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**Annual Results Reveal Largest and Most Diverse Group of Students Take PSAT/NMSQT<sup>®</sup>, SAT<sup>®</sup>, and AP<sup>®</sup>; Need to Improve Readiness Remains*****Despite growing concerns about testing, assessments linked to opportunity are reaching more students than ever***

NEW YORK — According to the [2015 College Board Program Results](#) released today, a larger and more diverse group of students than ever before is participating in challenging course work and taking advantage of the opportunities associated with College Board programs and assessments.

The PSAT/NMSQT<sup>®</sup>, SAT<sup>®</sup>, and AP<sup>®</sup> Exams always have been opportunity assessments, linking students to scholarships, college admission, and course credit. Anchored in the belief that students today need more opportunities — not more tests — the College Board has redesigned these exams and connected them to a wider array of educational and scholarship benefits.

- Students taking the PSAT/NMSQT will have increased access to money for college through the College Board's partnership with five of the country's leading scholarship providers.
- Students taking the redesigned SAT can benefit from free, personalized, interactive practice tools on KhanAcademy.org.
- The AP Program has partnered with college professors and AP teachers nationwide to create new AP courses in critical STEM fields, while partnering with states to enact uniform credit policies that will help ensure that students receive the college credits they have earned through AP.

The PSAT/NMSQT, SAT, and AP results provide valuable information that can help ensure that more students graduate from high school ready for college and career. To support decision-makers in using these results to effect change for students, the College Board has outlined three strategies to improve access and performance, bolster college graduation rates, and further increase participation in STEM course work. These strategies are part of the College Board's ongoing commitment to connect assessments with opportunities that help more students make successful transitions to college.

"We need fewer tests that do more," said College Board President David Coleman. "We're seeing great momentum through the wide and growing range of opportunities that our assessments provide."

Below are highlights from the *2015 Program Results* and the recommended strategies to support educators and students.

## Access and Participation

Expanding access to actionable assessments and challenging course work is an important way to connect students to college and career opportunities. Significant gains were made in access to the three College Board programs.

- **PSAT/NMSQT: Record number of test-takers.** In the fall of 2014, a record 3.8 million students took the PSAT/NMSQT, up from 3.7 million in 2013 and 3.6 million in 2010.
- **SAT: Growing participation.** A record 1.7 million students from the class of 2015 took the SAT, compared to 1.67 million students from the graduating class of 2014 and 1.65 million in the class of 2011. A total of 25.1 percent of SAT takers in the class of 2015 took the exam using a fee waiver, compared to 23.6 percent in the class of 2014 and 21.3 percent in the class of 2011.
- **AP: Record number of students takes AP Exams.** 2.5 million students took an AP Exam in 2015, compared to 2.3 million in 2014 and just under 2 million in 2011.

## Performance and Success

Increased access to assessments can help educators monitor student progress, understand skill areas in need of improvement, and identify students' potential to succeed in challenging course work. Results from the PSAT/NMSQT are the best predictor of a student's potential to succeed in certain AP courses. **In 2014-15, about 520,000 10th-grade PSAT/NMSQT takers overall showed potential to succeed in at least one AP course.**

AP courses offer students the opportunity to pursue college-level course work while still in high school. Students who succeed on AP Exams are more likely than other students to graduate from college on time, and they have the potential to save time and money through placement and credit-granting policies. **More than 1.5 million students received a score of 3 or higher on an AP Exam in 2015, compared to 1.4 million in 2014 and 1.2 million in 2011.**

Assessment results also can inform whether students are on track for college and career readiness. **Nearly 766,000 (48 percent) of 11th-grade PSAT/NMSQT takers met the grade-level benchmark, indicating they are on track for college and career readiness.** In addition, these results can help educators and policymakers see areas of progress and growth, as well as areas for improvement.

The SAT is a proven and trusted indicator of college readiness and success for students from all backgrounds. **More than 712,000 students (41.9 percent of SAT takers in the class of 2015) met the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark.** High school graduates who reach the benchmark are more likely to enroll in a four-year college and graduate on time than those who do not meet the benchmark.

## Solutions

Looking at the results, the College Board has highlighted three ways in which education leaders and policymakers can help propel students toward college and career opportunities.

1. **Encourage more students to think about higher education and participate in the college-going process.** With the support of states and districts, **SAT School Day**

allows juniors and seniors to take the SAT in their schools on a regular school day and avoids common complications of Saturday testing — such as part-time jobs, family responsibilities, and finding transportation. To date, all states that have made this commitment to access have seen growth in the number of students meeting the benchmark and gaining access to college.

Said Chief of Assessment Cyndie Schmeiser: “We are excited that more students are participating in SAT School Day because of all the benefits that come with it. By removing common barriers for students — like transportation or weekend work commitments — we are able to foster a college-going culture and increase access to college, especially among first-generation college-bound students. Through our assessments, we’re connecting students to opportunity with college application fee waivers and free personalized practice with Khan Academy, thereby encouraging more students to pursue a college education.”

2. **Help students make the most of their college experience and graduate in four years.** The AP Program enlists and encourages talented teachers, provides exciting, in-depth classroom experiences, and gives students the opportunity to master challenging subject matter that often is related to their choice of a college major. **A statewide AP college credit policy** helps ensure that public universities and colleges consistently and fairly recognize AP students’ academic achievements and simultaneously provides these institutions with an innovative solution to improve retention and decrease time to degree. As of August 2015, 17 states — most recently Illinois, Texas, and Virginia — have implemented unified and consistent statewide or systemwide AP policies to ensure that students’ achievements are equitably recognized.
3. **Ensure that more students are inspired and prepared to become the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) professionals our nation needs.** According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the need for jobs in science, technology, engineering, and math is expected to increase by 13 percent between 2012 and 2022 (versus 11 percent growth for all occupations). As a nation, we are not graduating nearly enough STEM majors to meet this need. Research shows that students who take AP math and science courses are more likely than non-AP students to earn degrees in physical science, engineering, and life science disciplines. To address this need, **the AP Program has expanded its STEM offerings.** In 2014-15, their inaugural year, AP Physics 1 and 2 showed the largest growth of any courses in the history of AP.

Senior Vice President of AP and Instruction Trevor Packer said: “We believe that inspiring and preparing students for in-demand STEM careers is an important opportunity for AP math and science courses. The launch of the AP Physics 1 and 2 courses this year attracted nearly double the number of high school students to enroll in algebra-based AP Physics classes, and demand for AP Computer Science A and our forthcoming AP Computer Science Principles is high. These results show that America’s students are eager to take on the challenge of STEM.”

## **A Look Forward**

Last year, the College Board announced it would [redesign](#) the SAT and PSAT/NMSQT and introduce the PSAT™ 10 and PSAT 8/9™ to focus on the skills that recent data show matter most for success in college and career. A parallel focus on depth over breadth has been informing the redesign of AP course frameworks and exams so that teachers and students gain more time to develop the knowledge and skills required in college course work. The redesigned courses and assessments will launch on a rolling basis. Redesigned courses and exams in [AP Art History](#) and [AP European History](#), along with a new course, [AP Capstone™ Research](#), are in place for the 2015-16 school year.

The first administrations of the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 8/9 will take place in October 2015, and the first administrations of the PSAT 10 and SAT will be given in March 2016. Working with College Board members and partners, the redesigned assessments will connect students to more opportunities than ever before, including fee waivers for assessments and college applications, increased access to more scholarships, and free, personalized practice tools on [KhanAcademy.org](#).

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### **About the College Board**

The College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of over 6,000 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, the College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success — including the SAT® and the Advanced Placement Program®. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators, and schools. For further information, visit [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).