

AP® Report to the Nation: Participant Biographies

Gaston Caperton

President
The College Board

Gaston Caperton is the eighth president of the College Board, a not-for-profit membership association founded in 1900 that consists of 5,400 of the nation's leading schools, colleges and universities. Among the organization's best-known programs are the Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) and the SAT®. A former two-term governor of West Virginia, Caperton was appointed to his current position in 1999.

Responsible for the overall direction of the College Board, Caperton has worked to make it a mission-driven, values-oriented organization, initiating ways to connect more students to academic success and opportunity while simultaneously raising educational standards. In an effort to encourage equity within programs fostering academic excellence, he has more than doubled the size of the College Board's staff and modernized its management structure. Caperton also established collegeboard.com, the nation's predominant comprehensive college-planning Web site serving millions of students a year as they plan their college careers.

Under Caperton's leadership, the College Board has updated the SAT. The nation's premier college admissions test now includes a writing section, reinforcing one of Caperton's priorities: to elevate the importance of writing on the nation's education agenda. Additionally, under his guidance, higher-level math and more critical reading passages have been introduced.

Caperton believes that the high standards found within the College Board's Advanced Placement Program courses transform schools and change lives. During Caperton's eight years as president, the number of low-income students taking AP courses has tripled. Though AP Exams have remained rigorous, student performance has improved. Today, students taking AP Exams are outperforming previous generations of AP students.

Caperton also envisions another important role for the AP Program: impetus for a greater appreciation of globalization's influence on education in the United States. With that as a goal, he has worked to initiate a new series of AP world language and culture courses, including AP Chinese, Italian and Japanese. These join AP courses in World History, Human Geography, and Comparative Government and Politics as a series of offerings to prepare students to participate in a global community.

Under Caperton's leadership, two initiatives were created that focus on college preparation for underserved students. College Board Schools were opened as a system of learning laboratories aimed at preparing underserved middle and high school students for successful college matriculation. With the support of the Gates and Dell foundations, the first two schools debuted in New York City's public school system in 2004. There are currently 14 College Board Schools in New York City and in Rochester and Buffalo, N.Y. In total, there are plans for 18 schools in New York state.

The other initiative is the EXCEerator™ program, which is being implemented in existing high schools selected from applicants demonstrating an urgent need and a strong commitment to reform. There are currently 27 EXCEerator Schools in Chicago; Washington, D.C.; Duval County and Hillsborough County, Fla.; and Denver. Caperton believes that with participation in College Board academic programs, students can achieve academic success regardless of their personal circumstances.

After graduating from the University of North Carolina, Caperton went to work for a small insurance agency in Charleston, W.Va. Under his leadership, the company grew into the 10th-largest privately owned insurance brokerage firm in the nation. Gaston Caperton has received many awards, including 10 honorary doctoral degrees. In 2007, he received the prestigious James Bryant Conant Award from the Education Commission of the States because of his significant contributions to the quality of education in the United States.

Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.

Superintendent, Guilford County Schools
Greensboro, N.C.

Named the 2008 North Carolina Superintendent of the Year by the North Carolina Association of School Administrators, Terry Grier has worked to advance academic rigor and achievement, giving all students the chance to succeed, while improving public education during his eight-year tenure with Guilford County Schools, Greensboro, N.C.'s third-largest school district with an ever-growing student enrollment of more than 71,000.

In 2006, Grier led GCS to become one of the first districts to address the educational crisis of teacher turnover and shortage in highly impacted schools. Initiating Mission Possible, the district used an incentive program designed to attract, retain and reward both teachers and administrators who achieve results in select schools. During the past seven years, the district's dropout rate has been cut in half. In 2005, the National Dropout Prevention Center presented GCS with its Crystal Star Award of Excellence in Dropout Recovery.

The district's success with AP and IB courses attracted the eye of Newsweek magazine's Challenge Index. For the third consecutive year, Grimsley High School was ranked among the top 100. The number of AP Exams taken by GCS students has increased from 2,864 in 2000 to 8,393 in 2007.

To encourage participation in higher-level courses, GCS has implemented an AP Diploma program. A student who takes five AP courses and receives a grade of 3 or higher on each exam is issued an AP Diploma. During a Cool to Be Smart awards ceremony last summer, 236 students received an AP/IB Diploma, and one student won a new car, five won a laptop computer and six won a \$1,500 college scholarship.

To attract the interest of high school students who do not excel with the traditional high school curriculum, Grier pioneered the district's first middle college high school program, which includes six different middle colleges located on separate college campuses. He implemented one of the first Early Colleges to allow gifted high school students to take courses on a college campus, many becoming full-time college freshmen during what would have been their junior year in high school.

Grier has published more than 50 articles in educational journals and is a frequent speaker at national and state educational conferences. He has been featured in national educational publications such as: Education Week, Urban Educator and Scholastic Administrator for his innovative ideas and proven leadership in education. He earned his doctoral degree in education from Vanderbilt University. On July 1, Grier will become the new superintendent of the San Diego Unified School District.

Mayra Irizarry

AP Calculus Teacher,
Cypress Bay High School, Weston, Fla.

Mayra Irizarry is an award-winning teacher with more than 30 years' experience as a bilingual mathematics teacher focusing on a constructive and collaborative classroom. She has been recognized as the 2007 and 2006 Sunshine State Scholars Mathematics Outstanding Teacher, 2005 Broward County Council of Teachers of Mathematics Teacher of the Year, 2005 Cypress Bay High School Teacher of the Year, 1997 Pasadena School District Teacher of the Year, a 2005 and 2007 U.S. Presidential Award nominee, and a 2005 and 2006 DisneyHand Award nominee.

