

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Assessment and Accountability **NO.:** AAC 07-35

COMMITTEE DATE: June 6, 2007

BOARD DATE: June 14, 2007

MOVED: **RENEWAL OF MOUNT WACHUSETT COMMUNITY COLLEGE
MEMBERSHIP IN THE COMMONWEALTH HONORS PROGRAM**
The Board of Higher Education accepts the report of the
Commonwealth Honors Program Executive Committee and renews
Mount Wachusett Community College's membership in the
Commonwealth Honors Program for six years effective June 14, 2007.

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 2007

Mount Wachusett Community College

Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

Background

This motion concerns the continuation of Mount Wachusett 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 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 Mount Wachusett Community College.

In the fall of 1991, Mount Wachusett Community College became one of four of the state's community colleges to offer an honors program. In 2000 the Mount's Honors Program became the first community college program to be granted Commonwealth Honors Program Status. The Honors Program is a campus-wide program, and students from all majors are eligible to join. Today the program enrolls approximately 50 students per semester and offers unique honors courses and a variety of educational, service, social, and advising opportunities.

Review Process

Mount Wachusett Community College prepared a self-study document presenting the Honors Program's 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 the Mount Wachusett 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 January 25, 2007, a review team (Susan McPherson, Assistant Professor and Honors Program Coordinator, Quinsigamond Community College; Stephen Adams, Professor and Honors Program Chair, Westfield State College; and Meredith Lind, Director of 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 Coordinator Sheila Murphy. The team met with President Daniel Asquino; the Vice President of Academic Affairs; faculty who teach honors courses; honors program students; and honors committee members.

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 Mount Wachusett Community College Honors Program has developed and maintained the curriculum, resources, and administrative support integral for a Commonwealth Honors Program. The team was impressed with the administrative support given to the honors program, the enthusiasm from both teachers and students involved in the program, and the commitment on the part of the President to enhance this program. The review team recommended to the Commonwealth Honors Executive Committee that it renew Mount Wachusett Community College's membership in the Commonwealth Honors Program.

The reviewers suggested that a general education, honors-only course be offered to incoming and/or second semester freshman to integrate them into the honors program prior to their sophomore year and that additional resources be allocated in the budget for honoraria.

Response

Mount Wachusett Community College responded that a discussion regarding the viability of offering a freshman-level honors class was held, and this will continue to be explored as part of the College's new recruitment initiative. In response to the second concern, the Honors Program coordinator will ask for increased funding for honoraria in her 2007-2008 budget request.

Mount Wachusett Community College will provide a status report on its response at the spring 2008 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 Mount Wachusett Community College's membership in the Commonwealth Honors Program.