

AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

2014 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 1

The essay score should reflect the essay's quality as a whole. Remember that students had only 15 minutes to read the sources and 40 minutes to write; the essay, therefore, is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards appropriate for an out-of-class assignment. Evaluate it as a draft, making certain to reward students for what they do well.

All essays, even those scored 8 or 9, may contain occasional lapses in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. Such features should enter into a holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case should an essay with many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics score higher than a 2.

9 – Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for the score of 8 and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their argument, thorough in development, or impressive in their control of language.

8 – Effective

Essays earning a score of 8 **effectively** evaluate whether college is worth its cost. They develop their argument by effectively synthesizing* at least three of the sources. The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and convincing, and the link between the sources and the writer's argument is strong. The prose demonstrates a consistent ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not necessarily flawless.

7 – Essays earning a score of 7 meet the criteria for the score of 6 but provide more complete explanation, more thorough development, or a more mature prose style

6 – Adequate

Essays earning a score of 6 **adequately** evaluate whether college is worth its cost. They develop their argument by adequately synthesizing at least three of the sources. The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and sufficient, and the link between the sources and the writer's argument is apparent. The language may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

5 – Essays earning a score of 5 evaluate whether college is worth its cost. They develop their argument by synthesizing at least three sources, but how they use and explain sources is somewhat uneven, inconsistent, or limited. The writer's argument is generally clear, and the sources generally develop the writer's position, but the link between the sources and the writer's argument may be strained. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the writer's ideas.

4 – Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** evaluate whether college is worth its cost. They develop their argument by synthesizing at least two sources, but the evidence or explanations used may be inappropriate, insufficient, or unconvincing. The sources may dominate the writer's attempts at development; the link between the sources and the writer's argument may be weak; or the writer may misunderstand, misrepresent, or oversimplify the sources. The prose generally conveys the writer's ideas but may be inconsistent in controlling the elements of effective writing.

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Question 1 (continued)

3 – Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for the score of 4 but demonstrate less success in evaluating whether college is worth its cost. They are less perceptive in demonstrating understanding of the sources, or their explanation or examples may be particularly limited or simplistic. The essays may show less maturity in control of writing.

2 – Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in evaluating whether college is worth its cost. They may merely allude to knowledge gained from reading the sources rather than citing the sources themselves. The link between the sources and the writer’s argument is weak or absent. These essays may misread the sources, fail to develop a position, or substitute a simpler task by merely summarizing or categorizing the sources or by merely responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated, inaccurate, or inappropriate explanation. The prose of essays that score 2 often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing, such as grammatical problems, a lack of development or organization, or a lack of control.

1 – Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for the score of 2 but are undeveloped, especially simplistic in their explanation, weak in their control of writing, or they do not use or even allude to one source.

0 – Indicates an off-topic response, one that merely repeats the prompt, an entirely crossed-out response, a drawing, or a response in a language other than English.

— Indicates an entirely blank response.

* For the purposes of scoring, synthesis means using sources to develop a position and citing them accurately.

It seems that the ultimate function of American
highschools has become to funnel as many young
minds as possible into institutions of higher learning.
The mindset behind this, though hotly debated, is
that a college education increases the quality of
life of the student, and society as a whole.
While critics contest the idea that college benefits
an individual economically, other areas of
life are undeniably ~~benefit~~ improved by a
college education; ^{the importance of} freedom of thought and
innovation ~~cannot be~~ provided by a
college education cannot be valued under
possible economic discrepancies.

The largest motivator behind going or not
going to college seems to be money. It is
commonly accepted that a college education
results in better financial situations later in
life. It is certainly true that college grads
earn, on average, 20,000 dollars more per
year than those with only a high-school diploma.
(source F) It is also true that college grads
are less likely to be unemployed. (D) These
statistics fail to impress critics. They argue
that those employed in sectors that do not
require a college degree are less expendable



The people that fix cars will always be needed, even during economic downturns. (A) The debate over the actual value of a college education is often boiled down to dollars and cents when, in reality the gains made through an education encompass so much more.

