

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Academic Affairs

NO.: AAC 17-27

COMMITTEE DATE: June 13, 2017

BOARD DATE: June 20, 2017

RENEWAL OF SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY 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 **Salem State University** 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

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June 2017

Salem State University Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

BACKGROUND

This motion concerns the continuation of Salem State University'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

Salem State University 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 December 12, 2016, the Commonwealth Honors Program (CHP) Review Committee conducted a site visit of the Honors Program at Salem State University. The Committee spent the day meeting with key constituencies, including the Honors Program Chair, Scott Nowka; Honors Faculty Fellow, Dr. Annette Chapman-Adisho; the Honors Program Advisory Committee (comprised of faculty and administrators); the Honors Program Advisory Council (comprised of students); the Provost, Dr. David Silva and the College President, Dr. Patricia Meservey. The day's schedule also included a tour of the campus.

The Committee found Salem State University Honors Program to be characterized by committed students, faculty and administrators who engage in a wealth of intellectual and social curricular and co-curricular activities. One activity the Committee particularly highlighted was the freshman retreat because of its proven impact on high program retention and graduation rates. The Committee commented on the value of such a robust curriculum of honors activities for its effect of building a strong commitment from the honors students to each other and the institution.

The Committee was unanimous in recommending that Salem State University continue to be granted Commonwealth Honors Program status and recommends the re-approval of the Salem State University Honors Program.

Recommendations from the visiting committee included the following:

1. Increase the course enrichment offerings, community building activities, and study abroad opportunities while keeping those currently offered;
2. Increase administrative assistant hours so that the program can find the best ways to use donated money;
3. Increase the incentives for students (freshmen and transfer) to participate in the freshman retreat to Cape Cod.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

Salem State University offered the following responses to the recommendations made by the visiting team:

1. In response to the course enrichment offerings, community building activities and study abroad opportunities, the institution has used a recent gift from generous donors to expand in these highlighted areas including making a biannual overnight cultural trip and annual offering and providing students grants for thesis research and study abroad opportunities.
2. Demonstrating fidelity to the program, the institution hired part-time administrative support to reduce the duties of the program coordinator freeing the coordinator to consider optimal ways to use donated program gifts.
3. The institution is committed to expanding on the success of its freshman retreat which will be a topic of their August planning 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 **Salem State University** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program**.