

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

NO.: BHE 23-57

BOARD DATE: June 20, 2023

**RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE COMMONWEALTH HONORS PROGRAM FOR
QUINSIGAMOND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education accepts the report of the Commonwealth Honors Council Executive Committee and renews the membership of **Quinsigamond Community College** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program** for seven years, effective June 20, 2023.

VOTED: Motion approved and advanced to the full BHE by the Executive Committee on 6/12/2023; and adopted by the BHE on 6/20/2023.

Authority: Commonwealth Honors Program Approval Process Guidelines as Revised by the Board of Higher Education in March 2022; G.L. c. 15A, § 9.

Contact: Winifred Hagan, Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Planning & Public Program Approval
Keith M. Connors, Program Director for Academic Affairs and Student Success

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

June 2023

Quinsigamond Community College Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

BACKGROUND

This motion concerns the continuation of Quinsigamond Community College's membership in the Commonwealth Honors Program in accordance with the Commonwealth Honors Program Guidelines. Once the Commonwealth Honors Program approval has been obtained by an institution, the Commonwealth Honors Council Executive Committee will review the Program every seven years. The report of the Committee shall be forwarded to the Board of Higher Education for approval.

REVIEW PROCESS

Quinsigamond Community College prepared a self-study document presenting its Honors Program structure and operation in terms of the Commonwealth Honors Program requirements. The report provided evidence documenting the fulfillment of the following criteria:

1. Alignment of the mission and goals
2. Organization and administration
3. Admissions criteria
4. Transfer criteria
5. Program curriculum
6. Graduation criteria
7. Program resources
8. Curriculum Review Process

VISITING COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On March 2, 2023, the Commonwealth Honors Program (CHP) Visiting Committee conducted a day-long review of the Quinsigamond Community College (hereafter QCC) Honors Program, having previously received and studied QCC's application for re-approval of CHP status. The Visiting Committee consisted of Daniel Soucy, Chair of Liberal Arts and Sciences and a Professor of Philosophy at Mount Wachusett Community College, and Chair of the Visiting Committee; Catherine Buell, Honors Program Coordinator at Fitchburg State University; and Amy Shapiro, Honors College Director at UMass Dartmouth. Prior to the visit, the Visiting Committee received and studied QCC's application for reaccreditation of CHP status.

The site visit was hosted and organized by Honors Program Coordinator Jean Kennedy. QCC's Honors Program is housed in the Academic Affairs Division. The team met with College President Louis G. Pedraja, Vice President of Academic Affairs James Keane, Academic Deans Melissa Fama and Brady Hammond, with faculty who have facilitated honors courses, with honors committee members, with Library Staff and with Honors Program students. The visit also included the team sitting in on an honors seminar regarding the social and moral issues surrounding artificial intelligence.

The Visiting Committee was impressed with the strong and steady presence of the Honors Program on campus. Further, the Committee noted the great enthusiasm from both faculty and students for the Honors Program, and of the support by the college administration. It lauded the efforts by Honors Program Coordinator, Jean Kennedy, for fostering collaborations among QCC Honors Faculty, for maintaining a clear set of standards, and for facilitating numerous academic enrichment opportunities for students.

Recommendations from the Visiting Committee included the following:

- Improve retention and completion through mentoring, advising, and other best practices.
- Consider increased funding for the Honors Program to better serve recruitment, retention, completion, student activities, and course offerings.
- Explore options that would allow for team-taught honors classes.
- Increase the number of add-on honors components to accommodate honors students in academic programs with limited electives.
- Clarify the use of the Honors Center for current honors students.
- Develop more honors classes in the creative arts, STEM, and nursing.
- Code honors students in data management system to allow basic data analyses and student tracking.
- Develop a systematic approach to registration that allows students to register themselves for honors courses.
- Create an Assistant Honors Coordinator position.
- Increase the secretarial and support staff.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

QCC President Luis Pedraja offered the following response to the recommendations made by the Visiting Committee:

"The recommendations of the Program Review Team are a valuable tool for the College to continue to improve and grow the Honors Program. The College is fully committed to the mission, purpose, and educational goals of the students it serves within the Honors Program. Support for our Honors Program will continue to be an ongoing commitment and the improvements suggested by the recommendations of the team will be a priority going forward."

On May 5, 2023, the Commonwealth Honors Council Executive Committee voted to reapprove Quinsigamond Community College 's Commonwealth Honors Program.

RECOMMENDATION

Department of Higher Education staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation received from the Commonwealth Honors Program Executive Committee and recommends that the Board approve the renewal of the membership of **Quinsigamond Community College** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program**.