A primer on Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs).

In order to increase the ability of institutions to serve Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students, the Higher Education Opportunity Act authorized the Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) program in 2009. Two years later, AANAPISIs were incorporated into Title III of the Higher Education Act and were officially added to the list of minority-serving institutions alongside Historically Black Colleges, Predominantly Black Institutions, Hispanic-Serving Institutions and Tribal Colleges and Universities.¹

The AANAPISI program provides discretionary grants, averaging between $200,000 and $300,000 per year for five years, to eligible institutions of higher education to enable them to improve academic quality, increase self-sufficiency and strengthen capacity to make a substantial contribution to the success of AAPI students. To be eligible for AANAPISI status, an institution’s undergraduate student enrollment must be at least 10 percent Asian American or Native American Pacific Islander. Additionally, a school needs to demonstrate that at least half of all enrolled students have financial need.²

AANAPISI grants encourage schools to provide students with support services, develop summer bridge programs between two-year and four-year colleges and universities, strengthen student advising and academic support, provide professional development to faculty, develop smart classrooms, create first-year experience programs, establish student learning communities and implement other technical enhancements to classrooms. AANAPISI funding also provides resources to increase access to leadership development and mentorship opportunities for students. AANAPISI dollars may be used to conduct research on the AAPI population and to provide staff development opportunities to help AANAPISI administrators, faculty and campus personnel better understand the complexities of the AAPI communities.³

In 2014, 19 AANAPISIs received funding, for a total distribution of $7.7 million dollars. This was a slight decrease (about $200,000) from 2013, though the same number of grants were awarded.⁴ A complete list of currently funded AANAPISIs can be found here.
The types of institutions designated as AANAPISIs are wide-ranging and include community colleges, regional campuses and state flagship institutions. Most are concentrated in areas with high percentages of AAPIs, including California, Hawaii, Illinois, New York, Massachusetts, Maryland, Texas, Washington and Guam. Importantly, many more institutions qualify for AANAPISI designation than are awarded limited funding; only 14 percent of institutions that meet the requirements for AANAPISI status receive federal AANAPISI dollars. In 2009, a report from the Congressional Research Service found that 116 institutions met the criteria for the designation. The CARE Project replicated this study in 2011 and found that there were 148 institutions that met the requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Institutions</th>
<th>Two-Year Numerical Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>+32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>+12</td>
</tr>
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Who AANAPISIs Serve

While AANAPISIs serve all students, their focus is on the AAPI population, a population that is growing rapidly in the United States – so rapidly that projections suggest that it will double by 2050.
The AAPI student population is considerably diverse. The AAPI population includes more than 48 ethnicities, over 300 languages and a variety of immigration histories, cultures, religions and socioeconomic statuses. According to the 2000 Census, of the 10.5-12.2 million Asian Americans, the largest ethnic groups were Chinese (2.5 million), Filipino (1.9 million), and Asian Indian (1.7 million). Together, these groups comprised approximately 60 percent of the Asian American population. Korean and Japanese Americans comprised another 18 percent of the population. Southeast Asians which include Vietnamese, Hmong, Cambodian, and Laotian Americans comprised another 16 percent.

AAPI students and their families also live in diverse parts of the United States, including large communities on the West Coast and in the Northeast. Below is a map of where AAPIs live in the continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands.

AAPIs in Higher Education

Unsurprisingly given the variety that exists in the AAPI community, AAPI students make up an incredibly diverse and growing segment of the U.S. college population. Yet AAPI students are often left out of conversations about students of color and are seldom recognized in academic research as facing challenges similar to other racial minorities. Instead, when AAPIs are included in the discourse on access and equity in higher education, they are referred to as the “model minority,” a reference point against which other groups are compared. Researchers and policymakers often assume these students have high educational achievement and tend to overlook the need to perform research and institute policies to address their needs.
The model minority myth stems from looking at the AAPI community as a single monolith, but the diversity in the community reveals the significant need in some sub-groups and the relative success of others. Despite perceptions about high achievement among AAPI students, research tells us that many AAPI ethnic sub-groups are actually underserved by higher education.

For instance, the figure below breaks down by ethnicity the rate of AAPI adults who have not attended college. Note the variation: 51 percent of Vietnamese, 63 percent of Hmong, 65 percent of Laotian and 66 percent of Cambodian adults living in the U.S. have either not enrolled in or not completed a postsecondary education. By contrast, only 20 percent of Asian Indian and 23 percent of Filipino-Americans have not earned a degree.

**Figure 5. Percentage of Adults (25 Years or Older) Who Have Not Attended College, by AAPI Ethnicity 2006-2008**

- **Cambodian**: 65.6%
- **Laotian**: 65.5%
- **Hmong**: 63.2%
- **Vietnamese**: 51.1%
- **Thai**: 26.0%
- **Bangladeshi**: 36.8%
- **Chinese**: 34.6%
- **Pakistani**: 30.2%
- **Korean**: 25.3%
- **Japanese**: 27.1%
- **Filipino**: 23.8%
- **Asian Indian**: 20.4%
- **Pacific Islander**:
  - **Tongan**: 47.5%
  - **Samoa**: 56.8%
  - **Guamanian**: 53.0%
  - **Native Hawaiian**: 43.3%

*Note: Data includes individuals with high school attainment as their highest level of education. It does not include individuals with some college and no degree.*

*Source: American Community Survey, 3-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)*
What’s more, this data does not reflect those in the AAPI community who lack even a high school diploma or the equivalent; 34 percent of Laotian, 39 percent of Cambodian and 40 percent of Hmong adults in the U.S. lack a high school diploma or the equivalent.\textsuperscript{xii}

**Challenges Facing AAPI Students in the Postsecondary Landscape**

There are a number of challenges facing AAPI students in the U.S. higher education system. These include parent education level, language barriers, immigration status, family support and guidance, institutional climate and the model minority myth.\textsuperscript{xiii} Many AAPI students play the roles of translators, caretakers, breadwinners and cultural ambassadors for their families – 60 percent of AAPI students report that they are expected to play the part of cultural ambassador while they are enrolled in school.\textsuperscript{xiv} These demands can place physical, emotional and mental strain on students that puts them at risk of not finishing their degree.

