

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Academic Affairs

NO.: AAC 15-37

COMMITTEE DATE: June 9, 2015

BOARD DATE: June 16, 2015

**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 16, 2015.

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

Contact: Angela Coletta, Assistant Director for Program Review & P-16 Collaborative Initiatives

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

June 2015

Northern Essex Community College Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

BACKGROUND

This motion concerns the continuation of Northern Essex Community College's (NECC) 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

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
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

REVIEW TEAM FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On February 23, 2015, a review team consisting of Dolores Bird, Ph.D., Honors Program Coordinator, Cape Cod Community College; James Canning, D.C.S, Dean of the Honors College, University of Massachusetts Lowell; and Sarah Wiggins, Ph.D., Assistant Director of the Honors Program, Bridgewater State University, visited the campus and meet with institutional representatives. Prior to the on-campus visit, the team reviewed the self-evaluation prepared by the College.

The review team met with the Honors Coordinator Ginger Hurajt, honors faculty and mentors, President Dr. Lane Glenn, honors students, the Honors Program Advisory Committee, and concluded with a meeting with the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. William Heineman, who impressed the team with his openness and attentiveness to the team's concerns. While the visiting team did make some suggestions for improvement, it found that the

honors program satisfies all of the above criteria. The review team recommends, without reservation, that Northern Essex Community College continue to be granted Commonwealth Honors Program status. The review team recommends the re-approval of Northern Essex Community College's Honors Program.

Recommendations from the review team included:

- Designate a new location or space for the Honors Center. The current space at the institution is small; only three or four students are able to fit comfortably in the space.
- The honors coordinator at NECC, Ginger Hurajt, should receive a 2/3 course reassignment time to focus more of her efforts on recruitment and overall coordination and expansion of the honors program.
- The honors colloquium should be team taught by two faculty members conjointly who have scholarship in different academic disciplines. It is the view of the visiting committee that the addition of guest speakers does not make a course interdisciplinary.
- An honors database should be created within NECC's Banner System so that the honors coordinator can keep better, more official records of honors student data. The honors coordinator currently keeps an excel spreadsheet of student data.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

The institution provided substantive responses for all of the recommendations as follows:

- Starting next spring, the college will be renovating its largest classroom building (Spurk). The college has committed to creating a larger Honors lounge as part of the Spurk rehab process.
- The Vice President of Academic Affairs will strongly consider a 2/3 course reassignment time so that the Honors Program Coordinator can focus on creating a bigger Honors presence on the Lawrence campus; the implementation of a Service Learning or Community Engagement activity for Honors students each semester; and to make the Honor's Program a more visible magnet for attracting academically strong students to the college.
- The Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs has agreed to support a team-taught colloquium with two faculty members as part of their regular teaching load.
- The Vice President of Academic Affairs is aware of the issue of keeping track of honors student data and a meeting has been set up with the Honors Coordinator and IT Management.

RECOMMENDATION

Department of Higher Education staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation received from the Executive Committee and recommends that the Board approve the renewal of the membership of **Northern Essex Community College** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program**.