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College prep advocates stress tough classes

Associated Press

Most teenagers say they want to go to college, but many students may not be taking the high school classes it takes to get there, education officials say.

A new media campaign featuring muscle-bound gladiators and bullfighters urges teens to "get tough" and take advanced classes - such as foreign languages, science and math. The campaign includes public service announcements, plus teen-friendly media such as YouTube, MySpace, Facebook and a Web site: www.KnowHow2GOIndiana.org.

Many students don't realize they should be taking more difficult classes than ones required by the state's basic "Core 40" requirements, said Elizabeth Crouch, with Learn More Indiana, a partnership of state agencies working on the campaign.

"Getting to and through college can be tough and students need to be ready," Crouch said. "Through the KnowHow2GOIndiana campaign, we are encouraging students to push themselves beyond Core 40 and take on 'tough courses' in order to prepare for success."

Many colleges are moving toward increased admission requirements.

Purdue University, for example, strongly encourages Indiana students to pursue an academic honors high school diploma.

Indiana University is implementing new standards for students seeking admission in 2011. Students will have to have more science and math credits - including pre-calculus, calculus or trigonometry - plus at least two years of foreign languages. IU officials passed the increased standards in an effort to boost the school to the upper echelon of public universities.

Annual surveys show that most high school students in Indiana want to go to college, said Cheryl Orr, associate commissioner for the Indiana Commission for Higher Education.

"They also tell us they don't know the steps to get there," she said.

Students can find out more about the path to college through Learn More Indiana. Online, they can visit a virtual campus and decorate an online dorm room or take a quiz about college preparedness.