

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION**

**COMMITTEE:** Assessment and Accountability                      **NO.:** AAC 09-27

**COMMITTEE DATE:** May 29, 2009

**BOARD DATE:** June 4, 2009

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**RENEWAL OF MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS 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 **Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts** in the  
Commonwealth Honors Program for six years, effective June 4, 2009.

**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 P-16 Policy

# BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

June 2009

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

## Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

### **Background**

This motion concerns the continuation of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts 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 Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

### **Review Process**

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts 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 Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
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 comprising Ricki E. Kantrowitz, Professor of Psychology, Honors Program Chair, Westfield State College; David Winsper, Professor of English and Honors Program Coordinator, Springfield Technical Community College; and Meredith Lind, Director, Academic Programs, 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 Co-Directors, Matt Silliman and Marc Goldstein. The team also met with College President Mary Grant, Vice President of Academic Affairs Steven Green, 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 Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Honors Program substantially satisfies the CHP criteria. The review team recommended to the Commonwealth Honors Executive Committee that it renew the membership of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in the Commonwealth Honors Program.

The visiting committee recommended that more outreach be done to inform students of the requirements for completion of the honors program. encourage more students to complete the honors program, resolve conflicts between departmental expectations and honors program requirements, and revisit the requirements that the MCLA Honors Program places on interdisciplinary coursework.

***Institutional Response***

MCLA will require all honors students to take at least one honors course each year to remain in the honors program, which will make it more likely that students complete the honors program. In addition, more honors sections and options in general education courses will also increase the likelihood that students take sufficient honors credits to complete graduation requirements for honors. The College is taking steps to create better ways to communicate the program requirements to students and to improve the academic advising of honors students.

The honors program directors met with various departments on campus to devise ways of strengthening the honors program by dovetailing its needs with those of departmental majors and will initiate a conversation with the Honors Advisory Board to review the College's policy on interdisciplinary requirements.

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts will provide a status report on its response at the spring 2010 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 Massachusetts College Liberal Arts in the Commonwealth Honors Program.