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A View from the Northeast:
University Perceptions of the IB Diploma Programme and IB Students
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Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to investigate and explore perceptions that university officials have of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) and IB students in general. In addition, I am also interested in understanding the connections these perceptions might have on credit policies that colleges and universities develop or currently have in place regarding the IB Program.

The IBDP is a two-year course of study and pre-university advanced academic program that requires students to study material in six course areas culminating in a series of international assessments. The program is offered in both American and international schools and schools that offer the IBDP are permitted to allow students to pursue individual subjects or to require students to complete the entire Diploma sequence – an undertaking during which a student completes study and examination in six subject areas including foreign languages and the arts. In addition to this requirement, students are also required to complete three additional obligations that are unique to IB – a critical thinking and philosophy course called *Theory of Knowledge (TOK)*, the development and writing of a 4,000-word piece of original research known as the *Extended Essay* and the completion of 150 hours of Community, Action, and Service, also known as CAS (Sjogren & Campbell, 2003, p. 55). There are approximately 100 languages available for students to study as well as 29 other subjects. Schools choose which subjects to offer depending on resources but must cover all six general subject areas.

Students are awarded an IB Diploma if they achieve a score of total score of 24 points or more on their exams, do not fail more than one exam, and do not receive an “E” (elementary) grade on either their extended essay or their TOK essay. IB is set apart from other advanced academic programs because of its international focus. As the program did begin in Europe in the

international school system, it has a decidedly world view and is less nationalistic in curriculum design. For example, students in the United States take History of the Americas (HOA), a course that discusses history of the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean (Schachter, 2008, p.28). Students at some IB schools can also take European History or Islamic History as well. Many students in the United States opt to not complete the full diploma but instead undertake several independent IB subjects which might eventually be eligible for university recognition.

Coursework for IB examinations officially begins in the junior year but many schools typically have a pre-IB program of some kind to get students prepared for IB work and requirements, or to lay the groundwork and build skills that will be needed in IB classes. The organization, International Baccalaureate, does provide training programs for teachers, both those teaching the DP courses and those teaching in pre-IB preparation programs. Teachers of IB classes are required to be trained in IB teaching methodologies and before schools can offer the Diploma Programme, schools must complete self-study, candidate review, and approval. The organization maintains instructional consistency through oversight of instructors and a regular review of school programs every five years.

Currently, the IBDP is offered in 1,753 schools across the world with 736 schools located in the areas of North America and the Caribbean. For statistical purposes, the organization divides schools and programs into regions and schools in the United States belong to a region now called IB Americas (IB World School Statistics, 2009). For the May 2009 examination session, there were 49,091 American candidates registered for various assessments; this number was the largest number of students of anywhere in the world.

As IB is a pre-university program, a continuing question is whether or not the program prepares students for university study. This question has not been fully explored in the United

States but has been previously researched in England in 2003 and in an Australian/New Zealander effort in 2007. My research project is intended to be a small attempt at a pilot study for my eventual dissertation as it is my desire to do some kind of university perception study of IB programs in the Americas region.

Conceptual Framework

For the last eight years, I have taught IB English A1 HL at one of the Fairfax County high schools. The school where I taught had an extremely diverse population and also endorsed an open access policy for their IB course work, meaning that if a student had a desire to take an IB course, they would be permitted to do so, without the requirements of teacher recommendations or meeting certain grade point averages. It was also understood at this school that a student who chose to take an IB course was not entitled to an “A” and if they did not complete the prior coursework well, it was possible that they would struggle in the IB course unless they were highly motivated to do well or they sought out extra assistance or interventions. Some students did and some students didn’t, but overall I think that students benefitted from being in IB coursework, even if they did not ultimately pass the IB examination.

In my own subject, English, there were many students who came into the course in September with lower skill levels and the teachers, including myself, were able to help bring them up to the standard of passing the IB English examination by May (the month of the exam). These included second language English learners, underserved populations, and other students who had not previously tried to take an advanced academic class. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, I believe IB is a good program and prepares students well for university study. My interactions and the relationships I have developed with my own students over the years and

subsequent anecdotal evidence from them leads me to believe that once they leave my classroom, college-level English courses (at least early on) are not so bad.

Although I have this professional interest, I think my identity as a qualitative researcher began long before I started this research project and I think I started this research project in many forms before I even started this class. Long before I started teaching, and throughout my own undergraduate experience, I studied to be and later worked as a reporter. I believe the research and interview skills that I developed while working in that field would later serve me well while doing background research about the universities and interviewing my participants. Expertise that I continually used as a teacher-practitioner would help me plan and execute my study. In addition, because I worked with senior-level students every day, I was day-in-and-day-out preparing them for university study; I was continually getting them ready to go be successful at college. I thought that because of this work I had a good perspective on what proficiencies students needed to meet to be successful in higher education.

Research Questions

Originally, I had developed three questions for my research study. These included: How much does an institution know about the course work, workload, assessments, and other components of the IB Diploma Programme (IBDP)? Is the IBDP perceived as sufficiently preparing students for first-year university-level work? and How is the IBDP viewed in comparison to other qualifications, specifically the College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Program? From feedback on my first memo, I later found out that the first question presented problems as individuals know things and institutions do not. I was seeking information about university perceptions and policy but I couldn't actually speak to a building (university) as it was an inanimate object. It would be important for me to identify the individuals who could best

answer my research questions. They would be in the best position to speak on behalf of the university and most likely those individuals would hold some position of responsibility. The individuals that I would later interview would be in the position to speak as representatives for the institution but I would soon decide that it would be less important for me to “test” my participant’s knowledge and more important for me to *understand* the participant’s perceptions of the IBDP and IB students. As I worked through this issue and my study progressed, I would modify my original research questions to be much simpler, making data analysis easier and getting to the core of my eventual narrative. These revised questions will be outlined and explained during the data analysis section.

Initially, I was not sure to expect when I went out to get my data. At first, I was pretty confident in my research questions mainly because they were similar to ones used in the two previous IB perception studies. The English and Australian studies had yielded good data using comparable questions. Why shouldn’t I be able to get good data using similar questions with some modifications for American college application processes? In addition, I had been thinking about completing this study for weeks prior to actually beginning the process. It is possible that by thinking about it for so long, I had convinced myself that I had all of my ducks in a row and even though I academically knew that not everything would work out as planned, I just couldn’t put my finger on where the bugs would be yet?

Methods

Setting, Research Procedures, and Relationships

For my project, I wanted to work in a state that did not have a legislative policy in regards to IB. That meant, for the purposes of my research interests, it would not be possible to work in Virginia. As of July 1, 2010, Chapter 598 – Virginia Code § 23-9.2:3.8 took effect.

This law requires parity in the College Board AP and IB credit policies of all Virginia public colleges and universities. Because of this law, colleges and universities that previously may have had policies that gave AP preference over IB will have to educate themselves more about the IB Program and change their recognition policies. I wanted to work in a state that was not mandated to learn about IB as one of my initial research questions dealt with the question of knowledge. Therefore, I chose a state without a legislated recognition policy in the northeastern United States that could be reached from Virginia within one day's drive.

To further choose my sample for the research study, I reviewed the IB website and printed the list of IB Diploma Schools in that state. I was already familiar with the various colleges there. After reviewing several of the high school websites and looking at their lists of where graduates go, I developed a list of seven possible institutions to target. In addition to using this criterion, I also considered distance between the IB schools and the colleges, thinking if a particular school is very close to a certain college, an institution might be more aware of the IB Program in their area or students might commute to that particular college. I specifically attempted to select a diverse sample of public and private institutions of large and small undergraduate populations.

Before I continue, there was one potential ethical issue with my sample as I had attended one of the institutions. I was aware that this presented some possible complications for my study and did consider not using the institution, however, I ultimately decided that because I would not be speaking with anyone who had previously evaluated me and I would disclose that in a human subject review board application, I could proceed with the institution in my sample.

Because of the absence of North American university perception data related to IB Programs and the fact I may want to use my data in the future, I filed paperwork with George

Mason's Human Subject Review Board (HSRB) including a draft interview guide and an email that would be used to initiate first contact with my potential participants. I received HSRB approval from George Mason on June 13. Since I would not be working in Virginia for my interview study, I would need to establish a relationship with each institution, determine who the correct person to speak to would be, and then make an appointment to interview that person during the time frame I would be in that area. I had initial reservations about using email to contact potential participants; when I worked as a reporter before I made all appointments for interviews over the telephone. This was before email was commonly used and it seems almost like it was in the Dark Ages. True to my reservations, as I was sending emails and trying to establish relationships with potential respondents, I found the process of emailing to be clumsy and impersonal. On one hand, my original email should have been more detailed, but in my haste to get my paperwork to HSRB, I wrote a more generic email that I felt would be suitable for the most institutions. In addition, since I had previously worked at establishing rapport with potential interviewees on the telephone, I was unpracticed in this type of rapport-establishment and I still find email, although it is commonly accepted for business use, sometimes insufficient for developing relationships and conveying emotion. What I found as I made contact with each institution was that I started to rely on email less and the telephone more as I could get an immediate answer and often did not have to wait for someone to respond.

The content of the email (Appendix A) introduced me and my research project. Before sending each email, I would research through the institution website, and sometimes by telephone calls, the person or people at each institution that I thought might be able to respond to my research questions. Because of my knowledge of the previous studies, I focused my energies to directors of admission, university presidents and deans, and those who work with transfer

credit and students. After the introduction, the email requested an interview with the person the email was sent to or another appropriate representative and provided my contact details. I also let the potential interviewee know that I would follow up with a phone call, which I did after two to three business days of sending each email depending on how difficult I felt it would be to schedule an interview at that particular institution. Since these interviews would involve significant travel for me, it was important that I was meticulous and organized in contacting and scheduling interviews for my study.

Data Collection

One of the reasons I chose seven possible institutions as participants in my research study was that I was unsure if I would be able to schedule all the interviews I needed because of the time of year (summer). In addition, since one of my research questions dealt with knowledge, I was hedging my bets a little bit; if a participant did not have much knowledge of IB or the institution did not have much interaction with IB students, then a good portion of the questions on my interview guide would become unusable. I needed three hours of interviews and I wanted to make sure that I not only met that requirement but I also got information that was usable to me, even if it meant adjusting my research questions.

