

**SPECIAL REPORT OF THE
ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL**

concerning

COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS AND PROGRAMS

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COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS AND PROGRAMS

I. BACKGROUND

During the fall of 1996, the Board of Higher Education undertook an initiative to improve the quality and image of public higher education in Massachusetts. The board decided that it was important to create, within the Commonwealth, a public honors college that would attract the very best high school graduates from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In seeking the best location and program for the new college, the Board decided to encourage proposals from all of Massachusetts' public higher education institutions, and issued its guidelines in January 1997. The University of Massachusetts/Amherst administration and faculty moved decisively to put forward a proposal to locate the new college on this campus. The Academic Matters Council developed a report that documented the strength of the existing Honors Program at the Amherst campus and proposed that the Commonwealth College be located on our campus. This document was approved unanimously by the Faculty Senate.

Chancellor David Scott submitted a proposal for the Amherst Campus and promised that if the college were to come to the Amherst campus, the college would work collaboratively with all institutions within Massachusetts public higher education to ensure that honors courses and honors programs were made available to students in all sectors of Massachusetts' public higher education. Following discussions with the Amherst campus concerning system-wide honors programming, the Board of Higher Education at its meeting of June 17, 1997 unanimously approved locating the new Commonwealth College at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst

Designating the Amherst Campus as the location of the Commonwealth College and allocation of initial funding by the Legislature included a mandate that the Campus opens the College for on-campus students for the spring semester, 1999 and to immediately commence recruiting for the fall, 1999 freshmen class. **In order to initiate both of these activities, the academic requirements of the College need to be in place as soon as possible.**

Both the Board of Higher Education and the University of Massachusetts President's Office have established that the Commonwealth College will play a critical and central role toward achieving the goal of improving the quality and the image of Massachusetts public higher education among Commonwealth residents. Specifically, Commonwealth College will be expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- To provide an honors college of national distinction in the public sector that will become a model throughout the Commonwealth and the nation.
- To increase the number of academically talented Massachusetts high school graduates who attend the University of Massachusetts.
- To provide a residential academic experience with an innovative, dynamic, interdisciplinary liberal arts and sciences curriculum, and faculty and mentors who place a high value on teaching and learning in an environment that maximizes active student involvement and student-faculty interaction.
- To provide opportunities for internship, community service learning and public service for all students.
- To collaborate with other UMass campuses and with state and community colleges to develop honors courses and programs across Massachusetts public higher education.
- To develop effective recruitment and retention strategies to attract and retain students of high academic ability from diverse socio-economic, ethnic, and racial groups.
- To increase career opportunities and the acceptance rate in outstanding graduate schools for our graduates and to increase the number of our students who win prestigious national and international fellowships.
- To engage in educational and leadership activities consistent with the land grant mission of the University of Massachusetts.

Commonwealth College will eventually replace the Honors Program. Freshmen will no longer be admitted to the Honors Program. The Program will be phased out as current students graduate. Students currently in the Honors Program and qualified students transferring to the University in the coming year will be afforded the opportunity to enter the Commonwealth College if they choose to fulfill the new requirements.

The Commonwealth College's philosophy, curriculum and requirements were developed by the AMC's Honors Committee. They are consistent with the expectations of the Board of Higher Education and the University President's Office. **Key features of the proposed requirements include:**

1. **an increase in the number of required honors courses from six to ten,**
2. **the addition of foundation requirements in oral communication and computer literacy,**
3. **the addition of an interdisciplinary course requirement, and**
4. **the addition of a culminating experience requirement for all members of the College.**

Students in Commonwealth College will be required to fulfill specific requirements in **six areas** (see **Table 1**):

1. **Foundation requirements:** demonstration of foundation skills in written and oral communication, and computer literacy at completion of the freshman year.
2. **General Education requirements:** Completion of the Gen Ed requirements of the University; four of these courses must be honors courses including College Writing and at least one must carry the Gen Ed "I" designation.
3. **Interdisciplinary:** In addition to the Gen Ed requirements listed above, students must take an additional interdisciplinary honors course or independent study (which could be another Gen Ed course).
4. **Depth:** Completion of the requirements of at least one of the nearly 100 majors offered within the University.
5. **Honors:** Completion of 10 honors courses.
6. **Culminating experience:** completion of a thesis, project, internship, study abroad experience or capstone course. Each culminating experience will have a substantial inquiry and writing component and will require a formal presentation of work undertaken.

