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### AP Program: The Perfect Plan

As universities set higher standards for high school students each year, scholars wonder what they should do in high school to make them the perfect student universities want. While most high school pupils take part in normal high school classes, their peers participate in the Advancement Placement program, otherwise known as an AP course. The program, introduced in the 1950s, helps students earn college credit while in high school. AP courses, a helpful path to partake or just another major mistake?

Motivation and preparation serve as a key to college acceptance. More motivated and prepared students receive acceptance from universities than unmotivated, unprepared students. Cole Wicker, a Duke University representative, agrees with Kristin Klopfenstein, a professor at Texas Christian University, and Kathleen M. Thomas', a professor at Mississippi State University, research that when viewing admissions, the officers want to know what the pupils did in high school to show their readiness for university. Sandy Dang, a Kennesaw State University freshman, participated in five clubs and eight AP courses in her high school career. Dang received acceptance to several universities such as Kennesaw State University, Auburn University, and Alabama University. Showing that participation in clubs and difficult classes play a factor in university acceptance, Dang reinforces Klopfenstein and Thomas' research. Unlike the fellow AP-course-taking, debate-team-leading student. Pupils who slack off in high school typically do not receive acceptance into their dream university.

**AP courses show high motivation and prepare students.** The college level courses allow scholars to express their desire to earn A's and B's in high school and in college. Regan Clark Foust, Holly Davis-Hertberg, and Carolyn M. Callahan interviewed AP students regarding their experience with the program. When asked what the scholars liked about the rigorous classes, one pupil from Parks High School answered, "I like AP English because I like being with advanced students.... The people that take AP English are like-minded people.... everybody else in the class is trying hard to get good grades." Not only do the strict courses show students' desire to academically achieve, they show that students want to conquer academic challenges head-on. Klopfenstein and Thomas agree with Foust *et al* that "the most highly motivated and academically successful high school students are drawn to these challenging [AP] courses." In addition, Klopfenstein, Thomas, and Wicker agree with Russel T. Warne *et al*, authors and professors, that esteemed universities such as Duke only grant college credit to scholars earning threes, fours, and fives on the AP exam. Understanding the strict standards, AP students work harder than a typical high school teenager to earn credit.

**AP courses serve as a key to college acceptance.** Not only do AP courses prepare and motivate students, courses such as AP Calculus and AP English can help students score high on the ACT and SAT. Because AP scholars already understand the college material, they typically score higher than their non-rigor peers on the college entry exams (Warne *et al*). The College Board, an organization that connects pupils to colleges, along with Klopfenstein, and Thomas agree with Warne *et al*'s research that AP students will more likely attend four-year colleges and earn higher GPAs, compared to non-AP students. Advanced Placement participants gain the motivation and preparation skills necessary for college-level courses which will benefit them when applying for college.

When asked how the rigorous courses helped Dang in college, she answered, “College is overall easy....Having AP classes helped me... get used to... college-level work.” In addition to Dang’s comment, Nhilynn Nguyen a North Cobb graduate, now a junior at the University of Georgia, believes that the courses in high school help scholars “get accustomed to the way most colleges are structured,” and the program “prepares [students] on what to expect from a college course.” Nguyen and Dang both mentioned that they believe their participation in high school events made them stand out to the admissions officers. Wicker agrees that Dang’s and Nguyen’s participation and GPA played a key role in their acceptance. By passing their classes and joining various clubs during their four years at North Cobb High School, Dang and Nguyen appealed to universities since universities value dedication and hard work.

Because scholars know that colleges focus on ambition and GPA, according to “More Students Than Ever are Participating and Succeeding in Advanced Placement,” students taking AP classes nearly tripled within the past ten years. In the year 2017, 1.17 million students participated in AP courses, passed the exams, and earned college credit; whereas, in 2007, only 423,067 high school students participated and passed the AP courses and exams. The program’s growth indicates its important value, and it shows more pupils paying attention to his/her academic success. While endorsing “More Students Than Ever are Participating and Succeeding in Advanced Placement,” research “AP and College,” also found that eighty-five percent of universities address that AP courses impact the decision of acceptance. With more pupils challenging themselves than ever before, it shows this generation’s desire to achieve in school.

Despite the evidence that ambitious scholars receive more college acceptances than careless high school students, an interview conducted by Brooke Donald asks Denise Pope, a lecturer at Stanford University, whether AP plays a critical role in college. Pope explains that AP classes’ quality and rigor depends on the school and its population. Pope states that colleges do not always accept

or look at the credit. While Pope presents an interesting and a well-thought-out claim, a majority of colleges emphasize if a student wants to challenge himself/herself. While endorsing Klopfenstein and Thomas' commentary, "AP and College" adds, "AP courses on...transcript[s] show colleges that [students] are intellectually curious, unafraid of [challenging] work, and capable of learning the knowledge and skills expected of college students." With college classes next to the pupil's name on a transcript, admissions officers recognize that the student understands college and how college classes function.

Similar to a miner's desire for gold, universities want the most excellent scholar to represent their school. With the drive and skills learned from the college-level course, the typical high school AP students appeal more to college admissions officers than their non-AP peers. Scholars who partake in different rigorous courses and exciting clubs, not only receive acceptance to their first-choice college, but they will more likely earn a bachelor's degree and become more successful than their sluggish peers.

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