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Why Commonwealth Honors College?

In 1996, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education determined to institute a new "public honors college" serving top high school graduates from across the Commonwealth. This new college would be located on the Amherst campus and would replace the University's long-established honors "program." It would be called "Commonwealth College."

Like other colleges within the larger University, Commonwealth Honors College has a dean, instead of a program director. Though most honors courses are still taught within regular academic departments, Honors College faculty now direct and teach specially designed interdisciplinary honors courses. Finally, as a college, ours offers students a number of residential living options or "Learning Communities."

Primarily, though, Commonwealth Honors College is distinguished by 1) the depth and breadth of its course offerings, 2) its greatly expanded advising and support services, covering such areas as national scholarships, research opportunities, community service, and local, national as well as international exchange, and 3) the involvement of students in all aspects of college operations and governance through the highly respected Student Advisory Board.
Does it cost more to be a member of Commonwealth Honors College?

In July of 2010, the University President's Office, with the approval of the University Trustees, established an additional semester fee for members of Commonwealth Honors College. The fee is used to provide enriched academic opportunities for students. It helps fund additional faculty, maintain small classes, and provide the experiences which distinguish the College, such as visiting authors and other special programs. We are continuing to provide this level of educational experience despite cuts in state funding that necessitated this fee. The University is committed to continuing the academic quality of Commonwealth Honors College. The fee will be taken into consideration in the determination of need-based financial aid packages.

Can I graduate with honors from UMass Amherst and not be a member of Commonwealth Honors College?

Yes, students may receive Latin honors (cum laude, magna cum laude or summa cum laude) based upon their final cumulative GPA and college/school class rank. Please see the UG Registrar's site for further details.

I'm a newly accepted transfer student at UMass Amherst. Can I join Commonwealth Honors College?

Yes, given that you meet certain criteria set out for transfer students. Please see "Joining CHC as a Transfer Student" web page for more information.

Admission: Transfer

I have questions regarding my transfer credit evaluation. What should I do?

The majority of transfer courses are frequently accepted toward elective credit rather than being equated to specific UMass Amherst major or General Education requirements. This is because the Transfer Credit Evaluator must initially make determinations based solely upon course titles vs. descriptions.

If you believe a transfer course might satisfy a specific UMass requirement, you will need to provide a course description or syllabus for further evaluation. If your request pertains to:

- a Gen Ed requirement: present the course description to the Transfer Credit Evaluator in the Undergraduate Admissions office
- a college requirement: present the course description to your Academic Dean's office
- a major requirement: present the course description to the Chief Undergraduate Advisor for your major

Commonwealth Honors College Membership
What is Commonwealth Honors College?

Commonwealth Honors College is the honors college at the University of Massachusetts Amherst UMass Amherst. Current UMass Amherst students with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.400 are eligible to apply. See our Admissions web page.

How do I benefit from Commonwealth Honors College membership?

Three of the obvious benefits of membership are:

- enhanced preparation for graduate school or a career via small honors courses and research opportunities
- credentialing upon graduation reserved for graduates of Commonwealth Honors College, i.e., Honors with distinction, great distinction or greatest distinction, as well as Departmental or Multidisciplinary Honors)
- scholarships

What's my current status with Commonwealth Honors College?

If you have received an invitation to join Commonwealth Honors College upon acceptance to UMass Amherst, then you may confirm your membership by signing our Commonwealth Honors College Terms of Agreement. This is typically done at an Honors College group info session scheduled during your New Student Orientation.

If you did not receive an invitation to join Commonwealth Honors College, you may consult our Admissions web page for application options.

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