

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Academic Affairs

NO.: AAC 16-27

COMMITTEE DATE: June 7, 2016

BOARD DATE: June 14, 2016

**RENEWAL OF BUNKER HILL 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 **Bunker Hill Community College** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program** for six years, effective June 14, 2016.

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

Contact: Patricia A. Marshall, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

June 2016

Bunker Hill Community College Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

BACKGROUND

This motion concerns the continuation of Bunker Hill Community College's 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

Bunker Hill 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. 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 10, 2016, review team members Susan Martelli, Coordinator of the Honors Program at Massasoit Community College, Joseph Moser, Honors Program Director at Fitchburg State University, and James Canning, Dean of the Honors College at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, conducted the 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 the Co-Directors of the Commonwealth Honors Program, Professor Elizabeth Dunphy and Professor Michael Dubson. The schedule for the day included meetings with Pam Eddinger, BHCC President, Maria Puente, Interim Dean of Mathematics, Behavioral & Social Sciences, VP of

Academic Affairs Clea Andreadis, Provost Jim Caniff, temporary Honors Program Advisor, Professor Mark Beaumont, Honors Faculty, and Honors Program Students. The visit concluded with an exit interview with Professors Dunphy and Dubson.

The enthusiasm on campus for the program, its significant growth in the last three years, and the fact that Honors courses offer students a rigorous academic challenge were highlighted in the visiting committee's report. The committee made some suggestions for improvement, but overall, found that the honors program satisfies all of the above criteria. The review team recommends, without reservation, that Bunker Hill Community College continue to be granted Commonwealth Honors Program status and recommends the re-approval of Bunker Hill Community College's Honors Program.

Recommendations from the visiting committee included the following:

1. Increase the Honors Program Budget to include funds for food, scholarships, marketing, professional development, and a dedicated administrative assistant.
2. In accordance with the Commonwealth Honors Program guidelines, the Co-Directors should report to the Vice President of Academic Affairs or the Provost.
3. The Co-Directors should receive reassigned time amounting to one-half of the required course load as currently recommended by the Commonwealth Honors Program. A two-course reduction in one semester and a three-course reduction in the other would be shared by the two Co-Directors.
4. The position of Honors Program advisor should be a permanent position in the Honors Program.
5. An Honors Advisory Board should be established.
6. The criteria for graduation should be increased from the current "C" grade in Honors courses to a minimum of "B."
7. Limit the number of contract courses to two such courses per Honors student.
8. Lower the required 3.5 GPA to a 3.2 GPA to increase opportunities for students and to expand the program.
9. Ensure that an Honors English course run each fall and that the Honors requirements be altered to allow students to take multiple versions of the Honors Seminar.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

The institution responded substantively to the recommendations by formulating a three-year strategic plan that will involve forming an Honors Advisory Board consisting of an interdisciplinary team of administrators, advising, and admissions staff, Commonwealth Honors Program faculty, and external partners. Opportunities to provide additional financial assistance to students in the Honors Program will be explored through the Bunker Hill Community College Foundation and BHCC will continue to work with its top transfer institutions to urge them to provide scholarships for graduates of the Honors Program. Regarding administrative leadership of the Program, the Interim Dean of Mathematics, Behavioral, & Social Sciences, reports directly to BHCC's Provost, who meets regularly with the Interim Dean and the Co-Directors of the program. BHCC remains strongly committed to improving the Honors Program curriculum and welcomes the committee's recommendations regarding lowering the required GPA for graduation, offering honors writing courses, limiting the number of contract courses that students can take, and permitting students to take multiple versions of the Honors Seminar.

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 **Bunker Hill Community College** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program**.