

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION**

**COMMITTEE:** Academic Affairs

**NO.:** AAC 15-38

**COMMITTEE DATE:** June 9, 2015

**BOARD DATE:** June 16, 2015

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**RENEWAL OF SPRINGFIELD TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE MEMBERSHIP IN THE COMMONWEALTH HONORS PROGRAM**

**MOVED:** The Board of Higher Education accepts the report of the Commonwealth Honors Program Executive Committee and renews the membership of **Springfield Technical Community College** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program** for six years, effective June 16, 2015.

**Authority:** Commonwealth Honors Program Approval Process Guidelines as Revised by the Board of Higher Education in November 2006; G.L. c. 15A, § 9.

**Contact:** Angela Coletta, Assistant Director for Program Review & P-16 Collaborative Initiatives

## **BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**June 2015**

### **Springfield Technical Community College Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program**

#### **BACKGROUND**

This motion concerns the continuation of Springfield Technical Community College's (STCC) membership in the Commonwealth Honors Program . According to the Commonwealth Honors Program Guidelines, once Commonwealth Honors Program approval has been obtained by an institution, the Program will be reviewed every six years by the Commonwealth Honors Executive Committee. The report of the Committee shall be forwarded to the Board of Higher Education for approval.

#### **REVIEW PROCESS**

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

1. Alignment of the mission and goals of the Honors Program
2. Organization and administration
3. Admissions criteria
4. Transfer criteria
5. Program curriculum
6. Graduation criteria
7. Program resources
8. Approval procedures for new courses

#### **REVIEW TEAM FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

On November 12, 2014, a review team consisting of Vanessa Martinez, M.A., Honors Program Coordinator, Holyoke Community College; Sara Pollak Levine, Ph.D., Honors Program Director, Fitchburg State; and Meredith Feltus, M.A., Director of Development, Commonwealth Honors College, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, conducted a day long assessment of the Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) Honors Program. Prior to the on-campus visit, the team reviewed the self-evaluation prepared by the College.

The visit allowed the review team to further explore information furnished in the self-study; to speak at length with the relatively new program director, Professor Diane Sabato; to see the program's facilities; to meet with honors program students, faculty and advisory committee members; and to discuss the role of the honors program with STCC President Ira Rubenzahl and Academic Vice President Stephen Keller. The visiting committee made some suggestions for improvement, but overall, found that the honors program satisfies all of the above criteria,

and recommends that STCC continue to be granted Commonwealth Honors Program status. The review team recommends the re-approval of STCC's Honors Program.

Recommendations from the visiting committee included:

- Increase the honors budget and consider hiring additional support staff. A part-time or shared administrative assistant for the Honors program could help build the infrastructure needed to continue to grow the program.
- Consider a new space for the Honors Lounge. The team cited the space to be located in a poorly trafficked area. None of the students the team met with were aware of the space.
- Improve visibility and accessibility of the Honors Program by creating a formalized training for advisors and faculty about the Honors Program.

### **INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE**

The institution responded substantively to all of the recommendations as follows:

- STCC President Ira Rubenzahl indicated that he doubled the Honors budget for calendar year 2014/2015 and would consider increasing the budget for 2015/2016. The institution will designate a shared administrative staff who will contribute a portion of his/her work week to supporting the Honors Program. Additionally, the Honors Program Coordinator will secure a work-study student to provide programmatic support for marketing and events.
- STCC is undergoing a three year renovation project on Building 19, the facility that houses student centered programs and services. The STCC Honors Center and Lounge will be housed in Building 19. In the interim, the college will seek a temporary Honors Center to accommodate the program.
- The Honors Program Coordinator will meet with the new Director of Learning Engagement and Advancement to detail the formal inclusion of Honors Program information into the new faculty orientation and ongoing faculty professional development sessions.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

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