





# AP CREDIT ACCEPTANCE POLICY

# Why Do Students Take Longer Than Four Years to Graduate?

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## FEDERAL & STATE POLICIES

Definition of “full time” (12 hours)

Lack of access to summer courses

## STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Uninformed choices

Changing majors

Additional minors/majors



## INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

Transfer policies

Acceptance policies for AP courses

Exam scores of “3” not accepted at some institutions

Course offerings (how often and at what times)

Degree program credit requirements

## OTHER FORCES

Work demands

Family commitments

Financial issues

Illness

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Jan. 2018: 120 credit hour policy

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BOG short session budget priorities include \$3.5 million in summer grants

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# Outline for Today

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- What is Advanced Placement and why is it important to the UNC System?
- What does AP credit acceptance look like across the UNC System?
- What have other states and systems done regarding AP credit acceptance?
- What effect would reforms to AP policy have on the UNC System?

## A Preview of the Bottom Line

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- North Carolina spends more than **\$12 million** per year on AP exams for public high school students.
- Due to inconsistency in AP credit acceptance policies across UNC institutions, UNC students missed out on **13,950 course credits in 2016-17**.
- That equates to **1,395 FTEs (and millions of dollars in costs to students and the state)**.





# WHAT IS ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNC?

# What is Advanced Placement (AP)?

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- Created in 1952 by the Committee on Admission which was urged by elite prep schools (Andover, Exeter, and Lawrenceville) and prestigious colleges (Harvard, Princeton, and Yale). In 2017, almost 5 million exams were taken.
- “Rigorous, college-level classes in a variety of subjects that give students an opportunity to gain the skills and experience colleges recognize.”
- Committees of **college faculty members** and expert AP teachers design the AP courses and exams; **faculty members** score the AP exams as well.
- AP courses are followed by an AP exam with the following possible scores:

AP Exam Score	Recommendation	College Course Grade Equivalent
5	Extremely well qualified	A+ or A
4	Very well qualified	A-, B+ or B
3	Qualified	B-, C+ or C
2	Possibly qualified	
1	No recommendation	

**College Board psychometricians consider a 3 or above as “Qualified”:**

*“Qualified” means that you have proven yourself capable of doing the work of an introductory-level course in a particular subject at college.*

# Evidence for AP Credit Acceptance

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- **National study of 79,000 students at 53 four-year colleges:** Compared the academic performance of students who had received AP Credit with those who had not in subsequent courses. In general, those who were granted credit based on an AP exam score of 3 or better performed as well as or better than non-AP students (even after controlling for academic ability).
- **University System of Georgia Study:** Compared the performance of students who received AP credit and those who did not in subsequent course at four USG institutions (including UGA). With the exception of chemistry, students who received AP credit performed as well or better.

# Evidence for AP Credit Acceptance

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- **Does earning “3” *actually* equal college-level understanding of the subject?**
  - College Board researchers map a score of 3 on an AP exam to a grade of B-, C+, or C in the comparable college course.
  - In studies that directly compared students who received credit for a 3 to those who did not have AP credit, AP students tended to perform as well or better in subsequent courses.
  - Under the statewide transfer agreement between UNC and community colleges, UNC institutions grant credit for course grades of C or better earned in community college courses.

# AP in North Carolina

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North Carolina is unique because the state funds all AP exams for public high school students.

