

# College Board Advanced Placement at the University of Georgia

## REPORT

The *Report of the Task Force on General Education and Student Learning* recommended that the Vice President for Instruction examine the role of Advanced Placement exams on campus, particularly as their use related to academic rigor. To this end, Vice President Del Dunn appointed an ad-hoc committee to examine the University's use of AP exams and to report its findings to the larger University community. The report of the committee follows.

### Executive Summary

The Ad Hoc Committee on College Board Advanced Placement is pleased to report that the AP system works well at the University of Georgia in many regards:

A review of our peer and aspirational schools indicates that UGA's Advanced Placement policy is typical of large public universities.

AP courses, generally more rigorous and better taught than other high school courses, provide excellent education to high school students eager to succeed in college.

Credit for AP courses enables students to graduate from their college or university in four years and to take advantage of multiple educational opportunities, such as doing a double major, engaging in supervised research, learning well a foreign language or two, studying abroad, earning a bachelor's and master's degree in four years' time, attending concerts and lectures, and participating in extracurricular activities.

Students exempting courses or earning credit for courses on the basis of their AP scores statistically do as well as or better than their peers in sequenced courses (e.g., English composition, mathematics).

The scores for the nationally-normed AP Exams, which are graded by college or university faculty from across the country, have exhibited no grade inflation over time.

The AP system benefits the University of Georgia in many ways.

The University's granting of AP exemptions and credits enables our institution to attract the state's best students and to keep them for four years.

The University's granting of AP exemptions and credits also enables our institution to put resources into junior- and senior-level courses that we would otherwise have to put into elementary courses.

Accordingly, the Committee sees no need to make changes in the AP College Board Placement system at the University of Georgia at this time.

### **In-depth Report**

Over a million students take Advanced Placement exams each year in one or more of 19 subject areas which are graded by college faculty from throughout the United States. The AP scores do not show grade inflation. The AP courses are taught in high school by teachers who have been trained at an AP Institute and whose syllabus has been approved by the College Board for AP designation.

The state of Georgia subsidizes the AP exams for public school students and consequently has a very high AP participation rate. In 2005 over 31,000 Georgia students took almost 50,000 AP exams.

At the University of Georgia, the College Board AP program accounts for 12,300 of the exams and 14,400 of the exemptions (a high score may result in exemption of two courses, hence the greater number of exemptions than exams). College Board AP uses a scoring range of 2-5, with a 3 considered a C level grade. Individual departments at UGA determine what score will result in course exemption or credit. The chart showing the credit and needed score for the particular courses is currently available on the Honors web site.

The University of Georgia uses four types of exams for college placement with and without credit. In 2005, UGA received almost 25,000 test scores from newly enrolling freshmen, resulting in over 18,600 exemptions, 69 percent of them with credit. Tests from the SAT II (subject tests) accounted for 4800 of the tests and almost 1000 of the placements, with and without credit. Tests from UGA Departmental Exams accounted for 11,000 of the exams and 5500 of the placements, with and without credit. Tests from the CLEP and International Baccalaureate programs produced additional placements, with and without credit.

Many new first-year students at UGA have also joint-enrolled in college classes while in high school (which are offered in some cases on the college campus and in other cases in the high school), and some students have taken college-level work in the summer prior to their enrolling at UGA. In fact, some students enroll with enough placement credits or transfer credits to be classified as sophomores and a few as juniors.

The awarding of placement with credit allows students to change majors, develop dual majors and minors, take some classes for pleasure, attend lectures and concerts, participate in edifying extracurricular activities, and graduate in four years. The Admissions Office finds that the AP program as it currently works at UGA has become an effective recruitment tool for academically superior students.

The current retention rate of first-year students at the University of Georgia exceeds 94 percent, a strong indication of the student's ability to complete course work, and is substantially above the national average of 75 percent for large, public institutions.

A review of our peer and aspirational schools indicates that UGA's Advanced Placement policy is typical of large public schools.

There are large economic issues that must be considered in any proposal to change the current AP system at UGA. For example, three years ago the English Department briefly proposed to change the minimum AP exam score from 3 to 4 for exemption of ENGL 1101 with credit. The review prompted by this request found that if the English Department did not continue to give course credit for students scoring 3 on the AP exam, the department would incur significant financial costs in providing the many additional sections that would be needed for ENGL 1101, and to cover those costs the Department would have to divert resources from its major courses and graduate courses to the entry-level courses. The same situation would occur in mathematics and other disciplines where good students have traditionally exempted entry-level courses.

The Ad Hoc Committee on College Board Advanced Placement concludes that the AP system is functioning well at the University and that no changes need to be contemplated at this time.

*Committee Members*

Betty Jean Craige, University Professor of Comparative Literature,  
and Director, Willson Center for Arts and Humanities

Delmer D. Dunn, Regents Professor, School of Public and International Affairs,  
and Vice President for Instruction

Noel Fallows, Professor and Head, Department of Romance Languages, and  
Member, University Curriculum Committee

Nancy McDuff, Associate Vice President for Admissions and Enrollment Management,  
and Director, Office of Undergraduate Admissions

William Vencill, Professor, Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, and  
Chair, University Curriculum Committee

David Williams, Professor, Department of Religion, and Director,  
University Honors Program

7/11/06