

AP[®] and the Cost of College

Recent research is available on the cost of college and how a student's participation in AP[®] 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.¹

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.²



Students attending private institutions who take longer than four years to graduate might expect to incur \$26,197² for each additional year it takes to earn a bachelor's degree.

"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.³

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

"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



¹ 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[®] 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).

² 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.

³ Unpublished institutional research, Crux Research, Inc. March 2007.

⁴ 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.