In 2016-17, NC Public School students took

**138,282**

AP exams

which cost

**\$12,184,251**

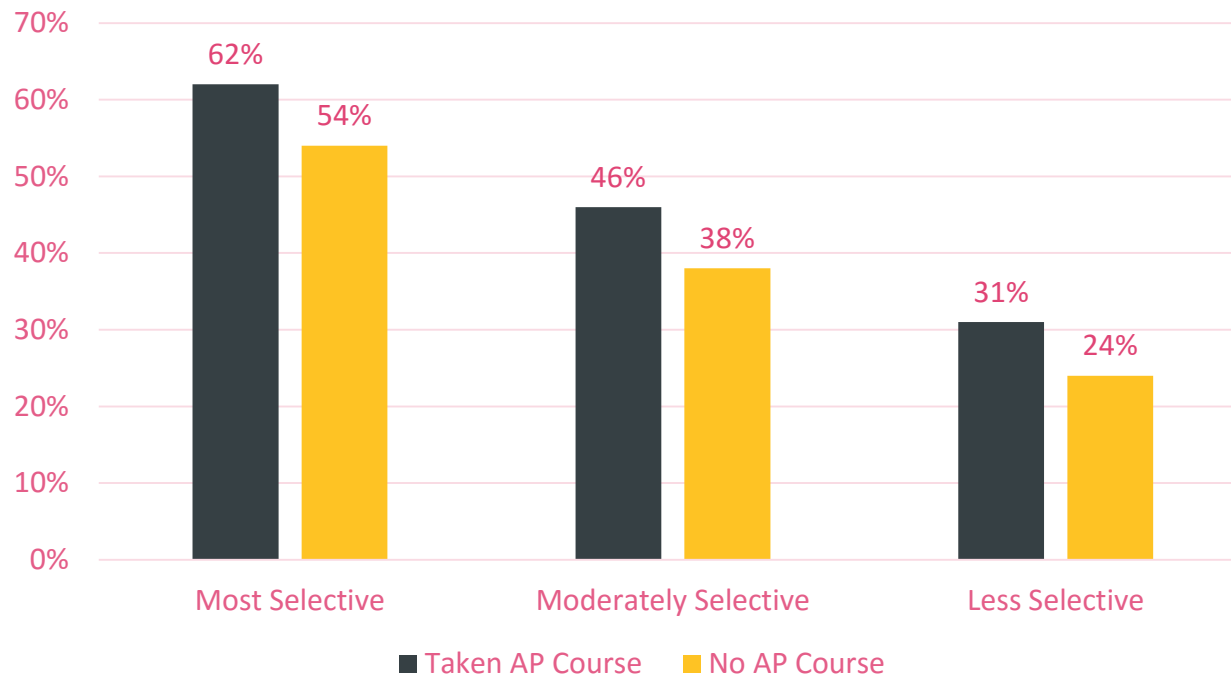
(average \$88 per exam)

That total does not include investments in teacher training, professional development, or materials.

# Earning AP credits before enrolling in college is correlated with student success

College Board Study<sup>2</sup>

Four-Year Completion Rates by AP Course-taking  
(Public 4-year Institutions)





# WHAT DOES AP CREDIT ACCEPTANCE LOOK LIKE ACROSS THE UNC SYSTEM?

# UNC System AP Credit Acceptance Policies

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- All UNC institutions grant AP credit, with score requirements varying by institution.
  - The number of AP subject area tests for which UNC institutions will award credit varies, from 19 to 39.
  - Qualifying scores range from 3 to 5 across the UNC System (with the exception of high-level math, where institutions grant credit for a score of 2).

## Number of UNC System Universities that have the Following Cut Scores for the Top 5 Most Popular AP exams

Course	Cut Score 3	Cut Score 4	Cut Score 5
English Language and Composition	10	5	0
United States History	10	6	0
English Literature and Composition	9	4	2
Calculus AB	15	0	0
United States Government and Politics	11	2	0

*Note: Rows may not total to 16 because not all institutions have a policy for each exam.*



# Absence of Consistent AP Policy Has Implications for Affordability and Success

- Additional costs to students and the state (paying twice for learning that has already occurred).
- Confusion and lack of predictability for students and families.
- Potentially limits the positive effect of state investments on student success and time to degree.



# WHAT HAVE OTHER STATES DONE ON AP CREDIT POLICY?



# What have other states done on AP credit policy?

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## VIRGINIA

- In 2015, Virginia General Assembly passed legislation requiring the State Council of Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV) to “establish a policy for granting undergraduate course credit to entering freshman students. . . .”
- In 2016, SCHEV approved policy stating that “[e]ach institution shall make a submission to SCHEV of its final policies, specifying grants of credit, if any, for each level of performance on each assessment, and providing justification for each case where the minimum threshold for granting credit is above the minimum indicated [e.g., ‘(3) or higher on an Advanced Placement examination’].”