II. REQUIREMENTS

ACADEMIC PHILOSOPHY

The primary educational objective of Commonwealth College is to provide the foundation for successful life-long learning. It will do so by employing principles of learning highlighted in The Boyer Commission (1998) report. Every honors course will emphasize inquiry and will facilitate at least one of the following modes of inquiry: *critical analysis, independent research, collaborative work and engagement with society*. In addition, every honors course will promote effective communication skills. These components will be emphasized from the outset so that when students engage in their culminating activity in their last two years, they will be building on a solid and continually reinforced foundation. The College will endeavor to nurture its students' love of learning and to develop their ability to critically assess problems. The College will encourage discovery, creativity, initiative, responsibility, collaboration, leadership and independent thought. These are the attributes that promote effective engagement of the challenges of the new millennium and that enhance the advancement of opportunities for individuals, organizations, and society as a whole. Consistent with the land grant mission of the University, the college will promote meaningful engagement of society. The College will afford its students many opportunities for engagement through a variety of academically based opportunities including internships, experiential learning courses, co-ops, leadership training and community service learning courses (i.e., courses that integrate work in the classroom with active outreach to the community in order to meet community needs). The college will also promote student leadership through specific leadership courses, through its speaker series and alumni mentoring/shadowing programs and by encouraging student participation in college activities including peer mentoring, committee work and activity planning.

OVERVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS

In order to be awarded a **bachelors degree** from the University, Commonwealth College students must complete the same requirements as other students. That is, they must complete General Education and Major requirements, and any additional requirements of their major's school or college. Students who also complete the Commonwealth College requirements will graduate with the distinction of **Commonwealth College Scholar**, which is awarded by the College. This designation certifies that the student has completed a rigorous honors program, has acquired significant communication skills, and has completed a culminating experience that demonstrates the student's ability to successfully pursue independent inquiry.

Table 1

Honors Program Requirements versus Commonwealth College Requirements

		Honors Program	Commonwealth College
Foundations Requirement	Writing	College Writing 112 or 113 or exemption	College Writing 112H or 113H or exemption
	Oral Communications	None	Demonstration of oral communication skills [Certification, CC workshop, or course)
	Computer Literacy	None	Demonstration of computer literacy skills [Certification, CC workshop, course, or SOM requirement)
General Education Requirements		Complete Univ. Gen Ed requirements; No specific honors courses required	Complete Univ. Gen Ed requirements; The courses used for Gen Ed must include three Gen Ed honors courses, one of which has Gen Ed "I" designation
Interdisciplinary Requirement		None	In addition to the Gen Ed requirements listed above students must take an additional interdisciplinary honors course or independent study (which could be another Gen Ed)
Depth (Major) Requirement		Completion of the requirements of at least one of the 90 majors offered within the university or an approved BDIC program	Same
Culminating Experience Requirement		Completion of research thesis, research project, or creative work required for high honors (<i>magna</i> or <i>summa</i>), but not required for either <i>cum laude</i> or completing the honors program	All Commonwealth College students must complete either a research thesis, a research project, a major creative work, a capstone course, or a written report of a supervised inquiry project related to an international, public service, or internship experience. While the culminating experience options are sufficient to receive <i>cum laude</i> , only a research thesis, research project, or major creative work must be completed for high Latin honors.
Total Honors Courses Required		Six honors courses completed with grades of B or better. At least three courses at 300 level or above. Usually, four courses from departmental or interdisciplinary track, two as electives. These may include independent study, a research thesis, etc.	Ten honors courses completed with grades of B or better. At least three courses at 300 level or above. The ten courses must also include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ College Writing 112H or 113H ○ 3 Gen Ed courses, one of which has a Gen Ed "I" designation ○ 1 other interdisciplinary course or an interdisciplinary independent study ○ 5 other courses (<i>e.g.</i> Gen Ed., disciplinary, interdisciplinary, independent study, research thesis, etc.), any of which may apply to the requirements of departmental or interdisciplinary track (see below)
Departmental or Interdisciplinary Track Requirements		Completion of either departmental honors tracks requirements (all require at least four honor courses) or interdisciplinary track requirements as one option for those seeking high Latin honors.	Same

The options of **Departmental Honors** and **Interdisciplinary Honors** will be retained (with the modifications in requirements mentioned below). As is currently the case, there are different requirements for standard honors (*cum laude*) and high honors (*magna* and *summa cum laude*).