When I designed my interview guide (Appendix B), it went through several iterations. The final guide had three different sets of questions tailored for different types of higher education personnel. During the actual interviews, I never used the third set because when I conceived the guide, I thought perhaps I would get the chance to talk to a couple of professors who interacted on a daily or weekly basis with freshman students. The questions in that section of the guide, although not completely different from the other two sections of the interview guide, asked about qualities that might set advanced academic students apart from other students

in their courses and from other first-year students. Because of the summer timing of the research study, it became apparent early on when I was trying to make contact with the various institutions that many of the professors who teach these freshman courses are either adjuncts, graduate students, or are not around in the summer time and for the meantime, I would need to scrap the idea of speaking to this class of university personnel. I will hold onto this idea for a possible future study.

Because of the situation I had with traveling to a different state for my interviews, I knew I had interviews scheduled five days before they were actually going to occur. This allowed me to continually work on my interview guide and conduct background research about the institutions but the traveling situation, coupled with the Fourth of July holiday and the fact that some of the people I wanted to interview were taking vacation time, required on two instances to have two interviews scheduled in one day. This was definitely not optimal as I would have liked to have more time to process after each interview but it was necessitated by circumstances. In addition to this, I would find later that transcribing two interviews in one day was just too much for me to do, especially after driving sometimes for several hours throughout the day between getting to the interviews, taking a break, and then driving back to where I was staying for the evening.

Interview 1

I arrived to my first interview at a medium-size suburban public university. I was to meet with James Gibson who worked in the admissions office of *Institution 1*. I was asked to wait and after a few moments, Mr. Gibson came out to meet me. After introducing himself, he escorted me to a small conference room where he explained it would be quieter and put down a stack of papers. I introduced myself, and took out the consent form and my tape recorder as well as my

notebook. I explained the content and aim of my project once again and then paused for Mr. Gibson to read and sign the consent form. When this was complete, I turned my tape recorder on and began the interview. During the interview, I did not write down many notes but at one point, there was a pause because of a draft IB policy that was handed to me by Mr. Gibson. It was brought up during the interview and I was given a copy to briefly look at during my questioning. Some subsequent questions concerned the document.

As a way of maintaining rapport with my participants, when I finished my questioning, I would ask the participants if they had any questions for me. When I scheduled the interviews, I told many of the institutions that I was soliciting for participation that I have been studying the IB Program in depth for the last two years and some of the institutions I had scheduled appointments with seemed eager to tap my brain for information. The first institution told me that the administration had only agreed to participate in my project because they felt they would be able to obtain information about IB from me, considering it an even exchange of some kind. I did provide Mr. Gibson with the information about IB that he requested and also gave him a contact name at IB in Vancouver to get some further information that I did not know.

Interview 2

Three hours after my interview with Mr. Gibson, I had another interview scheduled at a small, urban, and private college, *Institution 2*. There, I met with Dr. Edward Thompson who worked in administration. As Dr. Thompson was in administration and my previous interview that day was with someone who worked in admissions, I would be using a slightly different section of my interview guide. Some of the questions were the same but a few were slightly different. I am not sure what I expected when I spoke with someone who worked in an administrative capacity; I think I expected that they would be one of the most knowledgeable

people on the campus but I found that this was not really the case. My interview with Dr. Thompson was very different from my interview with Mr. Gibson in terms of substance. In terms of niceties, they were very similar. Upon arrival at *Institution 2*, I was greeted by Dr. Thompson's secretary who made small talk with me about Virginia and the Washington, D.C. metro area. Once I was brought into Dr. Thompson's office, I was seated at a table across from Dr. Thompson and the introduction and consent procedures went exactly as they had with Mr. Gibson. Dr. Thompson came across as having to manage many areas of the institution and with that job comes the idea that they may not always know a lot about everything. Again, at the conclusion of my interview, I asked Dr. Thompson if he had any questions for me; he asked me about my research interests and my ultimate goals after I graduate.

Between the first two interviews and the next two interviews I was lucky to have a day; it would give me time to reflect as well as transcribe. I cannot say that I was able to get both transcriptions done in that time. I wish I had but being new to transcribing I was slow and I took a lot of time with the first interview trying to make sense of what was said. In addition, I also had the added document given to me by *Institution 1* that I wanted to understand in some way.

Interview 3

Institution 3 was a large, urban, and public university and this interview, for some reason, was one of the easiest to schedule. I found this participant, Dr. Sutton, almost by mistake, when my email was redirected to her rather than someone in the admissions office. She responded to my email and in the process of our discussion, let me know that she was a recent Ph.D. and understood what it was like to complete a research study and to transcribe interviews. When I arrived for the interview, I entered a busy admissions office, buzzing with a tour about to start. Several parents with prospective applicants were near the door when I entered. When I went to

the reception desk and told the person seated who I was there to see, Dr. Sutton came out almost instantly and took me back to her office, a much quieter area. She apologized for her casual attire – it was a Friday in July and quite hot outside. She asked me if I would like some water.

Once the required consent form was completed, the interview went very smoothly. Dr. Sutton was quite congenial and explained that in her administrative role she brings in the first-year class and that is why she is housed in the admissions office. She asked questions about my progress in the doctoral program at the conclusion of the interview and struck me as so far being one of the most knowledgeable about the IB Program. However, with regards to IB students, I felt she was unable to distinguish between an IB student and another advanced student or even just a good applicant to her institution since she is responsible for the entire first-year class and this is a large institution.

Interview 4

Like my previous day of interviews, I was still going to have another interview that day. *Institution 4* was a small, suburban, and private university. I had some initial trouble setting up an appointment with Mary Phillips because of her vacation time and the looming Fourth of July holiday, which is why I ended up being double-booked for interviews. Ms. Phillips worked in admissions and when I arrived for the appointment, I entered a beautiful, old, historic building. Once I identified who I was, I was asked to wait on a couch and as I was sitting, I watched many people come in and out, coming back and going to lunch as the appointment was scheduled for 1:00. After nearly 15 minutes of waiting, Ms. Phillips came to get me and led me to her office where I sat on the other side of her desk. Her placement in relation to mine (being across from her desk which was piled with papers) gave me the impression that she would like control. After going over the consent document and finding a small space on the desk for my tape recorder, I

started the interview. Ms. Phillips answered my questions with a sense of definiteness to her answers and I got the feeling that she was trying to be very correct in her statements. I did appreciate the fact that she was trying to convey information and trying to convey it correctly but I also felt that she might be trying to say things a certain way or present a certain image for that particular institution. When I asked her if she had any questions, she asked a couple of questions about my research.

Again, after these two interviews, I had some time to transcribe and process. The Fourth of July holiday also allowed a little more time (but I would be lying if I said I took advantage of it as much as I should have.) I did write some notes relating to the two additional interviews but only transcribed the second and the third interview by the time I had my fifth and final interview with *Institution 5*.

Interview 5

Institution 5 was a small, suburban, and private university that I scheduled very early on but because of other participant's vacation schedules and this participant's flexibility, this appointment ended up being my last interview. I was scheduled to meet with David Baker who worked in the university's office of admissions. Again, just as with *Institution 3*, in getting to the interview, I entered an area where prospective applicants and their parents were getting ready to leave on a campus tour. I was, however, here, directed to the waiting area and told that Mr. Baker would be with me shortly. After a few minutes, a guide came in and asked me if I was waiting for the tour. When I told her no and explained to her that I was waiting for Mr. Baker, she told me, "I'll let them know," and disappeared around the corner. Shortly after, Mr. Baker appeared, stretched out his hand and introduced himself. After introductions had been made, he

escorted me to a large sitting room with a beautiful cherry coffee table, comfortable chairs, and a sofa where I would conduct my interview.

After the requisite consent document and tape recorder setup, I found that Mr. Baker was the most opinionated of all of my interviews. From the first question, I sensed that he had a definite opinion about the IB Program and IB students and he had experience with the IB Program in at least a couple of different places and in different forms. The other thing I sensed as I listened to Mr. Baker was that his experiences with some of the schools that offer IB programs have not been the best and he seemed honest in his remarks concerning this issue. Since he seemed so opinionated, when it came time to discuss IB policies at his institution, I asked Mr. Baker to describe his ideal recognition policy. I wish I had chosen to do this with my other interviewees. Following the interview, I used the same approach that I had used with my other interviews of allowing the subject to ask questions. Mr. Baker asked what I knew about recognition for the IB Diploma which I thought was interesting and also showed a higher level of understanding of IB than I had seen at any other institution in my study.

The following is a chart of the interviews I conducted, the length, and type of institution.

	James Gibson, <i>Institution 1</i>	Dr. Edward Thompson, <i>Institution 2</i>	Dr. Jennifer Sutton, <i>Institution 3</i>	Mary Phillips, <i>Institution 4</i>	David Baker, <i>Institution 5</i>
<i>Interview Date and Start Time</i>	6/30/2010, 11:00 a.m.	6/30/2010, 2:00 p.m.	7/2/2010, 10:00 a.m.	7/2/2010, 1:00 p.m.	7/5/2010, 12:00 p.m.
<i>Length of Interview</i>	40 minutes	31 minutes	42 minutes	48 minutes	56 minutes
<i>Type of Institution</i>	Medium size, suburban, public	Small size, urban, private	Large size, urban, public	Small size, suburban, private	Small size, suburban, private

Data Analysis

For me, data analysis was a combination of many things and ended up turning out in a way that I would never have intended for a project like this. In the previous paragraphs, with the exception of the final interview, I described the period of time that elapsed between the interview and the transcription. With each transcription created, I went through the file and created comments alongside the page, using the “Insert Comment” function available in Microsoft Word. The comments were added within a couple of days of getting each transcription done as I would reread the transcription over and over to try to make sense of the data I was getting. The final interview was transcribed upon returning home on July 8 with comments added later that day. In addition, when I returned home, I started to develop a list of organizational codes that I could start to use to begin to go through the transcriptions. These codes originally came from my research questions and during the time between July 8 and July 11, I marked up four of the five transcriptions with these codes. There were two unfortunate things about the process. First, I was coding my transcriptions on the computer, a practice largely done because I don’t have the ability to print at home and because I had been traveling. This is also why I had originally come up with the idea to make notes on the transcriptions using the Comment function in Word. I keep all files related to my doctoral work on flash drives so that they are easily transportable. As I would open files from my flash drive, the files would become vulnerable. This brings me to my second point. Unbeknownst to me, I picked up a series of Trojan viruses on my laptop on July 12 and what should have been a workday, turned into a massive irritation as I not only had to fix my computer but I had to recreate documents that had become corrupted and unusable because of the viruses. This included three transcriptions with notes and coding, my code list, and four

pages of a memo that was in progress about the data I saw in the interviews. For most of the day, I re-transcribed and replaced data that was lost.

