

# AP<sup>®</sup> and the Cost of College

Recent research is available on the cost of college and how a student's participation in AP<sup>®</sup> relates to college success. The following information summarizes key findings and may be helpful to students as they plan their transition to higher education.

## Finding 1

**Most students take five or six years, and sometimes even longer, to earn their bachelor's degrees at public colleges and universities. Students who take AP courses and exams are much more likely to graduate in four years.**

A 2008 study found that AP students had better four-year graduation rates than those who did not take AP. For example, graduation rates for AP English Literature students were 62 percent higher than graduation rates for those who took other English courses in high school.<sup>1</sup>

Because more than 3,200 colleges and universities in the United States offer credit and/or advanced placement for qualifying AP scores, AP students have the flexibility to double major or study abroad without putting at risk graduation in four years.

## The Difference in Four-Year College Graduation Rates for Students Who...

**Took the AP English Literature course and exam in high school**



Four-year graduation rate is 62% higher

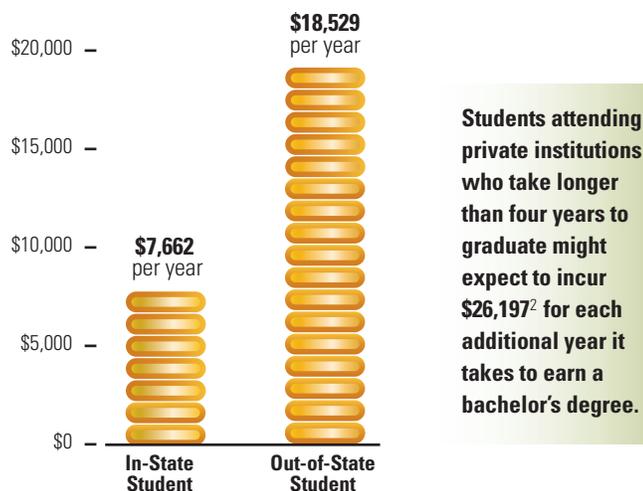


**Did NOT take an AP English course and exam in high school**

## Finding 2

**Students who take longer to graduate from a public college or university typically pay between \$8,000 and \$19,000 for each additional year.**

The typical college cost per year for a four-year public institution is \$7,662 for in-state students and \$18,529 for out-of-state students.<sup>2</sup>



"I took AP throughout high school because it was the most interesting and well-taught program offered. When I reached college, I realized that I had accumulated a year's worth of credits. I graduated from Michigan's undergraduate business program a full year early, saving \$30,000 and a year's time."

— Nikki Baker, student, University of Michigan

## Finding 3

**Taking AP increases eligibility for scholarships and makes candidates more attractive to colleges.**

31 percent of colleges and universities consider a student's AP experience when making decisions about which students will receive scholarships.<sup>3</sup>

85 percent of selective colleges and universities report that a student's AP experience favorably impacts admissions decisions.<sup>4</sup>

"We often observe a discernible difference between students without any AP experience, who typically only devote a few hours to homework each week, and AP students, who have had to develop the time management skills and the discipline to do the type of time-consuming intellectual work that is required to be successful in college."

— Spencer A. Benson  
Director, Center for Teaching Excellence  
Associate Professor, Department of Cell Biology and Molecular Genetics  
University of Maryland, College Park



<sup>1</sup> Linda Hargrove, Donn Godin, and Barbara Dodd, "College Outcomes Comparisons by AP and Non-AP High School Experiences." The College Board, 2008. To isolate the role of AP, researchers compared "matched" groups of students, meaning the students had similar SAT<sup>®</sup> rank and family incomes, but different experiences with English course work (i.e., they either took the AP course and exam or they took other English courses).

