

September 2008

Dear Colleague,

As you are aware, the College Board announced this past spring the discontinuation of three AP® courses after the May 2009 exam administration: AP Computer Science AB, AP French Literature, and AP Latin Literature. The purpose of this letter is to provide instructional leaders with a clear understanding of the reasons for this decision, to explain the future direction of the AP curricula in the respective disciplines, and to recommend optimal ways for schools to realign their programs to best serve students who study these three disciplines.

#### *About the Decision*

As a result of thorough College Board mission-impact analyses, AP Computer Science AB, AP French Literature, and AP Latin Literature will be discontinued after the May 2009 exam administration, and partnerships will not be sought for extending those courses beyond that date. Each of these courses represents the second of two AP courses within that discipline, but altogether these programs are providing fewer than 400 students, and less than five one-thousandths of one percent of minority students, with their sole AP experience. Yet they, along with AP Italian Language and Culture, require a net financial investment of \$25 million across the next five years. Note: External fund-raising efforts are under way in support of AP Italian, and educators can expect an update from the College Board by October 2008 announcing whether sufficient funds have been raised to ensure the future of that subject. We encourage schools to continue to cultivate long sequences of study in Italian.

The AP Program continues to sustain yearly financial losses in order to maintain many of the small-volume AP subjects, and will continue to sustain reasonable losses for these courses, as the losses can be sufficiently offset by larger volume courses. However, the losses being incurred for the discontinued courses have exceeded a prudent threshold for a not-for-profit organization. Given the lack of educational funds in our country, the College Board feels strongly that we cannot best support rigorous courses that prepare students for college success by continuing to invest millions in programs that only support fewer than 400 students uniquely. Instead, we are taking these resources and expanding upon them to provide more focused and extensive investment in, and support for, the remaining AP courses. As a not-for-profit membership organization, the College Board is committed to supporting schools in their work to provide high-quality, college-level AP course work to their students. To accomplish this work, we must allocate resources appropriately so that AP teachers and students are supported in the most meaningful, effective, and wide-reaching ways. This was a one-time decision made at a crucial juncture when we are making decisions to invest much more heavily in AP programs than ever before. **Most importantly, the College Board upholds the belief that studies in Computer Science, French, and Latin are critical components of the secondary school curriculum.**

#### *AP Computer Science*

In May 2009, students will be able to take both the AP Computer Science A and the AP Computer Science AB Exams. Beginning May 2010, only the AP Computer Science A Exam will be offered. In order to make critical decisions about the content and focus of the singular best capstone AP Computer Science course and exam, the College Board is working jointly with the AP Computer Science Development Committee and the AP Computer Science Course and Exam Review Commission, in consultation with the National Science Foundation. Plans include convening Computer Science Department Chairs in October 2008 from the colleges and universities that receive the largest number of AP Computer Science scores for the purpose of further informing the content of the future AP Computer Science course. Any and all changes to the curriculum will be announced well in advance, and the College Board will make every effort to support AP Computer Science teachers in their efforts to deliver a new AP Computer Science course.

### *The Future Sequencing of AP Computer Science*

In high schools that currently offer both the existing AP Computer Science courses, **schools are encouraged to continue offering a two-year sequence that culminates in AP Computer Science and that prepares students for success in subsequent computer science studies.**

### *AP Latin Literature*

We at the College Board value the study of Latin just as we value the study of other subjects ranging from biology to German to art history, for each of which we offer one high-quality AP Examination. We want to provide the same level of support for Latin as we do for other AP subject areas, but this entails focusing our efforts on one rather than two separate AP Latin courses. It is the opinion of our World Languages Academic Advisory Committee that it will be better to embed a variety of literature in the one AP Latin course we will sustain, rather than having it focus solely on Vergil. Accordingly, in fall 2008 we plan to convene a college faculty colloquium composed of professors from top classics departments nationwide to advise us on how we can make the remaining AP Latin program the best possible capstone experience for secondary school students seeking credit, placement, and further Latin studies in college. After the faculty colloquium, we will convene AP Latin teachers to discuss the needs of secondary Latin programs and recommendations for program sequencing during the AP Latin transition period.

In summary, the two existing AP Latin courses will remain in place for the May 2009 exam, and AP Latin: Vergil will be the only AP Latin Exam in May 2010. No sooner than May 2011, we will strive to offer a capstone AP Latin Exam experience that provides teachers with an appropriate spectrum of Latin texts, and as much choice as possible. Any and all changes to the curriculum will be announced well in advance, and we will make every effort to support AP Latin teachers in their efforts to deliver a new AP Latin program.

### *AP French Literature*

While we are disappointed to announce that the AP French Literature Exam will be offered for the final time in May 2009, we are eager to focus our resources on efforts that will provide a much greater degree of support for all AP teachers than ever before. As we significantly scale up our support for AP world language and culture teachers at large, we cannot continue to offer two separate AP French courses and exams for the many reasons already stated in this letter. AP French teachers are concerned that students will lose interest in the discipline without the companion AP French Literature course; however, AP German has continued to grow steadily, even since the discontinuation of AP German Literature. French teachers are also concerned that because the AP Spanish Literature course will endure, students will opt to take Spanish since they have the opportunity to take two AP courses in that discipline. School guidance counselors are strongly encouraged to promote the study of French, and to suggest that students who wish to seek additional AP credit opportunities consider enrolling in other AP courses such as AP European History—an excellent companion course to AP French Language.

AP Spanish Literature serves a significantly larger and more diverse group of students than the groups served by the discontinued subjects—there are more AP Spanish Literature students than in all the discontinued subjects combined. For many underserved students, AP Spanish Literature is their only AP experience, providing them with rigorous preparation for college success. For this reason, there are no plans to discontinue AP Spanish Literature.

*The Future Sequencing of AP World Language Courses*

AP world language courses are vital to the development and maintenance of long-sequence, articulated language programs so that as many students as possible have the opportunity to reach an advanced level of proficiency prior to college admission. **Beginning with fall 2009, as schools prepare to offer one capstone AP experience in French and Latin, we encourage you to maintain the same number of years of language learning experiences as are currently offered, moving the remaining AP French Language and AP Latin: Vergil courses to the students' final year of study in those subjects.**

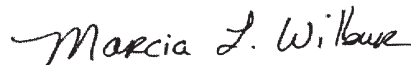
Cooper, et al. (*Foreign Language Annals, 2008*) have shown that long sequences of world language study result in higher SAT® scores over any other variable studied. In addition, the results of current efforts by the AP Program to review the curricula in both subjects will result in future capstone courses that contain elements of the discontinued courses—such as an increased emphasis in the AP French Language course on reading authentic literature, and the possible combining of literature written by the spectrum of authors currently studied in both AP Latin Literature and AP Latin: Vergil. **It is therefore advised that schools not reduce the total number of years of study in French or Latin to fewer than the number currently offered.**

Thank you so much for your care and ongoing support of the AP courses offered to your students. We welcome your comments, questions, or suggestions. Thank you, as well, for your efforts to support equitable access to rigorous secondary education and to prepare all students for college success. We share your passion.

Respectfully,



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