Limited Degrees at the Northern Marianas College

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Northern Marianas College

The Northern Marianas College (NMC) is a public college in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Island (CNMI). It was established in 1981 and has three campuses, one located on each island: Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. The Northern Marianas College offers only a few degree programs such as Nursing, Criminal Justice, Business, Education, and more (Northern Marianas College [NMC], 2008, academics). Although most of these programs offers only an associate’s degree, will having more degrees options and programs at NMC help or hurt the CNMI?

The Northern Marianas College offers several degrees such as Nursing, Criminal Justice, Business, Education, Libral Arts, and Natural Resources Management. From the six majors, only two offers up to a bachelor’s degree: Business and Education (NMC, 2008, academics). NMC is partners with a few universities that allow students to into extended degree programs. The University of Guam (UOG) is partners with NMC that offers a baccalaureate SROTC military science course “that allows full-time students enrolled at NMC to seek an officer career in the U.S. Army during their first two years of SROTC in the CNMI” (NMC, 2008, community programs, EDUP). Another UOG-NMC partnership available in the island is the bachelor’s program in Criminal Justice. “NMC students are to complete a four-year criminal justice degree in Saipan with three years of NMC coursework and one year of course work from UOG instructors who will either teach in Saipan or via online classes” (University of Guam [UOG], 2020). A partnership with Framingham State University allows a “Master of Education for teachers in American Schools Overseas”. Although these are steps into attaining a baccalaureate degree, the college could certainly try to offer more degree programs.

Many CNMI high school students apply to different universities in the mainland but not on their island. Why? According to a CNMI High School Senior Survey done in 2006, a total of 538 senior students were interviewed. Out of the 538 students, 39% (207 students) said they would prefer to attend college outside the CNMI. 20 percent (106 students) consider attending the Northern Marianas College and 18 percent (96 senior students) said they would join the military (Saipan Tribune. 2006). Why would most of the local students rather study outside of the CNMI? 31 percent of the students stated, “They want to leave the CNMI to experience a new environment” while 10.7 percent said they don’t consider NMC as a quality institution for college education. 18.2 percent said they would take up business courses, 9 percent would take healthcare courses, 8.8 percent would take education, and 8.4 would take engineering courses (Saipan Tribune, 2008). Adding more degree programs require more funding but, in the end, it could be also be beneficial. It could help motivate students to want to attend NMC. Having a higher acceptance and graduation rate may even make other students from different parts of the world want to study in the CNMI. The CNMI would have a variety of its own nurses, teachers, engineers, and etc.

According to College Possible: The Economic Impact of College Degrees, “Over the course of a lifetime, the average bachelor’s degree holder will funnel $278,000 more into local economies than the average wage earner with only a high school diploma. These same alumni will also contribute $44,000 more in local and state taxes that advance civil services, enhance infrastructure, fund public schools and support the arts.”

As NMC is the only college in the island, it is important to know whether having limited degrees can benefit or harm the CNMI. NMC may offer several degree programs for the island but it may not suffice for the lack of degrees that is yet to be offered. Having a variety of degrees could certainly benefit the CNMI. Many students are interested in art, music, and theatre; yet, the college does not offer such majors. A degree program that could be exceptionally beneficial to the CNMI is cultural heritage studies. Nursing majors goes through two years of taking prerequisites classes and another two years of clinicals, yet they only graduate with an associate’s degree.

To conclude, if the government were to actually make a change and add more degree programs, the CNMI may actually be given a chance to show some economic improvement. It would be a great way to boost the economy by having CNMI’s own experts.

Resources

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