

An Investigation of College Students' Perceptions of Advanced Placement[®] Courses

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RESEARCH

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Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Methods	4
Results	5
Demographic and Background Characteristics	5
High School Course-Taking and AP® Exam-Taking Histories	6
Perceptions of the Quality of AP Courses	9
Perceptions of the Benefits of AP Courses.....	14
Discussion and Conclusions.....	17
Reference	19
Tables	
Table 1. Background and Demographic Characteristics	6
Table 2. AP Courses Reported.....	8
Table 3. Reasons for Taking an AP Course but Not the Associated AP Exam.....	9
Table 4. Reasons for Scoring 1 or 2 on Any AP Exam.....	9
Table 5. Perceptions of AP Courses Compared with Other Courses	12
Table 6. Perceptions of AP Courses Compared with Dual Enrollment Courses	12

Figures

Figure 1. Number of AP courses taken	7
Figure 2. Grade levels in which AP courses were taken	7
Figure 3. Perceptions of the quality of AP courses	11
Figure 4. Perceptions of the benefits of AP courses: skills	16
Figure 5. Perceptions of the benefits of AP courses: expectations for college	16

Executive Summary

The present study investigates how current college students perceive their experiences in high school Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) courses. The goal of this research was twofold: We wanted to not only add to the existing literature on outcomes for AP students but also investigate possible benefits for students without success (i.e., a score of 3 or higher) on at least one AP Exam.

For the purposes of this research, the College Board Advanced Placement Program partnered with a large public university in the southwestern United States. In April 2012, freshmen and sophomores who had taken at least one AP course in high school were recruited via the university's email system. Participants ($n = 128$) completed an online survey that included closed- and open-ended items.

About two-thirds of participants reported taking an AP Exam for each of their AP courses. Although three-quarters of participants reported scoring a 1 or 2 on one or more exams, only a small subset ($n = 16$) did not have AP Exam success; one participant had never taken an AP Exam, and 15 participants had never scored higher than a 2 on an AP Exam.

Participants on the whole tended to report that their AP courses were of high quality, challenging, and ultimately beneficial in terms of improving specific skills (including writing, test taking, revising work based on feedback, balancing study time with competing demands, and analyzing the strengths and flaws of different points of view) and giving them the confidence to believe that they could do well in college. Participants were largely in agreement that their AP teachers were passionate about their subject areas and had high expectations for their students. The importance of students' AP teachers was also reflected in many open-ended responses: Teaching quality reportedly affected not only how much students enjoyed the experience but also how much they benefited from each of their AP courses.

Students without AP Exam success tended to report positive AP course experiences and a range of benefits attributed to their AP courses. Their responses were very similar to those of students with AP Exam success; only a few small differences were noted.

Given the small number of participants in this study, particularly when focusing on those without AP Exam success, further research is recommended with a larger sample.

Introduction

Advanced Placement Program (AP) courses include rigorous curricula on par with introductory-level college courses, and each course concludes with an optional comprehensive standardized assessment. Students taking AP Exams can earn college credit for their scores; typically, scores of 3 or higher (on a scale of 1 to 5) are sufficient to receive college credit.

The goal of this research was to add to the existing literature on outcomes for AP students. Previous research on AP students' college outcomes focused mainly on college grade point averages (GPAs) and retention. In this study, we sought to investigate the possible benefits of AP course taking from the perspectives of college freshmen and sophomores, who may have a unique viewpoint on whether their AP courses helped to prepare them for college. Additionally, we set out to explore potential benefits for students without high scores on AP Exams. High school students in the United States are taking AP courses and exams at an unprecedented rate. According to the College Board's *The 8th Annual AP Report to the Nation* (2012), the number of graduating seniors who took an AP Exam in 2011 was 903,630, compared with 431,573 in 2001. While the number of high school students scoring a 3 or higher on an AP Exam has grown substantially during this time period, so has the number of students taking AP courses but never succeeding on an exam. In 2011, 40% of graduating high school seniors who ever sat for an AP Exam never scored higher than a 2.

Methods

For the purposes of this research study, the College Board's Advanced Placement Program partnered with a large public university in the southwestern United States. In April 2012, an administrator at the university sent an email to all enrolled freshmen and sophomores between the ages of 18 and 21. We chose this age range to capture students who had recently completed high school, and who were old enough to consent to the research. A follow-up email was sent approximately one week later. These emails explained the nature of the research and requested participation from students who had taken at least one AP course in high school. The emails directed the students to an online survey. Students were not offered compensation for their participation. As recommended by the university, we closed the online survey after 10 days. The university's institutional review board reviewed and approved all study materials and processes.

Over the course of the 10 days, 148 students began the survey, and 128 completed all or most of it. These 128 students all reported taking at least one AP course in high school, and

In this study, we investigate the possible benefits of AP course taking from the perspectives of college freshmen and sophomores, who may have a unique viewpoint on whether their AP courses helped to prepare them for college.

we included them all in our subsequent analyses. Because of the nature of the university's data system, we were unable to obtain information on the total number of enrolled freshman and sophomore students who had taken one or more AP courses in high school. For this reason, we could not calculate a response rate for this survey.