Irizarry has taught AP Calculus AB and BC during the 11 years of her tenure with Broward County Schools. During that time, she has had a 100 percent student passing record and has increased AP Calculus enrollment in her high school more than 30-fold, from eight students to 256 in the 2007-08 school year.

She has accomplished this by obtaining both parent and student commitment to the possibility of passing the exam with a high grade. In addition to her students' 100 percent passing record on the AP Exam, she has had more than 85 percent of her students obtain a grade of 5—the highest possible exam grade. In 2007, College Board President Gaston Caperton noted in his remarks in the "AP Report to the Nation," "Mrs. Irizarry's high school had the greatest number of Latino AP Calculus students in the U.S. passing the AP Calculus BC Exam."

As an adjunct professor, Irizarry teaches mathematics courses at Broward Community College. She co-founded the M&M Math Camp along with another award-winning Cypress Bay mathematics teacher two years ago, and during the last two summers has taught mathematics to Broward County elementary and middle school students in this three-week summer math-instruction camp.

Irizarry has a Bachelor of Science in mathematics, magna cum laude, from the University of Puerto Rico and she completed the course work for her master's degree in pure mathematics. Irizarry is a Broward County trainer of teachers, and a College Board consultant conducting workshops for high school and middle school teachers around the nation.

Trevor Packer

Vice President, Advanced Placement Program®
The College Board

Trevor Packer is the College Board's vice president responsible for leadership of the Advanced Placement Program, with overall responsibility for strategic planning and ongoing development and operations of the AP Program.

Named vice president in 2007, Packer previously served as executive director of the AP Program, where for four years he managed its growth and national expansion and worked to strengthen the Program's overall quality and reputation. Most notably, he enacted plans to increase services for small rural schools, double the number of AP courses in world languages and cultures, and align AP curricula and assessments with best practices at colleges and universities.

Before serving as executive director, he was manager of the AP Program's policy and processes, overseeing day-to-day management of the printing, shipping and scoring of the AP Exams and the administration of the AP Exams at 15,000 schools annually.

A former lecturer and instructor in composition and literature at Brigham Young University and John Jay College, Packer has written a manual on composition pedagogy, as well as works on author Willa Cather and abolitionist Sojourner Truth. He is currently working on a book examining Virginia Woolf's relationship to the Pre-Raphaelites.

Packer earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in English from Brigham Young University.

Jean C. Robinson

Professor of Political Science
Indiana University

Jean C. Robinson is professor of political science at Indiana University, Bloomington. Currently dean of the Hutton Honors College, she previously served as director of graduate studies and as director of undergraduate studies in political science. Involved in the Advanced Placement Program in government and politics since 1992, she was chair of the AP Comparative Government and Politics Development Committee from 1996 to 1999 and now is Chief Reader for the AP Examination in Comparative Government and Politics.

Originally trained in comparative politics and as a China specialist, Robinson was a founding member of the international Research Network on Gender, Politics and the State. Recent publications include research on Poland in "Comparative State Feminism" (Sage, 1995) and on France in "Abortion Politics, Women's Movements," and the "Democratic State" (Oxford, 2001). Robinson was editor of "Women and Social Policy: From Local to Global" (2001) and has also published in numerous other edited volumes, as well as journals such as The China Quarterly, Policy Studies Review, Polity, Asian Survey, and Comparative Education Review. Her most recent publication is "Living Gender after Communism," co-edited with Janet Johnson (IU Press, 2007).

She has received two National Science Foundation research grants as well as funding from other major agencies. Robinson is a recipient of the Indiana University President's Award for Distinguished Teaching (1996) and eight other teaching awards. In 2007, she received the Distinguished Service Award from IU-Bloomington and in 2008, the W. George Pinnell Award for Outstanding Service at Indiana University. Robinson earned her Ph.D. from Cornell University.

Ted Spencer

Associate Vice Provost and Executive Director
of Undergraduate Admissions, The University of Michigan

Ted Spencer is associate vice provost and executive director of undergraduate admissions at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He is co-chair of the Enrollment Working Group, the body that manages undergraduate enrollment numbers and oversees all functions related to undergraduate admissions procedures, including processing, implementing, advising, developing, maintaining, funding, recruiting, admitting and enrolling students who reflect the socioeconomic and racial diversity of the state of Michigan and the nation.

Prior to his responsibilities at Michigan, he was an associate director of admissions at the United States Air Force Academy. After graduating from Tennessee State University, he received his commission through the AFROTC program and entered the intelligence career field. He has served in a variety of locations such as: Barksdale AFB, La.; Tripoli, Libya; Paris, France; Omaha, Neb.; and Tan Son Nhut, Saigon.

In the professional arena, Spencer has served as a member of the Secondary School Committee of the Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. He has also served as a legislative representative and a member of the ACT Executive Counsel, Midwest Region, of the Michigan Association for College Admission Counseling.

Spencer has given presentations at numerous professional conferences and has written several articles on the college admissions process. He garnered the John B. Muir Editor Award, given by the National Association for College Admission Counseling for an article published in the association's journal entitled "Why Admission Directors are Social Engineers." In the fall of 2001, Spencer was featured as a hero in the article entitled "Point Man on Diversity Defense" in The College Board Review (Issue No. 194, Fall 2001). Spencer also served as a College Board Trustee from 2002 to 2006. Spencer holds a Bachelor of Science degree in political science from Tennessee State University and a master's degree in sociology from Pepperdine University.