

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Assessment and Accountability **NO.:** AAC 08-22
COMMITTEE DATE: June 13, 2008
BOARD DATE: June 25, 2008

**RENEWAL OF UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DARTMOUTH
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 University of Massachusetts Dartmouth in the Commonwealth Honors Program for six years, effective June 25, 2008.

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 2008

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

Background

This motion concerns the continuation of University of Massachusetts Dartmouth'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 University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

Review Process

The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth 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 University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.
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 6, 2008, a review team (Sandra Neargarder, Honors Program Director, Bridgewater State College; Elizabeth Donaghey, Honors Program Coordinator, University of Massachusetts Lowell; and David Winsper, 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 University. The team met with Director Rob Darst, 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 the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Honors Program has developed and maintained the curriculum, resources, and administrative

support integral for a Commonwealth Honors Program. The review team was particularly impressed with the diversity and number of honors course offerings. The review team recommended to the Commonwealth Honors Executive Committee that it renew the membership of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth in the Commonwealth Honors Program.

The review team recommendations included that the University identify a space for the honors program, reactivate the honors committee, enhance student program opportunities, improve communication about the honors program, develop additional honors tracks, and increase budgetary resources and administrative support.

Response

The University responded that a space in the library would be converted in fall 2008 for the honors program, including a lounge and seminar area. The Honors Director re-activated the Honors Committee, which has begun addressing many of the recommendations in the visiting committee's report. Both the Engineering and Nursing colleges have both been working to formulate a track of courses that students can use to achieve CHP status. The results will be announced in the fall. The University also responded that an improved budgeting process has been put in place with the new director developing a budget that balances needs for program support; course buy-outs; student activities, including student research, outside speakers, social opportunities, and trips; and other programmatic needs to achieve a higher level of effectiveness and excellence.

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth will provide a status report on its response at the spring 2009 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 membership of University of Massachusetts Dartmouth in the Commonwealth Honors Program.