Putting aside the issue of money may seem counter intuitive when considering the worth of an education, but it is necessary; there is more to life. A large part of college is personal growth. (B) Coincidentally, ~~it is also~~ personal growth also plays a large role in perceived quality of life. Taking this into consideration makes college into more than a machine designed to increase an individual's level of monetary success. While some may ~~ex~~ claim that those who work in fulfilling jobs that do not require degrees feel more content, (A) it is impossible to ignore the way in which colleges, "help students discover what they love to do..." (B) Higher education ultimately leads to a better emotional quality of life, and this cannot be discounted when weighing the value of furthering one's education.

The benefits of post-secondary education's



reach further than individual lives. When judging the importance of going to college, one must think of the wider spectrum of the ways in which education can impact society as a whole. College harbors critical thought. (B) Those that attend an institution of higher learning learn how to accurately judge situations and act accordingly. They become agents of change who are capable of producing meaningful advances in the world. (B) There are of course, exceptions. The great minds of silicon valley who made such major advances in the world of technology without a college degree seem to prove the uselessness of a piece of paper with an official stamp, but ~~in reality, this is~~ This is not reality. This isn't the way in which it works out for most people. (E) Do you know why? Because a college degree is more than a scroll; it is proof that an individual has learned how to think and act critically, and this is an invaluable skill.

The economic benefits of a college education may be questionable, but the ways in which individuals are prepared to become contributing and innovative members of society



1

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering
on this page as it is designated in the exam.

1A
(4 of 4)

is too important to ignore. College is an
essential step towards improving the societal
standard of living.

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Today more than ever before it is emphasized of the importance of attending a university after high school to receive a higher education. However, high school students and their parents are wondering if college education is even worth the cost of attending. Though today it may seem like college is a necessity, more and more students are finding that the cost of college cannot compare to the opportunities that could be found elsewhere.

In 2011, Peter Thiel, one of the co-founders of PayPal, offered to pay each of the 24 winners for a new fellowship \$100,000 to not go to college in favor of developing business ideas instead (Wieder). Thiel believes that the traditional college environment does not invoke ideas in students that could be thought of elsewhere, tackling the world. These ideas are the ones that could be used successfully to lead new entrepreneurial excursions that would impact society and develop new companies and jobs for the future. The traditional college environment just does not provide opportunities to develop these ideas quickly. To add to this, college costs are soaring and "students today are taking on more debt, and recently tightened bankruptcy laws make it more difficult to shake that debt" (Wieder). Factors like this complicate the decision to attend



college even further. According to a 2011 report on a national survey of 2,142 adults ages 18 and older, 57% of Americans agree that colleges fail to give students with good value for the money they have spent to attend and 75% of Americans say college is too expensive to afford (Pew). When over half of the adult American population thinks college and a higher education is too expensive and not worth the investment, then there is a problem. Supporting this claim is data from a think tank that addressed the issue of new entry-level wages for men and women leaving college. Surprisingly, though there is an emphasis on going to college in our society, college graduates now are earning less than they did ten years ago (chart). Even now, "with unemployment expected to remain above 8% well into 2014, it will likely be many years before young college graduates—or any workers—see substantial wage growth" (Shierholz).

With all this evidence supporting the lack of need for college learning, it is important to refer back to our society's laurels and focus on developing our young adults' characters. "For a young person to succeed in the world, 81% say a good work ethic is extremely important and 57% say the same about knowing how to get along with people" (Pew). These traits and others can be developed outside of a higher education and better



Write in the box the number of the question you are answering
on this page as it is designated in the exam.

1 1B
(3 of 3)

prepare young adults for life in the real world. The
cost of college cannot be compared to the opportunities
that could be found elsewhere.

