



ADVANCED PLACEMENT CREDIT ACCEPTANCE POLICY

Committee on Strategic Initiatives
May 2018

A Preview of the Bottom Line

- 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 System institutions, UNC System 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)?

- 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

- 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 System and community colleges, UNC System institutions grant credit for course grades of C or better earned in community college courses.

AP in North Carolina

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.

UNC System AP Credit Acceptance Policies

- All UNC System institutions grant AP credit, with score requirements varying by institution.
 - The number of AP subject area tests for which UNC System 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

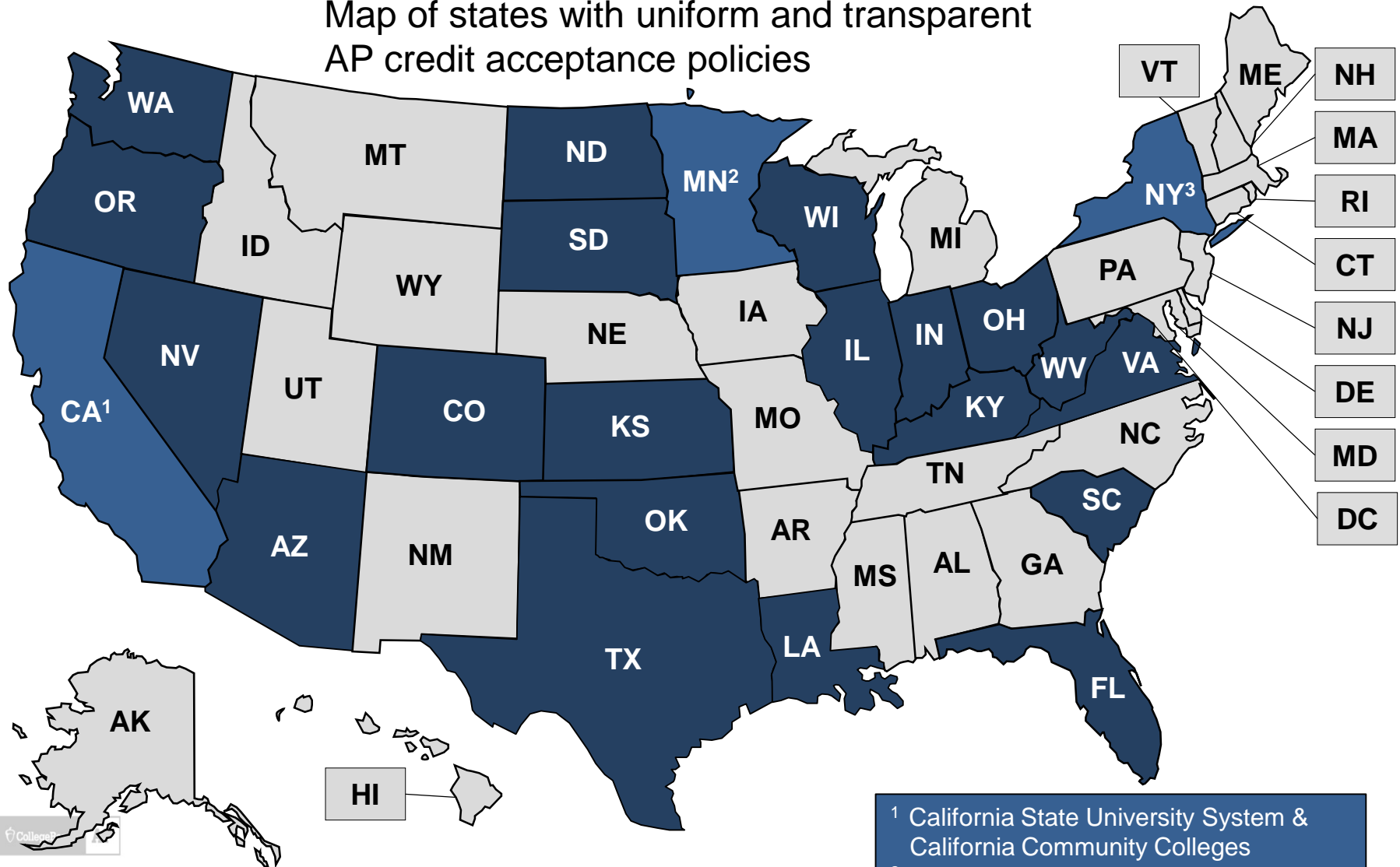
Note: Rows may not total to 16 because not all institutions have a policy for each exam.