STANDARD HONORS:

- *Cum laude*: GPA of 3.2 or higher
- Commonwealth College Scholar and *cum laude*: completion of the Commonwealth College requirements including a culminating experience and 3.2 GP A or higher.

HIGH HONORS:

- Commonwealth College Scholar and *magna cum laude*: Minimum GPA of 3.5, completion of the requirements of Commonwealth College including the completion of a research thesis, project, or a major creative work.
- Commonwealth College Scholar and *summa cum laude*: Minimum GPA of 3.8, completion of the requirements of Commonwealth College including the completion of a research thesis, project or a major creative work.

All honors courses in the disciplines and many interdisciplinary honors courses will be taught in the departments. Incentives will be offered to promote the development and offering of honors courses.

Honors courses will contain no more than **25** students. Each honors course should promote one or more of the core educational principles of the college: *inquiry, collaborative work, critical analysis, independent research, engagement with society, and effective communication*. As is currently the case, all honors courses will be open to all interested UMass students on a space available basis.

There are **six groups of requirements** for Commonwealth College: foundation, general education, interdisciplinary, depth, honors and culminating experience. These are summarized in Table 1 and are detailed as follows:

1. Foundation Requirements

The foundation requirements include **written and oral communication, and the ability to use computers** to access, evaluate and analyze information. The foundation requirements may be met either by completing specific courses or by demonstrating proficiency in each of the specified areas. The **written communication** requirement will be fulfilled by completion of ENGLWP 112H or 113H (College Writing), or by qualifying for exemption from the requirement through the Writing Program placement exam. Students may also be exempted from this requirement, and receive credit, if they received a combined score of 1460 or higher on their SAT Verbal, Aptitude and Achievement tests, or if they received a 4 or 5 on the Advanced Placement Language and Composition Test

The **oral communication** requirement may be met by completing an approved course that requires extensive oral presentations or a workshop offered by the Communications Department on behalf of Commonwealth College. Students may also complete this requirement without taking a course by demonstrating their public speaking ability through special opportunities arranged by Commonwealth College.

The **computer literacy** requirement may be met by showing basic competence in the following four computer applications: word processing, spreadsheets, databases, and telecommunications (i.e. E-mail and Internet). Commonwealth College students may complete the computer literacy requirement by completing CMPSCI 105 (Computer Literacy); ENGIN 191 (Introduction to Engineering II); the SOM computer skills requirement or through courses that offer instruction in the aforementioned applications. This requirement may be completed without taking a course, by demonstrating the ability to perform each of these applications in a supervised computer lab or by completing a special computer skills workshop offered by Commonwealth College. Commonwealth College will arrange periodic opportunities for students to demonstrate their proficiency in these four areas.

These foundation requirements must be completed in the student's first year within the college because they provide the foundation which will enable students to take full advantage of their undergraduate years and future career opportunities. Transfer students will be offered special workshops during their first term at the University to assure that all foundation skills are in place. All courses taught within Commonwealth College require writing and oral presentations. Many Commonwealth College courses also require students to use computers to access and analyze data or to prepare materials for presentation to the class. Consequently, the foundation skills in these areas are further developed and reinforced throughout the four years of the student's curriculum.

2. General Education Requirements

All Commonwealth College students will be required to complete the University's general education requirements, with an additional restriction that the courses used to fulfill these requirements include at least **three** honors designated courses, at least one of which must carry a Gen Ed "I" designation (interdisciplinary). The interdisciplinary courses offered by the College will be an important feature of its curriculum. Each year, the College will develop interdisciplinary courses around one or more *issues of national or world importance*, or will examine an issue that draws upon the concepts, theories and methods of more than one academic discipline (see III. New Initiatives). The following are some examples of the types of courses that might be offered:

- Global warming: causes and effects;
- The unsolved mysteries of science: what baffles scientific scholars;
- Youth violence in America: why it exists and what to do about it;
- Modern American literature: what determines its content and how does it differ from literature of the past.