A couple of days after that, I tried to recreate my code list and recode the transcriptions. I found that I couldn't get all of the original codes just by looking at the first two interviews. This was due to the fact that the first two interviews had the least substantive information in relation to my research questions and I was starting to seriously reconsider my research questions at that point. After I'd worked at this for a while, I decided that I would instead forget about trying to recreate the code list I lost and try to create a new one and start recoding the transcripts. When I did that, however, I used the same process as before – I went back to my research questions for the organizational codes. But here was the problem – I wasn't happy with the research questions and I was starting to think, from reading the transcripts over and over, that questions I asked my participants didn't explicitly answer my original research questions and I didn't yet know the narrative that the data was telling me. I didn't think my original research questions fit my data. Because of that, I scrapped my previous work and went back to the transcripts.

Now, when I recreated the lost transcripts I did just that, only recreated the lost transcripts. I hadn't had the time to put in the missing notes or to complete the summation information I had lost from the bottom. On the bottom of each transcript, after I had finished making "Comments", I would add a section at the bottom titled "Notes After". This section summarized what I got out of my interview at each institution and also addressed each of my three research questions. It was a kind of mini-memo for me, a way of quickly summing up what I thought about each place without having to read the whole transcript. I went back to each of the three recreated transcripts and redid the Comments and "Notes After" sections. Following this, I decided to go back to each transcript, reread them, and from that I developed four new

basic research questions to guide further data analysis: How much knowledge did the person I was speaking with have about IB? How is IB perceived? How are IB students perceived? and How is the IB Program compared to the AP Program in terms of university credit recognition?

With the new research questions, I developed four new organizational categories:

Knowledge, IB Program, IB Students, and IB Credit. As I worked, it started to become less important to me how much knowledge the person I was speaking to had about IB but I started thinking that there was a relationship between the level of knowledge about IB, the perceptions the institution had about IB and IB students and then the policy that the institution had in place. I reasoned that a person's level of knowledge about IB, might influence their perceptions (opinions) about IB Programs and IB students and then, as part of that institution, it might influence (for good or for bad) the enactment of an IB credit policy. As I read the transcripts over and made notes, I found that the participants with the most knowledge had the most to say in the areas of IB Programs and IB students and the institutions they represented also had IB credit policies. As I have been studying the IB organization and their programs for several years, at this point I have a considerable amount of knowledge about IB programs. When I was conducting the interviews, although I wasn't specifically testing my participants' knowledge of IB, in my position as an "expert" I was able to make judgments about the level of knowledge a participant had based on what kinds of things they would discuss and even the language a participant would use in response to my questions relating to perceptions of IB and perceptions of IB students. Implicitly, the participants were showing what knowledge they had of IB.

Another way I tried to make sense of my data was to make a matrix using my institutions across the top and the organizational categories down the left. It was my hope that by pulling out specific words and phrases from the interview transcripts, I would be able to find my substantive

categories. From the exercise, I created five emic categories - *Preparation, Success, Characteristics of Students, Curriculum, and Recognition*. *Recognition* is the closest to one of my etic and organizational categories, *IB Credit*, but I thought this was still valid as an emic category. My feeling at this point is the narrative I would tell is the story of how these institutions in a northeastern state in the U.S. perceive the IB Program and IB students and what types of policies for IB credit those institutions have adopted at this point in time. *Knowledge*, which was less explicitly discussed during the interviews, was left out of conclusion in my emic categories.

Results

Findings

When I began this project, I was hoping that each institution I visited would have some degree of knowledge about the IB Program so that they would be not only able to answer my questions fully but they would be able to give me some insight why university recognition policies, especially at institutions that see both IB and AP students, are so disparate. For some reason, I didn't consider that an institution would not have an IB policy, given the growth of IB as a curricular program in the United States. What I found out while completing this study was that not all institutions were as far along in their understanding of IB as others and some did not even have IB policies. Furthermore, I do realize that my personal belief that there should be parity between the credit that universities award students for IB and AP examinations is a bias and a possible validity threat and I will address this more later. What I did realize while completing this study was that the institutions I selected and worked with did have definite perceptions of IB and IB students and that was the narrative that this data would tell.

Preparation

During my interviews, I had asked a question about what makes IB students attractive to institutions. Three of the five institutions used the term “prepared”, giving me the impression that the universities feel the IB Program adequately prepares students for college-level work. The participant from *Institution 4* said, “They’ve studied a subject, (that) gives them an in-depth knowledge that is very attractive and will help them do really well once they get (here) (Phillips, p. 45).” The IB Program is a pre-university course of a study and one of its goals is to prepare students for tertiary education so according to the personnel at the institutions that I spoke to, it appears that that goal is being met. Two institutions in my study do not have much interaction with IB students because the institutions do not currently offer credit or other recognition for IB students.

In terms of my new research questions, the category of *Preparation* seemed to answer the question concerning how IB students are perceived. At this time, I am semi-comfortable saying that institutions consider IB students prepared for university-level work but I think this is an area that could benefit from additional participants or interviews.

Success

Preparation and *Success* seem intrinsically linked. If a student is prepared for university-level work, they should be successful in university-level work, barring any unforeseen occurrence. In speaking about IB students, four of the institutions I interviewed brought the discussion around to the idea of eventual success and graduation, saying advanced academic students, including IB students, “become student leaders” and “show higher persistence and retention rates” (Gibson, p. 34). *Institution 5*, on the other hand, focused on IB Full Diploma students, saying that a student who has completed the full diploma and has completed it well,

will “have no major challenges (Baker, p 47).” The addition of a fourth institution discussing topics related to success when only three recognized IB is explained by that institution’s desire to have an IB policy for recruiting purposes. Again, in regard to my new research questions, the topic of *Success* deals with the perceptions of IB students.

In addition to the quotes provided, I asked questions about programs that might be uniquely suited to IB or other advanced academic students. All five institutions mentioned an honors program or college, one institution mentioned dual degree programs with neighboring institutions, one mentioned study abroad opportunities, and two others mentioned their science programs specifically. These programs are often touted as being suitable for advanced students because of the rigor and/or the learning style they require.

Characteristics of Students

It was this emic category which yielded the most information from the interviews and again, this category directly ties into the question relating to perceptions of IB students. In addition to the idea that students were prepared for the demands of university-level work, the representatives from the various colleges and universities that I interviewed provided an array of characteristics that IB students seem to possess. Remarkably, none of the traits mentioned at the five institutions was repeated and it was *Institution 5* which seemed to contribute most of the 10 words and phrases. Of those characteristics, six were adjectives and included “mature” and “proactive” (from *Institution 3*), “serious” (from *Institution 4*), “savvy”, “sophisticated”, and “brave” (from *Institution 5*). *Institution 5* was also responsible for all of the verbal phrases including “pushing beyond their standard comfort zone”, “willing to push the envelope” and “challenging themselves” while *Institution 2* used the only noun phrase, “prized possessions”.

Ironically, *Institution 2* called IB students and other advanced academic students “prized possessions” (Thompson, p. 36) while not granting any IB credit.

Curriculum

The area of *Curriculum* directly answers my research questions related to knowledge and perception of the IB Program. Although all of the institutions offered insights concerning how they perceived the IB Program, it was *Institution 5* which provided the richest data:

If a student’s taking the full diploma program then they are being exposed to an educational experience that I would liken much more to the first year or two of a traditional liberal arts college. They are getting a great variety in terms of the courses that they are taking. They are being exposed to writing and research I think at a consistently deep level across that curriculum. There’s still an opportunity for advancement or for achieving at certain levels or working at greater depth in some courses rather than in others because some courses can be taken at higher level or not. (Baker, p. 48)

When other participants were asked about their perceptions of the IB curriculum, I received very similar answers including, an “international curriculum that’s followed leading to culminating examinations” (Gibson, p. 32), and a “pretty intensive curriculum similar to the rigors of a college curriculum” (Phillips, p. 45). Although three institutions all recognized that IB Programs exist both internationally and domestically, only *Institution 5* voiced strong opinions about differences in the ways that it sees IB Programs being run both in the United States and abroad. Mr. Baker stated that IB is “a curriculum that’s obviously more rigorous or at least as rigorous than the average standard US curriculum” (p. 47) and noted that “because of the variation of the school districts here and throughout the country there is greater variation in the quality of the student” (p. 47). In discussing their perceptions of IB, the institutions were implicitly demonstrating knowledge.

Recognition

During interviews, each institution was asked questions about their IB recognition policy. In previous paragraphs, I have already stated that two of the institutions that I interviewed do not have an IB credit policy, although I did mention that *Institution 1* would like to have an approved policy.

Generally in the United States, most colleges and universities give credit for Advanced Placement (AP) examinations. What I was interested in finding out was where these institutions were in granting credit for IB exams. Currently, the “American standard” (and I know this through my own research over the last two years) is that most U.S. institutions that grant credit for IB exams grant them for Higher Level (HL) exams only. If the institution gives credit for AP tests with a 3, then they usually award credit for IB HL exams with a score of 4 and higher (the highest score is a 7); if the school only gives credit for AP exams with a 4 or higher, then the requisite IB HL score seems to be a 5 and higher. I cannot explain why the thinking of the institutions is this way nor has any institution been able to explain their reasoning for this to me up to this point in time. Three of the universities that participated in the study grant the “American standard” in terms of IB credit (*Institutions 3, 4, and 5*) while the other two (*Institutions 1 and 2*) currently do not grant IB credit, with *Institution 2* noting that IB is “not even on our radar” (Thompson, p. 36). No school I interviewed grants Standard Level examination credit (credit for IB courses that are 120 hours rather than the 240-hour HL courses) but the reasons for this were less clear, with *Institution 3* saying that SL is “not one that we’ve been impressed that they are mastering material that is at the college level,” (Sutton, p. 40). *Institution 5* summed up the credit issue probably most appropriately saying:

We just kind of put it into the AP box which is not unlike what we do with other internationally-based programs. We would do the same thing with the actual French system, the baccalauréat, or the Abitur, or the A Levels. Basically, everything gets put, all those round pegs, gets stuck in the AP style, square hole. We look at the course, give it a certain grade, and then you get the transfer credit. (Baker, p. 49)

In terms of my research questions, this substantive category directly answered my final research question, dealing with IB credit as compared to AP. At all of these institutions, at this point in time, AP credit receives favor over IB in that credit is awarded for one-year examinations as well as in some cases, a larger variety of subjects. Some IB Standard Level courses are not offered as a higher level course and never were intended to be with that option.