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 policies?

Map of states with uniform and transparent AP credit acceptance policies



What have other states done on AP credit policy?

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.”

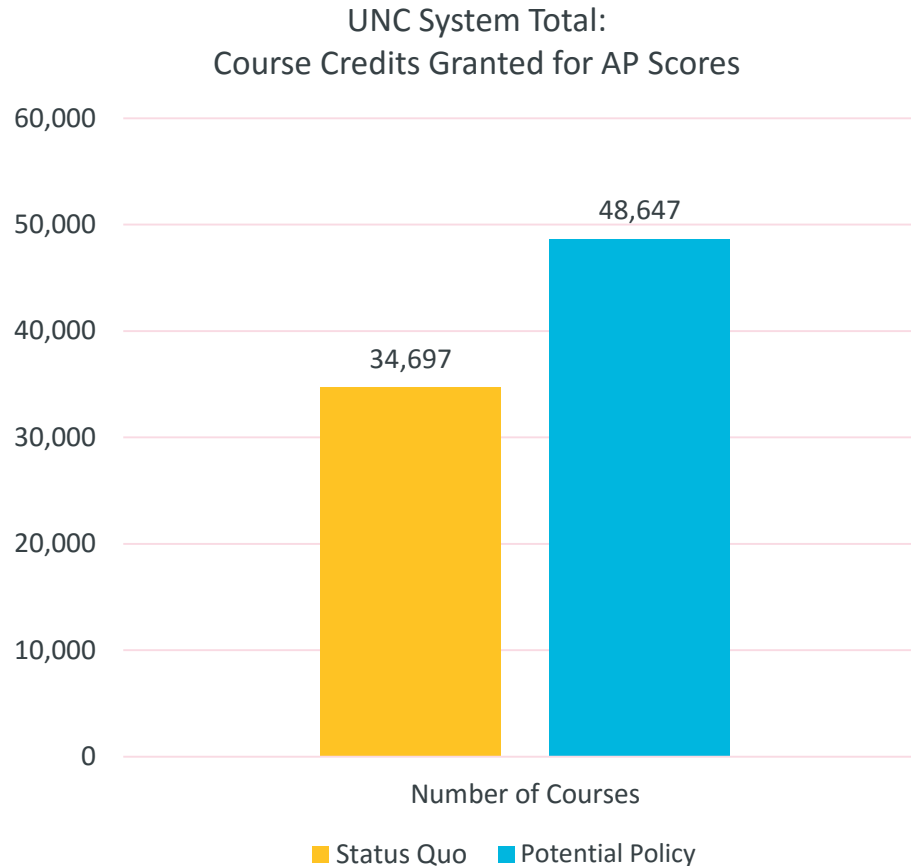
TEXAS

- 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.

