skills.
- 4.6.3.7. Regent Kabua reported that, in addition to the 173 positions, there will be another 150 openings, though the fields are currently unknown.
- 4.6.3.8. Regent Lucky shared that discussions about providing internships in Kwajalein were positive.
- 4.6.3.9. Interim President Switaj reported that retention rates for automotive and construction trades are below 50%, and finding solutions has been challenging.
 - Efforts such as adjusting schedules and providing release time from base work have not been effective, as some used the time for other activities.
 - Shorter class lengths and varying semester formats have also been tried.
 - Visibility issues with the current location, being somewhat hidden and within a K-12 school, may contribute to the problem.
- 4.6.3.10. Interim President Switaj shared that the vocational programs would primarily be in the Equitable Student Success Wapepe.
 - Interim President Switaj also shared that PSS is creating a new 4-track approach to better prepare students for college-level vocational programs, potentially including dual credit options so students can start college with some credits already earned.
- 4.6.3.11. Regent Lucky shared that while jobs were available, there was a lack of interest.
- 4.6.3.12. Regent Anjain shared that, despite many openings, PSS responded by directing high school graduates to the RMI office, which then connected them to Kwajalein HR.
- 4.6.3.13. Chair Relang emphasized the importance of the discussion on vocational education and asked if there is a group involving NTC, WAVES, and high schools to promote and engage more people, noting uncertainty about the existence of a task force.
 - Regent Lucky confirmed that a task force exists, including CMI, PSS, USP, and NTC.
 - The task force visits schools before high school graduation.
 - The Interim President reported that PSS will be able to leverage and develop an Early Middle College program, allowing high school students to earn college credit through vocational courses.
 - It was noted that this initiative could replicate GCC's successful model to enhance competitiveness and prestige.



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- Chair Relang reported that collaboration among institutions is needed, noted progress at LSA in addressing stigma around vocational education, and highlighted the new principal's commendable efforts to improve attitudes towards vocational programs.
- Chair Relang suggested that for the next meeting, an update on the task force Regent Lucky mentioned regarding vocational education be provided, and discussed how the board might further support vocational education at the college and with partners.

5. STUDENT STORY

- 5.1. Student Regent Joel introduced Junior Bilimon, a student residing in the dorm for 4 semesters from Wotje, and in the Business Degree Program and expended to graduation 2025 who would be sharing his story.
- 5.2. Junior thanked everyone for a smooth transition and shared that while CMI has potential for improvement, his dorm experience has been challenging with issues like cleanliness and communication.
- 5.3. He noted persistent problems with bathroom hygiene, class scheduling conflicts, and dorm connectivity issues.
- 5.4. Junior mentioned that some issues, such as laundry repairs and computer lab access, are expected to be resolved soon.
- 5.5. He highlighted a personal challenge with his course load and internship requirements, which might affect his dorm residency and academic progress.
- 5.6. Junior reported that he does not receive internet connection in his dorm room and has to go upstairs to do his work or assignments.
- 5.7. Regent Wakefield thanked Junior for sharing his story and inquired about his experience with the learning phase at CMI, specifically how smoothly he is working with teachers and professors and if he is encountering any issues with faculty.
 - 5.7.1. Junior responded that his experiences with teachers and academics at CMI have been mostly smooth, with no issues encountered with faculty, and he feels his journey has been smooth overall.
- 5.8. Regent Lomae asked about Internet connectivity for students, sharing his own experience in Vanuatu with internet issues affecting access to online course materials and emphasizing the importance of reliable internet access, especially in dormitories, for students to comfortably access their course materials.
 - 5.8.1. Junior reported that while free internet access is available, he has been unable to connect to the internet in his assigned dorm room and must go outside or use the lab for connectivity.
- 5.9. VPBAA Kotton reported that while managing IT, he learned that the student had not received the expected free Mi-Fi from NTA, despite internet access being available in multiple areas on campus.
- 5.10. Student Regent Joel reported that last month, he, VPBAA Kotton, his team, and other SGA members conducted a walk-around of the dorm. Key findings included



overcrowded laundry facilities with old machines, poorly maintained bathrooms, broken furniture, leaking rooms, a broken computer lab with inadequate air conditioning and no chairs, and insufficient fans. Additionally, food access for students was identified as a concern.