Reflections, Limits, and Validity

The first point I would like to make as I am reflecting on this research project is that I feel as if I have been working on this for a very long time, perhaps longer than the semester and it is probably because I really have. For the last few months prior to the beginning of summer, I have been trying to conceptualize what a pilot study might be like for me and what I might learn from doing one. In looking at my original plan, I think I was trying to model it too much on the previous English and Australian studies, forgetting that those studies took a significantly longer period of time and involved more than one person. I often try to pack as much as I possibly can into things and I think my original plans for this were susceptible to that possible character flaw; it sometimes renders me exhausted although I so far have always recovered my steam.

Another thing that had me stymied for a little while was getting the wording in my interview guide correct so that my questions would be more open. As I had an idea of what kind of information I was possibly looking for because of the British and the

Australian studies, I have not yet had as much practice (or I am a bit rusty from my reporting days) in constructing a list of interview questions. The basic: “Who?” “What?” “Why?” “When?” “Where?” and “How?” are not as helpful to me in this endeavor. I will need to do a little more reading on this and perhaps see a few more examples before I get to proposal.

In terms of reviewing my portrayal of the institutions I included in my study and reflecting on that portrayal, I was careful to protect the anonymity of the institutions and the people that I interviewed. I used narrative descriptions of the type of institution and did not identify the state in which I completed the study. I was as nondescript as possible and attempted not to be judgmental in the tone of my writing. I am hopeful that I have been successful.

Regarding possible validity threats, I can think of one that I need to address – my personal belief that there should be parity between the credit that universities award students for IB and AP examinations. I am encouraged by the recent legislative turn of events in Virginia regarding this matter. I’m not sure how to specifically address this, except to say that that I did not make my personal views known to any of my interviewees. I also thought in designing my study that all five of my institutions would have had an IB policy; that did not turn out to be the case. I think I got this data because in my preconceptions I overestimated the growth of IB in that region and what I found is that the actual number of IBDP schools did not really support every college and university having an active IB recognition policy at this point in time. If I were to repeat the study in another environment, I would not only keep my views to myself but I would probably be more attentive to my survey design and pay attention to the concentration of

IB schools as opposed to the colleges and/or universities that I would want to investigate.

I know that my beliefs are not “truth”.

Another potential validity threat for me is the existence of the two previous studies and the level to which I know the data that is contained in the findings. Because these are the *only* two university perception studies done to date and I have reviewed them ad infinitum, they have become a potential validity threat as I may try to make the information I find “match” the data in at least one of those studies in some way or another. I am combating that threat by keenly being aware of it, as I recognize my study is different in not only method and time spent, but also culture and other characteristics of American higher education.

I also attempted to address descriptive validity with my research study. I am aware of my limitations as someone who is new using voice recognition software and doing transcriptions. Towards that end I did reach out to my participants to check what they said in their interviews. To date, one participant asked to see a transcript which I did provide, two verified short paraphrased statements that I sent over email, one has been unavailable due to vacation and has not responded and one did not respond to my query asking if they wanted verification. Should I intend to publish or use any part of my research study in the future, I will again try to follow up with these participants to get more complete verification.

Another possible validity threat is generalizability and I am keenly aware that the situation I am representing at these colleges and universities does not represent the situation across the United States or even at other institutions in that same state. I have

considered and know that each participant's statements are their own and can only be applied to those particular institutions.

Conclusions

In conducting this research study, I accomplished my goal of completing a pilot study. The process, even though losing files was frustrating, was valuable in that it allowed me to test out many basic questions that I had concerning a North American perception study that had been brewing around my head for some time. Even though I did not get the results that I thought I would, I did get some rich data that allowed me to write a narrative. This study made me remember something that I used to know as a reporter but I had long forgotten; it didn't really matter what story I got from my data as long as I got that narrative.

References

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Appendix A

Email Soliciting Participants

Please Note: Each email was directed to a specific person at each institution.

Email Used to Solicit Study Participants:

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Kimberley Daly and I am a doctoral student in the Ph.D. in Education Program at George Mason University. As a class project, I am conducting a study of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme and am interested in learning how universities and colleges feel about this program and how it prepares students for undergraduate work. In addition, I am interested in learning how much institutions of higher education actually know about the specifics of the IB Diploma Programme, especially when compared with other advanced academic programs and hearing how universities perceive the students who complete the IB Programme.

To complete my study, I would like to schedule an interview later this month with someone in your institution's office of admission or academic dean's office as these persons are often the most familiar with my topic. The interview should take no longer than one hour. I can be reached by email at kdaly1@gmu.edu. I will also telephone your office to schedule an interview at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Kimberley Daly

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Use this as intro with all interviews: *The idea of the study is find out if the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program is perceived as sufficiently preparing students for first-year university-level work and how the program is viewed in comparison to other qualifications, specifically the College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Program.*

For interviews with those in Admissions or Registrar Offices:

1. Could you tell me about your experience with students who have IB qualifications?
2. Approximately what percentage of students entering your institution with an IB qualification are international students and what percentage are domestic students? (not available on websites)
3. What kind of credit or recognition does your university offer for IB examinations?
4. Could you tell me about credit or recognition your university offers for other academic qualifications (specifically AP)?
5. Why do you think these policies are in place? (rationale) Or, what is the rationale for these policies? [If this isn't obvious.]
 - o Could you tell me or, do you know how these policies were developed?
6. What are the qualities that make IB students attractive to your institution? (strengths)
7. What are the qualities that make IB students unattractive?
8. In what ways does your university market itself to area IB schools to encourage students to apply to your institution?
9. Are there programs and/or activities (extracurricular, etc.) at your institution that might be especially suitable to IB students given the nature of the program they have completed?

For interviews with those in a Provost's, President's or Dean's Office:

1. Could you tell me about your experience with students who have IB qualifications?
2. What are the qualities that make IB students attractive to your institution? (strengths)
3. What are the qualities that make IB students unattractive?
4. In what ways does your university market itself to area IB schools to encourage students to apply to your institution?
5. Are there programs and/or activities (extracurricular, etc.) at your institution that might be especially suitable to IB students given the nature of the program they have completed?

For interviews with those who work with first-year university students:

1. Could you tell me about your experience with students who have IB qualifications?

2. What are the qualities that make IB students attractive to your department? (strengths – ask about academic and non-academic qualities)
3. Are there any qualities that set IB/AP students apart in your courses?
4. Could you tell IB and AP students apart from other first-year students? How do you become aware of them?
5. How do you feel about your university's credit policy of _____ for a _____ on the IB examination? (justification from subject level standpoint)
6. How do you feel about your university's credit policy of _____ for a _____ on the AP examination? (justification from subject level standpoint)
7. Why do you think these policies are in place? (rationale)
 - o Do subject level experts have any input in policy development?

Appendix C

Annotated Transcripts

Please note: Transcripts are presented in the order that the interviews occurred. Names have been changed to protect anonymity and all references to the institution have been replaced by a numeric designation.

Interview with James Gibson, Transfer Counselor – Institution 1 June 30, 2010

K: Could you tell me what experience *Institution 1* has with IB students and IB in general?

J: Right now our experience is one of students inquiring as to what our policy is and us pushing back to them that we don't really have a policy. So they are kind of in a limbo state. These students are coming to us from all over the country, all over the world with these IB credits but unfortunately, at this point there's nowhere for those credits to go within our program.

K: Do you have a mix of students that complete the full diploma and those that do complete certificate courses?

J: To be perfectly honest with you I'm not sure what the breakdown is because really we're not tracking that data in any way. There is nowhere for it to go. It's not something that someone has been steadily reviewing.

K: How do students react to Institution 1's IB credit policy?

J: It's disappointing and understandably so and I'm sure to students who are inquiring about that at the prospect level it's off-putting. Because the expectation I'm sure for them has been that if you do this work (IB coursework), this will be the outcome (IB credit) when you get to college and obviously, that expectation has not been met.

K: What is your understanding of the IB program?

J: In general?

K: Yes. How aware are you of the program in terms of the curriculum, and assessments?

J: From what I understand, and I am by no means an expert, it's an international curriculum that's followed leading to culminating examinations. It's, I guess, to demonstrate a breadth of knowledge in certain subject areas similar to Advanced Placement but kind of to the next level. That would be my basic understanding.

K: Does *Institution 1* specifically recruit to advanced academic students?

J: No.

Comment [GMU1]: Approx Pop. 13, 000 Undergrad.

Comment [KD2]: No policy for IB. Students that have done any IB work, certificate or Diploma coming into this school will not get any credit.

K: What is *Institution 1*'s policy regarding Advanced Placement and credit recognition?

J: We will accept anything with a four or better. We have kind of a chart-a break down chart. The majority of those courses can come in with a four or better and I think there are a couple here and there where a three is acceptable. But basically over the years faculty have reviewed that for equivalency, they have determined that X score on the exam in such and such a subject is equivalent to Y *Institution 1* course or courses.

Comment [KD3]: AP credit is basically a 4 or better but a couple courses may get a 3. This is the standard.

K: Okay. In IB students also take exams. Is there any movement, now that IB schools are coming into play in X state, to review policy or to look at IB exams and say, "Okay, X score might be the equivalent to Y course on *Institution 1*'s campus?"