Funding has been secured from the Board of Higher Education to ensure that this plan can be implemented and the Commonwealth College will work with academic departments to bring experts to campus to discuss specific interdisciplinary topics, either as visiting professors or as guest speakers. The visiting faculty, in collaboration with our own faculty, will be involved in teaching interdisciplinary courses within the College, and will also be available to provide guest lectures in departmental general education and major courses. Versions of these interdisciplinary courses will also be developed collaboratively within the Massachusetts public higher education system.

Because some majors require completion of specified courses within a specified time, taking two interdisciplinary courses may increase the course load of some students within Commonwealth College. The College will attempt to alleviate this additional burden by offering interdisciplinary courses during summer and intersession, and by offering such courses at each of the four undergraduate University campuses (Amherst, Boston, Dartmouth and Lowell). This will assist Commonwealth College students in completing their course requirements, but will also assist students at other institutions in the state. Such courses will be offered collaboratively with the host campus and will be subject to the existing credit transfer policies of the University of Massachusetts/Amherst campus.

3. Major (Depth of Knowledge) Requirement

Students may satisfy the depth requirement of Commonwealth College by fulfilling the requirements of any of the nearly 100 undergraduate majors offered within the University.

4. Interdisciplinary Requirement

In interdisciplinary courses students grapple with more than one field's concepts, theories, methods, findings and ways of structuring knowledge. Students must take one interdisciplinary honors course which carries Gen Ed "I" designation and an additional interdisciplinary honors course (which may be Gen Ed or non-Gen Ed and may include interdisciplinary independent study or graduate courses in interdisciplinary programs like Neurobiology). Interdisciplinary Gen Ed courses will carry an "I" designation after approval of the General Education Council and the Faculty Senate. Honors courses accepted toward the honors interdisciplinary requirement will be approved by the *Commonwealth College Curriculum Committee*.

5. Honors Course Requirements

Commonwealth College requires all its students to complete a minimum of ten honors courses with grades of B or better. At least three must be upper-level courses (numbered 300 or higher). Current policy grants students honors course credit for courses numbered 600 or higher, 6-credit intensive language courses and courses taken abroad (one per semester, up to a maximum of two). Students may also petition for additional honors credits for courses taken abroad, at one of the other Five Colleges, or at UMass at the 500 level. Students will be encouraged to integrate international study, internships, and cooperative education into their honors experience, and some of this work may be approved for honors credit. As is now the case, approval of substitutions will be the decision of the dean of the Commonwealth College.

6. Culminating Experience Requirement

The culminating experience requires students to engage the world beyond their undergraduate academic experience by either expanding the frontiers of knowledge through research or applying their acquired knowledge beyond the University's campus. Students will be encouraged to begin thinking about their culminating experience as early as the middle of the sophomore year. They will need to complete a *preliminary*

proposal to the College by the end of the sophomore year. Once a faculty advisor approves a student's proposal, a specific plan is agreed upon that will enable the student to complete the culminating experience by the end of the senior year.

There are **four options** available to students; the choice will normally be based on the student's particular interests and their post-graduate career goals. Students must choose the first option if they seek high honors (*magna* or *summa cum laude*) but may combine the first option with the second or third by completing a research project during a study abroad program or during an internship. In this case, the international study or internship should be completed during the junior year, to allow for writing the thesis in the senior year.

To be counted as a culminating activity, the activity 1) must include a major inquiry project that has been approved prior to the inception of the activity (even if thereafter, in the light of the student's evolving experience, it is substantially modified), 2) must include a formal presentation to an appropriate audience and 3) must be supervised and regularly monitored (even if via E-mail) by a University of Massachusetts faculty member. The four culminating experience options are as follows:

1. Completion of a **research thesis, project or creative work, with a public presentation** at a research conference or at a formal proceeding on campus.
2. Participation in an **international study** program during which the student gains specific and identifiable experiences related to their field(s) of academic study.
3. Completion of a faculty-sponsored **public service learning** experience or internship that involves experiences directly related to the student's field of study and provides opportunities to demonstrate leadership in the chosen field
4. Completion of a **capstone course**. The capstone course will be an intensive, integrative course. One model for the capstone course is Honors 497 (Public Policy and Citizen Action). Additional capstone courses will be solicited by the College Curriculum Committee and will be approved following existing AMC procedures.