## SOUTH CAROLINA

- In 1984, South Carolina Legislature passed act requiring public colleges and universities to award credit to any student “who receives a score of three or higher on the advanced placement exam. ..”
- In response, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education required that “[e]ach public institution of higher education shall give credit in appropriate courses for scores of three or higher on pertinent Advanced Placement courses.”

## TEXAS

- H.B. No. 1992: “an institution of higher education may not require a score of more than three unless the institution’s chief academic officer determines, based on evidence, that a higher score on the examination is necessary to indicate a student is sufficiently prepared to be successful in a related, more advanced course for which the lower-division course is a prerequisite.”

## FLORIDA

- 2001 Florida statute requires the Florida Department of Education’s Articulation Coordinating Committee to set standards for AP credit. The committee created a matrix of exams and qualifying scores.

# Common features of state policies

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- **Common standard:** Typically require that institutions accept scores of 3 or higher.
- **Room for exceptions:** Institutions have an opportunity to produce evidence that the standard should be higher in particular subjects.
- **Continuous monitoring and assessment:** Commit to regularly evaluating the effect on student outcomes.



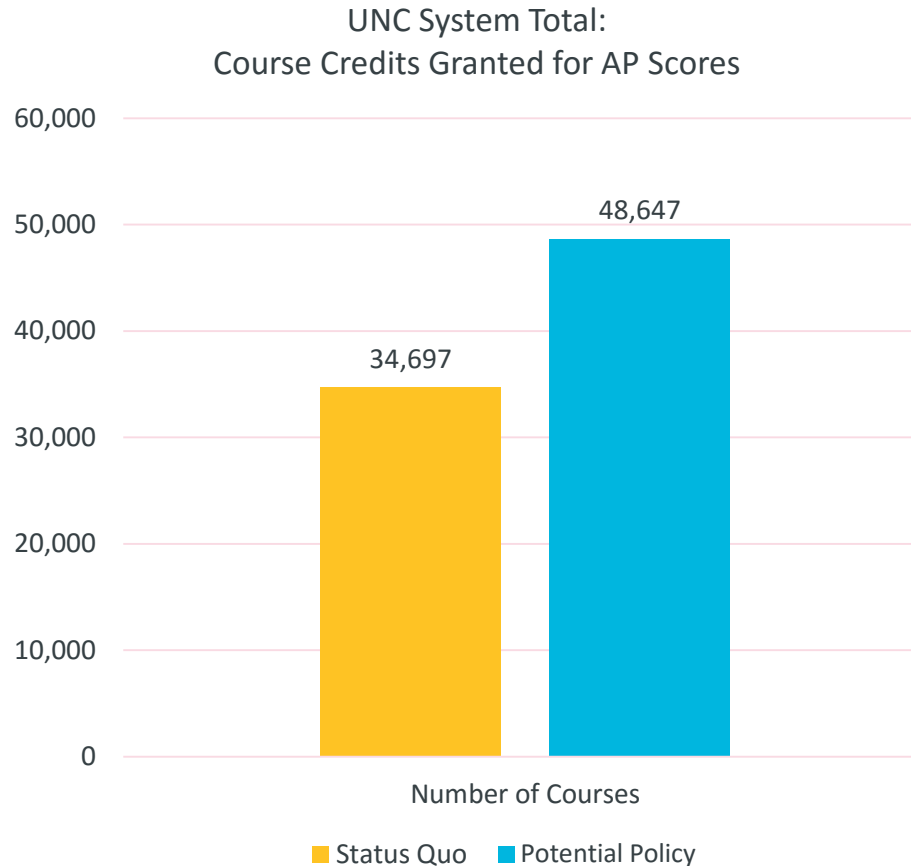
WHAT EFFECT WOULD  
REFORMS TO AP POLICY HAVE  
ON THE UNC SYSTEM?



What if the UNC System adopted a System-wide policy of awarding credit for AP scores of 3 or higher?

The following is based on enrollment data from the National Student Clearinghouse matched to College Board cohort data. Please do not distribute.