Analyses included calculating means and frequencies for responses on close-ended items and generating qualitative themes from responses on open-response items. In particular, we looked for qualitative themes that added to or clarified the quantitative findings. We conducted quantitative analyses for the entire sample as well as for the subsets of students who either scored a 3 or higher on at least one AP Exam (hereafter referred to as those "with exam success") or never scored 3 or higher on an AP Exam (hereafter referred to as those "without exam success"). The number of participants responding to open-ended items did not allow us to separate qualitative data in this manner, so we generated qualitative themes from the entire set.

Below, we present the findings of these analyses by topic area. Within each section, we first discuss the findings for the total group before turning to similarities and differences between those with and without exam success. Because of the small sample size, we did not run inferential statistical analyses comparing the students with and without AP Exam success. We instead present descriptive findings and note comparative differences of potential interest. Because of the limitations of this research, we strongly caution against drawing conclusions from these comparisons regarding the experiences of AP course-takers in general.

Results

Demographic and Background Characteristics

Survey items assessed students' demographic and background characteristics including year in college, gender, race and ethnicity, whether at least one parent had graduated from college, and high school and college GPAs. Questions about the students' high schools, including whether they were public or private schools; whether they offered honors, dual enrollment, and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses; and the approximate size of the graduating class, were also included.

As shown in Table 1, freshmen and sophomores participated in the survey in approximately equal numbers, but women outnumbered men. Approximately half of participants reported their race/ethnicity as white, followed by about one-quarter who reported that they were Hispanic and about one-eighth who reported that they were African American. About two-thirds had at least one parent graduate from college. Participants tended to report high GPAs in high school and college; 60% reported a high school GPA above 3.5, and 70% reported a college GPA above 3.0.

Almost all participants reported going to a public high school. The most common size of high school graduating class was "501–750," with almost two-fifths of participants reporting this number. Almost all participants reported that their high school offered dual enrollment courses, and about three-quarters reported that their school offered honors-level courses. The prevalence of IB courses was lower, with a small number of participants reporting that their school offered courses of this type.

High School Course-Taking and AP® Exam-Taking Histories

Participants answered questions about whether they had taken AP, honors, dual enrollment, and/or IB courses. For each of their AP courses, participants were asked to indicate the course name, the grade in which they took it, and their AP Exam score. Students were given the option of selecting “I did not take the exam” instead of an exam score.

Table 1.			
Background and Demographic Characteristics			
	All Participants (n = 128)		All Participants (n = 128)
Year in College		GPA	
Freshman	51%	High School	mean = 3.65
Sophomore	49%	College	mean = 3.29
Gender		High School Type	
Female	64%	Public	97%
Male	35%	Private	3%
“I prefer not to answer”	1%	Size of Graduating Class	
Race/Ethnicity		1–100	7%
White	49%	101–250	9%
Hispanic	23%	251–500	29%
Asian	9%	501–750	38%
African American	12%	751–1000	12%
“I prefer not to answer”	4%	1,000+	6%
Multiracial	3%	High School Course Offerings	
Parent Graduated College		Dual Enrollment	93%
Yes	66%	Honors	76%
No	33%	International Baccalaureate	13%
Unsure	1%		

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

A subsequent item asked students for reasons for opting out of an AP Exam after taking the course. Another item asked students for reasons for scoring a 1 or 2 on an AP Exam. For each of these items, participants were asked to “Select all that apply,” and they were also permitted to type in open-ended responses on an “Other” option.

Participants were involved in a variety of advanced courses in high school. As shown in Figure 1, the number of AP courses taken by the participants ranged from one to 10, with five being the most common number reported. Participants tended to report taking AP courses in their senior year: A little over half of AP courses reported (56%) were taken in the 12th grade, while about a third (32%) were taken in the 11th grade (see Figure 2). The group as a whole took part in 28 different AP courses, with the most common being AP English Language (14% of reported courses), AP U.S. History (12% of reported courses), and AP English Literature (12% of reported courses). See Table 2 for the full list of reported AP courses. Participants were also involved in other advanced course work in high school: A little less than half (45%) of participants reported taking a dual enrollment course in high school, while 7 in 10 (71%)

took at least one honors course. Reports of IB course taking were less common: Only four students took at least one IB course in high school.