J: Yes. That's the reason they (the admissions office) set you up with me. I'm the person who kind of started that three years ago before it was really an issue and we've seen a steady increase every year with students are coming in with their IB transcripts and saying, "What about this?" Basically, what I did was a bit of IB benchmarking with schools both in state and out of state comparable in size and rigor to see how they kind of view it and then because, I'm not, you know, in the provost's office, I'm not in academic advising, where in our university those sorts of decisions are usually housed, I kind of gave them "Here's my best guess, here's my most educated guess of how we could approach this." So, I picked two schools that I thought had kind of a handle on it - I did UCF, University of Central Florida and University of Delaware. They had policies, it seemed that were pretty logical and then I compared what they were equating it (IB) to what we equate that course, that UDel course let's say at *Institution 1*. It would stand to reason if we say that UDel's English 101 is equivalent to our English 101 and UDel says that this score on the IB exam is equivalent to English 101 it kind of follows though. That's what I prepared three years ago and nothing's happened with it since. And we're just now, in the last couple weeks, starting to get a little momentum with it now.

Comment [KD4]: This school's IB effort seems to have started with Admissions.

Comment [KD5]: They chose UD and UCF to compare this school to. Interesting. UD – Pop. 16,521 (Fall 2009); UCF – Pop. 45,398 (Fall 2009); This school– Pop. 13,130 (Spring 2010)

K: And you chose those schools because you thought they were comparable to *Institution 1* in programs?

J: Yes. Please forgive me for not having these answers off the top of my head but it was literally three years ago. We looked at rigor, perceptions and just really where we were reaching a little bit with some of the schools. I was really looking for a model, looking for somebody who had a policy that made sense. So this is the write up I prepared. You are welcome to look at it and to take it. There is the proposal and two charts.

K: Did you ever contact IB?

J: I spoke briefly with IB just at the beginning to get their input on it. I think I spoke to somebody in Vancouver or in New York.

K: So today, where is *Institution 1* in terms of this process?

J: A proposal has been submitted to the provost. So at this time we're waiting for the provost to make some initial determinations on whether or not he wants to approve that we will accept these

credits to begin with and at that point we will move onto getting departments involved, setting up these equivalencies, building some sort of a chart like this (the proposal I was given), like we have for AP. So we're in the very preliminary stages.

Comment [KD6]: There is a process of institutional review at this school for things to happen. This has been sitting for three years and no one has gotten credit for that whole time.

K: in terms of recruiting to high-performing students if an IB proposal went through would *Institution 1* adapt recruiting practices to tailor presentations to IB students?

J: Definitely. We do a Scholars Day. It is by invitation based on certain criteria and we see AP and IB getting preference at an event like that. Obviously, we would target IB schools. One of the points in my proposal was that we are missing an opportunity for recruitment; there is no carrot to be dangled.

Comment [KD7]: He seems like he would like to use this for recruiting.

K: Can you tell me about programs at *Institution 1* that might be uniquely suited to IB students?

J: We have an honors program. The interesting thing there is the honors program is meant to be a parallel of the gen ed program. A student coming in with many IB credits may miss out on a lot of that.

K: How so?

J: If an IB student has many courses, and we say they have completed English Composition I and English Composition II the first two courses in the honors program is [sic] the honors equivalent of English Comp I and II. So the honors program, other than the social aspects of it, the academic aspects are entirely in the gen ed.

K: Why wouldn't an AP student who took five AP exams have the same issue?

J: They would. So it doesn't mean that they can take any honors courses. I'm just thinking that they wouldn't have the same honors experience as another student who didn't come in with AP or IB.

K: Are there other programs in place at *Institution 1* that might be especially good for advanced academic students?

J: Certainly the sciences. We're constantly trying to grow the sciences at *Institution 1*. We have strong facilities for the sciences. We have steady enrollment in the sciences. An IB student would be served well by many of our majors. We have a very strong fine arts program and we award many of our merit-based scholarships to those in the fine arts.

K: What makes IB and other advanced students attractive to an institution?

J: This is purely anecdotal but often these are the students that do become student leaders. Certainly they will have higher persistence and retention rates by and large. There are definitely benefits for the University. These types of students often pay you back tenfold for the type of investment.

K: Thank you very much for your time.

J: My pleasure.

Notes After:

Institution 1 currently does not have an IB policy and it seems that their efforts have been initiated by this one person who sees IB as a in his words “carrot to be dangled” for recruiting. I think he has either personally dealt with students or has heard enough from admissions people who have had IB students inquire or come into Institution 1 and be disappointed that there is not credit given for IB work. Over the last several years, Institution 1 has had a lot of building and a kind of rebirth, starting with the change in name from Institution 1 College to Institution 1 University. The fact that G.’s proposal has been sitting for three years tells me something about the priority level Institution 1 had placed on this until now and it was only after I called asking for an appointment and explained my study, that G.’s proposal had been moved from the Provost’s office to a larger university review. G told me that Institution 1 was willing to participate because they felt that I would be able to provide them with more information about IB which I did following the conclusion of our interview.

I am thinking that the most important things I get from Institution 1 are the following in terms of my research questions:

Knowledge about IB – Some knowledge of program, but this is stifled by the fact that there is not an ongoing current IB policy at Institution 1. This requires an institutional chain of events.

University perceptions about IB – Respectful of program, believes it is worthwhile as a recruiting tool and that students would come prepared to do undergraduate work including participate in an honors opportunity

IB compared to AP – AP is currently favored as there is a recognition policy

Interview with Dr. Edward Thompson, President – Institution 2
June 30, 2010

Comment [GMU8]: Approx Pop. – 2,142 undergraduate

K: Could you tell me what your experience is with IB students?

T: I don't really have a lot of experience with them.

K: In doing research for this project, I was surprised that your college website did not list a recognition policy for either AP or IB.

T: We do accept AP courses. The problem is every department sets its own cutoff point so it was **hard** to devise a policy. We're trying to change that. Hopefully our new dean will but departments have been very jealous about those scores and in general, not wanting to accept them.

Comment [KD9]: No policy for IB. AP policy is not on site but it determined by departments. Very hard for a student to find out on their own.

K: So can you tell me how you view advanced academic students at *Institution 2* and how you view them as part of your student body?

T: Well, you know, I think academically, we view them as prized possessions because they are among our better students. They find their way to our honors program so our honors students **have** AP credits that they have brought here to begin with. The honors program, as you may recall, is a freestanding program with the luxury of being more flexible in terms of department standards. It can accept courses that some other departments may be reluctant to and so the honors directors are rather aggressive in accepting AP credits. **Institutionally, we don't have a philosophy with regards to AP and certainly we have none with regards to the International Baccalaureate. It's not even on our radar screen.**

Comment [KD10]: View of advanced academic students is interesting. Values them.

Comment [KD11]: Institutional policy may be the key here. SPC was always very individualized.

K: Why is there no institutional philosophy with regards to with regard to AP? And then we'll move on to IB.

T: This institution has always operated with the notion that **departments are independent players** here if you will; they have the authority and the decision-making right with regards to courses in their area and until that changes it's been hard to develop any kind of institutional policy. We started to try to move in the direction of trying to develop a kind of consensus about it. Frankly, we've been pushing it a little harder because we think it's a competitive issue. So for example, as a student looks at our website and tries to figure out where does AP fit at *Institution 2*, they might come away with the same idea that you did, which is that it doesn't really fit here, it's not really welcome, it's not really a part of our institutional strategy. More and more institutions are moving in the direction of making everything quite explicit and up front. **The more road blocks you put between the student and the institution the less likely you are to get that student.** For

Comment [KD12]: Goes into philosophy.

Comment [KD13]: This statement goes into recruiting though—he could see their policy as a recruiting problem eventually.

example, in state X they created this thing called State Transfer. We had a real dustup over that with the faculty years ago when I first came to us because again, they jealously guarded their prerogatives in deciding what courses should be accepted. For State Transfer to work, the Dean's office had to be able to make those decisions because you have a fairly quick turnaround time to evaluate these courses and put them up on the website for the state otherwise they drive you crazy. So that was really the first crack in the armor, they (the departments) ceded the authority to the Dean's office for State Transfer. We're trying to build upon that and get to a point where we have a consistent policy for AP and perhaps for some others down the line so that when a student goes to the website they can do what they do now for State Transfer, they can look there, they can put in a particular course and know exactly what's going to happen to them. That's true with college-level courses, it needs to be true with high school level courses.

Comment [KD14]: Program where students can go to community colleges and then transfer to a 4 yr college. Do not have to get a AA or AS degree but it is recommended that the student have at least 30 credits before transfer. Colleges had to specifically designate classes that the county/community college credits would transfer to. Very specific.

K: What is your personal experience with the IB program or with IB students?

T: None at all. I've read about it over the years of course. I think it's a wonderful program but there's not been any demand here to make it more explicit. My understanding is that a school has to go through a very rigorous process to be an IB school.

Comment [KD15]: Little knowledge.

K: Are you aware that St. Dominic's is an IB school?

T: I was not aware they were an IB school and that's very interesting because we have an alum who is my special assistant and she has not mentioned it.

Comment [KD16]: Wow. They should be more up on this.

K: What types of programs in addition to the honors program at *Institution 2*, could you see advanced academic students, possibly IB students being attracted to?

T: That's a good question. I would venture to say some of the specialized science programs such as biotechnology might be attractive to high achieving students. Our joint programs which also require dual screening processes with Seton Hall Law School and with UMDNJ could also be attractive to those students. Students spend three years here and finish their graduate work at those institutions. I think also they might be attracted to some of our study abroad opportunities in part because those who can take advantage of the study abroad opportunities most effectively are high performers because they have to be able to balance going to different country, culture, different learning style, etc. and advanced academic programs often already have the students already prepared to learn that way.

K: Let's go back to policy development. What level of knowledge do you believe your departments have about AP or at some point about IB, in comparison to their courses?

T: I think they're pretty up on what goes into those courses. I know we all receive regular bulletins from ETS and the various tests and many of us, including myself, have written questions in the past. Many of us have engaged in those processes over the years.

Comment [KD17]: This seems off to me. Tests and programs change over the years. Just because you did it years ago does not mean that you understand the rigor or the test now.

K: Do you know how often your policies are reviewed?

T: No, I don't. Probably not regularly. Probably only when Middle States is coming. To be totally honest, every 10 years. Every 10 years. I'm just being honest with you. Some departments look at policies very often because they're under pressure of regular external accreditation for example nursing and education. We just went through TEAC. So those policies are looked more often. Education is as looked at often because the state requirements but others, I bet your [sic.] history looks at it only when dragged to the Middle States altar.