# Adopting a System-wide AP credit acceptance policy of 3 or better could result in ...

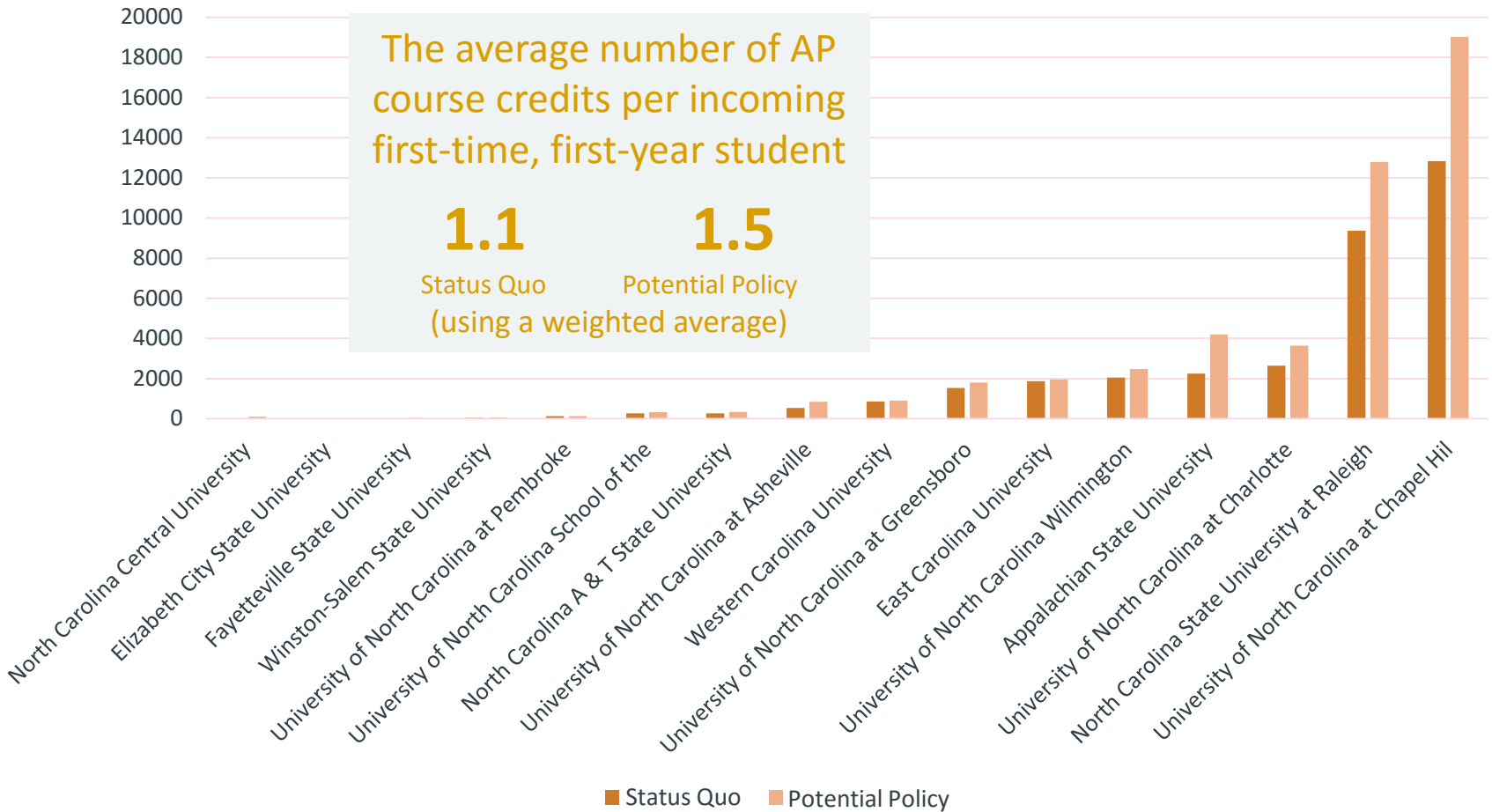


**40% more  
courses**  
for which  
students  
could receive  
college credit



# Students Could Receive Credit for an Additional 13,950 Courses

Total AP Courses Eligible for Credit



# Number of Courses for which UNC System Students Did Not Receive Credit

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In 2016, in the UNC System, incoming students did not receive credit for