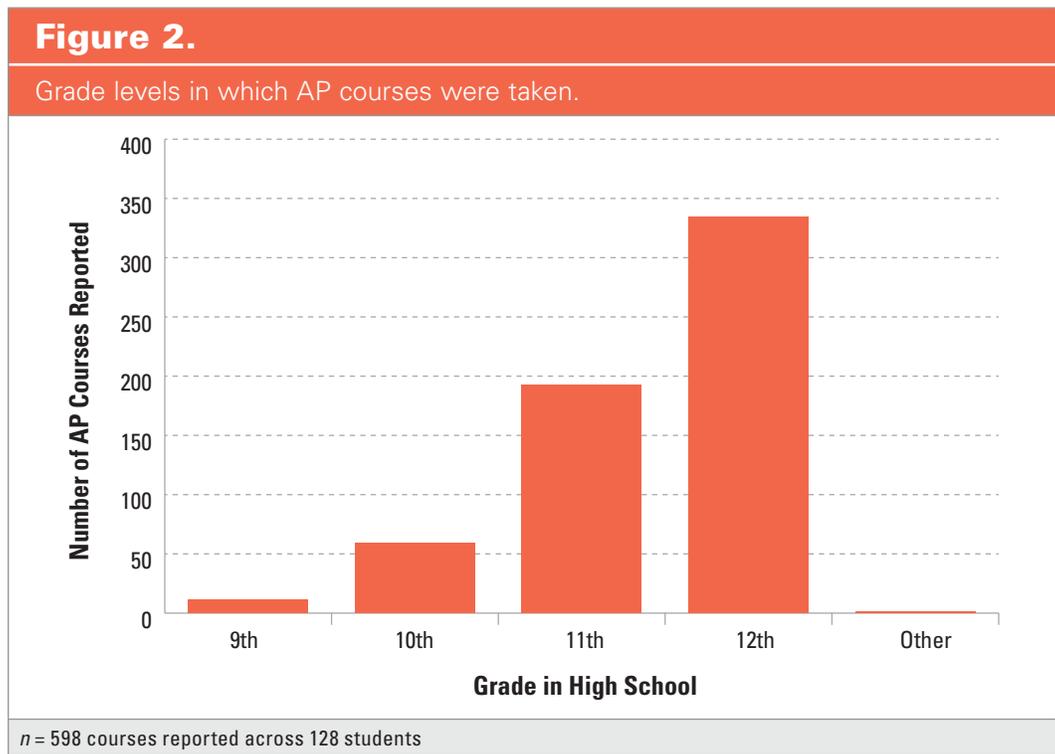
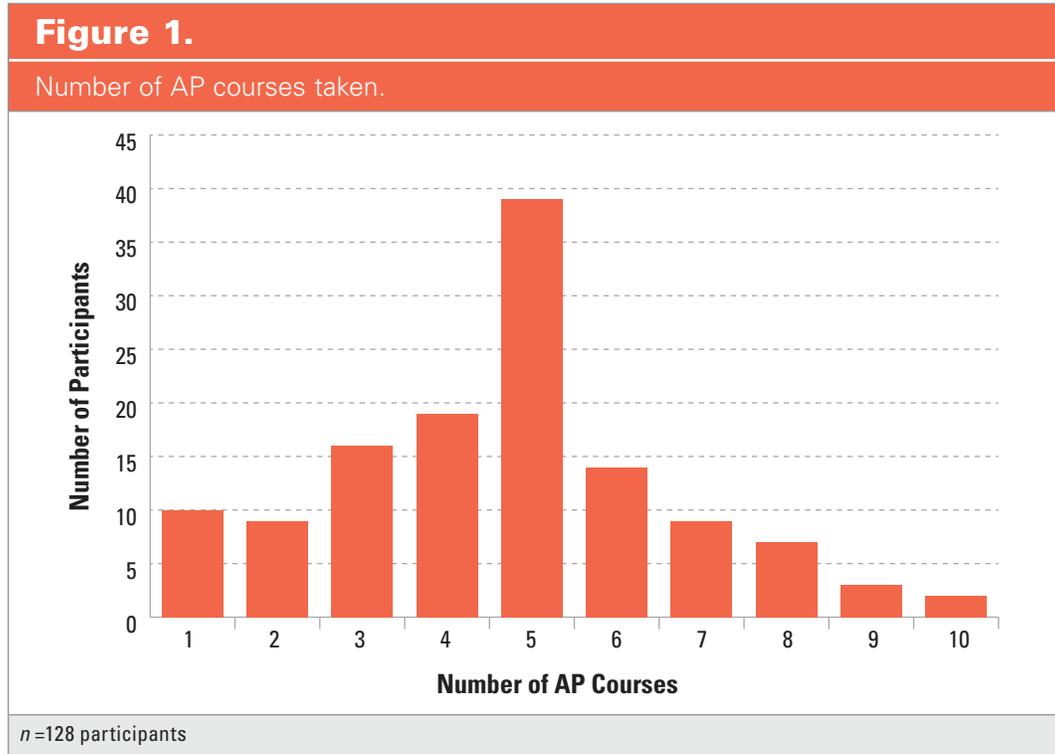


Table 2.

