

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

**COMMITTEE:** Academic Affairs

**NO.:** AAC 17-26

**COMMITTEE DATE:** June 13, 2017

**BOARD DATE:** June 20, 2017

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**RENEWAL OF QUINSIGAMOND 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 **Quinsigamond Community College** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program** for six years, effective June 20, 2017.

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

**Contact:** Patricia A. Marshall, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

## **BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**June 2017**

### **Quinsigamond Community College Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program**

#### **BACKGROUND**

This motion concerns the continuation of Quinsigamond 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 Commonwealth Honors Executive Committee. The report of the Committee shall be forwarded to the Board of Higher Education for approval.

#### **REVIEW PROCESS**

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

1. Alignment of the mission and goals
2. Organization and administration
3. Admissions criteria
4. Transfer criteria
5. Program curriculum
6. Graduation criteria
7. Program resources
8. Curriculum Review Process

#### **REVIEW TEAM FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

On November 16, 2016, the Commonwealth Honors Program (CHP) Review Committee conducted a day-long assessment of the Honors Program at Quinsigamond Community College. The Committee spent the day meeting with key constituencies including the Honors Program Coordinator, Susan McPherson, the Academic Vice President, Pat Toney, faculty who taught honors courses, and honors program students. The visit also included an exit interview with QCC President Gail Carberry.

The Committee was impressed with the high level of commitment and enthusiasm expressed by all those interviewed. Everyone clearly understood, especially students, the transformative experience of participation in the CHP. The faculty, staff, students and college administration were also very appreciative of Susan McPherson's work and promised continued support.

The Committee found QCC CHP satisfies all criteria in the CHP Guidelines and, therefore, recommends re-approval of the Quinsigamond Community College Honors Program.

Recommendations from the visiting committee included the following:

1. Provide dedicated Honors office space, additional administrative support, adequate compensation for the coordinator and up to three course releases per semester to give the coordinator/director a two course teaching load each semester;
2. Streamline the CHP admissions process by identifying students who meet honors entry criteria and send welcome letters to qualified students with program details and invite them to join;
3. Provide one course of release time to honors faculty to allow them more time for honors student mentoring;
4. Explore options to maintain and grow budget resources;
5. Have all honors course proposals be approved by the Honors Coordinator and an Honors Advisory Committee;
6. Change the title of CHP Coordinator to Director;
7. Create an Honors Center and Office;
8. Provide dedicated physical space for Honors seminars and students. The current seminar room is a shared space, which does not provide opportunities for student bonding and interaction in off class hours;
9. Designate Honors Course status in titles and course numbers and identify Honors students in the computer system with a CHP tag to facilitate reporting and tracking of students;
10. Provide more scholarship availability to Honors students and provide financial incentive to join the CHP;
11. Give priority registration to Honor students
12. Consider ways to expand honors course offerings in STEM areas;
13. Provide more resources for external program marketing.

## **INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE**

Quinsigamond Community College offered the following responses to the recommendations made by the visiting team:

1. QCC offers both a dedicated honors classroom and meeting/studying space. Many QCC employees help with clerical support. Additionally, a member of the marketing department updates the Honors Program website regularly. QCC provides two course releases for the Program Coordinator in the fall and three in the spring;
2. Welcome letters are sent to all qualified honors students;
3. Course reassignment for honors faculty is an idea that the college will take under consideration;
4. The Honors Program is supported by a budget. Fundraising is not required;
5. At this time, the College does not feel it appropriate to change the title from Coordinator to Director due to adherence to the Collective Bargaining Agreement;
6. QCC does have dedicated space for honors coursework and the Program Coordinator. The spaces are adjacent to each other;
7. QCC's dedicated Honors space allows for Honors students to congregate before and after their classes;
8. The College now designates Honors Course status in titles and course numbers and identifies Honors students in the computer system with a CHP tag;

9. QCC currently offers two \$500 scholarships per semester for returning students. QCC will look into offering scholarships to new CHP students;
10. QCC will consider giving priority registration to Honor students;
11. Given the growth in STEM majors, offering an Honors section makes sense. Currently QCC does offer STEM majors an opportunity to complete their honors course work through honors-only general education courses as well as by contract;
12. Honors program info is available on QCC's website.

## **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 **Quinsigamond Community College** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program**.