Comment [KD18]: This is blunt and honest. TEAC required a long review so he probably had a good idea of what was involved. Since departments keep the policy, they may not review it often or at all.

K: Thank you for your time.

Notes After:

If one looks at Institution 2's website, they would think that this school did not give credit for either AP or IB but after speaking to the President, I found out that Institution 2 does give credit for AP but it is completely done individually through departments rather than through an institutional policy. IB does not seem to be on their radar at all, except in a passing idea that it is a well-respected academic program. I was shocked to learn that they were unaware that they had a DP school less than a mile from the campus. On another note, I was also taken aback at the stunning level of honesty I got from Dr. Thompson. Comments he made regarding policy review were rather blunt albeit probably true at Institution 2 and possibly other institutions.

In terms of my research questions, the most important things I got from this interview were the following:

Knowledge about IB – Little substantive knowledge of program. No contact with IB students.

University perceptions about IB – Has respect for program but lacks knowledge. College has honors program and other opportunities including dual undergraduate/graduate degree programs that could be attractive to IB students

*IB compared to AP – AP is currently favored as AP gets credit albeit through individual department. **No institutional policy.***

**Interview with Dean Jennifer Sutton – Institution 3
July 2, 2010**

Comment [R19]: Approx Pop. Main (NB)
Campus – 25,000.

K: The purpose of the study is to understand how much colleges and universities know about the IB diploma program and how well they believe the diploma program prepares students for undergraduate level work. I would also like to know how colleges compare the IB program to other advanced academic opportunities including the Advanced Placement program and how colleges award credit for the IB program.

K: What is your experience with IB diploma students or students that come in with IB credentials?

S: We have some students to come in with a couple higher level exams. We have some students come in with the diploma. It's a small, small number. It's been growing. I've worked with IB going on 15 years now but early on, it was the international IB.

Comment [KD20]: First person who has distinguished between domestic and international IB. Shows knowledge of program.

K: How did you work with IB before?

S: I bring in the first year class so I tend to be the one who receives the transcripts and does the credit granting and advises the students about how that impacts their first term schedule so it's one of the reasons I'm one of the few people familiar with IB because early on I saw the transcripts and then had to learn about what the program was and talk with our departments about evaluating credit.

K: You said you've worked with them for about 15 years now?

S: About that. I've been in something close to this position for about 16 years but early on, IB for me was always international. I couldn't even begin to tie it when it began to be part of the US program. Sometime in that time we started to see IB students coming from domestic schools.

K: How do you perceive IB students in terms of their preparation for university level work?

S: They're prepared. They don't stand out in a way that's different from our AP students or our general students. Some of them may, the few that have interacted with me, had [sic] struck me as really mature in that they are able to navigate this place but it's been so spotty that I can't say that it's always something that I've been able to pin on IB. A lot of our IB are out-of-state students and those students by nature of coming from out-of-state also tend to be proactive so I've never known which factor to attribute to that positive quality to hit the ground running here.

Comment [KD21]: Perception is prepared.

Comment [KD22]: Perception of students –
Mature due to how they can navigate

Comment [KD23]: Perception – proactive.
Comparison with out of state students. Her
experience with IB may be with out of states.

K: Is there a particular area of the country that your out-of-state students come from?

S: I can't quote. Colorado, California. I can't really give you a good list.

Comment [KD24]: 29 DP schools in CO.

Comment [KD25]: 85 DP schools in CA.

K: Do you know what percentage of students coming into *Institution 3* with IB qualifications are international students versus domestic students?

S: I couldn't give you a percentage, no. IB has grown obviously. We are seeing a lot more of those students than I had in the past.

Comment [KD26]: Growth. *Institution 3* is the largest uni in the sample. I would expect this.

K: How does *Institution 3* deal with credentials in terms of IB? I took a look at your website and there's a very clear list for AP but not a clear list for IB?

S: We've finally got a statement up but what we tend to do is give credit for higher level exams with scores of 7, 6, or 5. We're working on a chart much like we have for AP but the problem I run into is that different schools seem to adopt different higher level exams so it does seem like there is not always consistency in what we're seeing. I just saw Spanish for the first time two years ago and that here means I go to the department, explaining to them what IB is, getting them all the syllabi so that they could review it. So, that's been an interesting one because we have to get the departments to decide on a policy so then it can consistently be applied.

Comment [KD27]: This is standards for much of the US that actually has an IB policy.

K: Why is there no credit for standard level exams?

S: It's seen as, at least in the times we've evaluated it, high school level. It's not one that we've been impressed that they are mastering material that is at the college level. We also haven't had enough students who are diplomas versus students just taking courses, I know there's a push in the system to grant something extra if they do the full diploma but it's not something that we felt comfortable doing at this time.

Comment [KD28]: Connection bet SL and HS level. Could the lack of credit for SL exams have something to do with the name "SL"?

K: What kind of a push has there been for the full diploma?

S: We had a couple of [state] schools get connected to *Institution 3* because they felt, and it was probably realistic, that not a lot of people understood what the IB curriculum was so they brought a number of us from the different colleges and the faculty and to discuss more about how to help the transition, how to help us understand what the curriculum was looking for.

Comment [KD29]: Push came from IB schools in the state – interesting. They're pushing for more credit themselves.

K: These were diploma schools in the state?

S: Yes.

K: Do you remember which ones they were?

S: I'd have to look it up.

K: If I showed you a list of IB schools, would it help?

S: Sure. (List provided) The Bergen Academies were definitely there. Potentially Morris Knolls, but the Bergen Academies were driving it. They particularly wanted to make more inroads with our engineering school because their students were taking a lot of science curriculum and they wanted to see a more seamless transition and potentially transition to higher levels.

K: Do you know if admissions does programs particularly geared to IB schools or IB students?

S: I don't believe they do anything special but I couldn't give you chapter and verse on what they do. I'm sure they do the same type of program that they do at any other school. It's not something that we've been looking to cultivate at this point.

K: Does *Institution 3* have any programs that might be specifically suited to advanced academic students such as AP or IB students? An honors program? An honors college?

S: We have a general **honors program**. Initially invitation into the program is based on SATs and rank in class although students can self select in by using other credentials including IBs and APs.

Comment [KD30]: Honors program available to both AP and IB students.

K: How are AP and IB tests used for honors program admission if scores are not available until after graduation?

S: We're seeing a lot of junior year APs and IBs obviously we're seeing that they're taking the classes and proceeding through the program. We obviously don't have the final transcripts but it counts in terms of admissions.

K: I'd like to get back to policy development. How are policies developed at *Institution 3*?

S: They start with faculty in the department. It's something, particularly in a place like this, where would be hard to effect all of the departments without the Faculty Council being the one to take it on. So, generally with things like IB, we would break apart into specific areas and then at the department take a look at it and decide what they would grant. The issue of level, the 7, 6, and 5, comes from the college.

Comment [KD31]: Policy development has a specific pecking order – institutional.

K: Does *Institution 3* take a look at other university policies at all?

S: Rarely, probably. Like many hundreds of faculty, when we are interested we look at sister schools-same prestige, same population, same size. So, generally that falls to someone in my office in terms of fact-finding. What does U Maryland do? What does Penn State do? I never know how much that actually matters to faculty or not.

Comment [KD32]: May look at others' policies but it may not matter to faculty. UMaryland – Undergrad 29, 642 Fall 2009; Penn State - Undergrad ~35,000.

S: We've started to speak in much more broad terms about the International Baccalaureate. (Shows me *Institution 3* inquiry form – AP/IB question together). It's slow. It's starting to become a baseline. IB, partly because of their similarities, often gets lumped in with AP and people understand it that way. They compare it. It's more of a bulk program rather than individual classes.

K: Thank you for your time.

Notes After:

Institution 3 was the first school that had any significant knowledge about IB and they were the first to specifically break it out into an international IB and a domestic IB which I found interesting. Dean Sutton, in her job of working with transcripts and dealing with first year students probably has the most experience of anyone I have spoken to thus far in terms of credit and policy development but was less clear about specific qualities that she could attribute to IB students. I thought it was interesting that a few of the small number of IB schools in the state actually approached Rutgers to teach them more about the DP; I see this as an attempt to not only transition their students more smoothly but an effort to perhaps get more for their student in some future time. One of the two states that Dean Sutton mentioned that she sees out of state students coming from to Institution 3 is a high profile IB state with a large regional association.

I am thinking that the most important things I get from Rutgers are the following in terms of my research questions:

Knowledge about IB – Good knowledge of program in terms of an international and domestic realm. Policy development goes through an institutional process of definite steps. Since Dean Sutton deals with credit evaluation, any program that does not already have a policy, she is the one responsible for initiating credit policy development, including obtaining syllabi.

University perceptions about IB – Respects program and called students who come with IB credentials “well-prepared”, “mature” and “proactive”

IB compared to AP – Both programs receive credit although AP does receive credit for 1 year tests while IB does not receive credit for SL exams. IB credit given for HL exams only for a 5, 6, or 7.

**Interview with Mary Phillips – Director of Admissions, Institution 4
July 2, 2010**

K: Could you tell me about your experience with IB Diploma students or students with IB credentials?

P: Well a few years ago, *Institution 4* made the decision to investigate the IB program to determine whether it was appropriate to be granting credit for IB coursework because we had, I think at the time, just a few schools within [the state] that had the IB program but it was clear it was becoming more and more important and we were seeing students from overseas bringing IB credit in, not in large numbers, but it was obviously becoming important that we talk about IB in a serious way. *Institution 4* has accepted AP for a long, long time and it seems like the IB program was growing enough that we really had to look at it because it seemed to be a robust curriculum and to create parity between our processes with AP and IB it seemed a fair thing to do. So like I said a few years ago I could tell you the exact year but it was over four years ago I think we created a proposal, did some research, and at *Institution 4* it all has to go through Faculty Council and have to be approved by faculty. It all went to individual departments to get their input on it and it was approved and we do currently grant credit for every subject in IB a higher level at 5, 6, or 7.

K: Just to be clear, did the original initiation come out the admissions office or out of the departments? Where did it start?

