

# **Independent Study at The College of Wooster**

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# Relation to Mission

- The College of Wooster is an independent residential liberal arts college offering a rigorous and comprehensive education to students with the capacity and motivation to become educated leaders in a complex society. Wooster has for more than fifty years required every graduate to complete a significant Independent Study project, and the College has become nationally recognized for changing student lives through an emphasis on independent learning. Wooster values co-education, diversity in its many forms, a global perspective, and the heritage arising from its origin as a college founded by Presbyterians.

# The Heart of the Curriculum

- Independent Minds: The Campaign for Wooster

# Elements of I.S.

- In place since the late 1940s – a mature program
- Required for every senior
- Consists of two parts over three semesters: Junior I.S. and Senior I.S.
- Junior I.S. either tutorial or seminar or combination. Primary focus upon disciplinary research methodology. Typically leads to extended research paper.
- Senior I.S. individual project with tutorial mentoring. Leads to thesis or artistic product (with written component)
- Counts as part of both student and faculty workload: for students, one course during each of the three semesters; for faculty, supervision is calculated at 0.1 course credit per student per semester.

# Some Recent Projects

- The Marriage of Opposites: Development of a Silver-Containing Photosensitive Ceramic Glace for Ceramic Art
- Measuring the Effect of Multiple Dosage Levels of Creatine-Monohydrate Supplementation on Muscular Strength and Endurance in Rats
- The Effect of Generic Competition on Name Brand Price Premiums in the Pharmaceutical Industry: An Empirical Analysis
- The Palace of the Forest of Lebanon: A Collection of Poems
- <http://academics.wooster.edu/is/database.php>

# Support for Faculty

- Faculty leaves program: multiple options, but essentially tenured faculty are eligible for a year's paid leave after four years of teaching.
- Supplemental leaves: Luce fund providing teaching reductions of 1-3 courses to begin or conclude a major research project
- Annual professional development funding: one conference trip; possibility of second or of support for research work

# Support for Students

- Science department budgets include funding for supplies and other support
- Endowed funds in several departments
- Copeland Fund for Independent Study

# Benefits to Students

- Institutional culture of research
- Sophomore Research Program
- Summer research: 100 + students involved annually
- Grant-funded programs for additional research opportunities
- In-house research showcase
- Frequent presentation/publication with faculty members

# Alumni Outcomes

- Head start in grad school
- Wooster ranks 18th in baccalaureate institutions as producers of Ph.D.s
- Between 1995-2004 13.8% of STEM grads went on to receive Ph.D.s
- Compare to 19.3% at the top 11 US institutions – Wooster entering scores c. 1220 SAT; 3.55 HS GPA

# Benefits to Faculty

- Engagement with student researchers
- Stimulus to new research projects
- Leaves program
- Annual influx of visiting faculty
- Peer pressure

# Benefits to Institution

- Provides powerful source of identity and master narrative – shapes/is shaped by mission
- Structures campus academic life
- Facilitates branding and market differentiation
- Provides focused opportunities for Development

# Unintended Consequences

- Focused branding can be a negative
- Very resource-intensive: faculty workload; leaves; leave replacement hiring and assimilation; cost of support
- Potential tension between commitment to faculty work and faculty-student work
- Reduction of course work in the major
- Privatization of student experience

# Future Directions and the Role of the Dean?

- Entrepreneurship
- Collaborative projects
- Independent Study conference
- Assessment