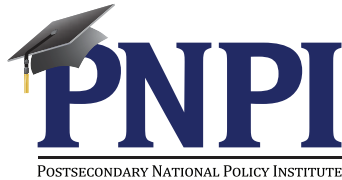# Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions

Updated May, 2020

The Postsecondary National Policy Institute (PNPI) provides current and prospective policymakers with a substantive and collegial foundation on which to build federal higher education policies that drive positive outcomes for students and their families.

For more information please visit pnpi.org.

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 (MSIs) alongside Historically Black Colleges, Predominantly Black Institutions (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). The AANAPISI program allows eligible institutions of higher education to improve their academic quality, increase their self-sufficiency, and strengthen their capacity to make a substantial contribution to the success of AAPI students. [i]

AANAPISI grants were authorized by the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007, which granted eligible institutions access to a limited pool of federal funds. 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. In addition to being an accredited institution, schools need to demonstrate that at least half of their enrolled students received federal financial aid, and must maintain less-than-average expenditures per FTE student. Institutions that meet these standards can apply to be designated as an AANAPISI by the U.S. Department of Education. Once an institution has been designated as an AANAPISI, they may apply for discretionary grants, averaging between $300,000 and $350,000 per year for five years, with a maximum of $1,750,000.[ii]

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, and develop an endowment fund to meet costs for maintenance and technological upgrades. AANAPISI funding also provides resources to increase access to leadership development, create first-year experience programs, establish student learning communities, and provide 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.[iii]

 In 2016, the most recent available data, 25 AANAPISIs received funding, for a total distribution of just over $8.0 million dollars. This was a slight increase (about $500,000) from 2015, when 21 grants were awarded. A complete list of currently funded AANAPISIs can be found here.[iv]

Enrollment/Demographics

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. The number of institutions designated as AANAPISIs has increased over time, from 116 institutions in 2009 to 133 in 2016. Many more institutions qualify for AANAPISI designation than are awarded limited funding; only 25 of 133 eligible institutions received federal AANAPISI dollars in 2016.[v]

Who AANAPISIs Serve

While AANAPISIs serve all students, they play a critical role in educating the AAPI population, a community that is one of the fastest-growing populations in the United States. The current AAPI population is nearly 20 million in the United States and it is projected to double by 2060. Given rapid increases in the AAPI population, the AANAPISI eligibility of institutions is rising quickly.[vi]

The AAPI student population is considerably diverse and includes more than 48 ethnicities, over 300 languages, and a variety of immigration histories, cultures, religions and socioeconomic statuses. According to the 2016 American Community Survey, of the 21.4 million Asian Americans, the largest ethnic groups were Chinese (4.9 million), Asian Indian (4.1 million), and Filipino (3.9 million). Together, these groups made up approximately 60 percent of the Asian American population. Korean and Japanese Americans accounted for another 15 percent of the population. Southeast Asians which include Vietnamese, Hmong, Cambodian, and Laotian Americans made up another 13 percent.[vii]