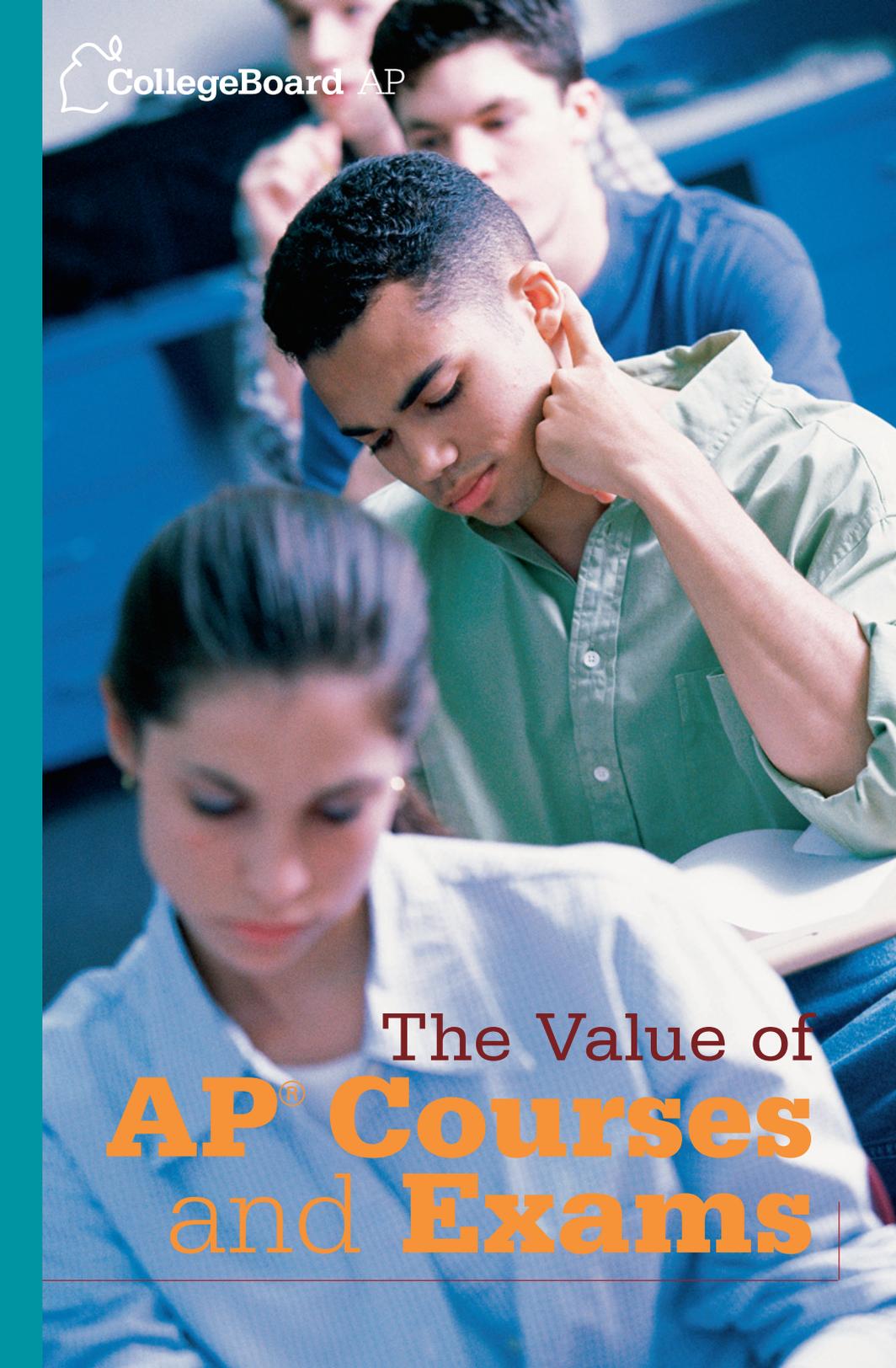
<sup>2</sup> Costs include tuition, fees, and books only, and do not include room, board, and other living expenses. Average Estimated Undergraduate Budgets, 2008-09 (Enrollment-Weighted). The College Board, "Trends in College Pricing," 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Unpublished institutional research, Crux Research, Inc. March 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Unpublished institutional research, Crux Research, Inc. March 2007. For the purpose of this study, selective institutions were defined as those where less than 70 percent of applicants were admitted, the mean SAT score was 1025 or higher, and mean ACT score was 22 or higher.



CollegeBoard AP

A photograph of three students in a classroom setting. In the foreground, a young woman with dark hair pulled back is looking down at a book or paper. Behind her, a young man in a light green button-down shirt is leaning over her shoulder, looking at the same material. In the background, another young man is partially visible, looking towards the camera. The overall color palette is dominated by blues and greens.

The Value of  
**AP<sup>®</sup> Courses**  
and **Exams**



Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup> (AP<sup>®</sup>) courses give you the opportunity to take college-level courses while you're still in high school. Taking the end-of-course AP Exam sends a powerful message to colleges and universities that you're ready for them, and can enable you to gain admission, college credit, and placement into advanced courses.



The College Board and the Advanced Placement Program encourage teachers, AP Coordinators, and school administrators to make equitable access a guiding principle for their AP programs. The College Board is committed to the principle that all students deserve an opportunity to participate in rigorous and academically challenging courses and programs. All students who are willing to accept the challenge of a rigorous academic curriculum should be considered for admission to AP courses. The College Board encourages the elimination of barriers that restrict access to AP courses for students from ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in the AP Program. Schools should make every effort to ensure that their AP classes reflect the diversity of their student population.