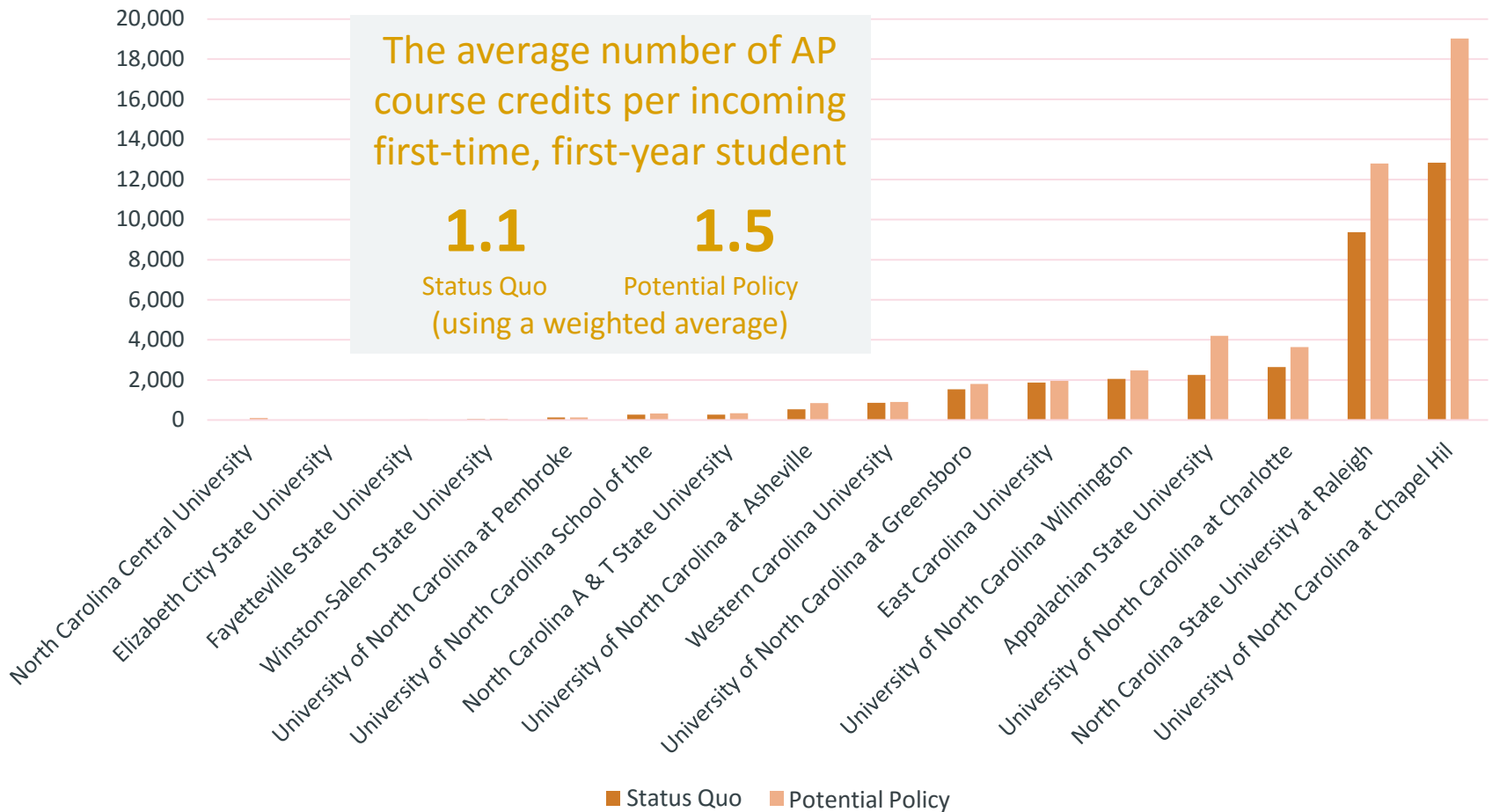
Adopting a System-wide AP credit acceptance policy of 3 or better could result in ...



