

April 8, 2008

The Hon. Gaston Caperton  
President  
The College Board  
45 Columbus Avenue  
New York, NY 10023-6992

Dear Governor Caperton:

As the leading national professional association for college and university teachers and scholars in classics, the American Philological Association strongly opposes the College Board's recent decision to discontinue the Advanced Placement examination in Latin Literature. We urge the College Board to reconsider that decision and to impose a two-year moratorium on implementation while reconsideration goes forward.

We are concerned that the decision to eliminate so important a program seems to have been taken without consulting those who know most about the program and who will be most affected by its end: teachers of Latin in schools and colleges. The sudden announcement of the decision leaves teachers and administrators in schools with insufficient time to redesign their Latin programs before the 2009-2010 academic year.

More than 3,700 high school students took the AP Latin Literature examination last year, and this number has nearly doubled since 1997. This growth seems likely to continue, reflecting the surge in secondary-level Latin enrollments and the popularity of recent revisions in the Latin Literature syllabus. Without the AP Latin Literature syllabus and examination, many students will decide not to continue to advanced levels of Latin in high school; those who do may arrive in college with little or no knowledge of Catullus, Cicero, Horace, and Ovid. These authors are at the center of the classical tradition. The AP Latin Literature program provides not only a national standard for teaching and learning about them, but also an important affirmation of their place in our culture.

While an AP course lasts a single year, Latin students need several years of preliminary study before they take on an AP curriculum. The capstone of that sequence cannot always be Vergil. Latin teachers need the flexibility to offer different authors to their upper level students. Reducing AP offerings in Latin to a single author (Vergil) as the College Board now proposes to do will create a number of difficulties for Classics teachers, difficulties that we would like the opportunity to explain to you in detail.

For all these reasons we urge the College Board to reconsider a decision that will adversely affect Latin instruction at all levels of American education. The American Philological Association stands ready to work with the College Board and other professional associations to strengthen and support the AP program in Latin Literature.

Most sincerely,

Kurt A. Raaflaub  
President

Lee T. Percy  
Vice President for Education