AP Courses Reported

Course Name	Number Reported	Course Name	Number Reported
English Language	82	Spanish Language	11
U.S. History	73	Chemistry	10
English Literature	72	European History	10
U.S. Government & Politics	50	Studio Art	10
World History	48	Music Theory	9
Calculus AB	41	Calculus BC	7
Macroeconomics	39	Computer Science A	5
Biology	22	Art History	4
Statistics	21	Physics C	4
Environmental Science	18	Latin: Vergil	3
Microeconomics	14	Spanish Literature	3
Psychology	14	German Language & Culture	2
Human Geography	12	French Language & Culture	1
Physics B	12	Comp. Government & Politics	1
<i>n</i> = 598 courses reported across 128 students			

Most participants (88%) reported scoring a 3 or higher on at least one AP Exam. One-quarter of participants reported scoring a 3 or higher on every AP Exam they took, while three-quarters of participants reported scoring a 1 or 2 on one or more exams. Only 13% of participants ($n = 16$) did not have AP Exam success; of these, one participant never took an AP Exam, while 15 participants never scored higher than a 2 on an AP Exam.

About two-thirds of participants (66%) reported taking an AP Exam for each of their AP courses, while others skipped one or more exams. As shown in Table 3, reasons for forgoing AP Exams included concerns about preparedness and cost. The most commonly selected responses were "I did not feel academically prepared for the exam" and "I did not think taking the AP Exam was worth the cost." The nine open-ended responses on this item did not produce any additional themes.

As shown in Table 4, when asked for reasons for scoring a 1 or 2 on an AP Exam, participants' responses again highlighted feelings that they were not prepared for the exam. The most common responses were "I did not study enough prior to taking the AP Exam" and "My AP course did not adequately prepare me for the AP Exam." A lack of interest and motivation were also apparent in responses on two items: "I did not enjoy the subject area" and "I was not motivated to do well on the AP Exam." Of the nine open-ended responses on this item, some alluded to personal difficulties with testing (e.g., struggling with "narrow-timed tests," "test anxiety," and "A.D.D.") and others spoke of either errors on the exam itself or in its administration (e.g., "fire drill interruptions," "inadequate" proctors, and "an error on the essay portion").

Table 3.	
Reasons for Taking an AP Course but Not the Associated AP Exam	
Course Name	Number Reported
I did not feel academically prepared for the exam.	36
I did not think taking the AP Exam was worth the cost.	14
I was sick or had a personal issue come up on the day of the exam.	5
My teacher did not recommend that I take an AP Exam.	1
Instead of taking an AP Exam, I took an SAT Subject Test.	0
Instead of taking an AP Exam, I took a CLEP® exam.	0
Other responses*	9
<i>n</i> = 49 participants Note: * indicates statements provided in the "other" open response box. Note: Participants were asked to select all that apply.	

Table 4.	
Reasons for Scoring 1 or 2 on Any AP Exam	
	Number of Participants
I did not study enough prior to taking the AP Exam.	60
My AP course did not adequately prepare me for the AP Exam.	45
I did not enjoy the subject area.	39
I was not motivated to do well on the AP Exam.	25
I did not take any practice AP Exams.	19
I was not familiar with the format of the AP Exam.	12
I was sick or distracted by an issue in my personal life on the day of the exam.	10
Other responses*	9
<i>n</i> = 97 participants Note: * indicates statements provided in the "other" open response box. Note: Students were asked to select all that apply.	

Perceptions of the Quality of AP Courses

Participants had multiple opportunities to provide feedback on the quality of their AP courses. First, the participants responded to five statements on the quality of their AP courses. Response options were "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Neither Agree nor Disagree," "Agree," and "Strongly Agree" (coded as 1 to 5, with higher numbers indicating greater agreement with the statement). Two items ("My AP teacher(s) were passionate about their subject area(s)" and "My AP teacher(s) had high expectations for my performance in class") were specific to the course teachers, while three items pertained to the challenges of each course and how hard the student worked ("I put a lot of effort into my AP course(s)," "The content of my AP course(s) was too difficult for me to understand," and "My AP course(s) were challenging").

Two additional survey items asked for further information on the quality of the students' AP courses. The first asked about the quality of AP courses in comparison to other courses the student took in high school, and the second item asked about the quality of AP courses in comparison to dual enrollment courses specifically. For both items, participants were asked to indicate whether the quality of their AP courses was "much lower," "somewhat lower," "about the same," "somewhat higher," or "much higher" than that of the comparison courses. The two items also asked participants to explain their responses in an open-ended format. For the second item, participants were given response options to indicate that they did not take dual enrollment courses in high school or that their AP and dual enrollment courses were cross-listed or combined.

Finally, the last two survey items were open-ended and asked participants for more general responses on their AP experiences. For the first question ("If you took more than one AP course, think about how your experiences in one AP course compared with another. Please

share any of these differences"), 68 participants who had taken more than one AP course responded. In the second question ("Please add any additional comments regarding your AP experience here"), 38 participants responded. In responses to these two items, we found additional information on AP course quality.

