

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION**

**COMMITTEE:**      Assessment and Accountability                      **NO.:** AAC 07-36  
**COMMITTEE DATE:**      June 6, 2007  
**BOARD DATE:**      June 14, 2007

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**MOVED:**                      **RENEWAL OF WORCESTER STATE COLLEGE MEMBERSHIP IN  
THE COMMONWEALTH HONORS PROGRAM**  
The Board of Higher Education accepts the report of the  
Commonwealth Honors Program Executive Committee and renews  
Worcester State 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

Worcester State College

## Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

### **Background**

This motion concerns the continuation of Worcester State 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 Worcester State.

Worcester State's Honors Program is a campus-wide program, and students from all majors are eligible to join. The program currently enrolls approximately 160 students. Honors classes are small and are designed to encourage active and lifelong learning. In addition, the program offers a variety of educational, service, social, and advising opportunities.

### **Review Process**

Worcester State 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 Worcester State 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 30, 2007, a review team (David Langston, Director of the Honors Program, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts; Kim Hicks, Honors Program Coordinator, Holyoke Community College; and Cory Pols, Director of Advising, Student Programs and Outreach, Commonwealth College, University of Massachusetts Amherst) appointed by the

Commonwealth Honors Council, conducted the review. Prior to the on-campus visit, the team reviewed the self-evaluation prepared by the College. The Committee devoted the day to meeting with the Honors Director as well as faculty, administrators, and students associated with the Honors Program.

On the basis of the campus visit, the review of the self-evaluation, and the materials received during the on-campus visit, the team noted the careful design of the Honors Program and the high quality of its leadership. According to the team, the commitment of the College administration to sustain the Program's excellence as well as the presentations from the students testified to the strength of the program. The review team recommended to the Commonwealth Honors Executive Committee that it renew Worcester State College's membership in the Commonwealth Honors Program.

The reviewers made suggestions relating to the organization and administration of the Honors Program. The team suggested that Worcester State create an Assistant Director position, increase student participation on the Honors Advisory Committee, and consider using the Honors Independent Study/Honors Colloquium method for enrolling students more students. The team also suggested that Worcester State College clarify the Honors Program's goals and initiate sophomore-level research projects in honors courses.

### *Response*

Worcester State College acknowledged the team's concerns and responded that the College will consider creating an Assistant Director position. Students were asked to serve on the Honors Advisory Council for 2007-2008. The College has devised a system whereby students register for the course separately when taking a "mixed course" for honors credit. In the 2007-2008 academic year, the Honors Advisory Committee will work on a reformulation of the current honors program mission. The Committee hopes to team the written mission statement with a brief honors program handbook for new professors teaching in the program or serving on the Honors Advisory Committee.

Worcester State 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 Commonwealth Honors Program Executive Committee and recommends that the Board approve the renewal of Worcester State College's membership in the Commonwealth Honors Program.