

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Assessment and Accountability **NO.:** AAC 09-29

COMMITTEE DATE: May 29, 2009

BOARD DATE: June 4, 2009

**RENEWAL OF NORTHERN ESSEX 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 **Northern Essex Community College** 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

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June 2009

Northern Essex Community College

Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

Background

This motion concerns the continuation of Northern Essex 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 Northern Essex Community College.

Review Process

Northern Essex 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 Northern Essex 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 February 25, 2009, a review team (Sara Pollak Levine, Associate Professor of Psychology Co-Director of the Leadership Academy Honors Program, Fitchburg State College; Rajini Srikanth, Associate Professor, English, Director, University Honors Program, University of Massachusetts Boston; and David Winsper, Professor of English and Springfield Technical Community College Honors Program Coordinator, Springfield Technical Community College, 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 Professor and Commonwealth Honors Program Coordinator, Ginger Hurjat. The team also met with College President David Hartleb, Vice President of Academic Affairs Lane Glenn, 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 Northern Essex 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 Northern Essex Community College in the Commonwealth Honors Program.

The review team recommended that the College increase awareness and appreciation of the honors program, support enrollment in honors classes, improve the honors center location, and include in the budget the anticipated costs for faculty mentor stipends and for the new service learning component.

Institutional Response

Northern Essex Community College responded that to increase awareness of the program, arrangements have been made for the Honors Coordinator to meet with new faculty each semester for an orientation to the Honors Experience, for the Honors Coordinator to present her sabbatical report at the October 2009 board of trustees meeting, for students who perform well on the math assessment to be sent a letter inviting them to sign up for the new Honors College Algebra course, for faculty to inform students that courses may be taken for honors credit, and for a more accessible location on the campus Website. To improve enrollment in honors courses, efforts are being made to promote the classes more successfully. Discussion is taking place to pre-enroll honors students in the honors colloquium and to create additional honors sections in psychology and English Composition II. NECC is adding a new honors college algebra course in the fall. In regard to space, the College responded that a large conference room in the library will be renovated, and the Honors Student Lounge will hopefully be able to be expanded at this point. Lastly, the Honors Coordinator will include an estimate in her next budget request for faculty mentors for honors projects and for the service learning project.

Northern Essex Community College 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 Northern Essex Community College in the Commonwealth Honors Program.