**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

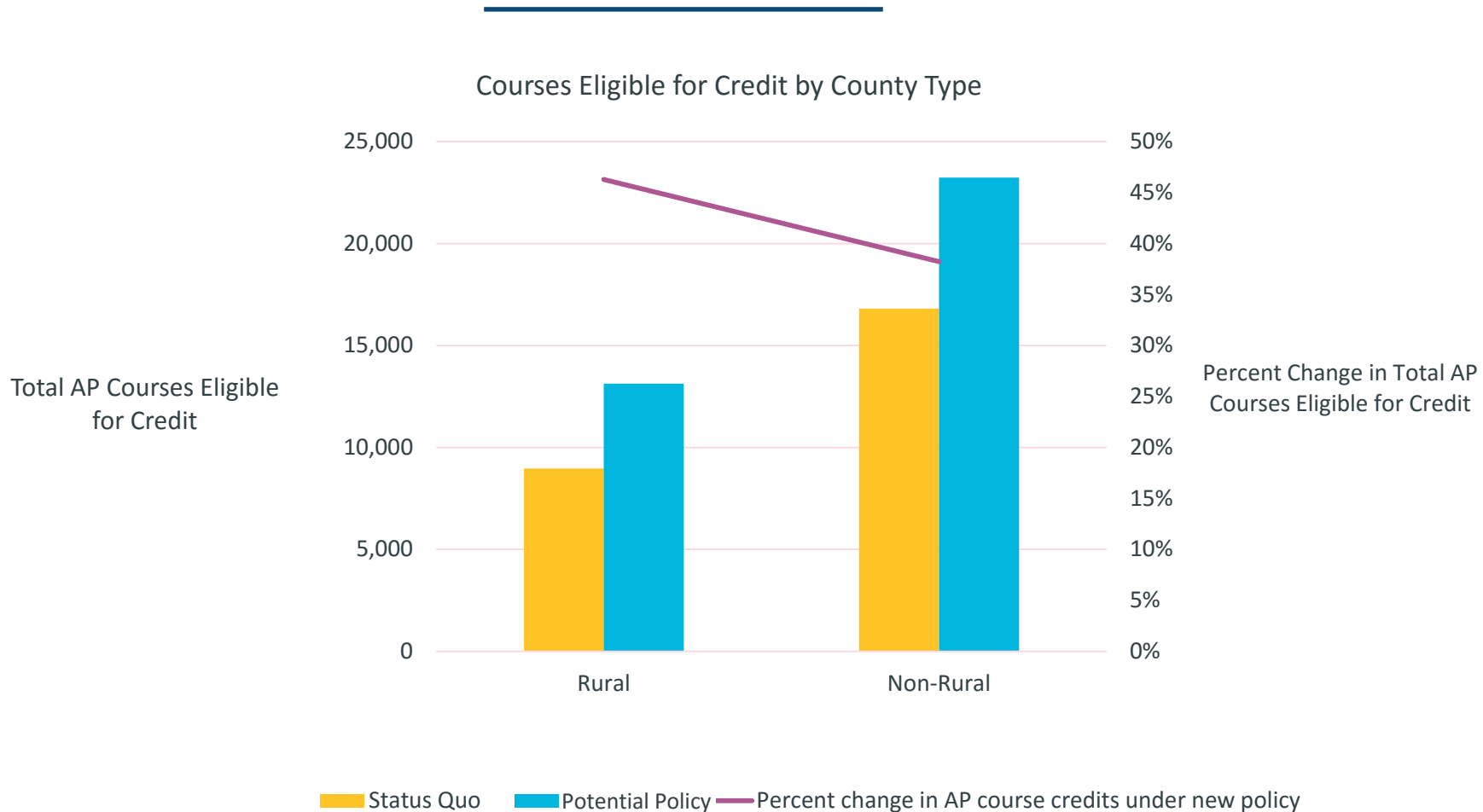
In 2016, in the UNC System, incoming students did not receive credit for