**13,950**  
courses

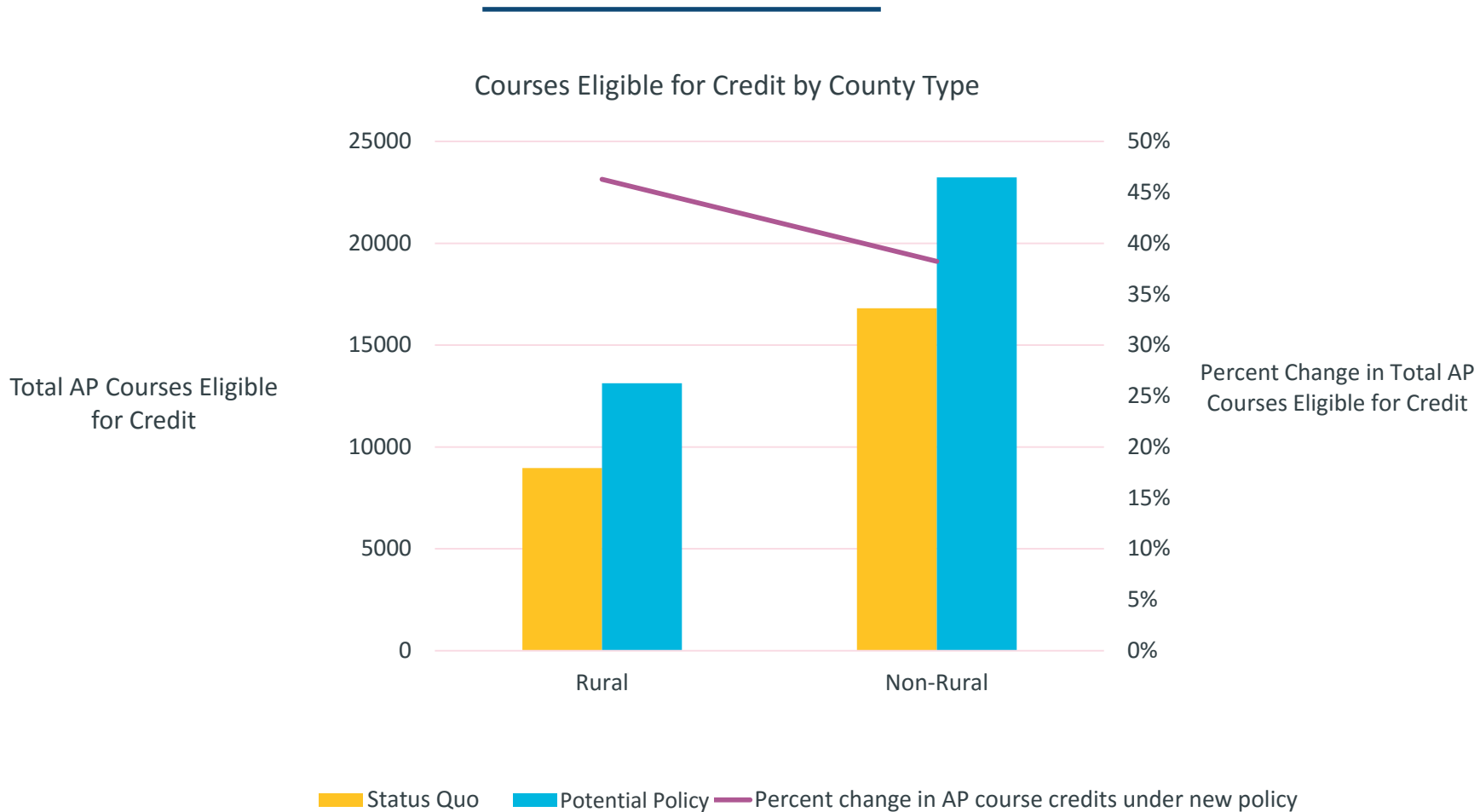
for which they received a 3 or above on the AP exam.