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.[viii] Below is a map of where AAPIs live in the continental U.S., Alaska and Hawaii.
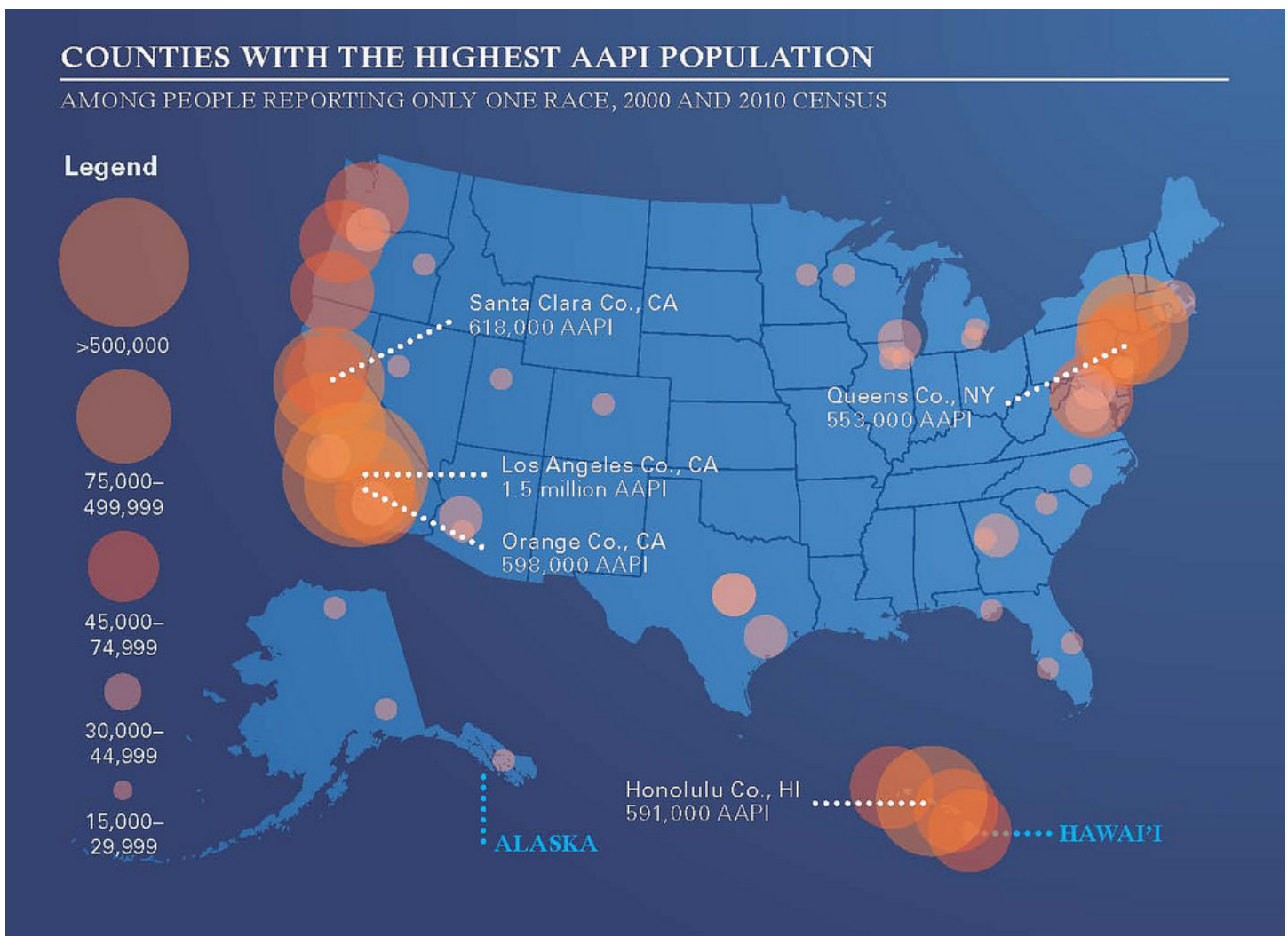
Source: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/aapi_demographics_counties.jpg
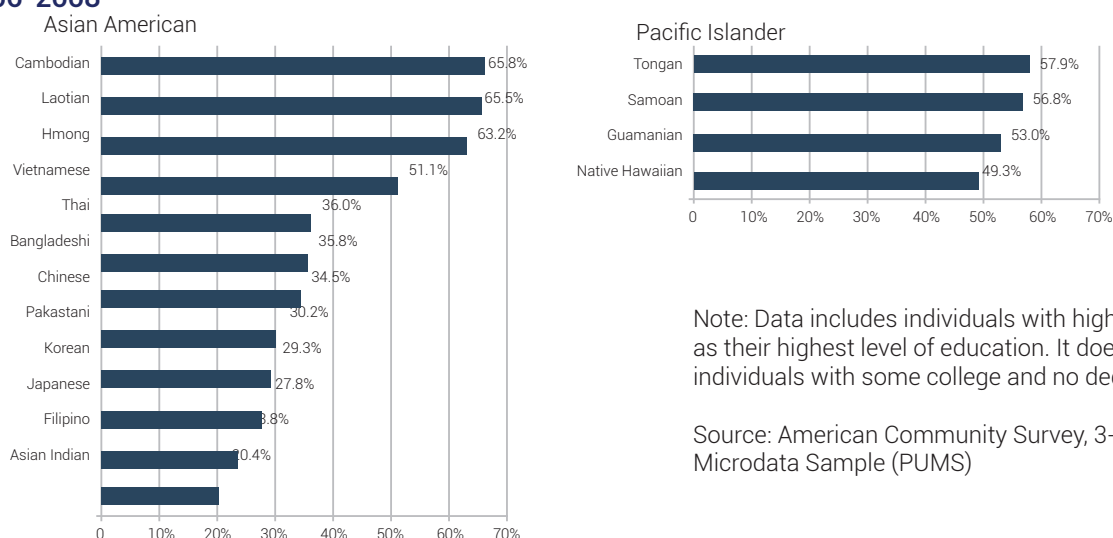
AAPIs in Higher Education

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 often referred to as the "model minority,"[ix] a reference point against which other groups are compared. Researchers and policymakers often assume that all of these students have high educational achievement and tend to overlook the need for AAPI student supports.

The model minority myth stems from looking at the AAPI community as a monolith. In truth, there are great disparities in academic achievement and economic status by sub-groups. Ignoring these disparities has led to entire ethnic sub-groups being underserved by higher education.

For instance, the figure below breaks down by ethnicity the rate of AAPI adults who have not attended college.[x] 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

Asian American

Ethnicity	Percentage
Cambodian	65.8%
Laotian	65.5%
Hmong	63.2%
Vietnamese	51.1%
Thai	36.0%
Bangladeshi	35.8%
Chinese	34.5%
Pakastani	30.2%
Korean	29.3%
Japanese	27.8%
Filipino	3.8%
Asian Indian	0.4%

Pacific Islander

Ethnicity	Percentage
Tongan	57.9%
Samoan	56.8%
Guamanian	53.0%
Native Hawaiian	49.3%

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.[xi]

Challenges Facing AAPI Students in the Postsecondary Landscape

There are a number of challenges facing AAPI students in the U.S. higher education system: parent education levels, language barriers, issues with immigration status, lack of family support and guidance, and the prevailing climate of their institutions. Sixty percent of AAPI students are also burdened with the pressures of playing the roles of translator, caretaker, breadwinner, and cultural ambassador for their families while enrolled in school.[xiii] These demands can place physical, emotional, financial, and mental strain on students that puts them at risk of not finishing their degree.