13,950
courses

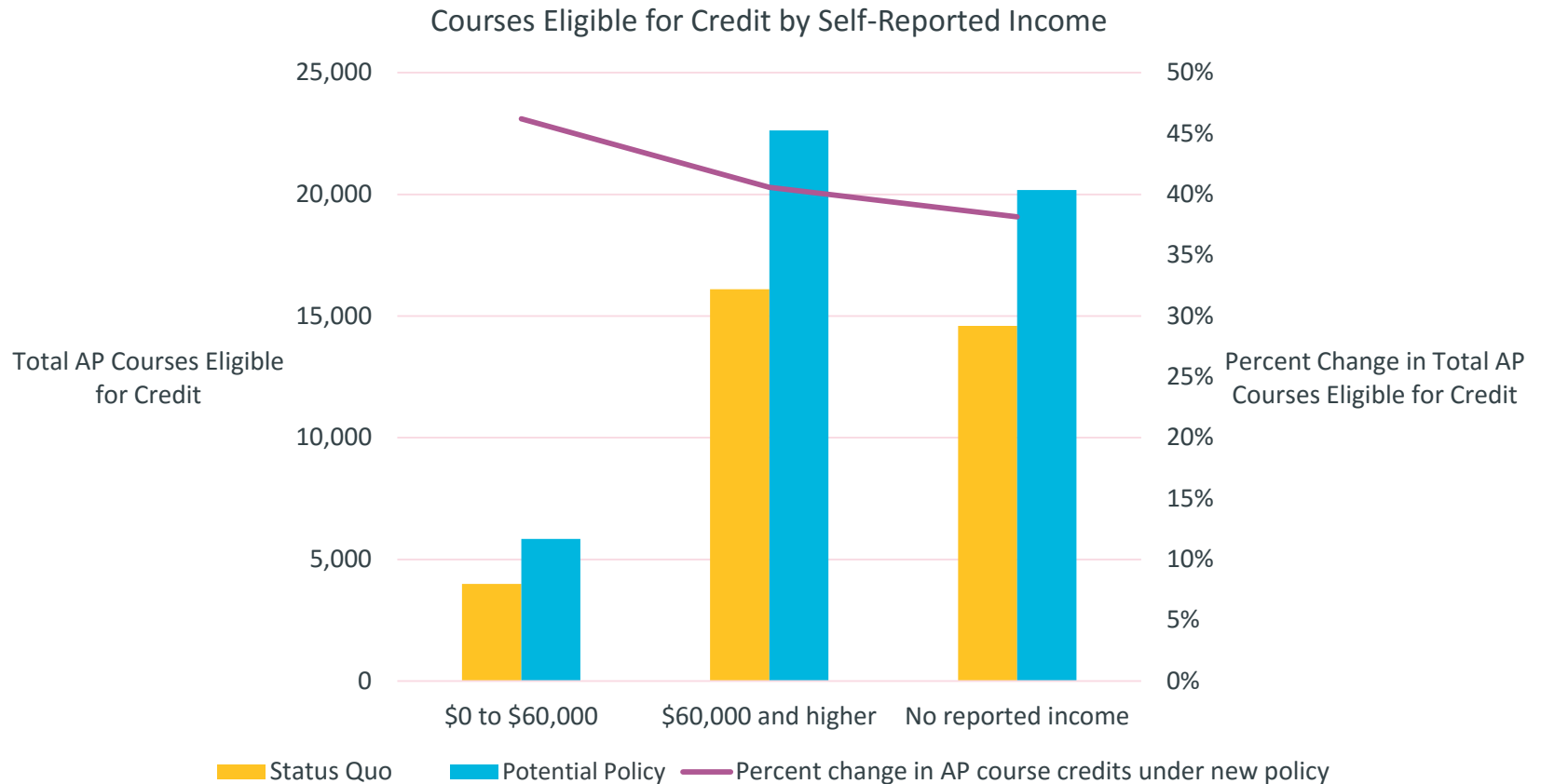
for which they received a 3 or above on the AP exam.

1,395
FTEs.