**1,395**  
FTEs.

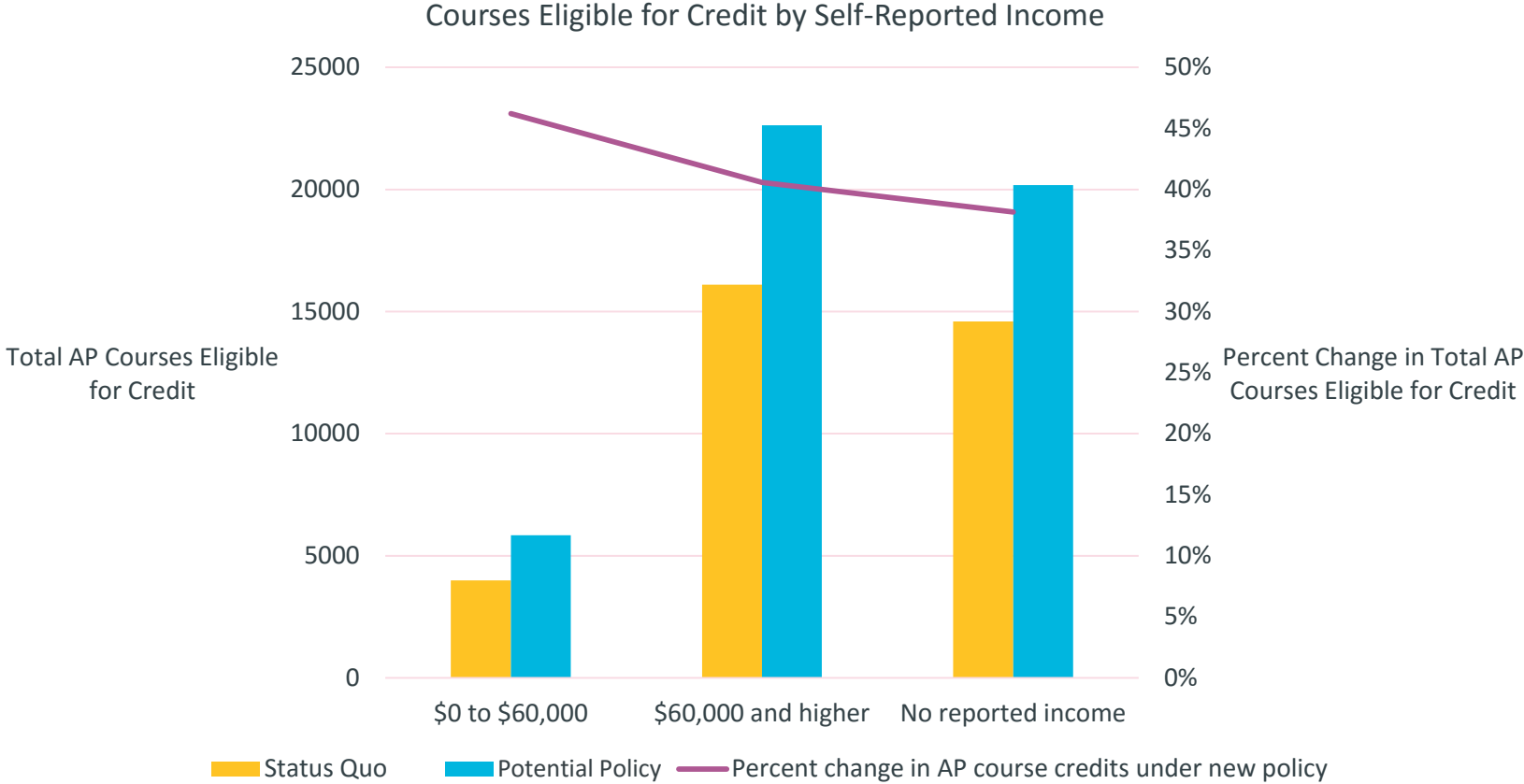


WHO WOULD THIS  
CHANGE AFFECT THE MOST?

