How the IB program Gets You into College by Nvid Lada

Article published on January 5th 2012 | History

Every year, the New York Times and other most important newspapers are filled with articles about the increasing competition to get admitted into college. The intense competition fills many students with anxiety and concern - are they doing enough to get admitted to their university of choice?

You may wonder, "What courses they should take in high school to prepare for college study?" Many students take Advanced Placement (AP) courses but fewer take the IB. The International Baccalaureate school program (or IB Program) provides a demanding, internationally recognized set of courses, exams and diplomas that prepares students for advanced study. Excelling in IB courses can not only get you admitted to college but many institutions will actually give you degree credit for your IB courses.

What Does The IB Program Require of High School Students?

The International Baccalaureate school is offered at several levels of study by private and public schools around the world. High school students characteristically focus on the IB Diploma as it provides a broad education and preparation for university study. Students studying for the diploma must complete six courses and may choose from a selection of courses: English, a foreign language, mathematics and computer science, economics, history, theatre and the arts.

In addition to the courses described above, the diploma has three central components that all students must complete; an extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, action and service (CAS). The extended essay is expected to be just about four thousand words in length and explore a topic of interest to the student. The theory of knowledge, a special interdisciplinary component of IB, encourages students to explore philosophical questions and the nature of knowledge. The final core IB component expects students to engage in creative pursuits such as music, physical fitness and learning through volunteer activities.

The Benefits of the IB for College Study

Universities vary on their approach to assessing the IB diploma and assignments but most view it as a positive achievement. Some departments at the University of California - Berkeley, for example, grant students degree credit for both IB and AP course work. In many instances, graduate and professional degree programs do not provide credit for the IB. There is other reimbursement to consider beyond degree credit however.

The core machinery of the IB Program, especially the theory of knowledge and the extended essay, prepare students for large projects and the intellectual demands of college work. After drafting such a long essay, some IB diploma holders may even find freshman courses easy! The interdisciplinary emphasis of the diploma also reminds students that there is a wider world beyond their major. The program's emphasis on service, athletic activity and creative expression provides a lifelong lesson; work and study are not the only elementary to a successful and flourishing life.

What Schools Offer the IB Program To Students?

Every year, more and more schools become accredited to offer the IB Program to their students but it is far from a worldwide offering. If your school does not offer it, you have a number of options. First, consult with your guidance counselor and see what opportunities they can suggest. You can also check with your school district and consult the list of IB schools on the International

Baccalaureate school organization website.

Tom Harp is a freelance writer with expertise on a range of topics including higher education, education issues and history. Learn more about the IB Program and other courses you can take to get into the college of your dreams.

Article Source:
http://www.articleside.com/history-articles/how-the-ib-program-gets-you-into-college.htm - Article Side

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Article Keywords:
International School Bangalore,Baccalaureate Schools,Residential School,Boarding School

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