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NOTE: At the time of publication, the author was affiliated with the The College Board. Currently, Professor Michael C. Johaneck is a Senior Fellow with the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania.

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Teaching the College Introductory Survey in the High School: Reaching out to AP U.S. History Teachers

Abstract

The College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) program now serves as a strong vehicle for promoting high academic standards, with college-level work for high school students. The product of a unique collaboration between high school teachers and college faculty dating back to the 1950s, AP is the de facto standard for academic programs that help students make the transition from high school to college. The recognition of AP as a program of academic excellence has, in turn, fueled a rapid expansion in the number of students taking the examinations. Last year, approximately 250,000 students took the Advanced Placement United States History examination. With this growth comes the continued twin challenges of maintaining high standards that correspond with advances in each discipline, and expanding access to these rigorous courses in much more equitable ways.

In this article we provide a brief overview of college faculty's involvement in the school-college collaboration that is AP, including the College Board's expanded efforts to strengthen its support to AP teachers.

Comments

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Teaching the College Introductory Survey in the High School: Reaching out to AP U.S. History Teachers

Mike Johanek, Uma Venkateswaran, Lawrence Charap

The College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) program now serves as a strong vehicle for promoting high academic standards, with college-level work for high school students. The product of a unique collaboration between high school teachers and college faculty dating back to the 1950s, AP is the de facto standard for academic programs that help students make the transition from high school to college. The recognition of AP as a program of academic excellence has, in turn, fueled a rapid expansion in the number of students taking the examinations. Last year, approximately 250,000 students took the Advanced Placement United States History examination. With this growth comes the continued twin challenges of maintaining high standards that correspond with advances in each discipline, and expanding access to these rigorous courses in much more equitable ways.

In this article we provide a brief overview of college faculty's involvement in the school-college collaboration that is AP, including the College Board's expanded efforts to strengthen its support to AP teachers.

Faculty Involvement in AP United States History

The AP U.S. history exam is three hours and ten minutes long and tests the knowledge and skills gained in a college level survey course through both multiple choice and essay questions. College faculty play a critical role in the following ways:

- Establishing the content domain for the examination

Colleges nationwide are surveyed to determine the course material covered in a typical survey course as well as any pedagogical changes. This feedback is used to establish the contents of the exam.

- Developing the examination

Led by one of its college faculty members, a development committee of seven college and high school faculty write, review and approve all the questions for the examination.

- Pretesting questions

The program gathers data on every multiple-choice question through a process called pretesting. College faculty administer shorter versions of the exam to their students at the end of a survey course. Student performances on these questions are then analyzed in order to ensure that the AP exam meets psychometric standards.

- Grading the exams

The essays on the exam are graded by college and high school faculty, who meet on a college campus in June. Every year, college and high school faculty participate in a week-long AP Reading, which combines rigorous grading by day with informal research, collegial discussion and academic collaboration in the evening. This last June, over 780 college and high school faculty participated at Trinity University in San Antonio.

- College Comparability Studies

Every four or five years, the program invites select colleges nationwide to participate in a college comparability study that is used to set the standards for the exam. Faculty from colleges with students who have high AP scores administer a mini version of the exam to their students. Performances of these students are then compared to the performances of AP candidates to ensure that AP standards match college level standards.

Supporting AP Teachers

Critical to maintaining high standards and to broadening access to AP is a whole set of resources and professional development opportunities offered by College Board and by collaborating universities. All across the U.S., hundreds of one- and two-day workshops are held during the academic year, and many week-long institutes are held during the summer. In order to carry out such a broad array of professional development—over sixty thousand teachers are involved each year across the pro-

gram—the College Board depends on hundreds of consultants, active teachers and faculty who receive training, endorsement and support from College Board. In addition, College Board endorses only those summer institutes that use consultants, appropriate materials, and standardized evaluations that comply with the quality standards set by a panel of college and school representatives. Finally, a number of publications are available as well, including teacher's guides, released exams, CD-ROMs and other supporting materials.

In addition to these efforts, College Board seeks to continue to learn more about AP teachers, and carries out regular research on AP teaching, including a broad forty-question survey of over thirty thousand teachers regarding their academic background and professional support needs. At present, we are in the midst of a study of AP U.S. History teachers and students, examining instructional practices in light of student performance patterns.