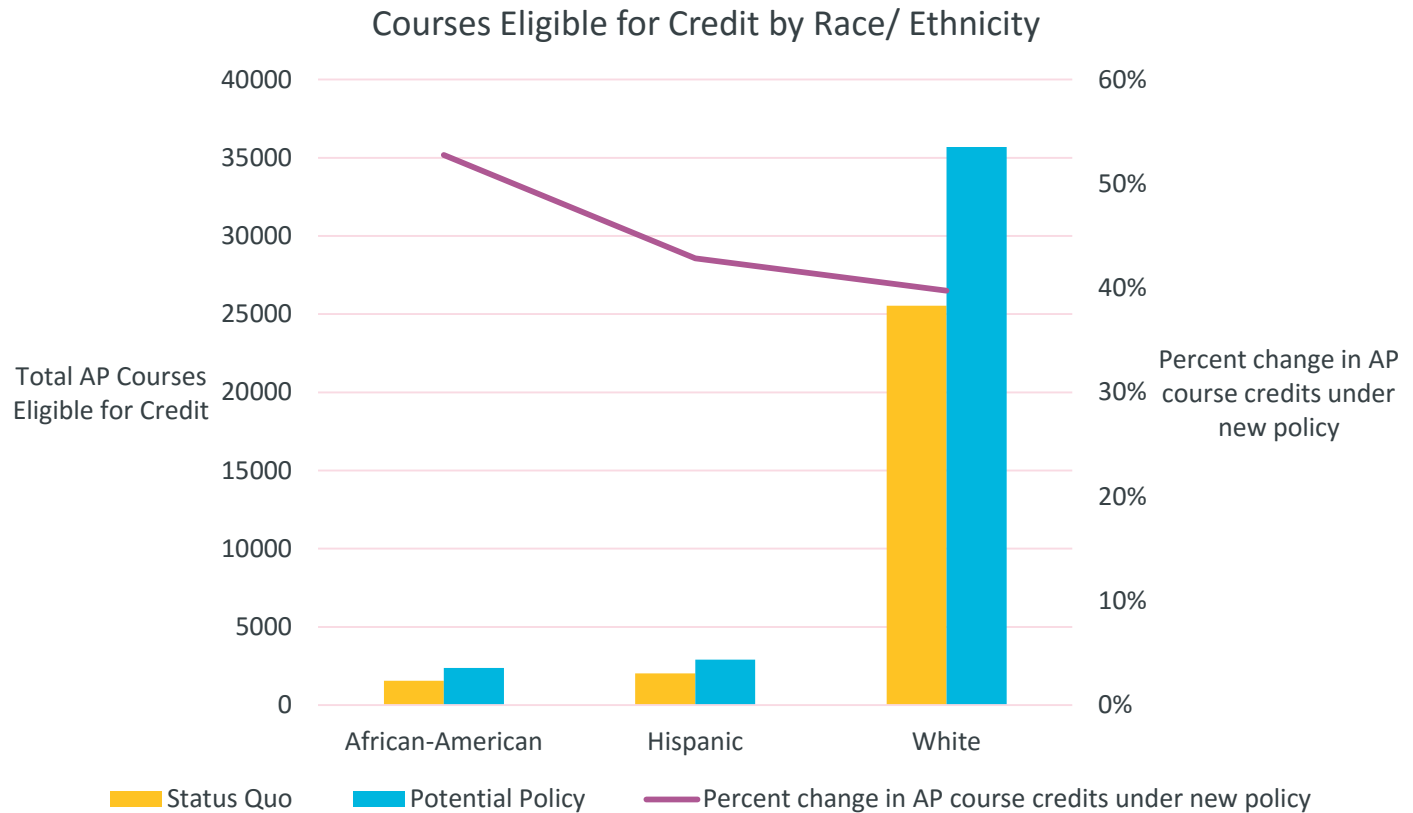
# Students from Rural Counties Could Receive Credit for 46.3% more Courses.



# Students from Families Making less than \$60,000 a Year Could Receive Credit for 46.2% more Courses.



# African American and Hispanic Students Would be Eligible to Receive Credit for 52.8% and 42.9% More Courses.



# Summary

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- Potential change to AP credit policy would be most beneficial for students targeted by our Strategic Plan.
- More consistent policy will:
  - Create a clearer, more predictable path to timely completion for all students.
  - Result in significant savings for students and taxpayers.
- Creating room for exceptions can balance consistency, flexibility, and rigor.



# **IS AP CREDIT POLICY A TOPIC WORTH PURSUING?**



THANK YOU

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