

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

NO.: BHE 23-59

BOARD DATE: June 20, 2023

**RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE COMMONWEALTH HONORS PROGRAM FOR
SPRINGFIELD TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education accepts the report of the Commonwealth Honors Council Executive Committee and renews the membership of **Springfield Technical Community College** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program** for seven years, effective June 20, 2023.

VOTED: Motion approved and advanced to the full BHE by the Executive Committee on 6/12/2023; and adopted by the BHE on 6/20/2023.

Authority: Commonwealth Honors Program Approval Process Guidelines as Revised by the Board of Higher Education in March 2022; G.L. c. 15A, § 9.

Contact: Winifred Hagan, Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Planning & Public Program Approval
Keith M. Connors, Program Director for Academic Affairs and Student Success

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June 2023

Springfield Technical Community College Renewal of Membership in Commonwealth Honors Program

BACKGROUND

This motion concerns the continuation of Springfield Technical Community College's membership in the Commonwealth Honors Program in accordance with the Commonwealth Honors Program Guidelines. Once the Commonwealth Honors Program approval has been obtained by an institution, the Commonwealth Honors Council Executive Committee will review the Program every seven years. The report of the Committee shall be forwarded to the Board of Higher Education for approval.

REVIEW PROCESS

Springfield Technical 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

VISITING COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On April 12, 2022, the Commonwealth Honors Program (CHP) Visiting Committee conducted a day-long review of the Springfield Technical Community College (hereafter STCC) Honors Program, having previously received and studied STCC's application for re-approval of CHP status. The Visiting Committee consisted of Daniel Soucy, Chair of the Visiting Committee and Honors Program Coordinator at Mount Wachusett Community College; Hillary M. Sackett-Taylor, Interim Honors Program Chair at Westfield State University; and Jenifer Whitten-Woodring, Dean, Honors College at UMass Lowell. Prior to the visit, the Visiting Committee received and studied STCC's application for reaccreditation of CHP status.

The site visit was hosted and organized by Honors Program Coordinator John Diffley. STCC's Honors Program is housed in the Academic Affairs Division. The team met with Geraldine de Berly, VP Academic Affairs; with faculty who have facilitated honors courses; with honors committee members; and with Honors Program students. The visit concluded with an exit interview with College President Dr. John B. Cook.

The Visiting Committee found the Honors Program has a strong and stable presence on the campus with solid support from the college administration, fosters collaborations among CHP faculty, maintains a clear set of standards, and facilitates many great academic opportunities for students. Faculty and students spoke about the program enthusiastically. The Visiting Committee's general finding is that STCC's program satisfies all the CHP criteria and recommends STCC be reapproved for CHP status.

Recommendations from the Visiting Committee included the following:

1. Consider increased funding for the Honors Program: To better serve recruitment, retention, student activities and course offerings.
2. Explore options for team-taught honors classes.
3. Increase the number of add-on honors components: To accommodate honors students in academic programs with limited electives.
4. Develop a faculty stipend for add-on components.
5. Increase the secretarial and support staff.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

STCC President John Cook offered the following response to the recommendations made by the Visiting Committee:

"Along with academic leadership at the college, I remain extremely supportive of the Honors Program at STCC, and we have taken note of the report recommendations, including the encouragement to increase funding, explore of team-taught courses, consider opportunities to increase credit while not taxing extraneous credit accumulation, and also providing increased administrative support. As part of budget development by STCC for FY 2024, these elements will be considered, as well as mapping possibilities in harmony with the collective bargaining agreement that frames instructional assignments."

On May 5, 2023, the Commonwealth Honors Council Executive Committee voted to reapprove Springfield Technical Community College's Commonwealth Honors Program.

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 **Springfield Technical Community College** in the **Commonwealth Honors Program**.