

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Assessment and Accountability **NO.:** AAC 08-20
COMMITTEE DATE: June 13, 2008
BOARD DATE: June 25, 2008

**RENEWAL OF HOLYOKE 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 Holyoke Community College in the Commonwealth Honors Program for six years, effective June 25, 2008.

Authority: Commonwealth Honors Program Approval Process Guidelines as Revised by the Board of Higher Education in November 2006.
Contact: Francesca B. Purcell, Ph.D., Director for Academic Policy

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

June 2008

Holyoke Community College

Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

Background

This motion concerns the continuation of Holyoke Community College'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. This is the first renewal cycle for Holyoke Community College.

Review Process

Holyoke 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 with those of Holyoke Community College
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 March 27, 2008, a review team (Susan McPherson, Associate Professor and Honors Program Coordinator, Quinsigamond Community College; Matt Silliman, Professor and Honors Program Co-Chair, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts; and John Reiff, Director, Office of Community Service Learning, Commonwealth College, University of Massachusetts Amherst) appointed by the Commonwealth Honors Council conducted the six-year review. Prior to the on-campus visit, the team reviewed the self-evaluation prepared by the College. The site visit was hosted and organized by Honors Program Coordinator Kim Hicks. The team also met with College President William Messner, Vice President of Academic Affairs Win Lavallee, Honors Committee members, faculty and students.

On the basis of the campus visit, the review of the self-evaluation, and the materials received during the on-campus visit, the team concluded that Holyoke Community College Honors Program substantially satisfies the CHP criteria. The review team recommended to the Commonwealth Honors Executive Committee that it renew the membership of Holyoke Community College in the Commonwealth Honors Program.

The review team recommended that membership on the College's Honors Committee be broadened; that the Honors Program Committee consider offering a three-credit general education Honors course; and that new students are informed about the Program during orientation. The review team also recommended that the Honors Option requirements be reviewed and possibly restructured. They also suggested that students who fulfill the CHP's graduation requirements be recognized on their diplomas.

Institutional Response

Holyoke Community College responded that a motion allowing all faculty teaching in honors courses to serve on the Honors Committee as part of their "college service" requirement has been made. The Honors Coordinator will present a proposal to create a three-credit general education honors course and will be part of the summer's new student orientation. The College also responded that the Coordinator is willing to initiate the process of reviewing the Honors Option requirements and adding a "CHP Scholar" designation to the diplomas of qualified students.

Holyoke Community College will provide a status report on its response at the spring 2009 Commonwealth Honors Council meeting.

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 Holyoke Community College in the Commonwealth Honors Program.