## Get ready now to succeed in college

A number of studies show that students who take AP<sup>®</sup> courses and exams are much more likely to succeed in college. Recent research from The University of Texas at Austin<sup>1</sup> found that AP students who placed into higher-level courses in college through their AP Exam grades earned higher GPAs in those courses than students who did not earn AP credit. Another Texas study<sup>2</sup> found that AP students earned higher college GPAs and had higher four-year college graduation rates than non-AP students.

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### Did you know...

If you earn a high school diploma, you're likely to earn \$6,500 more annually than students who don't complete high school.

But if you earn a bachelor's degree in college, you're likely to earn \$19,000 more annually.

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006, PINC-03)

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## What's the difference between AP and other college-prep or honors courses?

Many schools have created valuable honors courses for their students, but AP courses are the only ones actually designed by teams of college professors who work alongside expert secondary school teachers. Plus, college faculty participate in the scoring of the AP Exam you'll take at the end of your course, comparing you to their own college students, verifying your mastery of the same level of curriculum.

<sup>1</sup> Leslie Keng and Barbara Dodd (in press).

<sup>2</sup> Linda Hargrove, Donn Godin, and Barbara Dodd (in press).





## Who designs the AP courses and exams?

The AP Program offers what no single school can—a portfolio of courses and examinations that are developed by committees of college professors and experienced AP teachers. The AP committees are composed of leaders in their fields who bring cutting-edge content knowledge and expert teaching practices to the development of AP courses, which are reviewed and revised annually. AP committee members currently teach at dozens of the nation's top colleges, universities, and secondary schools, including:

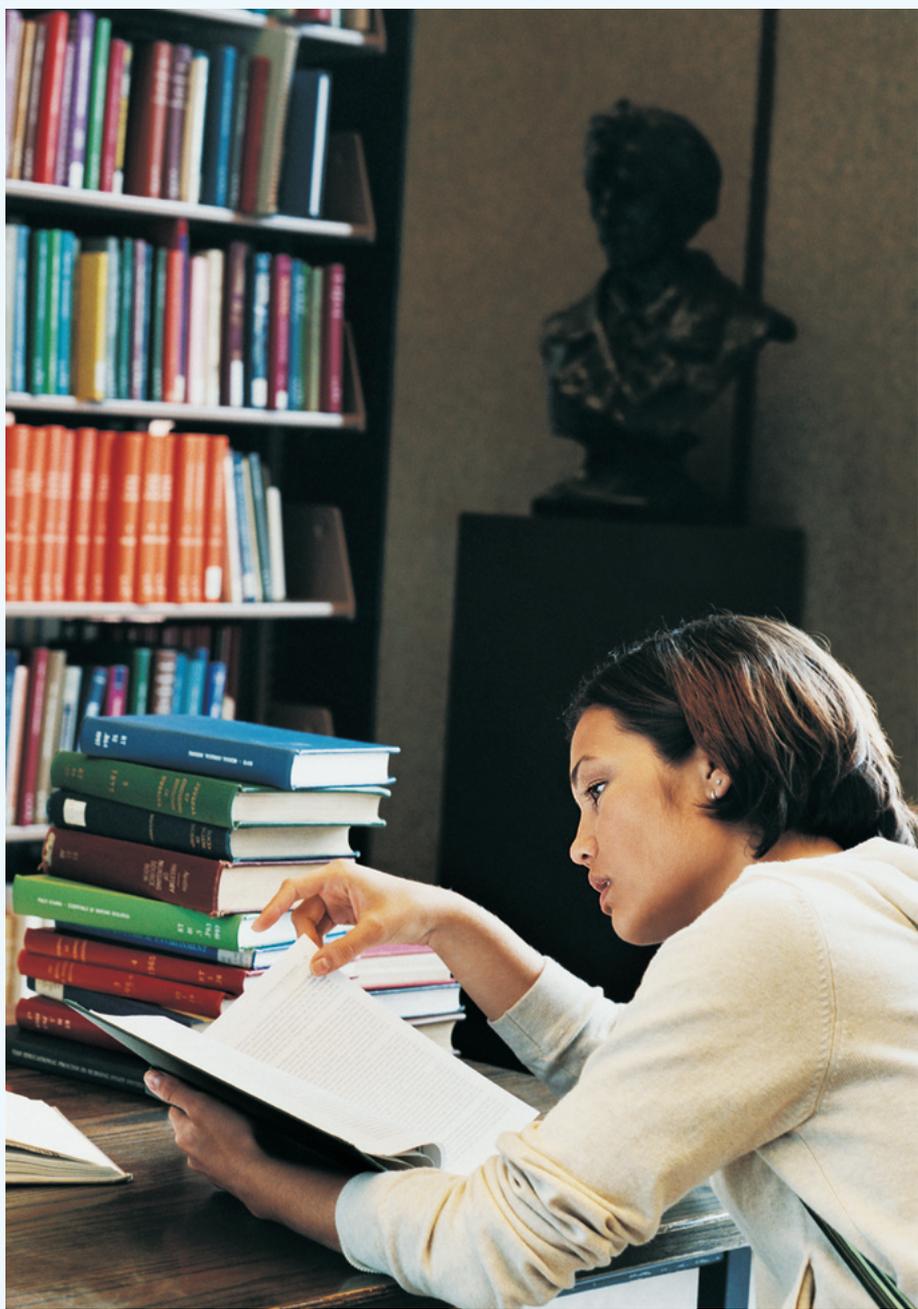
- Dartmouth College
- Princeton University
- Emory University
- University of Virginia
- Yale University
- The Spence School
- St. Louis University High School
- Phillips Exeter Academy
- Thomas Jefferson High School