Large proportions of AAPI students also arrive on campus with serious financial need, lack of preparation for college-level work, and — often as first-generation students — a status that comes with its own set of challenges.[xiv] 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 8 percent of all degree-granting institutions in 2016, they enrolled 49 percent of all AAPI students. They conferred 47 percent of all AAPI associate degrees and 25 percent of all bachelor's degrees to AAPI students in 2010.[xvi]

According to a 2014 National Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Research in Education report, AANAPISIs also serve some of the most underrepresented and highest need communities of AAPI students. For example, the neighborhoods served by the University of Hawaii at Hilo have an average poverty rate for Pacific Islanders of 20 percent — nearly twice the national 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 report having only a high school diploma or less. These types of findings are consistent with the findings of many other funded AANAPISIs.[xvi]

AANAPISIs are also succeeding in creating partnerships with other MSIs to serve even more minority students. Many AANAPISIs serve large percentages of Latino students and apply to receive funding designated for Hispanic Serving Institutions as well.[i] South Seattle College started the Strengthen Pathways for AAPI Students to Become Teachers program through a partnership with four-year Hispanic Serving Institution Heritage University in Toppenish, WA.[xvii] 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 MSIs 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[xviii] 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, but it also provides resources to increase completion rates, particularly among low-income AAPI students. While much remains to be seen about this relatively new federal program, AANAPISIs are positioned to improve enrollment, retention, and graduation rates for AAPI students.

Sources:

[i] U.S. Department of Education AANAPISI Program: https://www2.ed.gov/programs/aanapi/index.html

[ii] U.S. Department of Education AANAPISI FAQ: https://www2.ed.gov/programs/aanapi/faq.html#q5

[iii] U.S. Department of Education AANAPISI FAQ: https://www2.ed.gov/programs/aanapi/faq.html#q11

[iv] U.S. Department of Education AANAPISI Program: https://www2.ed.gov/programs/aanapi/funding.html

[v] U.S. Department of Education AANAPISI Program: https://www2.ed.gov/programs/aanapi/aanapi-eligibles-2016.pdf

[vi] Teranishi, R. "Asians in the Ivory Tower.: Dilemmas of Racial Inequality in American Higher Education." Teachers College Press: New York, NY (2010).

[vii] American Community Survey: https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2018/asian-american.html

[viii] U.S. Department of Education AANAPISI FAQ: http://www2.ed.gov/programs/aanapi/faq.html#q1

[ix] Teranishi, R. "Asians in the Ivory Tower: Dilemmas of Racial Inequality in American Higher Education." Teachers College Press: New York, NY (2010).

[x] The Relevance of Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders in the College Completion Agenda." National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2011. Retrieved from: http://care.gseis.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/2011_CARE_Report.pdf

[xi] "Profile of Undergraduate students: 2011–2012." National Center for Education Statistics, October 2014. Retrieved from: http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015167.pdf

[xii] A National Report on the Needs and Experiences of Low-Income Asian American and Pacific Islander Scholarship Recipients." Asian and Pacific Islander Scholarship Fund, 2013. Retrieved from: https://apiascholars.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/APIASF_2013_perspectives.pdf

[xiii] "A National Report on the Needs and Experiences of Low-Income Asian American and Pacific Islander Scholarship Recipients." Asian and Pacific Islander Scholarship Fund, 2013. Retrieved from: https://apiascholars.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/04/APIASF_2013_perspectives.pdf

[xiv] Measuring the Impact of MSI-funded Programs on Student Success: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED573714.pdf

[xv] AANAPISI.net: http://www.aanapisi.net/aanapisi_infographic

[xvi] The Relevance of Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders in the College Completion Agenda." National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2011. Retrieved from: http://care.gseis.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/2011_CARE_Report.pdf

[xvii] Measuring the Impact of MSI-funded Programs on Student Success: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED573714.pdf

[xviii] The Relevance of Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders in the College Completion Agenda." National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2011. Retrieved from: http://care.gseis.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/2011_CARE_Report.pdf

Additional Sources

Infographics & Data. Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions.

Measuring the Impact of MSI-Funded Programs on Student Success: Findings from the Evaluation of Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions. National Commission on Asian American & Pacific Islander Research in Education, April 2014.

On Their Own Terms: Two-Year Minority Serving Institutions. University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, 2015.

Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions Program: Frequently Asked Questions. U.S. Department of Education.

Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) U.S. Department of Education.

[i] An institution of higher education (IHE) may have a Title V, Part A, Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) grant and a Title III, Part F, AANAPISI grant simultaneously. An institution may not have a Title V, Part A and Title III, Part A simultaneously. An institution can have any Title III, Part F grants simultaneously.

Updated May 2020