P: It might have been a combination. We have an enrollment research division office within our division and they are for example, is a transcript evaluator. There's our enrollment research people that track trends, watch the academic environment and what's going on. What are topics that we need to be on top of on a regular basis? I think some of this came out of them and some of it came out at us. I don't know that it was faculty driven. I think that it was more from our administrative perspective. More and more it was in our professional realm.

K: Where was the faculty brought in for input?

P: What we did was we in the admissions office with enrollment research studied the IB diploma program, took a look at the numbers of schools that were participating, where the schools were, took a look at the curriculum, put together packages of information for faculty and I think the sequence of events was we did the study, brought the proposal to Faculty Council, spent a lot of time educating the Faculty Council as the representative for the entire faculty to say, "Is this something that you would endorse as proceeding with?" So the Faculty Council representatives of the faculty asked us to do a little more research, had more questions [sic], proposed things that

Comment [R33]: Approx. pop. 4,681

Comment [KD34]: They seem ahead of the curve here if it actually was a few years ago.

Comment [KD35]: She also makes a reference to IB in an international sense.

Comment [KD36]: Perception of IB – respect. Interesting quote.

Comment [KD37]: The school also has a process that has been undertaken in order for something to occur. Institutional policy.

Comment [KD38]: Standard IB policy for HL at 5, 6 and 7

they would like to know more about. We went back and did more research. We came back to them, updated the proposal. They said, “Yes, they were willing to endorse that.” We then went out to the faculty as a whole for a vote. That was pretty easy because Faculty Council had endorsed it. They usually make the recommendation unless there is a lot of controversy so it initially went through faculty approval. What we did then is sent out information to each of the departments that we were proposing to give credit for. Those departments did a review of all the IB material we put together and they individually decided, “Yes, we will grant the credit” because this matches a course that we would give and it seems an appropriate thing to do. If they would give the credit what credit and then send it back to us and then they would’ve approved it. So there were two layers. There was, “Yes, we could do it” by the entire faculty and then it went to the departments and there was, “Yes, we’re willing to approve this.” And we just told you departments and we had approval to accept at a higher level 5, 6, or 7 - what score if any do you want to accept at based on information we provided **them**?

Comment [KD39]: This school has a pretty developed institutional process for getting things done.

K: Were standard level exams ever considered?

P: They were considered. The only thing that we did was we looked up what other colleges and universities similar to ours were doing as well as the curriculum within the IB and we decided that we were going to start with higher **level**. We thought that that would work better with our faculty approval process and it seemed to match up closer to what we do with AP and other credit granting.

Comment [KD40]: SL decision seems to be based on other colleges rather than a specific reason. *I should have asked if it would be looked at again at some point or pushed this with the hours but then that would be showing my bias.*

K: How often are credit policies reviewed?

P: Usually on a yearly basis. It depends what comes up. We put all this in a catalog so obviously once a year we update. We do it more frequently if a change happens. Sometimes departments bring things up to us, we need to change this because this structure of our curriculum has changed. We just went through a general education revision and it affected some departments the way they had administered entry-level or early coursework in their departments and what counted for what credit on the general education requirements. School of Science updated their IB policy to be more in concordance with what we were now requiring in the general education requirements. So if a major change happens they get reviewed regardless of what time of year it is. The processes are handled through our enrollment research offices now. They also handle all transfer credit.

K: Does *Institution 4* give any consideration to students for the IB Diploma including the extended essay, community-action-service or Theory of Knowledge?

P: We’re subject specific right now, so not specifically credit.

K: What qualities make IB students attractive to an institution like *Institution 4*?

P: First of all, they have a really pretty intensive curriculum. It's really similar to the rigors of a college curriculum. They've studied a subject, because of the length of time they study a subject, I think the faculty feel, gives them an in-depth knowledge that is very attractive and will help them do really well once they get here. I think particular subjects, something like the sciences here, they really recognize how really in-depth those sciences in IB go. They're very generous with their transfer policies because they know the rigor of the curriculum and their preparation is pretty significant. A student is coming here and we've had numbers but not overwhelming numbers compared to AP students but in general IB students are very, very well prepared and it reflects a solid SAT score. They're very well-prepared to do well here.

Comment [KD41]: Perceptions of an IB student.

Comment [KD42]: Perceptions of an IB student.
Good quote.

Comment [KD43]: Perception of IB students

K: Are there any qualities that set them apart from other applicants?

P: I think in my opinion in just choosing to do the IB program because a lot of students who do it are very conscious of the fact that they're doing IB and know how rigorous their academic program is and you sort of have to applaud a student taking the rigorous way and that indicates how well they're going to do in college. They are obviously quite serious students and they just know. They know how hard the curriculum is and they liked that fact.

Comment [KD44]: Perceptions of IB students

K: Do your admissions personnel tailor school visits for IB schools and/or IB students?

P: I think it's something that we're always conscious of. We always have the information available because students say "Do you accept IB?" And they want to know specifically so we have charts available just like we have charts for AP and we are able to provide that information currently. Of course by the time they graduate something could change but in general we would be able to say "Yes we accept it." And generally speaking, "If you do the following, you will get the following credit." That's very straightforward. Here we don't have a lot of the problem saying "Yes we do accept and here's what it would be." If you look at it right now, if you came in right now, this is the way it is right now and certainly I think that any IB program is quite different from any regular high school curriculum and again, I think we would be conscious of the seriousness of the student asking about IB credit. I think they're being told that IB, rightfully so, is a serious curriculum and it will get you advanced standing at colleges and universities so students are increasingly expecting advanced standing through those programs.

K: Outside of working at *Institution 4* do have experience with IB?

P: I worked at another college before I came here and it came up regularly. We did not accept credit for IB. We did accept AP credit. When I was in that position I was pushing them to look about IB but there wasn't really any interest.

K: Was there particular reason there wasn't any interest?

P: This was a long time ago and I think it was so new and there were so few schools doing it. I don't think there was a lot of information about it. I don't know if they have a policy now.

K: Was this institution in the United States?

P: Yes.

K: Do you have an Honors Program and if so, how is one admitted?

P: We have one. Students qualify through meeting a minimum SAT and GPA. Since IB and AP courses receive weighted GPAs these students often are offered admission to our honors program. These students can also be offered scholarships because some scholarships are awarded based on the weighted GPA.

K: Thank you for your time.

Notes After:

This university also had significant knowledge of the IB program and seems to have been working with the program for a prolonged period of time (last three years at least). Considering the small number of schools in the state, this is significant. The policy at this institution is in line with others throughout the country although the reason for the non-inclusion of Standard Level examinations is less firm as it is based on what other colleges are doing and not on a University decision. The admissions office did recognize several traits that were of value in IB students and noted a high level of respect for the IB program and the rigors of the curriculum. The policy development at the university must go through a significant number of steps before something is complete.

I am thinking that the most important things I get from Institution 4 are the following in terms of my research questions:

Knowledge about IB – Good knowledge of program and knew of an international and domestic dimension. Policy development required many steps and is quite organized.

University perceptions about IB – Knows rigor of program and thinks that students who choose to do program know exactly how hard it is and that they like that. Gave some good quotes regarding university perceptions of IB students.

IB compared to AP – Takes AP credit. Gives HL credit for 5, 6, and 7. No SL credit.

**Interview with David Baker – Director of Admissions, Institution 5
July 6, 2010**

Comment [R45]: Approx. pop. – 1,739

K: The purpose of this study is to find out what colleges and universities know about IB Diploma Programme and how they feel about students who come through the program and enter their institutions. I would also like to understand how colleges and universities compare the IB Diploma Programme to other advanced academic programs including Advanced Placement program.

K: Could you tell about your experience with IB students here at *Institution 5*?

B: In general, I'll be honest with you, I've only been at *Institution 5* for six months. I haven't had a prolonged experience with IB students coming into *Institution 5*. But in general, I tend to find that IB students come in well-prepared. Most of them are taking a curriculum that's obviously more rigorous or at least as rigorous than the average standard US curriculum. Depending on how they're pursuing it, whether they're actually pursuing full diploma status or whether the schools were using IB courses to a certain extent to either offset APs or lack of honors courses, I think the quality varies, obviously the full diploma is stronger. Typically, the student coming in with a full diploma, as long as they've done well and it, have no major challenges.

Comment [KD46]: Perception of IB students

Comment [KD47]: Perception of IB

Comment [KD48]: Perception of IB

Comment [KD49]: Perception of IB students

K: You mentioned you've been at *Institution 5* for six months. Do you have experience with IB someplace else?

B: Yes. I've had experience with IB both here and abroad.

Comment [KD50]: Again, a mention of IB both in the US and internationally.

K: Do you see differences with IB with international students versus domestic students?

B: I would say that in general most of the institutions in the US that I have dealt with I find more variety in the way that it's (IB) being looked at. There are school systems for instance, in Westchester County, New York, where and I've had a conversation with a few counselors about this I know because of the structure of the way the school was set up, the public school, how they could limit access to the IB or they could make it competitive entrance they have watered it down a little bit not the IB itself but in terms of the quality of the student. There were clearly students in the program that were not reaping the full benefit of it either because they were not taking it seriously or because they were not as academically prepared moving into the diploma program. Whereas I think in general most of the schools abroad have more or less made it clear to the students that it is a competitive track and made sure that the students are typically better prepared. That's again, a generalization. I dealt with lots of students, students from Texas, students from other places where the preparation was fine. Generally, I think because of the variation of the school districts here and throughout the country there is greater variation in the quality of the student.

Comment [KD51]: He notes that some IB programs in the States are run differently than others. This is perceptive and is a point that no one has brought up, showing he knows a little more about the reality of American schools.

Comment [KD52]: Compares international schools to domestics in the way that students are prepared for rigors of DP and access.

Comment [KD53]: Interesting quote.

K: So, just to be clear, depending where the school is and how the school allows access to the IB program the quality of the student that comes out of it in terms of college preparation could vary?