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Do you want to grow up to be like Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, or Barack Obama? Do you want to be successful and have millions of dollars? I'm not positive that you will ever be successful like these inspiring people but one way to become successful is you have to go to college. Everytime I mention the word "college", many of my friends and families ~~panic~~^{yell} and start to panic. The cost of college may be very expensive, but I strongly believe college education is worth the cost! Entering college could be very ~~beneficial~~ beneficial to you in the future. Once you ~~graduate~~^{graduate} college, you will have a successful job and career, and you will not make your parents proud but you will also make yourself proud ~~and~~.

Primarily, a college education is worth the cost because you will never find yourself working in a fast food restaurant such as McDonald's or Burger King. However, many people don't have a chance to work at "fast food restaurants" ~~because~~^{because} they can't afford college because their parents can't afford it. There are plethora ways, one can pay for college! First of foremost, there's financial aid. "...once financial aid is taken into account, Average net tuition and fees at public four-year colleges this past year were only about \$2,000". Many people are torturing themselves by coming retail sales people, home estate, plumbers, etc.



1

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

1C
(2 of 3)

because they can't afford college. Sure, they might look happy, but are they really? ~~Many people think that education is a waste of money.~~ "Education helps people do higher-skilled work, get jobs with better paying companies or open their own businesses." (Source D). In the end, Education ^{provides} ~~helps~~ ^{happiness} ~~people~~ and successful.

In addition, a college education is worth the cost and many people would agree. A 2011 report on a survey of 2,142 adults ages 18 and older shows why college benefits them. Having a college education will not only improve your knowledge but only improves your character as well. Statics ^{states} ~~say~~ "61% say a good work ethic is extremely important and 57% say the same about knowing how to get along with people, just 42% say the same about a college education." (Source F) College doesn't always have to be about the cost, because college has a good investment. College benefits one's character by making them more mature and grow intellectually.

Furthermore, a college education is worth the cost because it will earn a living. Many students are being pressured about not going to college because they either want to build



things or fix things. Although, "somebody has to ~~do~~
actually do things: fix our cars, unclog our toilets
and build our houses" (source A) that doesn't
mean they have to force themselves on doing these
jobs. And if they are not forced, they are
obviously taking the easy road and not
challenging themselves for more entry-level jobs.
College education will help students to become
more "knowledge workers".

To sum up, a college education is really
important to have in your life because it
illustrates how determine you are to
become successful like Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey,
or Barack Obama. I strongly believe a
college education is worth the cost because
there's scholarships, financial aid, and loans
to you help through it. A college education
can benefit one's ~~whole~~ entire life in a
blink of an eye.

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2014 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 1

Overview

Question 1, the synthesis prompt, opened with a brief account of differing ways to assess the value of a college education in the context of rising unemployment among college graduates. Students were then instructed to read six short sources, one containing a visual text charting the average wages of male and female college graduates from 1979 to 2010, and to “use” the sources to develop their own arguments about whether college is worth its cost. Source A was a book excerpt that made a case for preferring hands-on trade labor over the cubicle office work many college students are destined for after graduation; Source B extolled the multifaceted values (economic, civic, personal) of a liberal arts education over more specifically career-focused higher education; Source C charted the downward trend of college graduates’ salaries from 2000 to 2010; Source D argued that a college education is a wise financial investment; Source E gave an account of \$100,000 fellowships offered by one of the founders of PayPal to entice students to be mentored by Silicon Valley innovators instead of attending college; and Source F listed public survey responses to a series of questions on respondents’ beliefs about the values of college education and the qualities that best equip individuals for employment. Students were further asked to cite the sources they used in their arguments, identifying them either by author or by letters assigned to the sources. This question was intended to elicit students’ performance of several skills in combination: critical reading of the six sources, synthesis of information and perspectives drawn from three or more of the sources, construction and articulation of a source-informed argument *evaluating* the worth of college, and accurate citation of sources. This question, more than some of the synthesis questions from years past, invited students to augment the sources by drawing from their own experience and observations of college costs, educational and social opportunities, and financial, as well as other, outcomes. In “using” the sources to “develop” their arguments, students were not constrained to use sources only as support. In addition to providing support, for instance, sources could provoke an argument or offer opposing arguments that students could consider and respond to in refining their own arguments.

