

# The Value of AP in Retention

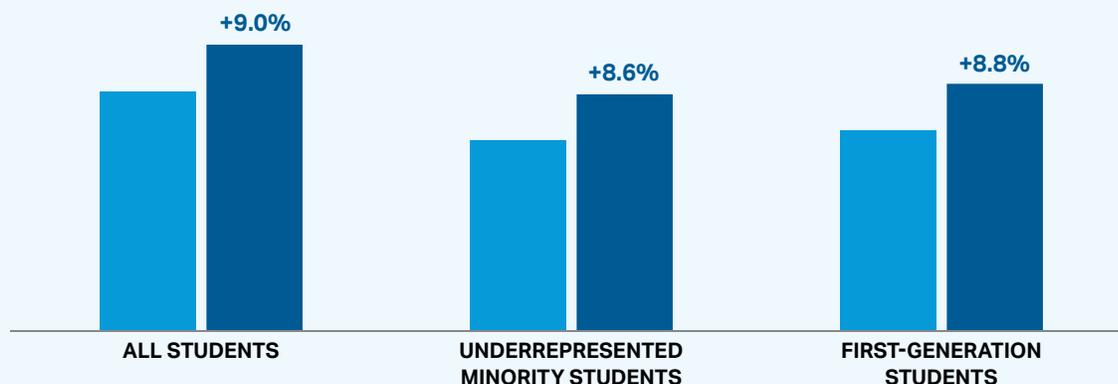
Incorporating AP<sup>®</sup> into your retention models and other success initiatives that support students through graduation can have strong, positive impacts on institutional strategies and goals.

## Key Finding

AP Exam takers have higher four-year graduation rates than non-AP Exam takers—regardless of AP Exam score earned.

### Four-Year Graduation Rates of Non-AP Students and AP Students

■ Non-AP Students ■ AP Students



Based on Mattern, K. D., J. Marini, and E. Shaw, (2013) *Are AP Students More Likely to Graduate from College on Time?* (Research Report No. 2013-5, 12 [Model 5]). New York: College Board, 2013. Probabilities are calculated for an average student.

## Supporting Research

- Students who take an AP Exam have higher predicted retention to the second year of college, compared to non-AP students of similar ability.<sup>1</sup>
- Low-income AP students who take an AP Exam have higher rates of retention to the second year of college, compared to non-AP students of similar ability and background.<sup>2</sup>
- Students who earn credit from their AP Exam scores are more likely to graduate from college in 4 years than those who don't earn credit from their scores.<sup>3</sup>
- Students who take an AP Exam are more likely to graduate from college in 5 years or less, compared to non-AP students of similar ability.<sup>4</sup>

1. Mattern, K., Shaw, E., and Xiong, X. (2009). *The Relationship between AP Exam Performance and College Outcomes*. New York: College Board.  
 2. Wyatt, J. and Mattern, K. (2011). *Low-SES Students and College Outcomes: the role of AP<sup>®</sup> fee reductions*. New York: College Board.  
 3. Smith, J., Hurwitz, M., and Avery, Ch. (2015). *Giving College Credit Where it is Due: Advanced Placement Exam Scores and College Outcomes*. Chicago: Journal of Labor Economics.  
 4. Ackerman, P., Kanfer, R., and Calderwood, C. (2013). *High School Advanced Placement and Student Performance in College: STEM Majors, Non-STEM Majors, and Gender Differences*. New York: Teachers College Record. And, Dougherty, C., Mellor, L., and Jian, S. (2006). *The Relationship between Advanced Placement and College Graduation*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educational Accountability.

## Understanding the Relationship Between AP and Retention Outcomes on Your Campus

The research on the previous page demonstrates that there tends to be a strong correlation between participation in AP and year-to-year retention, as well as on-time graduation.

In order to facilitate a facts-based conversation about AP policy on your campus, it's important to fully understand the implications of AP participation and performance among your unique student body as it relates to key outcomes, including retention and graduation rates.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

The following related questions can help you further consider how AP can help your retention efforts:

- Are your completion rates where you need them to be?
- Is AP participation included in your predictive modeling in order to reduce the number of students who are retention risks?
- Has your institution studied the validity of AP on your campus in measuring retention and graduation?
- Do your faculty understand the potential value of AP in reaching key institutional goals around retention and graduation?
- Have you researched a correlation between the number of AP courses/exams taken by students and the impact on retention and completion rates?

### ACTION ITEMS

It's important to understand the relationship between AP participation and enrollment outcomes like retention and graduation. This will enable an evidence-based conversation about the value of AP on your campus.

- Conduct local research on retention and graduation outcomes for AP Exam takers who score 3+ versus non-AP students.
- National research has shown that AP students at any score band—even scores of 1 or 2—are more likely to retain at a university than their non-AP peers. Consider studying the retention and graduation outcomes of all AP students who sent scores to your institution, even if those scores weren't recognized for credit.

## YOUR AP CREDIT POLICY IS IMPORTANT

Research shows that students who earn a 3 or higher on AP Exams perform as well or better than non-AP students of similar ability. You can support student engagement and success at your institution by offering fair AP credit policies that fulfill graduation requirements and place students into courses that will challenge and excite them. Such policies can give your students the flexibility to double major, minor, study abroad, or explore several paths without putting on-time degree attainment at risk. Given research showing the recognition of AP scores factor into students' college choices, these policies can improve your institution's position in a competitive landscape.

### SPOTLIGHT ON ACES

Admitted Class Evaluation Service™ (ACES™) is a free online service from College Board for colleges and universities. It helps you answer important questions about College Board assessments you use to admit, place, and advise students at your institution. ACES provides expert analysis of data you supply so you can validate your admissions and placement policies—or help you refine them. It can also shed light on how your AP credit policy is impacting your progress toward meeting key institutional goals. Visit [aces.collegeboard.org](https://aces.collegeboard.org) to learn more.

### WE'RE HERE TO HELP

College Board is available to assist you in developing a stronger pipeline of prospective students by leveraging the AP Program. Our Higher Ed Services team and AP Higher Ed team can help you take advantage of resources offered by College Board as you plan for successful recruitment and can also provide support as you talk to campus stakeholders about the value of AP in reaching key enrollment goals.

Visit [aphighered.collegeboard.org](https://aphighered.collegeboard.org) for more information.