As shown in Figure 3, participants tended to report both that their AP courses were "challenging" (with 79% agreeing or strongly agreeing) and that they put "a lot of effort" into them (with 76% agreeing or strongly agreeing).¹ A small percentage of participants (7%) agreed or strongly agreed that the content of the courses was too difficult for them to understand. Participants were in even greater agreement regarding their AP teachers: 83% agreed or strongly agreed that their AP teachers were passionate about the subject areas, and 86% agreed or strongly agreed that their AP teachers had high expectations for their performance in class.

Almost all participants (93%) reported that their AP courses were of "somewhat higher quality" or "much higher quality" than their other high school courses (see Table 5). The 53 open-ended responses to this item produced the following themes:

- AP classes tended to have a greater depth of content. Responses included:
 - ◇ "My AP courses went at a faster pace and we were able to cover more content, and went into greater depth so that we could better understand the curriculum"; and
 - ◇ "My other courses seemed to be filled with busy work that I did not find helpful, but my AP classes had work and lectures that were meaningful to me."

1. Because some of our figures only present the mean response of each item, in the text we occasionally present the percentage agreeing and strongly agreeing as additional information.

Almost all participants (93%) reported that their AP courses were of "somewhat higher quality" or "much higher quality" than their other high school courses.

- AP teachers tended to have higher expectations of their students. Responses included:
 - ◊ “The other courses expected the least of students while AP courses expected the most out of the students.”
- AP classes tended to have more motivated students who contributed to a positive learning environment. Responses included:
 - ◊ “My AP courses had a better quality because only students who were serious about that subject were in it, therefore it became a much higher learning environment versus classes with people who didn’t care/didn’t want to be there, bringing you down.”

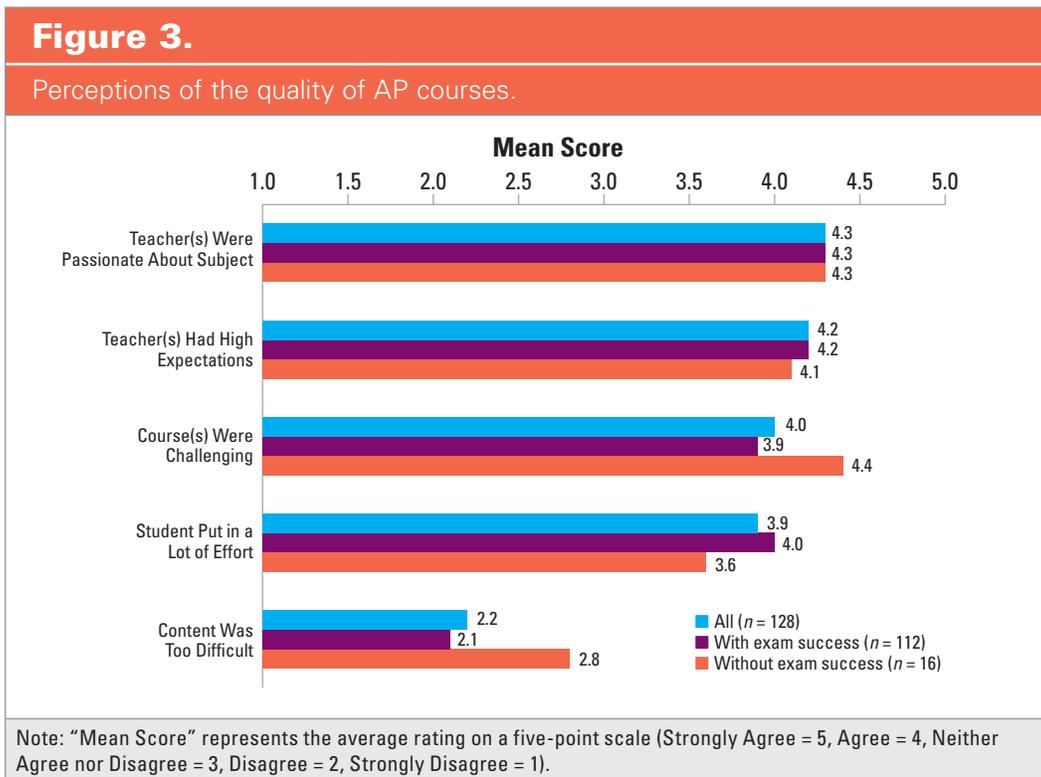


Table 5.			
Perceptions of AP Courses Compared with Other Courses			
	All Participants (<i>n</i> = 128)	Participants with Exam Success (<i>n</i> = 112)	Participants Without Exam Success (<i>n</i> = 16)
	%	%	%
AP courses were of much lower quality	2	2	0
AP courses were of somewhat lower quality	0	0	0
AP courses were of the same quality	5	4	19
AP courses were of somewhat higher quality	35	34	44
AP courses were of much higher quality	58	61	38

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Among those students who completed dual or concurrent enrollment courses that were not cross-listed as AP courses, almost half (46%) reported that their AP courses were of “somewhat” or “much” higher quality than the dual enrollment courses, and a little over one-third reported that they were of the same quality (see Table 6). In 21 open-ended responses to this item, participants noted similarities and differences between AP and dual enrollment courses, but they appeared to be somewhat idiosyncratic. Consequently, no meaningful themes emerged.

