American Top Universities Program for Malaysian Students

This year, 104 Malaysian students are attending IU-Bloomington. Forty of these are participants in the American Top Universities (ATU) Program, a joint venture of the Malaysian Public Services Department, IU’s Office of International Programs and the Advanced Studies and Placement (ASAP) Center, and the Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities, Inc. These young scholars, among the most highly-ranked graduates of their secondary schools in Malaysia, are fully-sponsored government students who have been selected through a highly competitive process. They have come to undertake a year of intensive study on the IU-Bloomington campus, in such diverse fields as business, engineering, bio-technology, and international relations.

The goal of the ATU Program is to place this select group of Malaysian students in the top-ranked 25 American universities. In order to meet this objective, the ASAP Center, in consultation with admissions representatives from Ivy League universities and a delegation from the Malaysian Public Services Department, has designed a comprehensive year-long program to assist in the academic preparation and placement of these promising young scholars.

The students begin their year at Indiana University in early summer, spending a minimum of 8 weeks of intensive study at IU's Center for English Language Training. During the Program year, the Malaysian students live in dormitories on the Bloomington campus. Beginning in the fall, ATU students spend their mornings attending local high schools in order to take Advanced Placement level courses necessary for completion of their final twelfth year of high school. These courses also serve to prepare the students for the Advanced Placement exams through which advanced university-level credit may be earned. In the afternoons, ATU students are enrolled in a half-day program on the IU campus. For the first semester of this program, all the students take “non-transcripted” university level courses in library studies, study skills, critical reading and analytical thinking, and academic writing. During the second semester, ATU students enroll in two or three regular IU courses, as well as take one additional course during the first summer session. This intensive course of study was developed to assist the students in adjusting to the rigors and language requirements common to university calibre work prior to undertaking a full-time schedule at their future highly competitive universities. After completion of the Program, ATU students will have earned 9-15 hours of IU credit eligible for transfer to their placement universities.

In addition to this intensive program of academic preparation, the ATU Program staff provides students with instruction and assistance in all matters pertaining to their application and admission to top-ranked American universities. As part of placement preparation, ATU students attend an SAT preparation course, as well as take practice exams for the SAT, the ACT, and the TOEFL. Since university admissions officers regard application essays as important indicators of the leadership qualities and academic abilities required of successful applicants, ATU students are provided with an English grammar and essay writing course explicitly geared toward developing the skills necessary for writing a good college admissions essay. In addition, field trips to outstanding midwestern universities are available throughout the year.

The ATU Program at Indiana University has been designed to encompass a broad-based approach which, in addition to academic preparation, assists the students in becoming better acquainted with American culture and life. Students are encouraged to pair themselves with local host families and to attend at least two cultural events each month. They can also choose among such cultural activities as participation in high school clubs and organizations, community service work, or taking music lessons. Through the American Top Universities Program, these gifted Malaysian students are provided with the opportunity for intellectual growth and the development of skills which will prepare them for leadership roles in Malaysia’s future.