

High school students across Northwest Indiana get ready to graduate

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Students across Northwest Indiana are wrapping up their senior year and getting ready for college and careers. Many have earned college credit through dual credit programs at their high schools, and a few have already earned college degrees.

Dual credit is a program in which high school students can earn both high school and college credits simultaneously. Dual credit courses are taught by high school faculty, adjunct college faculty or college faculty either at the high school, at the college or university or through online courses.

Local high schools have dual credit arrangements with a number of local and statewide colleges and universities.

Raven Osborne, who turns 19 in August, made national news when she earned her baccalaureate degree May 5 from Purdue University Northwest, before graduating from 21st Century Charter School in Gary set for tonight.

Winoska Medina, who will graduate from Lighthouse College Prep Academy in Gary on June 11, is another success story.

Medina, 18, of East Chicago, earned an associate degree May 13 through Ivy Tech Community College via the American Honors program. Ivy Tech has had the American Honors program at the East Chicago campus since fall 2014. It also is offered at the Valparaiso campus.

American Honors is a nationally recognized, selective honors program offered at community colleges across the country. It helps students find, prepare for and transfer to other colleges to earn their bachelor's degrees. It features smaller classes, one-on-one advising and a national transfer network of four-year schools to enable American Honors students to meet their full potential.

Ivy Tech officials said Lighthouse is the only high school in Indiana that has this partnership with American Honors.

Ivy Tech's American Honors Director Danielle Hughes said the first thing that stood out about Medina was her level of commitment and drive for academics.

"In my first advising appointment with her I learned that not only was she taking on this full load while she was in high school, but she also worked," Hughes said. "In spite of this, she made no excuses for herself, which I typically see in students who are juggling multiple responsibilities. Not Winoska; she made it clear that she wanted all As and Bs."

Medina, who is also Lighthouse's valedictorian, said she will attend Indiana University Purdue University in Indianapolis and major in psychology.

"I'd like to eventually get a master's degree and work with juveniles," she said by telephone.

"This has given me a head start. There were times when I had a lot going on, but I believe this will make my transition to college easier," Medina said.

More high school grads now have college credits

Ivy Tech officials said this school year, there were 4,568 dual credit students in Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties, taking 453 classes. Four of those students earned associate degrees — two from 21st Century Charter School and two from Lighthouse College Preparatory Academy, both in Gary.

Nineteen students from the Hammond Area Career Center University celebrated their achievements March 20. These students were part of the career center's early college program supervised by Vincennes University. Of the 19, nine earned associate degrees, four earned statewide transfer with a general education certificate and six earned directed-studies certificates.

Portage High School Principal Max Gill said the school offers multiple dual credit classes, and has arrangements with Purdue Northwest, IU Bloomington, IU Northwest, Ivy Tech and Vincennes. He said several of the 570 graduates have earned dual credits.

Porter County Career Center Principal/Director Jon Groth said dual credit programs are offered through the career and technical classes, and many students have graduated from high school with as many as 30 college credits.

Michigan City High School Principal Bonnie Manuel said of the 1,700 students, 351 are seniors.

"This year's seniors have earned more than 3,500 college credits," she said.

"Dual credit has become such a demand for our community. We currently offer 29 dual credit classes. It's a great advantage for our community and students, and it's a great feeder for our students into colleges. They go in well-prepared for what's going to be required of them."

Students garner scholarships, awards

Dozens of graduating high school students have scored impressive scholarships, honors and awards this school year.

Highland High School senior Alexander Fitt won the Lilly Scholarship and the Cox Scholarship at Indiana University, Bloomington, which means he will be attending IU with no cost for tuition or housing.

Highland senior Zachary Fraley will attend Harvard University but hasn't received his financial package yet.

Fraley is the school valedictorian, and Fitt is salutatorian.

Nine students from Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties who want to pursue a career in education are among the recipients of the first Next Generation Educator Scholarship, which will pay \$7,500 per year for up to four years to students who obtain their teaching license and commit to teaching in Indiana for five consecutive years.

Those students are Emily Couch, Lowell High School; Jaycee Hopper and Sophie Nonos, Crown Point High School; and Theresa Ross, Highland High School in Lake County.

In Porter County, the winners are Emma Havrilla, Portage High School; Carson Krutz, Valparaiso High School; and Rachel Pauer, Hebron High School.

In LaPorte County, the winners are Courtney Lindquist, LaPorte High School, and Hannah Tubb, Michigan City High School.