

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE TARGETED AT MOST MOTIVATED



IB Students enjoy rigorous schooling.

By LINDA HALL Staff Writer Published: February 16, 2014 4:00AM

WOOSTER -- Tri-County International Academy, housed at Wooster High School and offering high school students the opportunity to complete the globally competitive, highly lauded International Baccalaureate degree program in conjunction with their regular high school diploma, isn't for the faint of heart.

But according to students enrolled in the program, who may just be modest, it isn't only for the most highly performing students, either. It may, however, be targeted at the most motivated.

Entering as juniors, IB students -- who must prepare as much as possible in their early high school years by taking the most challenging courses possible -- study advanced level, two-year courses in English, Spanish or German, social studies (History of the Americas, which includes the government requirement), science (chemistry, advanced biology and/or physics), math (ranging beyond Algebra II to functions, trigonometry, matrices, vectors, statistics, probability and calculus) and Theory of Knowledge (a philosophy of learning course) and also complete service-learning hours and a comprehensive research paper.

"It's not so much about being really smart," said Ty Young, a Loudonville High School senior, but rather, "It's a lot about working hard. I just feel like I work a lot harder (in the program)," he said.

Maddy Fannin, a senior from Wooster High School, confirmed that "time management" is key to success in the IB program.

"The homework load is a lot," said Kyley Mollohan, a senior from Smithville High School.

"I used to never do homework," Young admitted.

But he is excited about how he has adapted to the new academic level and thinks "it's really going to be easy to transition" to college.

Previous IB students, now in college, have said "it's a breeze compared to IB," Mollohan said.

"We'll be prepared," Fannin affirmed.

Young said increasingly IB students are athletes; he and a friend are the first football players to be part of the program.

"It was rough my junior year," acknowledged Young, who on top of his other responsibilities, holds down a job.

"We're busy," said Fannin, who said she and her peers are involved in arts, athletics and other activities and are also employed.

"We have fun, too," Mollohan inserted.

They celebrate the holidays and even had "Secret Santas," Young said, adding, those who aren't Wooster High School students have time to spend with their friends in their home schools and participate in activities there as well.

IB students are used to the tight time schedule, according to Fannin, who is considering becoming "a journalist (to) travel the world."

"We really enjoy the difficulty (level)," Mollohan said, "taking advantage of (our) skills and making the most of ourselves."

Bottom line, "I love learning," she said, and is thinking about pursuing a double major in biomedical engineering and education.

Fannin said she, too, enjoys the challenging environment, and certainly doesn't miss being in class with "kids who didn't like to learn."

Juniors now immersed in the program contributed their thoughts on the program as well.

Ben Lorentz of Wooster considers the work load to be "flexible," based on knowing "what needs to be accomplished" and the accompanying deadline.

That doesn't mean there are no moments of panic, however, he said.

An IB student catches on pretty quickly -- the first week, Matthew Dyer of Wooster said -- to the understanding that he or she can't procrastinate.

"It's a lot of work," Dyer admitted.

But to the degree one cares about the work, "it goes really fast and easy," said Justice Garber from Hillsdale High School.

Garber also enjoys "the camaraderie" of the program, "everybody working toward a common goal."

"We're pretty helpful (to one another)," Young said.

Young confirmed academy director Richard Bellanco's assertion, based on a chemistry teacher's comments, that student team work "raises the bar; the whole group excels" by working with those who may be struggling in a subject.

Being from a smaller school, "it's (also) cool to get a different experience" at Wooster High School, Garber said.

Young wanted to be prepared for college -- "extra prepared," he said -- and he seems to think the IB academy will do the job.

Money for college is "a great plus," Mollohan said.

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