Some specific examples include David Kennedy, Stanford University's Pulitzer Prize–winning historian, who chaired the AP U.S. History committee, and Harvard's prominent economist N. Gregory Mankiw, former chairman of the federal Council of Economic Advisers.

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## What's the cost of taking an AP course?

The College Board, which develops AP courses and exams, is a not-for-profit membership association dedicated to helping students make the transition to college. Students do not pay a fee to take an AP course, but do pay an end-of-course AP Exam fee, which the College Board uses to score the exams, report the students' grade results, offer teacher training, develop classroom resources, and so on. The College Board partners with states and the federal government to reduce and/or waive the exam fee for students from low-income households.





## Put Your Knowledge to the Test

You've spent the year tackling rigorous AP courses. Now it's time to put your knowledge to the test. Take the AP Exams and earn college credit or placement before you even set foot on campus.

Most of the nation's colleges and universities, and colleges and universities in more than 40 other countries, grant students credit, placement, or both for qualifying AP Exam grades.

So whether you plan to attend a public or private university, a small liberal arts college, a state school, or an international university, taking the AP Exams pays off.

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### **What's the difference between credit and placement?**

Colleges and universities determine their own policies regarding AP Exam grades:

- Some award "credit" for qualifying AP Exam grades. This means you actually earn points toward your college degree.
- Others award "advanced placement." This means you can skip introductory courses, enter higher-level classes, and/or fulfill general education requirements.

Many colleges and universities offer both credit and placement. At Princeton University, for example, students can use qualifying AP Exam grades to:

- Graduate in three or three-and-a-half years.
- Enter upper-level courses.
- Fulfill a foreign language requirement.





## Can I earn college credit or placement just by taking the AP course?

Colleges and universities only give credit or placement for qualifying AP Exam grades, not AP course grades. Without a corresponding AP Exam grade, they can't verify that the AP courses you take are true college-level courses.

*“One of the best standard predictors of academic success at Harvard is performance on Advanced Placement Examinations.”*

William R. Fitzsimmons, Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, Harvard University

*“The confirmation that college-level learning took place is in the published results. The AP Exam grade is a national standard that I can understand and rely upon.”*

Joellen L. Silberman, Dean of Enrollment, Kalamazoo College

## What can I do with college credit or placement?

### Increase your options

College credit or placement can allow you to move into upper-level courses sooner, pursue a double major or a combined B.A./M.A. program, and gain time to study and travel abroad.

*“As a freshman, I was able to skip general ed requirements and head straight into the higher-level classes I wanted to take. Taking AP Exams literally saved me semesters of time.”*

Brent Wiese, University of Iowa





## Save money

If you earn a qualifying grade on an AP Exam, you can receive credit for the equivalent course at thousands of colleges and universities. This could save you as much as \$3,000 per course.