Alternatives and Substitutions

The above requirements of Commonwealth College should not be viewed as a rigid set of course requirements that every student must take, but rather a set of opportunities that will provide exciting and challenging educational experiences for honors students. Those experiences should include the ability to engage in active discussion and even debate concerning important academic topics with faculty, and fellow students. Students should be encouraged in every honors experience to pursue independent inquiry and to take risks in their education that will lead to exploring the unknown. But when and where honors students seek to engage in other honors learning experiences, which also meet these objectives, they should be permitted to do so. Commonwealth College must be able to provide the opportunity for students to pursue independent inquiry to its fullest extent

While we normally think of inquiry and research as focused in the upper class years, there may be some students who develop a research focus early on, perhaps even in the freshman year. The College must allow for such opportunities to be made available to students on a **case by case basis**. Furthermore, flexibility must be provided to encourage academic departments to develop and make available honors courses for students during the freshmen and/or sophomore years.

Consequently, **three provisions** are made for fulfilling Commonwealth College requirements **through substitution**. Substitution approved by any of these three methods may reduce the number of honors courses students need to take within the general education curriculum, but they **do not change the student's obligation to complete the general education requirements of UMass/Amherst, or to complete one interdisciplinary honors experience during the first two years**. These provisions are:

1. Any student may propose (with faculty approval) an alternative honors learning experience (course, independent study or other learning experience) to be substituted for any of the General Education honors course requirements. Such proposed substitutions require the approval of the Dean of the college.
2. Any college or department (with the approval of their college dean) may propose alternative honors learning experiences, which may be substituted for one or more of the required honors general education courses. These proposals must include honors learning experiences during the freshman and/or sophomore years. These proposals need to be approved by the Commonwealth College Curriculum Committee, the Dean, and the Academic Matters Council.
3. An academic department may offer a department-based honors course, taken during the first two years to

substitute for one of the general education honors courses, **other than college writing**. The course needs to be approved by the Dept. Chair, the College Dean and the Dean of Commonwealth College.

The three substitution options also allow for the opportunity of Commonwealth College to work collaboratively with academic departments to work out any unforeseen difficulties that may arise from implementing the new requirements.

III. NEW INITIATIVES

‡ **Honors Courses:** Commonwealth College will **expand the number of honors courses** offered and reduce the reliance on one-credit Honors Colloquia to fulfill the honors requirements. These will be used largely in instances where the anticipated enrollment is insufficient to justify a separate course. Departments that wish to continue to offer colloquia will be able to do so. Commonwealth College will work in collaboration with the Deans and departments to promote excellence in undergraduate education and undergraduate research.

‡ **National Issues Program:** Commonwealth College will use the two-course interdisciplinary requirements to develop courses on national issues, with the potential of providing distance learning courses and/or related educational material to a national market. The **Commonwealth College National Issues Program** will sponsor a new lecture series each year to bring distinguished visitors to the campus to speak on a selected national issue and to teach interdisciplinary courses related to this topic and others.

‡ **Residential Living:** Commonwealth College will support three different **residential living** options to allow honors students to participate in a learning community with other highly motivated students. These students will live in a contiguous space within the residence hall and take two or three courses together with the aim of creating effective learning communities. Freshmen in Commonwealth College will be *encouraged but not required* to live in Commonwealth College learning communities. At the end of the freshman year, as in the existing Talent Advancement Programs (TAPs), students will be required to move off the freshman corridors to make way for the incoming class. Commonwealth College will provide assistance to groups of students wishing to remain together in other dorms in the hopes that they will spread the culture of learning communities across the campus.

