

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Assessment and Accountability **NO.:** AAC 10-26
COMMITTEE DATE: June 8, 2010
BOARD DATE: June 15, 2010

ESTABLISHMENT OF MIDDLESEX 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 approves the membership of **Middlesex Community College** in the Commonwealth Honors Program for six years.

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

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

June 2010

Middlesex Community College

Establishment of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

Background

This motion concerns the establishment of Middlesex Community College's membership in the Commonwealth Honors Program (CHP). According to the Commonwealth Honors Program Guidelines, the Commonwealth Honors Executive Committee serves as the review board for applications from individual institutions in the Massachusetts public higher education system to be approved as CHPs. The Executive Committee, acting upon recommendations and information provided by a visiting committee, shall determine the applicant's qualifications for initial approval as a Commonwealth Honors Program and make recommendations to the Board of Higher Education for consideration and action. This is the initial establishment of membership in the CHP for Middlesex Community College.

Review Process

Middlesex Community College prepared a self-study document presenting its proposed Commonwealth Honors Program structure and operations in terms of the review criteria. The report provided evidence documenting fulfillment of the following criteria:

- A. Mission
- B. Organization and administration
- C. Admissions criteria
- D. Transfer criteria
- E. Program curriculum
- F. Graduation criteria
- G. Program resources
- H. Curriculum review process

Visiting Committee Findings and Recommendations

On February 22, 2010, a visiting committee, comprising Associate Professor Susan McPherson, Honors Program Coordinator, Quinsigamond Community College; Professor Ricki Kantrowitz, Honors Program Chair, Westfield State College; and Associate Professor Doreen Arcus, Honors Program Director, University of Massachusetts Lowell, conducted the review. Prior to the on-campus visit, the committee reviewed the self-evaluation prepared by the College.

On the basis of the campus visit, the review of the self-evaluation, and the materials received during the on-campus visit, the committee concluded that Middlesex Community College had developed and maintained the curriculum, resources, and administrative support integral for a Commonwealth Honors Program but noted a few areas where the College did not meet review criteria and could further strengthen the proposal. The visiting committee's recommendations, followed immediately by the institution's responses, are as follows:

- (1) Change the reporting structure so that the Honors Coordinator reports directly to the Provost.

Effective immediately, the Honors Coordinator will report directly to the Provost of the College.

- (2) Provide nine credits of reassigned time each semester to the Honors Coordinator, as well as funding for coordination work done outside of the academic calendar.

As the Program grows, the College will consider increasing reassigned time for the Honors Coordinator and will include funding for coordination work done outside of the academic calendar in the FY11 budget request.

- (3) Add at least one student representative to the Honors Committee.

Effective immediately, two students from the Student Honors Council will be invited to join the College-wide Honors Committee.

- (4) Simplify the admission criteria and streamline the application process.

The admission criteria and process will be streamlined and simplified. Students will be offered acceptance into the Honors Program if they have a 3.2 GPA and 12 credits. Additionally, incoming students with appropriate SAT and/or honors work at their high schools will be invited to the College Honors Program during their first semester. The Enrollment Management Department has agreed to make changes to the enrollment process to be able to flag qualified students, who will then receive a letter from the Honors Coordinator, welcoming them into the Program, indicating both the benefits and the requirements of being an honors student.

- (5) Obtain formal approval of the World Cultures interdisciplinary seminar and offer it on a regular basis on the Lowell and Bedford campuses.

The World Cultures seminar is currently moving through the internal governance process for formal approval. The seminar will be offered on the Bedford Campus in the fall and the Lowell Campus in the spring 2010-11. Faculty will be recruited to co-teach the seminar, and we intend to offer the seminar on both campuses simultaneously beginning in fall 2011.

- (6) Offer additional general education, honors-only course offerings and keep these class sizes small (15-17 students) with a commitment from the Administration to let the courses run with lower than traditional enrollments until the Program grows to the point where there will be greater demand for such courses.

Middlesex has traditionally made commitments to run with smaller class sizes in Honors courses and will continue to do so. Additionally, there will be an 18-student cap on honors course offerings beginning in fall 2010.

- (7) Provide scholarship availability for Honors Program students.

The Middlesex Foundation provides scholarships for our students and will work to designate an Honors Scholarship for next year's graduates. We are also working with the Foundation Board's community outreach to identify private sector funds for an ongoing Honors Scholarship Fund.

- (8) Provide an increased budget to accommodate growth of the Honors Program on both campuses.

The Honors Coordinator and the Provost have developed a realistic honors budget, and we will do all we can, given the ongoing budget crisis, to fund it.

- (9) Create Honors Centers for student and faculty use on both campuses, thereby providing a vehicle to develop an honors learning community.

There are currently two areas designated as Honors Centers on the Bedford and Lowell campuses. As the Program builds in size and scope, the College is committed to maintaining and equipping appropriate space on both campuses.

- (10) Give Priority Registration to honors students in all their classes. This is a no-cost way to provide students with a benefit for participation in the Honors Program and allow them to arrange course schedules to accommodate enrollment in the new interdisciplinary honors seminar, as well as in honors sections of English Comp I and II.

Effective for fall 2010, all honors students will have early registration as a benefit of being honors students at the College.

- (11) Clarify to administration and department chairs that those facilitating honors options are fulfilling College service requirements.

Effective immediately, the Provost will establish with division deans mechanisms for providing faculty teaching honors options with appropriately recognized College service credit.

After a review and discussion of the submitted materials, the Commonwealth Honors Executive Committee was impressed with Middlesex Community College's immediate responses to the visiting committee's recommendations and satisfied that Middlesex Community College has met the CHP criteria. The Executive Committee recommends the establishment of membership of Middlesex Community College in the Commonwealth Honors Program.

Middlesex Community College will provide a status report on its response at the spring 2011 Commonwealth Honors Council meeting.

Recommendation

Department 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 the membership of Middlesex Community College in the Commonwealth Honors Program.