Table 6.	
Perceptions of AP Courses Compared with Dual Enrollment Courses	
	Percentage of Participants
AP courses were of much lower quality	7
AP courses were of somewhat lower quality	9
AP courses were of the same quality	37
AP courses were of somewhat higher quality	33
AP courses were of much higher quality	13

n = 54 participants who reported taking dual enrollment courses that were not cross-listed as AP courses. (Five participants reported that their dual enrollment courses were cross-listed with AP.)
 Note: Responses are not shown by AP Exam success because of small cell sizes.
 Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

The comments on differences across AP courses and additional comments on the final survey item produced the following themes:

- Although a few students left comments that suggested they did not value the AP experience, students in general had positive AP experiences. Comments included:
 - ◊ “I think that AP classes are the best thing I did in high school!”; and
 - ◊ “AP classes were much more interesting and challenging than regular classes. I would strongly encourage students who do exceptionally well in a subject to take an AP course in that subject.”

- The quality of teaching varied across students' courses and greatly affected their experiences in those courses. Comments on teachers and teaching quality were by far the most common for the survey item on differences across AP courses. Comments included:
 - ◇ "Some teachers did not care about the subject and therefore the class was easy and uninformative. Other teachers were very passionate about their subjects, and I learned a lot from them"; and
 - ◇ "Some courses were taught by very passionate teachers who embraced the material, taught us well, expected more out of their AP classes than their regular classes, and did a lot to prepare us for college. But I was in a few, such as my World History and Physics courses, where the teachers were more focused on their football team than their students. They gave us AP-level work without AP-level teaching, and that made the class agonizing rather than simply challenging."
- Students' experiences varied based on how challenging the course content was for them. Comments included:
 - ◇ "I felt a lot more comfortable in my English and social studies courses, but AP Biology was a lot more difficult for me"; and
 - ◇ "Certain classes, such as Spanish Language and Macroeconomics, were harder than ones like U.S. Government and U.S. History because the subject matter was more difficult, not because the teacher or something else along that line was hard."
- Students' experiences varied based on their interest in the course subject. Comments included:
 - ◇ "In AP Microeconomics, I wasn't as interested in the subject at the time, so I was always a little behind"; and
 - ◇ "It is hard to compare the two because history and music theory are so different. Music is a passion of mine, so naturally, I enjoyed that course a lot more."

Comparisons of those with and without AP Exam success. In our quantitative analyses, when comparing perceptions of the quality of AP courses between students with and without exam success, we noted that, on the whole, responses were very similar. In other words, those without exam success tended to report positive AP course experiences. Although we did not note any substantial differences in responses between the participants with and without AP Exam success, a few items showed small differences: Participants without exam success had higher mean ratings for the statements that their AP courses were "challenging" and that the course content was "too difficult" to understand (by 0.5 points and 0.7 points, respectively, on a five-point scale; see Figure 3) than those with exam success. Additionally, those without exam success were less likely than those with exam success to report that their AP courses were of "somewhat" or "much" higher quality than their other high school courses (82% versus 95%; see Table 5).

Perceptions of the Benefits of AP Courses

On a five-point scale, participants responded to 14 statements on the benefits of their AP courses. The response options were “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree” (coded as 1 to 5, with higher numbers indicating greater agreement with the statement).

Ten of the 14 items assessed the extent to which students perceived that their AP courses had helped them develop particular skills that would presumably aid them in college:

- “My AP course(s) helped me to improve my writing skills.”
- “My AP course(s) taught me test-taking skills.”
- “My AP course(s) taught me how to take better class notes.”
- “My AP course(s) taught me to identify valid sources of information for research projects.”
- “My AP course(s) taught me to analyze the strengths and flaws of competing points of view.”
- “My AP course(s) taught me to revise my work based on feedback.”
- “My AP course(s) helped me develop creative ways of addressing challenges.”
- “My AP course(s) taught me how to balance study time with competing demands, such as work and socializing.”
- “My AP course(s) taught me the value of persistence when presented with a challenge.”
- “My AP course(s) taught me how to work on a project as part of a group.”

... College students' perceptions of the benefits of AP course taking tended to be very positive.

Four of the 14 items addressed the extent to which AP course taking influenced students' college intentions and expectations:

- “My AP course(s) gave me confidence that I could do well in college.”
- “My AP course(s) gave me ideas for college majors I might enjoy.”
- “My AP course(s) positively influenced my desire to go to college.”
- “My AP course(s) showed me what to expect in college.”

Additionally, the final survey item, for which students were asked to leave additional comments on their AP experience, generated some responses on the benefits of AP course taking.