‡ **Advising and Support Service:** Commonwealth College will greatly **expand the advising services** and initiate a number of unique and innovative **academic support initiatives** which will position Commonwealth College as an innovative leader among honors colleges and enhance the national prominence of the University of Massachusetts. Services provided by most of these programs will be made **available to all undergraduates**, not just Commonwealth College students. These services include:

Office of National Scholarship Advisement (ONSA): This office was opened in the spring of 1998, funded by a Board of Higher Education grant. The office will continue as a permanent fixture, covered by the budget of Commonwealth College. Similar offices or programs at other major research universities have been successful in assisting undergraduates in obtaining national scholarships. ONSA provides orientation sessions for academically successful undergraduates at the sophomore level in order to inform students of and develop their interest in competing for national scholarships. The office works with students in their junior and senior years to further develop student talent and to identify students who will be most successful in national scholarship competition, and to support them through the application process. ONSA works closely with the faculty advisors for each of the national scholarship programs, and provides support for the selection process.

Research Fellows Program: A significant undergraduate research experience is critical for many national scholarship competitions, and is equally important for students applying to graduate school. The undergraduate Research Fellows Program provides direct funding to a selected group of undergraduate students to pay them to work on research for a faculty member on campus. This program is competitive. It provides opportunities for students to work directly with faculty to obtain research skills, and for faculty to enlist the services of talented undergraduate students. Programs of this type have been very successful on other research campuses. Research Fellow candidates must have a grade point average of at least 3.5, and must have demonstrated a serious interest in research. Students must submit an application in the spring semester of their freshman year in order to be a Research Fellow in the sophomore year. The fellowship will, in many cases, result in an ongoing mentoring

relationship between student and faculty that will ideally culminate in a senior research project. Commonwealth College will attempt to seek outside funds to support the costs of research during the senior year, such as laboratory, travel, or other expenses necessitated by the senior research project.

Citizen Scholars Program: Commonwealth College plans to develop in the next academic year a Citizen Scholars program. The program will admit 20 freshmen and 20 juniors/year who have demonstrated excellence in leadership and **community service**. The program will provide funding support for students engaged in linking classroom scholarship to community action. Citizen Scholars will complete at least four community service learning courses including an introductory course and a capstone course. They will also receive a stipend to cover their expenses while they complete a required summer internship or community service project. Citizen Scholars will receive a graduation medal acknowledging their service and will graduate with the additional designation of Citizen Scholar.

International Fellows Program: This provides grants to students who wish to travel abroad in order to conduct research. An applicant to the program will need to have a grade point average of at least 3.5, and will need to justify clearly how the proposed international experience will contribute to the research project.

National Honors Exchange Program: A number of nationally recognized honors colleges have indicated an interest in establishing a national honors college exchange program among institutions with high quality honors programs. This would provide an additional opportunity for our students, who might go on exchange at another university for a semester or a year in order to pursue a particular research interest or other honors activity. Commonwealth College will try to be a leader in developing such an exchange agreement. Students who would come on exchange from other honors colleges to the Amherst campus would be some of the most academically talented college students in the United States. We would have an opportunity to provide them with information and experiences here that might attract them to our graduate programs upon their graduation from their home institutions. Such a program would benefit both our undergraduate and graduate programs.

IV. AMC REVIEW

It is very clear that an enormous effort has been expended to develop a proposal that is focused on academic excellence while reflecting the consent of the majority of concerned parties. Upon receiving the proposal, the Academic Matters Council embarked on a comprehensive review that aimed at evaluating all aspects of the proposed requirements for the Commonwealth College. Several issues were identified by members of the council or brought to our attention by concerned faculty. In addition, a special meeting was held to solicit inputs from departmental honors coordinators and from department heads/chairs regarding how the implementation of the proposed requirements might impact their honors programs and resources. Following is a listing of those concerns and the AMC's recommendations and/or assessment for addressing each:

1. Oversight and Jurisdiction:

Commonwealth College requires approval from the Faculty Senate on all academic matters and these will be subject to a formal review by the AMC **after five years**. The academic requirements and the curriculum will also be subject to periodic review by a new **Commonwealth College Curriculum Committee** to be established as a standing committee of the AMC-Honors Committee and comprised of 6 faculty, each from a different college and two student representatives. The Curriculum Committee will report to the AMC-Honors Committee which in turn will report to the AMC. The Committee will be responsible for reviewing existing and new courses bearing the honors designation and for assisting in the implementation and review of the new curriculum.