- 5.10.1. Junior reported that recent dorm maintenance addressed several issues, students fix their own fans with old parts, and the food vendor's weekend closure has led to students cooking in the RA's room.
- 5.11. Chair/Vice Chair Lucky tasked the Student Regent with reviewing the listed issues and reporting on their status at the next board meeting.
- 5.12. Interim President Switaj noted that persistent issues were due to poor communication between residence life, student services, and the physical plant team responsible for addressing physical problems.
 - 5.12.1. To resolve this, the physical plant administrative assistant will now organize regular meetings and take minutes to ensure all parties are informed and issues are addressed promptly.
- 5.13. Regent Kabua supported the suggestion for the student rep to provide updates and inquired about someone overseeing dorm maintenance to ensure timely responses, noting the challenge of consistent communication and follow-through in addressing issues.
 - 5.13.1. Interim President Switaj reported that the residence life team is responsible, and regular meetings are being implemented to address the communication breakdown that previously occurred.

6. PRESIDENT'S REPORT & ACCREDITATION UPDATE

- 6.1. Interim President Switaj presented and respectfully referred Regents to the detailed report in the folder for the meeting and is happy to entertain questions: [PRESIDENT & SLT 3rd Qtr Presentation](#).

Regent Lucky inquired about the possibility of having a communication officer or a Facebook page for the Majuro Land Grant to improve the visibility of ongoing initiatives and suggested potential collaboration with CMI to enhance public outreach.

 - 6.1.1. VPLG Ogunmokun reported that there is a Land Grant Facebook page where all activities are reflected.
 - 6.1.2. Efforts are underway to update the Land Grant page on the CMI website, as it currently contains outdated information.
 - 6.1.3. Work is also being done to redevelop the nursery, which has been delayed due to unfilled positions. However, with the help of NTC, an intern is now assisting extension agents, and efforts are being made to construct a greenhouse.
- 6.2. Chair Relang inquired about the status of the CMI newsletter, suggested using simplified and visually appealing flyers or one-pagers to share reports and student data with the public, noting that not many people visit the website or read long documents.
 - 6.2.1. Interim President Switaj reported that the main CMI Facebook page has been reactivated, data reports are being published on the website, and efforts are underway following a discussion with the communications officer about meeting work requirements.



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- 6.3. Interim President Switaj reported that the expansion of the Math Bridge Program depends on the schools, noting that it was easy to connect with SDA due to CMI faculty involvement on their board, but outreach to other schools will take more time.
 - 6.3.1. Chair Relang suggested that Regent Wakefield promote the Math Bridge Program to other private schools, noting its potential impact on improving math exam performance across both public and private schools.
- 6.4. Interim President Switaj reported that a JICA volunteer will be teaching Japanese courses, and the three courses offered prior to COVID will be available again.
- 6.5. Chair Relang inquired about the ongoing challenge of recruiting researchers and suggested strengthening the connection between Land Grant and the academic side to promote student research, asking if any discussions have taken place with the academic side of the college on this matter.
 - 6.5.1. VPLG Ogunmokun reported that while no formal actions have been taken, efforts are being made to involve the Faculty Senate and form a committee to address research promotion and increase Land Grant visibility within the college.
- 6.6. VPLG Ogunmokun reported that a project proposal is in the early stages, stemming from a recent meeting with Land Grant University, and differs from the Pacific Island project which has already progressed further.
 - 6.6.1. Regent Kabua shared that she will reach out to Rufus.
- 6.7. Interim President Switaj reported that liberal arts graduates complete a research paper course requiring an exchange research project, but as most are at the associate or bachelor's level, they are not yet independent researchers; to develop research skills, students would need to pursue further education at any university, not necessarily other land grant institutions.
 - 6.7.1. Chair Relang reported that linking Land Grant with academics aims to promote student research and address the difficulty in recruiting local and international researchers across institutions like CMI, COM, FSM, and Palau Community College.
 - 6.7.2. The Interim President reported that that's really one of the pathways we hope that our Agroforestry associate degree can lead them towards. You know we have. We have programs in these areas. I think it's less about, how can we promote research as an abstract ideal, although that can be helpful and more about, how do we promote these particular fields? Because that's what then connects them to the larger universities, and they can get those advanced degrees.
 - 6.7.3. VPLG Ogunmokun reported that currently, only research and extension components of Land Grants are active, with the instructional component missing; efforts are underway to expand internships for research credit, and promoting research at the associate level remains challenging.
- 6.8. VPBAA Kotton reported that liabilities increased due to delayed reconciliation of large grants and POs, but these issues have been resolved, and he will ensure close monitoring and quarterly reporting to the budget committee moving forward.
 - 6.8.1. VPBAA Kotton emphasized that while SOPs for managing grants are in place, the issue was with improper human management, which has now been addressed.