As shown in Figures 4 and 5, participants' perceptions of the benefits of AP course taking tended to be very positive. In terms of specific skills gained by taking AP courses, participants most often agreed or strongly agreed with the statements regarding test-taking skills (70%),

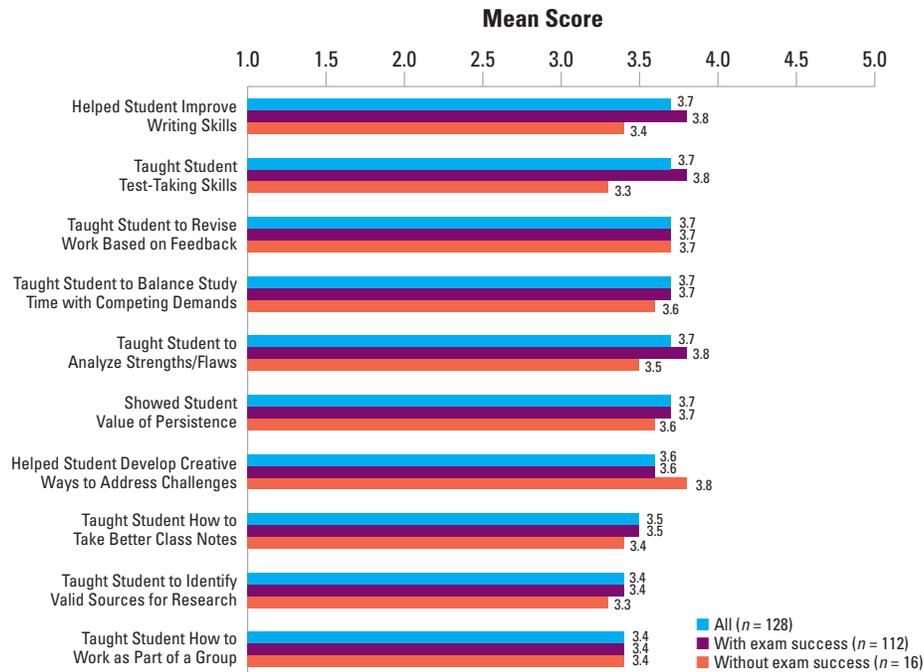
writing skills (67%), persisting when presented with a challenge (67%), balancing study time with competing demands (67%), and analyzing the strengths and flaws of competing points of view (67%). Less popular items included working on a project as part of a group and identifying valid sources of information for research (with 52% and 56%, respectively, of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing). In regard to expectations for college, participants most often agreed or strongly agreed (69%) with the statement regarding gaining confidence that they could do well in college. Participants least often agreed or strongly agreed (48%) with the statement that their AP courses gave them ideas for college majors they might enjoy.

Additional comments produced the following themes:

- Students greatly appreciated the opportunity to earn college credit through AP Exams, and some wished they had taken more AP courses for this reason. Comments on earning or not earning college credit through AP were the most common for the final survey item. Comments included:
 - ◊ “I came into college with 29 AP credits — almost an entire year! I’m graduating a year early because of my AP credit. It was well worth it”; and
 - ◊ “I wish I took more AP classes that applied toward my prerequisites. Teachers should stress the importance of seeing what your college choices will take for a college credit with regard to AP classes.”
- Reiterating findings for other survey items, participants tended to believe their AP courses prepared them for college-level work. Responses included:
 - ◊ “My AP experience was a success even if I did not pass the AP Exams. It provided me with knowledge of what to expect in college and better prepared me for college”; and
 - ◊ “My AP experience was great because it allowed me to take challenging courses in high school that helped prepare me for college and get some college credit at the same time.”

Figure 4.

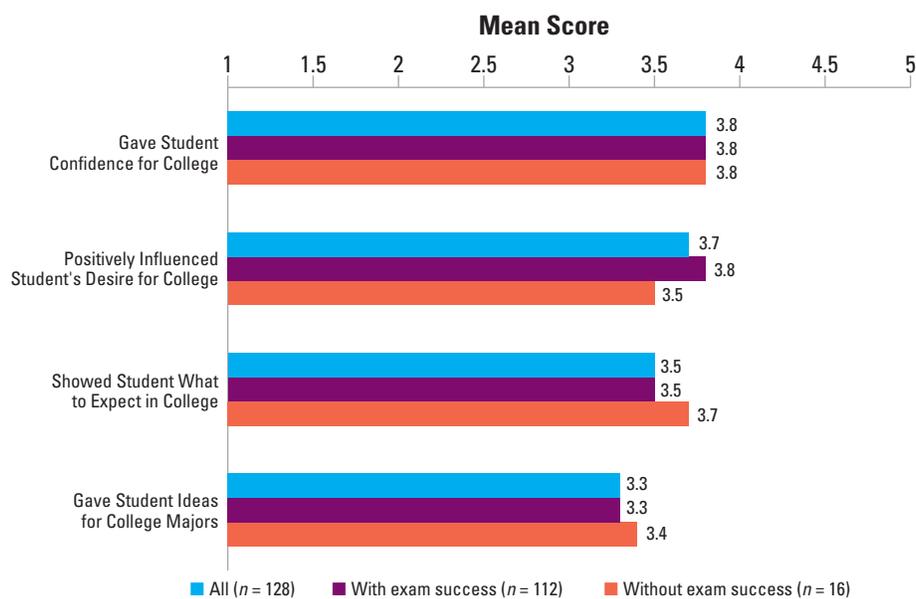
Perceptions of the benefits of AP courses: skills.



