

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Academic Affairs

NO.: AAC 12-47

COMMITTEE DATE: June 12, 2012

BOARD DATE: June 19, 2012

RENEWAL OF UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST 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 **University of Massachusetts Amherst** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program** for six years, effective June 19, 2012.

Authority: Commonwealth Honors Program Approval Process Guidelines as Revised by the Board of Higher Education in November 2006.

Contact: Francesca B. Purcell, Ph.D., Associate Commissioner for Academic and P16 Policy

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

June 2012

University of Massachusetts Amherst Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

Background

This motion concerns the continuation of University of Massachusetts Amherst's membership in the Commonwealth Honors Program (CHP). 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

University of Massachusetts Amherst 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 with those of University of Massachusetts Amherst
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
9. Student enrollment for past three years
10. Approval procedures for new courses

Review Team Findings and Recommendations

On February 28, 2012, a review team consisting of Rajini Srikanth, UMass Boston, Director of University Honors Program and Associate Provost, and J. Thomas Grady, Bristol Community College, Director of Commonwealth Honors Program and Professor of English, visited the campus. Prior to the on-campus visit, the team reviewed the self-evaluation prepared by the College. The site visit was hosted by Dean Priscilla Clarkson and included meetings with Provost James Staros, Dean Priscilla Clarkson, Associate Dean Daniel Gordon, Executive Director Meredith Lind, Director of Advising Cory Pols, Director of Assessment Alexander Phillips, Director of Student Recruitment Alexandrina Deschamps, Director of Development and External Relations Meredith Feltus, Director of the Office of National Scholarship Advisement Susan Whitbourne, Manager of Information Technology Celso Avelar, and members of the Commonwealth Honors College Council, a council of the Faculty Senate. In addition, the review team met with students over lunch, visited two honors classes and met with professors.

The visiting committee was impressed with the level of commitment to the Commonwealth Honors College from the highest levels of administration. Construction on a new Honors

Complex is already underway. The committee noted no deficiencies or gaps in the CHC's vision and implementation; thus, its observations and recommendations were made with a view to further enriching an already impressive and admirable academic structure. It only addressed those questions/topics of the re-approval framework that require Commonwealth Honor College's further consideration. The visiting site committee recommended re-approval of Commonwealth Honors status of the Commonwealth Honors College.

Recommendations from the visiting committee included: special targeted efforts be made to identify and recruit continuing students from under-represented groups with GPAs of 3.4 or higher; that more targeted recruitment of Commonwealth Honors Program graduates from community colleges be developed; and that greater emphasis be placed on assessing student learning outcomes;

Institutional Response

The University of Massachusetts Amherst responded that it would increase its recruiting efforts with community college students. It noted ways in which it plans to increase student learning assessment efforts; the Provost promised additional support from the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment. Satisfactory responses were provided for all other recommendations.

Recommendation

Board of Higher Education staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation received from the CHP Executive Committee and recommends that the Board approve the renewal of the membership of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the Commonwealth Honors Program.