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- 6.9. Regent Kabua requested a report for the Endowment on how it's been doing for over the past 5-10 years. On the cash flow liquidity ratio, do we have a policy on what point does the college need to maintain and not go below a certain level, for, like cash flow. Maybe a policy that states at least 6 months ago, the value of the budget or cash flow balance, some kind of safety net.
- 6.9.1. VPBAA Kotton reported that they are reviewing best practices for cash flow management from other institutions, highlighting the importance of a "rainy day fund" to provide a financial cushion in unpredictable scenarios, noting that while the college aims to maintain a minimum of \$250K for immediate needs, this is based on cash flow fluctuations rather than a formal policy.
- 6.9.2. He also explained that system changes in managing Pell Grants, compounded by simultaneous U.S. Government system changes, caused temporary financial issues, though most have been resolved, with some remaining challenges due to regulatory conflicts.
- 6.10. Regent Kabua announced that she will be flying to Honolulu for the JEMFAC Meeting and requested that Interim President Switaj email any key talking points the college would like her to raise with the Minister.

7. STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

- 7.1. Finance/Risk Assessment/Audit Committee
 - 7.1.1. Chair/Vice Chair Lucky reported that the committee met last Friday, discussed the audit and financial report, assigned tasks to VPBAA Kotton, and requested VPBAA Kotton to present to the full Board.
 - 7.1.2. VPBAA Kotton reported that the Finance Committee focused on public perception issues due to audit concerns, and recommended drafting a debrief memo for the public account chairman and a public report to increase transparency. He also mentioned ongoing efforts with auditors, the open FABS Director position, and delays in signing the audit report, which is awaiting final approval.
 - 7.1.3. Regent Lomae added that for recruiting the FABS Director, VPBAA Kotton proposed three options: 1) train an internal candidate, 2) create a recruitment package to attract candidates within the RMI, or 3) recruit someone from abroad, and emphasized the urgency of filling the position due to ongoing audit issues.
 - 7.1.3.1. Regent Kabua inquired if there is already a candidate for Option 1 and requested management to prepare information on any identified staff for the special meeting.
 - 7.1.3.2. Interim President Switaj stated that this needs further discussion.
 - 7.1.3.3. VPBAA Kotton added that management has not yet met to discuss this but emphasized the importance of revisiting the option, given the previous director's impact on the team's efforts, including basic accounting tasks.
 - 7.1.4. Interim President Switaj reported that appointing the wrong person to the FABS Director role could be more detrimental than having no one, as past experiences



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showed that a poor fit could create a toxic environment and further hinder progress.

- 7.1.5. VPBAA Kotton reported that the issue arose from not properly evaluating staff workloads before assigning tasks, leading to staff being overwhelmed as federal grant requirements increased significantly.

- 7.1.5.1. The challenge was recognized and discussed with the late President, revealing that staffing levels remained the same from 2010 to 2022 despite a 60% increase in federal grant funding, which led to more complex reporting requirements.

- 7.1.5.2. Staffing issues identified in the 2020 audit were addressed through additional training and adjustments to ensure staff were better prepared to handle grant management.

- 7.1.6. Interim President Switaj reported that efforts to restructure the USAID collaboration were unsuccessful.

7.2. Academic & Student Affairs Committee

- 7.2.1. Chair of the ASA committee, Chair Regent Maddison reported that the committee met last Friday and is recommending a resolution regarding the graduate listing of 15 students.

- 7.2.1.1. The discussion included student data, highlighting that liberal arts is highly favored while nursing is less popular despite existing shortages.

- 7.2.1.2. Issues with course scheduling and cancellations were also shared by the Student Regent.

- 7.2.2. Interim President Switaj reported that under the current graduation policy, there is a secondary graduation list for students who completed their requirements in the summer.

- 7.2.2.1. Originally, this policy allowed for a separate ceremony for programs like carpentry. However, since students now prefer to attend the main May ceremony, the policy might be revised to have only one conferral resolution per year.

- 7.2.2.2. This potential change is under consideration but has not yet been processed.