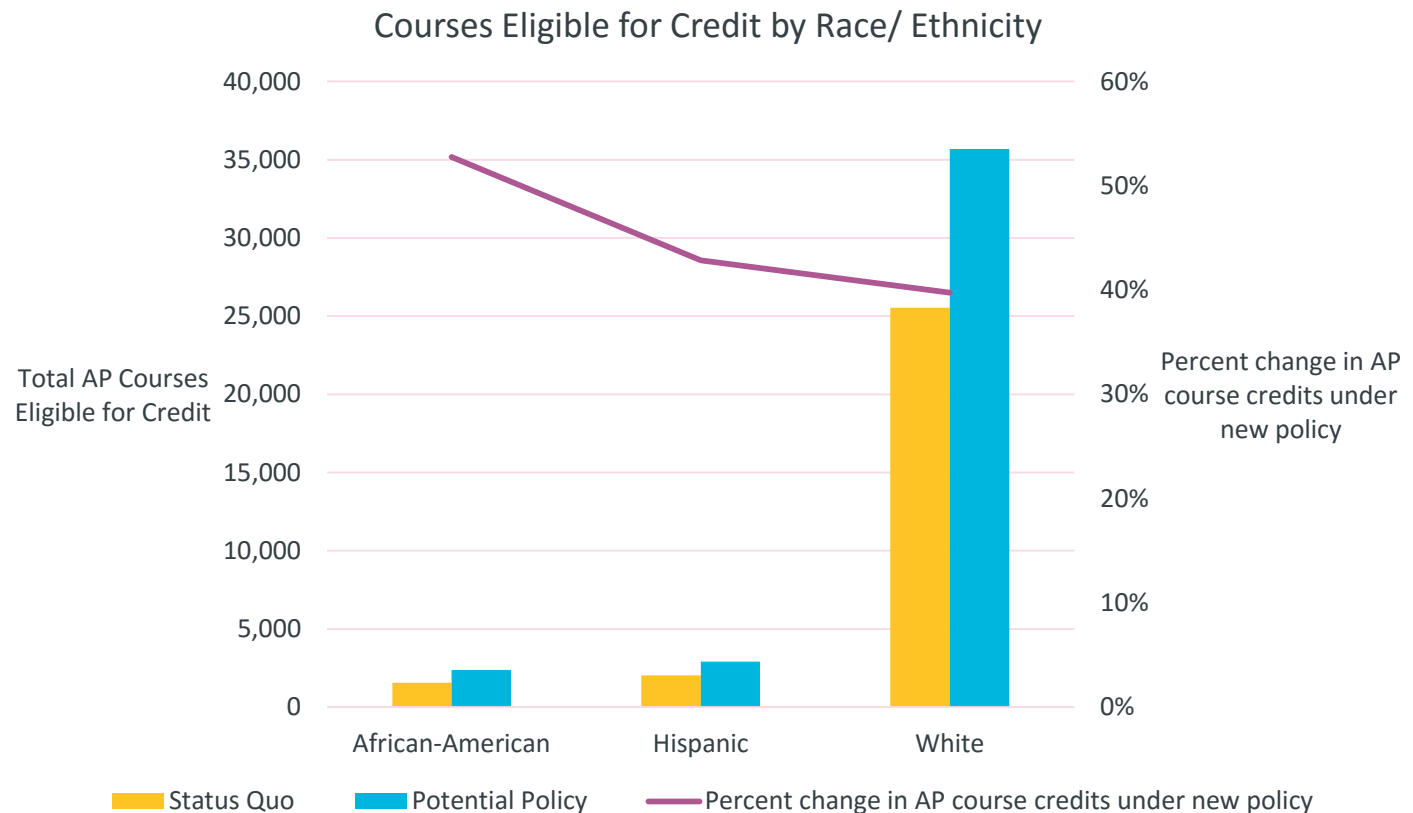
Students from Rural Counties Could Receive Credit for 46.3% more Courses.