Note: "Mean Score" represents the average rating on a five-point scale (Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neither Agree nor Disagree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1)

Figure 5.

Perceptions of the benefits of AP courses: expectations for college.



Note: "Mean Score" represents the average rating on a five-point scale (Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neither Agree nor Disagree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1)

Comparisons of those with and without exam success. Similar to the results on perceived quality of AP courses, the responses from participants with and without AP Exam success did not differ substantially: Students in both groups tended to report a range of benefits from their AP course-taking experiences. In other words, those without exam success also reported benefiting from their AP courses in multiple ways. We noted only one small difference between participants with and without AP Exam success: The mean score for the item addressing test-taking skills was lower (by 0.5 points on a five-point scale) for the students without AP Exam success.

Discussion and Conclusions

This research investigated college students' perceptions of the quality and benefits of their high school AP courses. Through the College Board's partnership with a large university, we were able to obtain survey responses from 128 college freshmen and sophomores who had taken at least one AP course in high school.

Overall, the survey responses of these 128 students were positive. Responses suggested that the participants' AP course experiences were challenging, of high quality, and ultimately beneficial. Open-ended responses indicated that in comparison to participants' other high school courses, AP courses tended to have a greater depth of content and motivated classmates who contributed to a positive learning environment. Additionally, the importance of their AP teachers was reflected in responses to several items. Although in general the participants believed that their AP teachers were passionate about their subject areas and had high expectations for students, their comments also noted variations in AP teacher quality. Teacher quality reportedly affected not only how much students enjoyed the experience but also how much they benefited from each of their AP courses. The participants tended to report that the courses benefited them in a number of areas, including writing, test taking, revising work based on feedback, balancing study time with competing demands, and analyzing the strengths and flaws of different points of view. The participants also tended to agree that their AP courses gave them confidence that they could do well in college. Additionally, many commented on the value of earning college credit through AP Exams.

On the whole, the responses of students with and without AP Exam success were very similar, with those without exam success tending to report positive AP course experiences and a range of benefits attributed to their AP courses. Although we did not note any substantial differences between the participants with and without AP Exam success, a few items showed small differences. First, participants without AP Exam success were more likely to report that their AP courses were "challenging" and that the course content was "too difficult" to understand. These results appeared to align with participants' reported reasons for forgoing an AP Exam or scoring a 1 or 2 on an exam; for both of these questions, participants most commonly cited concerns that they were not well prepared for the exam. Second, those without exam success were less likely to report that their AP courses were of "somewhat" or

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“much” higher quality than their other high school courses; this finding seems to suggest that those without exam success were either taking lower quality AP courses or perceived their courses to be of lower quality because in the end they did not succeed on their AP Exams. Finally, the students without exam success were less likely to report that their AP courses had taught them test-taking skills. Again, this finding would suggest that these students either did not learn test-taking skills in their AP courses or perceived that they did not, given their lack of exam success.

The present study went beyond previous research on outcomes for AP students — which largely focuses on college GPA and retention — to ask college freshmen and sophomores about specific benefits gained in AP courses. However, in addition to providing a general picture of the perceptions of college students who had taken AP courses in high school, we set out with the intention of focusing a set of analyses on students who never succeeded on any AP Exam. Unfortunately, in our sample of 128 respondents, only 16 fit this definition, which significantly limited our ability to make inferences about this population. Given the small number of participants in this study, particularly when focusing on those without AP Exam success, we strongly caution against drawing conclusions from these comparisons and we recommend that this research be replicated with a larger sample. While the findings are positive and suggest that college students — both with and without AP Exam success — see benefits in AP course taking, research with a larger sample would lead to a stronger basis for interpretation.

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Reference

College Board. (2012). *The 8th annual AP report to the nation*. Retrieved January 23, 2013, from http://apreport.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/downloads/pdfs/AP_Main_Report_Final.pdf

The Research department actively supports the College Board's mission by:

- Providing data-based solutions to important educational problems and questions
- Applying scientific procedures and research to inform our work
- Designing and evaluating improvements to current assessments and developing new assessments as well as educational tools to ensure the highest technical standards
- Analyzing and resolving critical issues for all programs, including AP[®], SAT[®], PSAT/NMSQT[®]
- Publishing findings and presenting our work at key scientific and education conferences
- Generating new knowledge and forward-thinking ideas with a highly trained and credentialed staff

Our work focuses on the following areas

Admission	Measurement
Alignment	Research
Evaluation	Trends
Fairness	Validity