7.3. Strategic Planning Committee

- 7.3.1. Chair of the SPC, Regent Kabua reported that they met last Friday and reviewed the three Wapepes on the agenda for the Board's approval, which were previously presented in Interim President Switaj's report; she expressed satisfaction with the activities and requested the Board's support for them.

8. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS/APPROVALS

8.1. Resolution to Confer Degrees, Certificates, and Diplomas

- 8.1.1. The Interim President reported that the list of graduates complies with the resolution to confer degrees and certificates for students who have completed their requirements in the summer.



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Regent Maddison moved to approve the resolution to Confer Degrees, Certificates, and Diplomas. Regent Wakefield seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

8.2. Proposed Amendments to CMI Act

- 8.2.1. Regent Lomae reported that the committee proposed amendments to the CMI Act to clarify its provisions, mandate, and structure, including inserting new subsections for better organization, and presented these proposed amendments to the whole board for consideration, noting that the last amendment to the CMI Act was in 2006.
- 8.2.2. Chair/Vice Chair Lucky requested that the Board review the proposed amendments and provide their comments at the next Special meeting.
- 8.2.3. Chair Relang commented that certain sections, like those on meetings, may be more appropriately placed in bylaws for ease of amendment, drawing from experience with the Human Rights Committee Act, which has proven difficult to amend through Nitijela. She suggested that, when reviewing the proposed amendments, the Board should consider what should be in bylaws versus what is necessary for inclusion in a legal act to avoid operational limitations.
- 8.2.4. Chair Relang suggested that the CMI Act review be discussed in a separate special meeting, acknowledging that the Board will conduct a deeper review before revisiting it.

The suggestion to defer the proposed amendments to the CMI Act and discuss them in a separate special meeting was unanimously approved.

8.3. Purchasing and Accounts Payable Policy & Resolution

- 8.3.1. Interim President Switaj reported that the topic was brought up at the last meeting, with substantial discussion surrounding the distinctions between micro purchases, small purchases, and large purchases.
- 8.3.2. VPBAA Kotton requested to discuss the topic further at the next Finance Committee meeting, as they were unable to delve deeper due to audit issues, and suggested linking the changes to these issues before seeking approval at the Special Board meeting.

The suggestion to defer the Purchasing and Accounts Payable Policy & Resolution for discussion in a special meeting was unanimously approved.

8.4. Wapepe & Resolution: Climate Change Wapepe, Equitable Student Success Wapepe, & Community Engagement Wapepe.

- 8.4.1. Chair Relang reported that the presentation was made by Interim President Switaj and the Strategic Planning Committee.

Regent Wakefield moved to approve the resolution to Climate Change Wapepe, Equitable Student Success Wapepe, & Community Engagement Wapepe resolution. Regent Lomae seconded the motion. The motion was approved.



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8.5. Budget for FY25 (Budget Portfolio)

- 8.5.1. Regent Kabua motioned to move the discussion to a special board meeting.

The motion to defer the Budget for FY25 (Budget Portfolio) for discussion in a special meeting was unanimously approved.

9. MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

9.1. Joint Research Works between KRISO and CMI

- 9.1.1. Interim President Switaj reported that this was included in her report presentation and is open to any questions.

- 9.1.1.1. Interim President Switaj reported that the energy project includes a basic skills training component with hypercomics.

10. BOR REQUESTS FOR FUTURE ITEMS AND INFORMATION

- 10.1. As requested by Regent Kabua, a detailed report on the Endowment Fund be provided, reviewing its performance over the past 5-10 years and including recommendations for future investment growth.

- 10.2. Chair Relang requested an update on the endowment raffle, noting the date change to November 1st.

- 10.2.1. Board members were reminded to sell and return their tickets.

- 10.2.2. VPBAA Kotton was tasked with asking Charlynnne and Hatty for an update on ticket sales and to follow up with those who received tickets, including providing email updates on sales progress.

- 10.3. Student Regent shared that Regent Kabua suggested providing an update on the status of addressing the previously discussed issues concerning the dorms.

- 10.4. Regent Lomac suggested using the student regent as a journalist to discreetly post updates on the progress of the works and related information.

- 10.4.1. Chair Relang emphasized the need to ensure there's a clear boundary to avoid misusing the student regent's position at the journal.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Meeting adjourned @ 12:25 PM

Scribe

Kelly Luce Sebastian,
Recording Secretary

Reviewed & Approved by

Julius Lucky,
Acting Chair, Board of Regents

December 2, 2024

Date Approved