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

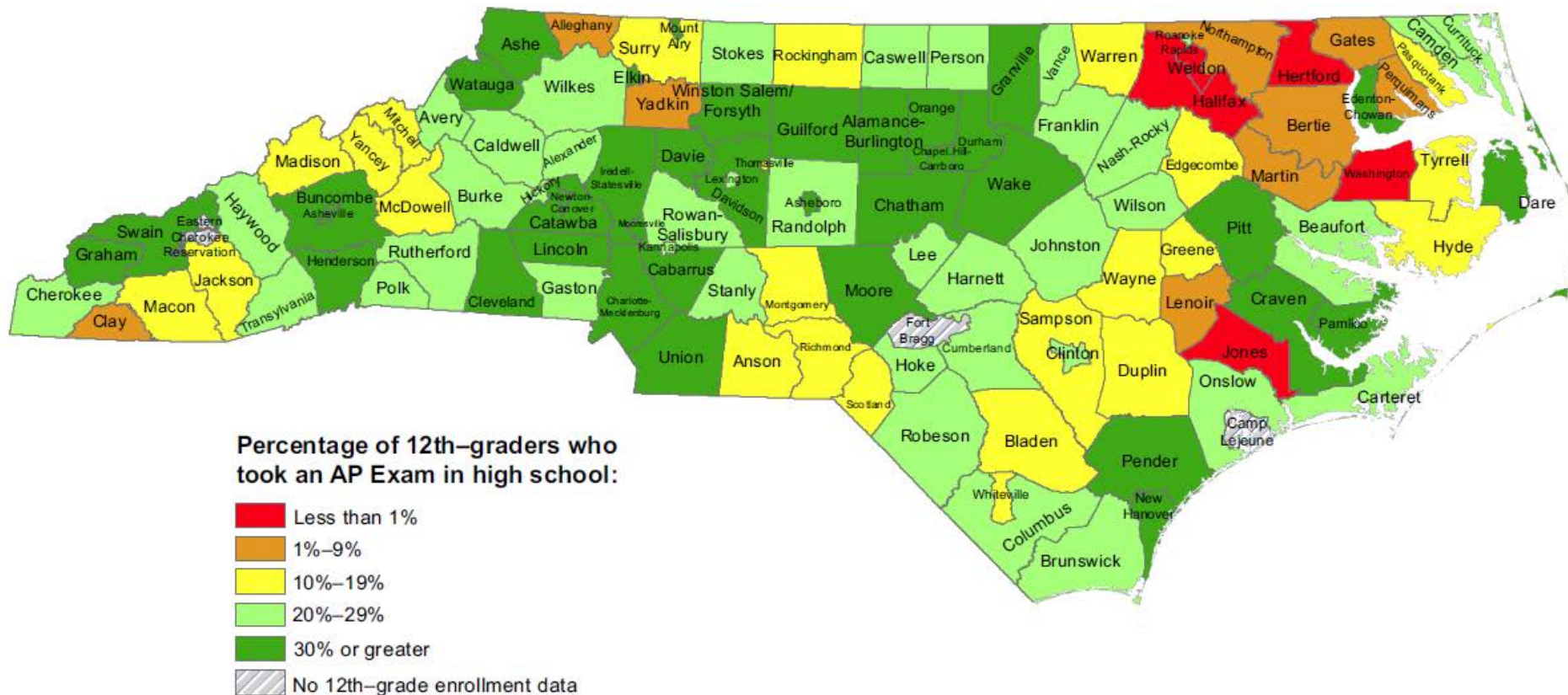


African American and Hispanic Students Would be Eligible to Receive Credit for 52.8% and 42.9% More Courses.