AP Central

One important component of the College Board's professional development efforts is its web site for AP teachers, AP Central, launched in December 2001 (<http://www.apcentral.collegeboard.com>.) The site currently has over two hundred thousand registered users, representing principals, AP coordinators, and college professors, as well as high school teachers. In addition to providing current information on the Advanced Placement Program and the AP Examinations, AP Central features "best practices" teaching articles, lesson plans, curriculum units, online discussion groups, and announcements for AP workshops and Summer Institutes. The site puts teachers in touch with one another and keeps them informed of larger trends in teaching and research affecting their fields.

One important way that AP Central has created connections between AP teachers and higher education is through its Teachers' Resource Catalog. This searchable database contains thousands of reviews of resources commonly used in the AP classroom and the college-level survey course. The review list in each course is drawn up by a content advisor and peer-reviewed by teachers and college faculty; the reviews themselves are similarly written by veteran AP teachers and by college survey instructors. The reviews do not merely provide a synopsis of the content of a given textbook, video, web site, primary source, or other teaching tool: they discuss how it can actually be used in the AP classroom, whether as a student assignment or as background information for a teacher.

AP Central has also been a prime way to join the research community with the needs and interests of high school teachers. Collaboration agreements with professional organizations such as the Organization of American Historians and the American Historical Association have resulted in a series of "state of the field" pieces by leading scholars, discussing how recent developments in historical research will affect the teaching of the U.S. history survey course. College Board is also working with the National Museum of American History and the Smithsonian Institution to produce web, print and online resources for the use of artifacts in teaching the survey. Other innovative content development on the site—such as a series of U.S. history online lesson plans created by the Ohio State University's Teaching Institute—presents teachers with an integrated package of sources and teaching materials about important topics in the AP classroom.

The site is also an ideal portal that allows teachers to connect with other valuable academic resources for the survey course, such as the "Teaching and Textbook" column of the *JAH*, or a series of online teaching modules created by the Columbia American History Online project.

Collaboration with OAH

AP U.S. History has established a strong partnership with the OAH over the last couple of years through a number of initiatives. At the readings, OAH sponsors distinguished faculty who address the readers and share information about the OAH. The College Board distributes the *OAH Magazine of History* to over 8,000 AP U.S. History teachers at its workshops nationwide. More recently, we are proud to announce the formation of a Joint OAH/AP Advisory Board on Teaching the U.S. History Survey Course. The Advisory Board consists of distinguished college and high school faculty who will guide efforts to strengthen the survey and provide resources to AP U.S. History teachers. Faculty involvement is critical to AP and it is our hope that these initiatives will strengthen the ties between AP and the academic community. □

Michael Johanek received his doctorate in U.S. history from Columbia University and is Executive Director of K-12 Professional Development at the College Board; Uma Venkateswaran received her doctorate in U.S. history from Case Western Reserve University and is Assessment Specialist, History and Social Sciences at Educational Testing Service; and Lawrence Charap received his doctorate in U.S. history from Johns Hopkins University and is Head of the Humanities and Social Science Group at the College Board.

OAH-AP Joint Advisory Board Announces New Essay Series

The OAH-AP Joint Advisory Board on Teaching the U.S. History Survey recently announced "America on the World Stage: Essays on the Teaching of the United States History Course," a new feature of both *OAH Magazine of History* and AP Central. This essay series is designed to offer practical assistance to both secondary and college-level instructors in the design and substance of the U.S. History course. The thrust of the series is consistent with the recommendation of the OAH's *LaPietra Report* (2000) that it is time for "rethinking American History in a global age." Such a reframing is necessary, as the authors of the report argue, so that students "will better understand the emergence of the United States in the world and the significance of its power and presence."

Each of the essays in this series will cover a specific chronological period and emphasize both the importance and distinctiveness of the American national experience history in the context of world history. Treatment of themes and subjects will be both comparative and "interactive" (i.e., showing how American events actually interrelate with events elsewhere).

Although the authors of these essays will not be bound by the usual periodization of the survey course, topics will be constructed and presented in a way that allows their smooth placement into the "traditional" syllabus of the survey course. The project will provide instructors with ways to bring new perspectives to the survey course, without necessitating an immediate and complete "make-over" of its structure. □

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