As is currently the policy, the Dean of the Commonwealth College will serve as the Academic Dean for all issues related to honors requirements and for all Commonwealth College students who are University undeclared or are Pre-majors in the College of Arts and Sciences. The Dean of the College in which the student is majoring will serve as the academic dean for all other academic matters.

2. Advising:

Many of the opportunities offered by the College (e.g., sophomore year research fellowships, Citizens Scholars Program, study abroad, senior thesis, and national post graduate fellowship opportunities) require planning as early as the freshman year. From their first term in the program students will be encouraged to meet

regularly with faculty and staff advisors to think about coherence in their program and about the opportunities that the college offers. Freshmen will be assigned a specific advisor in the program who will work with them consistently during their first two years at UMass. In addition, students will be able to benefit from new group advising workshops offered by the college on such issues as choosing a major, thesis planning, experiential learning and post graduate scholarship opportunities. Once students declare a major they will receive primary advising from their departments and from the departmental honors coordinators although the College advising staff will continue to be available to them.

It is recommended that special attention be given to the scheduling of the honors courses as to maximize access of Commonwealth College students to these sections/courses and to provide careful guidance to the incoming freshmen as they preregister for their courses.

3. Joining the Honors College after the First Semester:

Any student who achieves a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.2 and a minimum GPA of 3.2 in the most recent semester is eligible to enter Commonwealth College. This applies both to University of Massachusetts Amherst's students and to students transferring to the campus from other institutions of higher learning. Students who have already completed the freshman writing requirement, will be exempt from the honors writing requirement. Students entering the College **as sophomores** (with less than 6 semesters remaining in their program) may have their transcripts reviewed for appropriate accommodations by the Dean of the Commonwealth College. Commonwealth College Curriculum Committee will develop preliminary guidelines for assessing the prior work and skill level of students entering the college after the freshman year on a requirement by requirement basis. These guidelines will evolve with experience. The two principles guiding the Curriculum Committee's work will be: **a)** Commonwealth College must maintain high academic standards, and **b)** if the program of study of students entering the college after the first semester of the Freshman year would enable them to complete all of their Gen Ed and major-related graduation requirements within 120 credits, it should be possible to make accommodations so that such students would be able to graduate without far exceeding the 120 credits University minimum.

It is important to note that once the requirements for Commonwealth College are in place, the other schools in the state system will develop honors courses, consistent with our standards. This will make it easier for transfer students to fulfill their Commonwealth College obligations.

4. Resources

Funding for Commonwealth College and for the implementation of this academic program has been secured from the BHE. It should be emphasized that every effort will be made to ensure continued availability of funds to support such an excellent program.

One goal of Commonwealth College is to partner with academic departments. The bulk of honors courses will continue to be taught in the departments. Commonwealth College will provide support and incentives to departments for developing and offering additional honors courses including direct compensation to departments for assistance in developing and offering Gen Ed honors courses. The College will also offer workshops, training and undergraduate research fellowships. It is important to note that bringing to campus more of the academically talented and highly motivated students will not increase the number of undergraduates overall or the academic departments' FTE loads.

5. Impact on Teaching

Concerns have been raised that Commonwealth College will a) take the best students out of regular courses, so that faculty may have fewer academically talented students in their courses, b) attract the best teaching faculty, taking them away from the regular sections, and c) demand providing instruction to more honors students. Commonwealth College will recruit and help retain additional honors students to the campus, but there is no plan to increase the undergraduate population overall. Commonwealth College students are only required to take four general education courses in honor sections, which means that there will still be a significant number of Commonwealth College students in regular sections. Creation of some honors sections will reduce the number of honors students in regular sections. Consequently, as additional courses are added to the University's offerings through Commonwealth College, the average class size in other courses will decrease correspondingly. Commonwealth College students will also be encouraged to serve as tutors and mentors for other students on campus, to assist in their learning experience.

