Essay: What Economics Means to Me

It is not that I thought economics didn't pertain to me before taking an AP course. I saw its importance relating to commonly televised topics like inflation, unemployment, and stocks, and while those terms had the potential to relate to me, most of them didn't. It wasn't until after months of learning about the subject I came to find that economics is responsible for more than what the media portrays; every choice made beneath my roof plays a vital role in today's complicated economic world.

This fall, I was tasked with the daunting process of deciding where to attend college. At first, my criteria only consisted of a warm location and stellar academics, but as I began learning about concepts like opportunity cost, marginal benefit, and scarcity, my view changed in its entirety.

I no longer see the process as a simple decision of what I like and dislike in each school. Instead, I view it as a verdict that places me deeper in the world of economics. I can now see how my decision is determined by the opportunity costs that are inevitable in every potential choice. If I go to a warm location, I will be giving up the opportunity to go to a school that is close to home. Or if I choose a place with better academics on the East Coast, I forfeit my desire for optimal weather. Additionally, my money, a scarce resource in the process, will ultimately determine if my choice is feasible. Scarcity forces me to choose what I need most, and I have to find a balance between cost and value in order to maximize my marginal benefit.

My knowledge of the economy forces me to think about every decision. I think of how the economy affects me and equally as important, how I affect the economy.

My family has always invested in stocks for income and savings. For a while, I believed that this choice only reflected my family's financial decisions. I now recognize that not only do our investments define us on a microeconomic level, but we also contribute to the economy on a scale much bigger than my own home. We are buying shares of companies and aiding the expansion of integral businesses. We are promoting innovation with our dollar by putting our confidence, our values into these shares, prompting them to succeed.

As I learn more about the economy, I see how we vote with our dollar in our capitalistic society. Directly, we buy things from companies we want to succeed and boycott the ones we disagree with.

We also vote on our dollar. In this year's election, this was the first time I grasped that people don't just vote on a candidate, we vote on policies as well. We vote for candidates who will decide on fiscal policies that stabilize the economy, influencing society as a whole. We look out for our microeconomic concerns as the Central Bank will ultimately decide on interest rates that affect our personal bank accounts and savings.
Examples of my newfound perspective on the world are endless. It's as if I can see through a new pair of eyes and read the fine print of my actions. I understand how my small, everyday choices contribute to something bigger than what I may be able to see. With my part-time job, I exchange my human capital for money. When I go to the grocery store, I am impacting supply and demand. I contribute to someone's income and employment. I influence an economy that runs from my household up to the government. I now take note of how my seemingly meaningless actions impact a system beyond my immediate reach.

Economics isn't just something that could potentially or eventually affect me, its meaning finds me every day and I contribute to the effect it has on our country. So, now when asked what economics means to me, I can see that it's not just what economics does for me, it's also what I do for economics. It is all of us—average Americans and the system, working in unison to create what we see today.