B: It's quality in and definitely quality out. If a student's not prepared for the program, they are definitely not going to succeed in it as opposed to a student who came in prepared and can really get through the program well in and graduate well. It's entirely possible that a student coming in with a lower GPA is not going to go through the IB and magically come out the other side with a better GPA. If anything they struggle. I found that in the US it also depends on how the grading systems were working. If the schools are still grading the student on the report cards based on the school's curriculum – in most cases if a student is going to IB school overseas it will follow the typical IB grading scale. In the US I've seen it done both ways. Students get graded on a different scale - they're graded on 4.0, 5.0 or a zero to 100 scale and grade inflation in the classroom can still impact, you know a student may think they're doing great in class but when it comes to taking the exams they're taking higher levels and they may not perform as well. I think the way that it is being administered in the US really seems to vary pretty greatly whereas I think I find better consistency with schools abroad. I think also schools in the US it also comes down to schools not knowing how to approach it. I think there's still a good amount of misinformation. I think that IB would probably not want to be considered an alternative to AP. It's not designed for that. I think that schools in the US would be looking at it if we don't have the budget - What can we do? What do we currently offer? Is there an alternative to/for AP in these different ways? Is this a better option? So I think that even that perception changes the schools and/or students approaches to the program.

Comment [KD54]: Perception of IB students.

Comment [KD55]: Interesting – not comparing IB to AP.

Comment [KD56]: This seems against logic. It costs \$ to apply to be an IB school and then \$ to be an IB school each year.

K: Now being on the higher ed level, do you see a difference in IB student in terms of college preparation versus an AP student in terms of college preparation?

B: Again, it's a difficult question. If a student's taking the full diploma program then they are being exposed to an educational experience that I would liken much more to the first year or two of a traditional liberal arts college. They are getting a great variety in terms of the courses that they are taking. They are being exposed to writing and research I think at a consistently deep level across that curriculum. There's still an opportunity for advancement or for achieving at certain levels or working at greater depth in some courses rather than in others because some courses can be taken at higher level or not. I think that AP is much harder to generalize because an AP student can be a student is just taking AP math in which case sure, I would say that they are not getting the preparation that an IB diploma student is getting really because they're only having that higher level experience probably a bad term to use there, but they're only having that deeper academic experience in the one course. We've had students come in with their first year completed basically because of their AP tests but again I think it's disjointed because you're

Comment [KD57]: Perception of DP students.

Comment [KD58]: Good quote regarding perception of IB Diploma students.

talking about individual siloed courses where I think the diploma program is taught with more thought to a holistic curriculum as opposed to having individual silos. But I think in general the writing level and that approach the across the disciplines is a little stronger in IB then I would say then for an AP student with one or two APs as opposed to a student who can offer a full array.

Comment [KD59]: Interesting word choice

Comment [KD60]: Perception of IB program.

Comment [KD61]: Comparison between IBDP and single APs

K: Can you tell me a little bit about *Institution 5's* credit policy in regards to IB?

B: Right now, IB is any higher level with a score of five or better. So we're not looking for credit for the diploma program as a whole. We're going course by course and typically exam by exam which mirrors and I think that that and as much as I hate to say it, that approach is the higher ed version of what I was talking about at the high school level. Not all schools have figured out a great way to deal with IB yet. We just kind of put it into the AP box which is not unlike what we do with other internationally based programs. We would do the same thing with the actual French system, the Baccalauréat, or the Abitur, or the A Levels. Basically, everything gets put, all those round pegs, gets stuck in the AP style, square hole. We look at the course, give it a certain grade, and then you get the transfer credit as opposed to, I know that IB's been seeking, I tried to push this through at my previous institution, credit for the diploma.

Comment [KD62]: Policy is same as RU and MU for IB.

Comment [KD63]: Good quote for how schools deal with IB.

K: Could you tell me how that policy was determined to be applied higher levels only?

B: I don't know. I wasn't around for the beginning of that. Even at my prior institution that decision had been made right at the inception of IB. That was 4 or higher. That was a less selective institution. So I'm not sure where the genesis of it was.

Comment [KD64]: I should have pushed to find out from someone else how the policy came about.

K: What are the personal qualities that make IB students attractive to an institution?

B: The idea that 1) they're challenging themselves 2) bravery or sophistication, one of the two, in that IB is not something that many people know. A student in IB district here that talks to a friend outside of their district, a person outside of their district is very likely not to have heard of IB. I think that taking something that's still is not very widespread here in the US and the courage to go for it and the savvy to say even though I don't understand what it is these two things bode well for students that come in here. They're students that are willing to push the envelope a little bit, try courses that they've never had before, push beyond their standard comfort zone to go into courses they've never taken in high school I think an IB student just by their nature is sort of engaging in that process before they even get here and they are likely to continue that once they get here.

Comment [KD65]: Perceptions of IB students

Comment [KD66]: Perceptions of IB students

Comment [KD67]: Perception of IB students

Comment [KD68]: Perception of IB students

Comment [KD69]: Perception of IB students

Comment [KD70]: Perception of IB students

K: Are there any programs that *Institution 5* has that are uniquely suited to IB students or advanced academic students in general?

B: Most of them are. Our curriculum and our philosophy is what I would consider a more classical version of liberal arts philosophy. It comes down to our application even. We don't have a list of the majors we offer on our application. We asked students what they want to study but they can put down something that's completely out of left field that we don't even have and we want that. We want students to come in without a major and take up to two years to do it, to explore around. Many of our students double major and minor or double minor and major or do both. We'll try to find something that they want to do if they have a concept in their head what they want to do and then will piece together all of our offerings to match it. So it's not a cookie-cutter approach. I think that that idea of students being able to build connections and make connections between the various areas of study and being willing to synthesize all of that together in what for them is a good experience is something that I think IB when you're looking at it again is a good fit for since it is a holistic program. The holistic attitude will suit well a student coming in here. It is a mode of thinking that we want; we want them to approach it as a whole.

K: Can you think of something that would make IB students unattractive to an institution?

B: I've never really seen at downside. The only time I've experienced the downside, I could think of to examples when I was with Pace, and it was in two different states. One was in Connecticut; one was in New York. I actually called the guidance counselors to talk about the students because their academic performance in high school was weaker once they got into IB. There was just a major disconnect once the students hit the IB level and in talking to the counselors they were honest about the fact that the students were not well-prepared and probably should not have been in the IB program in their minds. They had actually advised parents against but because of the way the district worked it was the parents' choice to put them in. There, it was much more a function of the administration and the schools not being ready to try to bring the students to a level where they had a support structure. In terms of the way the students were allowed into the program I think it hurt them. If there had been better support services there to help students keep up, I think it would've been fine but I also think students may have been better off not being pushed as hard as they were and it ended up with the students getting very frustrated and each student ended up backing off. Going into college, they were coming in low motivation, they just struggled and they were maybe even turned off by this different type of program rather than the traditional program and I'm not sure if that was the case. We would like students to come in motivated and eager even if they're not performing well.

K: Does *Institution 5* recruit specifically to the IB schools in the area?

B: We very aggressively recruit in all of our local areas not just to the IB schools. We really try to hit all the local publics, privates, and independents. We recruit a lot in the middle states region

Comment [KD71]: Former institution for Baker.

Comment [KD72]: Students sometimes do not receive the full benefit of the program when they are not fully prepared in the first place. Two instances described.

from Virginia to Maine also in California, Texas, Florida and a few other regions. In breaking into new market I would say that looking at schools that offer IB, that far more challenging would be the first schools we would go to. It's something that if we only had a week in an area we would target those schools. We're going and make the most of our time there.

Comment [KD73]: 85 IBDP schools.

Comment [KD74]: 47 IBDP schools with state policy.

Comment [KD75]: 68 IBDP schools with state policy.

K: In terms the area IB schools, do you get many students from them?

B: A moderate amount. I would say that we have interest. I don't know that there's any that there's any difference because of our IB policy. If we're losing a student to somewhere else or they're not coming in it's for a more traditional reason it's either lack of the program they are interested in or we don't have financial aid or we're too close to home. I haven't seen a difference. I wouldn't attribute any of the differences to IB itself or the way we treat IB. That said, I think that there's room for the reverse. I think if we had a more favorable IB policy there would be potential for us to maybe eek a little bit more out of that. I think granting for only higher levels is a little restrictive. It's not out of line I don't think but it's not also as favorable as some other policies I've seen. So I think if we were a little bit lower and we were able to grant a little bit more and we promoted that little bit stronger we might have a little more impact when we walk into an IB school and we can have a more targeted conversation. One of the disadvantages to having a general presentation is you're not really having a specific conversation. We're talking about IB, we'll address IB credit but in terms of the rest of the academic conversation were not really acknowledging the student for being in IB upfront. I think if we were to change our policy a little bit we could do better.

Comment [KD76]: Sees room for a change in policy.

K: If you could write ideal policy, what would it entail?

B: Honestly it's very difficult. I've gone back and forth. If I had my dream, I probably wouldn't, and this isn't just for IB, I would probably take a stock answer for advanced credit out of the mix entirely and probably go more in the direction of challenge exams in the University because I think is entirely possible that a student who takes a standard level exam and does very, very well may not need an entry-level course here. I think if we could move to a system where was more personalized it would be more fair. But the administration and the marketability of that becomes a hassle.

Comment [KD77]: Not completely in favor of a blanket SL policy but more in favor of individually testing all students. Potential administrative nightmare.

K: Thank you for your time.

Notes after:

At Institution 5, they have a great deal of knowledge about the IB Program but the fact also has to be acknowledged that this is a new Director of Admissions so it cannot be completely determined how the current policy came into effect. Institution 5 currently awards credit for HL

exams with a score of 5 and higher. The Admissions Director had a very distinct idea of what IB was and how rigorous the program should be and it seemed that he had determined a specific opinion that depending on the quality of the school in the United States and how the IB program is run, the quality of the student coming out of the program can vary. There did seem to be a sense of institutional policy but since the policy development could not be explained, this researcher did not get a sense of review timing. This interview provided many quotes and details concerning perceptions of both the IB Program and IB students.

I am thinking that the most important things I get from Institution 5 are the following in terms of my research questions:

Knowledge about IB – Incredible knowledge of program and definite opinions about quality of the program depending on where it is and how it is run. Policy development requires an institutional chain of events but some details were unknown because of newness of admissions director.

University perceptions about IB – Extremely positive about program. Thinks if policy were different it might be better for recruiting. Lots of quotes about IB program and IB students

IB compared to AP – IB diploma is favored in terms of skills but there is no credit policy specifically geared to the IBDP. HL courses get credit for scores of a five and higher. AP exams get credit.