*"I took AP throughout high school because it was the most interesting and well-taught program offered. When I reached college, I realized that I had accumulated a year's worth of credits. I graduated from Michigan's undergraduate business school a full year early, saving \$30,000 and a year's time."*

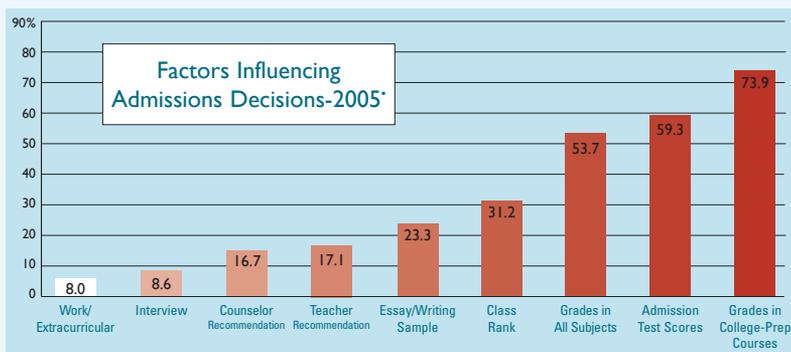
Nikki Baker, University of Michigan

## Why should I take the AP Exam if I'm not looking to earn credit or placement?

Even if earning college credit or placement isn't your goal, you can still benefit from taking the AP Exams.

## Stand out in the admissions process

Everyone wants to get into the college of their choice. Those who make it take the most challenging courses.



\*NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2005. Reprinted with permission. Copyright 2007 National Association for College Admission Counseling.



## Did you know...



### AP is a global program.

Students at schools in more than 100 countries participate in AP.

AP is increasingly recognized as a highly desirable academic credential internationally. More than 600 universities located outside the United States recognize AP for credit, placement, and/or admissions purposes. A full listing of these institutions, with their AP policies and contact information, is available at [www.collegeboard.com/apintl](http://www.collegeboard.com/apintl).

AP is widely recognized in Austria, Colombia, Canada, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Mexico, Norway, South Korea, and the United Kingdom, among other countries.

### The AP International Diploma

(**APID**) is a globally recognized certificate for students interested in international studies who display exceptional achievement on AP Exams across several disciplines. For more information, see [www.collegeboard.com/apid](http://www.collegeboard.com/apid).

AP Exams provide colleges and universities with additional information about your ability to succeed in college-level study.

*“AP Exams affirm the rigor of a student’s course work. Though admissions policies vary, if I were a student, I wouldn’t assume that the college of my dreams didn’t care about AP Exam grades in the admissions process.”*

Bruce Walker, Vice Provost and Director of Admissions, The University of Texas at Austin

## Earn academic scholarships or awards

Some of the most competitive scholarship awards consider your AP Exam grades. Many colleges also use AP Exam grades to place students into honors classes.

*“Having the AP Exam grade can make the difference when it comes down to awarding precious scholarship dollars.”*

Edwina Harris Hamby, Dean of Admission, Fisk University

## Experience a college-level test

The intensity of college exams catches far too many first-year students by surprise. Taking the AP Exams will put you a step ahead, and give you a clear understanding of what you need to succeed on a college exam.

*“Students who have prepared for and taken the AP Exams more easily adapt to taking college essay exams, and are especially skilled in including a thesis and a well-developed argument. They are also less intimidated by sophisticated, college-level multiple-choice questions that seek to test understanding over memorization.”*

Robert Blackey, Professor of History, California State University: San Bernardino



## Be a step ahead

If you decide to take the corresponding college course after taking the AP Exams, you'll have the tools to excel.

### What about courses that aren't AP?

Your school may offer excellent, rigorous courses for which there's no AP equivalent (for example: geometry or business). If the College Board has not developed an AP course in a particular subject, you should not be discouraged from taking that class. Talk with your school counselor and teacher to identify ways to help college and university admissions offices gauge the quality and rigor of your non-AP courses.

*"I received a 3 on my AP English Exam, but since I love English and hope to take all the English courses that I could possibly get my hands on, I decided to take English 111 in college. My college class is covering the same material I studied in AP English. Thanks to my experience preparing for the free-response questions, my frequent essay exams are a breeze. By taking AP, I'm a step ahead of the others in my class. I know the material and I know the process."*

Anne Elliott, First-Year Student, University of Connecticut

*"Students should take the AP Exam if for no other purpose than to know how well they mastered the material. Even if they decide not to pursue college credit, the exam grade gives them feedback on a national standard rather than just on that of the local high school."*

R. Scott Verzyl, Associate Vice President, Enrollment Services, University of Alabama at Huntsville

## How can I find out the specific value of AP Exam grades at the colleges that interest me?

For the most up-to-date information, check directly with the college or university office of admissions. Go to [www.collegeboard.com/ap/creditpolicy](http://www.collegeboard.com/ap/creditpolicy) to find out more about the credit and placement policies of individual colleges and universities—just type in the name of the institution or browse by letter of the alphabet.



Talk to your school counselor, teacher, or AP Coordinator to register for AP courses and exams.



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