It is desirable to have good teachers for the honors courses and also to provide the opportunity for all interested faculty to teach a course for the Commonwealth College from time to time, but there are a number of options that would not take faculty out of regular classes. Some of our faculty may want to teach an honors

course in exchange for additional compensation, retired faculty will be available to teach honors courses, as will Five-College faculty, and, in some instances, recent recipients of doctoral degrees from the University may also be used for specific Commonwealth College courses. Finally, the interdisciplinary courses will be taught by a number of visiting faculty with expertise on the particular national issue under discussion in a given year. These faculty will not only be available to teach Commonwealth College courses, but will also give campus lectures available to all students and will speak as invited guests in a number of regular courses.

V. AMC RECOMMENDATIONS

The AMC believes, unanimously, that the proposed curriculum for the Commonwealth College is **outstanding** and consistent with excellence in undergraduate education and with promotion of the ideals of discovery and learning. The set requirements are conducive to promoting the mission, philosophy and goals of the Commonwealth College.

In addition, the Commonwealth College proposal includes exciting, innovative and ambitious programs that, upon fruition, will play an important role in placing UMass/Amherst in a prominent position nationally among other Honors Programs and peer institutions, and no doubt at the top of the list of choices that outstanding high school seniors in Massachusetts will be contemplating for their college education.

The AMC anticipates that the Commonwealth College's curriculum, combined with its new initiatives (residential learning, national lecture series, national issues courses, ONSA, research fellows, citizen scholars, international fellows, and national exchange) will benefit our campus through each of the following:

- Attracting and retaining academically talented students to the campus.
- Effectively placing these students into national scholarships and high quality graduate schools.
- Providing an exceptional opportunity for national leadership in undergraduate research. Research Fellows Program will enable faculty to mentor the student and enable the student to acquire sufficient research knowledge in order to undertake a successful research project in the future.
- Fostering research synergy between faculty and honors students through development of inquiry based courses.
- Providing excellent support to its students through the ONSA Office, Citizen and International Fellows Program and the National Honors Exchange Program.
- Providing unique opportunities through the National Issues Program to enable the Commonwealth College to become a national leader in honors curriculum development, with the potential of providing distance learning courses and/or related educational material to a national market.
- Attracting additional funds to the campus in association with The National Issues Program which focuses on issues of interest to various national foundations. Consequently, outside grant support should be an ongoing benefit of the college. Because many campus faculty will have an interest and expertise in the topics covered by the National Issues Program, there will be an opportunity for them to play a leadership role in identifying program topics, be involved in teaching related courses and benefit from foundation grants and the national scholars brought to campus as a part of the Program.
- Providing the opportunity for the Commonwealth College to become nationally recognized for its research on undergraduate teaching. Faculty who teach either disciplinary or interdisciplinary honors courses will be encouraged to experiment with new teaching pedagogy and instructional technology and to share the outcome of their "experiment" with their colleagues both on campus and at regional and national conferences.

Based on the above, the AMC is unanimous in supporting the proposed Commonwealth College requirements with the following Motion for the Faculty Senate:

MOVED: That the Faculty Senate approve the requirements for the Commonwealth College as summarized in 09-99 Section II of this report as recommended by the Academic Matters Council in Sen. Doc. No. 99-005A.

MOVED: That the Faculty Senate endorse the Provost's Advisory Committee on the Commonwealth College established to monitor the implementation of this report. This Committee will report to the Senate at least once annually or more often at the request of the Senate, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 99-005A.

ADDENDUM TO
SPECIAL REPORT OF THE
ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL

concerning
COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE
ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS AND PROGRAMS

(On Page 9, IV. AMC REVIEW, Paragraph #2 under 1. Oversight and Jurisdiction:)

Original Version:

As is currently the policy, the Dean of the Commonwealth College will serve as the Academic Dean for all issues related to honors requirements and for all Commonwealth college students who are University undeclared or are Pre -majors in the College of Arts and Sciences. The Dean of the College in which the student is majoring will serve as the academic dean for all other academic matters.

Agreed Substitute Paragraph by the Academic Matters Council:

The Dean of the Commonwealth College will serve as the dean for all issues related to honors requirements. The Dean of the College in which the student is majoring will serve as the dean for all other academic matters.