Students were told to “avoid merely summarizing the sources,” in the hope that they would *analyze* the individual sources and *put them in conversation with one another* in the process of constructing their own arguments. For instance, many students did this by using Source D’s account of the widening gap between starting wages for workers with and without a college education to critique Source C’s report that salaries for college graduates had declined during the recession; Source D enabled these students to point out that salaries for workers without a college education had declined even more precipitously during the same period. Similarly, many students used sources A, B, and E to develop an account of noneconomic educational values not acknowledged by Sources C and D. Some students successfully employed rhetorical analysis of the sources, for instance, by noting that the author of Source B, who advocated liberal arts education, was himself the president of a liberal arts college and therefore personally and professionally invested in his argument, while the cofounder of PayPal, though he disparaged college as a “default” choice, had himself benefitted in a number of ways from his own college education at Stanford.

The prompt also directed students to make their own arguments the focus of their essays. That is, they were expected to use the sources to develop their own arguments, not to summarize or interpret the arguments in the sources as ends in themselves, nor to agree or disagree with one or more of the sources. Because their own arguments were to be central to their essays, students needed to explain their reasoning as they encountered the sources and constructed their arguments.

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Question 1 (continued)

Sample: 1A

Score: 8

This essay effectively evaluates whether college is worth its cost. It argues that although the “debate over the actual value of a college education is often boiled down to dollars and cents . . . in reality the gains made through an education encompass so much more.” The essay effectively discusses the issue of money through source-informed argumentation using Sources A, D, and F, but then it continues by arguing that “there is more to life,” using Source B for support. This point is fully developed through a discussion about personal growth, which is gained through the college experience and “plays a large role in perceived quality of life.” The essay then extends the argument of benefits from the individual to “society as a whole,” noting that college “harbors critical thought,” and that those with a college education can become “agents of change who are capable of producing meaningful [*sic*] advances in the world.” The essay concludes that, no matter what the economic benefits of a college education, “the ways in which individuals are prepared to become contributing and innovative members of society is [*sic*] too important to ignore.” The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and convincing, and the link between the sources and the argument is strong. For its thorough development and control of language, this essay earned a score of 8.

Sample: 1B

Score: 6

This essay adequately evaluates whether college is worth its cost and argues that “the cost of college cannot be compared to the opportunities that could be found elsewhere.” The link between the argument and Source E is apparent, as the essay contends that the “traditional college environment just does not provide opportunities to develop these ideas quickly.” The essay moves with some facility into Source F, using the sentence “Factors like this complicate the decision to attend college even further” to transition into a discussion of the statistics presented in that source. The essay ends with a slight inconsistency (“With all this evidence supporting the lack of need for college learning, it is important to refer back to our society’s laurels and focus on developing our young adults’ characters”), but overall, the evidence and explanations are appropriate and sufficient, and the prose is clear.

Sample: 1C

Score: 4

This essay is inadequate in evaluating whether college is worth its cost. It begins by stating the position that a college education is worth the cost, but overall, the essay is insufficient and unconvincing. The essay cites the sources but makes an inadequate link between the sources and an argument for its position. For example, the citation of several statistics (which demonstrate that the surveyed Americans value character over a college education) from Source F is followed by two unrelated assertions that college “has a good investment” and that “[c]ollege benefit [*sic*] one’s character.” The essay asserts that a “college education is worth the cost because it will earn a living” but uses Source A unsuccessfully for support. The prose generally conveys the student’s ideas but is inconsistent in its control of the elements of effective writing. For these reasons, the essay earned a score of 4.