AANAPISIs are succeeding in spite of the large proportions of their students who arrive on campus with serious financial need, underprepared for college-level work and, oftentimes, as first-generation students, a status that comes with its own set of challenges.\textsuperscript{xv} More than 80 percent of the students at Guam Community College were eligible for financial aid, and 58 percent of the students were older than the traditional college age (22 years old).

We also know that poverty affects many AAPI students and their families and presents serious challenges to affording, attending and completing college. Twenty percent of AAPI students receive a Pell grant and the number of AAPI students living in poverty increased by 38 percent between 2007 and 2011.

**Impact of AANAPISIs**

AANAPISIs are seeing success in serving many in their communities, particularly with respect to enrolling and conferring degrees to AAPI students. Though AANAPISIs made up only 4 percent of all degree-granting institutions in 2010, they enrolled 41 percent of all AAPI students and 75 percent of all low-income AAPI students in that year. In terms of degree completion, AANAPISIs conferred 47 percent of all AAPI associate degrees and 25 percent of all bachelor’s degrees to AAPI students in 2010.\textsuperscript{xvi}

AANAPISIs serve high numbers of AAPI students across the board, but they also serve some of the highest need communities of AAPI students, according to a 2014 National Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Research in Education report. For example, the neighborhoods served by the University of Hawaii at Hilo had an average poverty rate for Pacific Islanders of 20 percent — nearly twice the national poverty rate of 12 percent. In the
neighborhoods served by South Seattle College in Washington State, one of the first designated AANAPISIs, 58 percent of Asian Americans and 71 percent of Pacific Islanders had a high school diploma or less. The report indicates that these findings are consistent with many other funded AANAPISIs. xvii

AANAPISIs are also succeeding in creating partnerships with other Minority Serving Institutions to serve even more minority students. South Seattle College started the Strengthen Pathways for AAPI Students to Become Teachers program through a partnership with 4-year Hispanic Serving Institution Heritage University in Toppenish, WA. xviii This provided opportunities for South Seattle students to earn teaching degrees and brought needed diversity to Heritage University, which historically had very low numbers of AAPI students enrolled overall (less than 1 percent) and few AAPI students each year in their education program. This partnership demonstrates how Minority Serving Institutions can work together to serve multiple populations facing similar challenges.

The Future of AANAPISIs

Advocates working with the AAPI population and AANAPISIs point to the following ways to improve higher education outcomes for AAPIs and to strengthen AANAPISI’s capacity to serve them:

- **Raise Awareness.** Increase public and stakeholder understanding of the AAPI population; debunk the model minority myth so the AAPI community is not seen as a monolith but instead as a diverse amalgamation of ethnicities.
- **Fund Research.** Commission and provide funding for additional research on AANAPISIs and other institutions that serve high concentrations of AAPI students to learn what is working to improve results for these students and what is not.
- **Improve Data Collection.** Push the research community, both K-12 and higher education, to disaggregate and cross-tabulate AAPI data by race, ethnicity, gender and generational status to get a more accurate picture of student needs and outcomes.
- **Encourage MSI Partnerships.** In addition to increasing funds for AANAPISIs, create pathways for AANAPISIs and MSIs (particularly HSIs) to work together to serve their students, many of whom have similar challenges and needs.
- **Recruit AAPIs to Underrepresented Fields.** Improve recruitment to increase the number of AAPI faculty and administrators in higher education and focus on getting AAPI students into underrepresented fields, such as education and law.

The AANAPISI program has been the most significant federal investment in the AAPI student community to date. Not only does it recognize the unique needs that AAPI students may face at the postsecondary level, it provides resources to increase completion rates, particularly among low-income AAPI students. While much remains to be seen about this relatively new federal
program, it seems clear that AANAPISIs are well positioned to improve enrollment, retention and graduation rates for AAPI students.

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1 U.S. Department of Education AANAPISI Program: [http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/list/asian-americans-initiative/aanapisi.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/list/asian-americans-initiative/aanapisi.html)
2 U.S. Department of Education AANAPISI Program: [http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/list/asian-americans-initiative/aanapisi.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/list/asian-americans-initiative/aanapisi.html)
3 U.S. Department of Education AANAPISI Program: [http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/list/asian-americans-initiative/aanapisi.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/list/asian-americans-initiative/aanapisi.html)
4 U.S. Department of Education AANAPISI Program: [http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/list/asian-americans-initiative/aanapisi.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/list/asian-americans-initiative/aanapisi.html)
9 U.S. Department of Education AANAPISI FAQ: [http://www2.ed.gov/programs/aanapi/faq.html#q1](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/aanapi/faq.html#q1)

 xv Measuring the Impact of MSI-funded Programs on Student Success: 

 xvi Measuring the Impact of MSI-funded Programs on Student Success: 


 xviii Measuring the Impact of MSI-funded Programs on Student Success: 