

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

NO.: BHE 23-58

BOARD DATE: June 20, 2023

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

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education accepts the report of the Commonwealth Honors Council Executive Committee and renews the membership of **Roxbury 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

Roxbury Community College Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

BACKGROUND

This motion concerns the continuation of Roxbury 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

Roxbury 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 September 21, 2022, the Commonwealth Honors Program (CHP) Visiting Committee conducted a day-long review of the Roxbury Community College (hereafter RCC) Honors Program, having previously received and studied RCC's application for re-approval of CHP status. The Visiting Committee consisted of Tiffany Magnolia, Chair of the Visiting Committee and Coordinator of the Honors Program at North Shore Community College; Scott Nowak, Honors Program Area Chair at Salem State University; and Susan Gauss, Interim Dean, Honors College at UMass Boston. Prior to the visit, the Visiting Committee received and studied RCC's application for reaccreditation of CHP status.

The Visiting Committee spent the day meeting with key constituencies. These constituencies included Interim President Jackie Jenkins Scott; Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Joyce Taylor Gibson; Dean of Liberal Arts and Health Careers, Jeff Van Dreasen; Honors Program Coordinator, Jason Laguna; representative faculty who teach honors courses; honors program students; and members of the Honors Advisory Committee. The Visiting Committee was able to tour several areas of the campus including areas critical to the Honors Program, such as the Library and Support Services.

The Self Study chronicled a program that has gone through numerous transitions since the last site visit in 2016. Such transitions include CHP leadership turnover, and the change in leadership from a dean to a faculty coordinator. Given the extent of these transitions happening at the same time, the Visiting Committee was particularly struck by the very high regard that was demonstrated for the Honors Program by students, faculty, staff and the administrators. It is evident the even in this period of transition, the Honors program is much beloved at Roxbury Community College.

The Visiting Committee unanimously recommend to the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Honors Committee that the Roxbury Community College Honors Program be approved for CHP status.

Recommendations from the Visiting Committee included the following:

1. Monitor the program's operation to ensure resources are sustained: Have the CHP Coordinator manage the budget and ensure a supportive honors learning community is maintained inside and outside of the classroom. Consider providing dedicated CHP physical space.
2. Designate a separate and distinct CHP Budget that is controlled directly by the Honors Committee Coordinator.
3. Clearly prioritize CHP experiences or CHP graduates as the aim of the program: Make sure to communicate the chosen priority through the resources and through the mission of the program.
4. Create a specific location on campus for use as an Honors Program Center:

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

RCC offered the following responses to the recommendations made by the Visiting Committee:

1. Monitor the program's operation to ensure resources are sustained: The college will continue to support the Honors Program Coordinator and will create a process to improve Honor student tracking. The college will add support networks to increase

retention and graduation. The Dean of Liberal Arts will set up a meeting with both the Coordinator and the Registrar to improve the college's tracking of Honors students, and we will make other measures to improve our institutional record keeping in this regard as well. The college is also considering recommendations for forming an Honors Program Club as well as capping Honors courses at a lower amount and creating a two-tiered diploma or certificate for students in the program.

2. Designate a separate and distinct CHP Budget that is controlled directly by the Honors Committee Coordinator: Beginning this spring, the budgetary needs of the Honors Program will be collectively determined by members of the Honors Committee to support existing as well as new program initiatives. The Honors Program Coordinator will share the proposed budget for the upcoming academic year with the Dean of Liberal Arts and Health Careers in addition to the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs. In June, the Honors Program's budget will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees with allocations made at the start of the new fiscal year in July.
3. Clearly prioritize CHP experiences or CHP graduates as the aim of the program: Honors courses were made clearer on the posted schedule options for the upcoming Spring semester, which will help for tracking and data purposes. The clerk working for the Dean of Liberal Arts and Health Careers has training with our student information system and will be tasked with supporting the Honors Program Coordinator with tracking information, with the support of student work studies as well
4. Create a specific location on campus for use as an Honors Program Center: The college began the work to establish an Honors Program Center in the area outside of Honors Program Coordinator's office. The expected completion of the new space was the Fall of 2022. RCC said the space would be clearly marked and designated for Commonwealth Honors Students and would feature information about how to get involved with the program, as well as ways to contact the Honors Program Coordinator and other faculty teaching Honors courses.

On May 5, 2023, the Commonwealth Honors Council Executive Committee voted to reapprove Roxbury 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 **Roxbury Community College** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program**.