North Carolina Public Schools

AP[®] Participation by District: Class of 2017

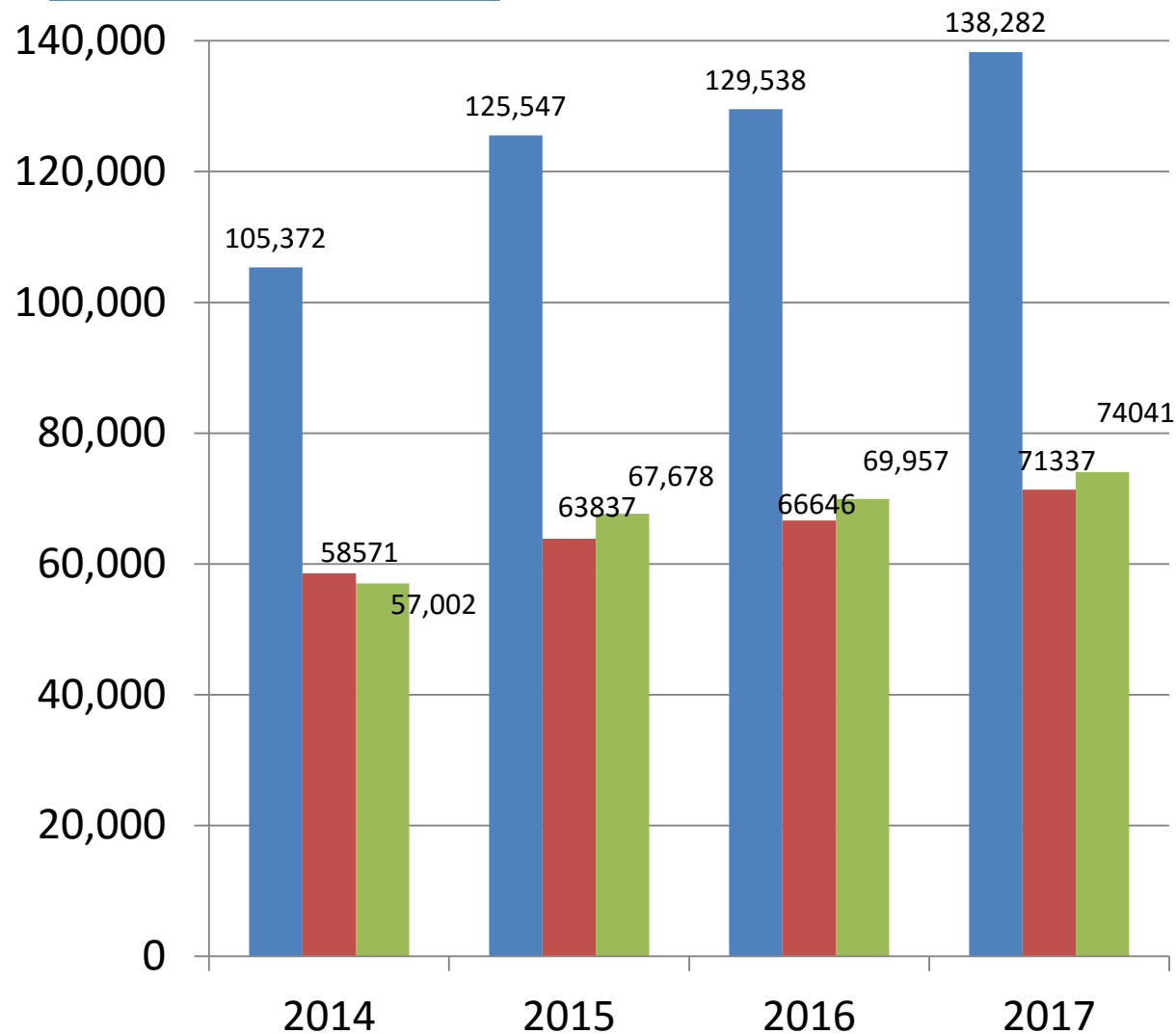


Sources:

2015–16 NCES 12th-grade district enrollment, 2017 College Board AP Cohort Data, and 2015–16 Proximity School District Boundary Files.

NC Public Schools Data Highlights

2013- 2017



- Many more NC public school students now participate in AP.
- Since the inception of the partnership, NC has seen a 30% increase of AP public school students.
- This represents a 31% increase of exams taken since the partnership has been in place, and a 22% increase of examinees scoring 3+.