INPRACTICE

AANAPISIs in Context and Practice: Strategies for Serving Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Students

By Mike Hoa Nguyen ⓘ, Kristine Jan Espinoza ⓘ, Demeturie Toso-Lafaele Gogue, and Dong Manh Dinh

ESTABLISHED IN 2007, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) have worked to improve the availability and quality of higher education for Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) college students across the United States and the Pacific Islands. Through culturally relevant curriculum and services, AANAPISIs promote and strengthen APIDA student engagement and civic participation while also increasing their academic achievement and success. Today, nearly 40 percent of all APIDA undergraduates are enrolled at an AANAPISI. As the fastest growing population in the nation, APIDAs are expected to attend college in greater numbers with the likelihood of enrolling at an AANAPISI.

AANAPISIs offer unique and innovative approaches to foster student learning and development that can be adopted by a vast array of institutions. Furthermore, we can gain new insights on APIDA student populations and how to best serve them in different educational contexts if we look to the important work that AANAPISIs are engaged in. Thus, greater attention on AANAPISIs is necessary to ensure that equitable access and educational opportunity exists for APIDA college students. Toward that effort, we aim to provide new and updated data on AANAPISIs, with specific attention on demographic shifts and federal funding, as well as discuss innovative institutional initiatives that enhance student success. Additionally, we offer implications and recommendations for policy, practice, and research in order to improve the operations and delivery of AANAPISIs.

Becoming an AANAPISI

THE AANAPISI PROGRAM, housed in the U.S. Department of Education, is a competitive grant that provides federal funding for colleges and universities to serve APIDA populations. There are two primary eligibility requirements that institutions must meet in order to become an AANAPISI. First, the institution must maintain a 10 percent APIDA undergraduate population. Second, the institution must meet Section 312(b) of the Higher Education Act's basic eligibility criteria of Title III and V programs. This is often detailed as enrolling a significant proportion of low-income students and

maintaining a low average of educational and general expenditures. Each year, the U.S. Department of Education produces a matrix that details which institutions meet eligibility requirements to become an AANAPISI. Once a college or university satisfies these requirements, that institution can apply for federal funding through the AANAPISI grant.

While AANAPISIs comprised only 5.1 percent of the over 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States, they enrolled nearly 40 percent of all APIDA undergraduates in the nation.

Department of Education 2020 eligibility matrix, 160 institutions are currently eligible for AANAPISI funding. Of these colleges and universities, 38 have been funded since the AANAPISI program was created in 2007, and they are located across the United States and the Pacific Islands.

AANAPISIs continue to serve a large and growing proportion of all APIDA college students

AANAPISIs in Context: Demographics and Funding

THE NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS that meet AANAPISI eligibility requirements has increased over time. Since its inception, over 217 colleges and universities have been identified as eligible AANAPISIs. However, given dynamic enrollment patterns, some of these institutions no longer satisfy all of the AANAPISI eligibility requirements outlined above. As a result, per the U.S.

MIKE HOA NGUYEN, PhD, is an assistant professor of higher education at the University of Denver. His research examines the benefits and consequences of public policy instruments in expanding or constraining the operations of colleges and universities.

KRISTINE JAN ESPINOZA is a Pilipina PhD student in the Higher Education program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her research interests include higher education organization and law, and the influence of minority-serving institutions on minoritized students' educational trajectories.

DEMETURIE TOSO-LAFAELE GOGUE is a Pacific Islander PhD student in the Higher Education and Organizational Change division at UCLA. His research interests include examining student of color experiences in college and exploring institutional approaches to promote diversity in higher education.

DONG MANH DINH is a doctoral (EdD) student in higher education at the University of Denver. His research interests include AANAPISIs and APIDA populations.

We love feedback. Send letters to executive editor Ryan Evely Gildersleeve (aboutcampus@du.edu), and please copy him on notes to authors.

throughout the country. Through analysis of data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), over one million APIDA undergraduates were enrolled at two-year and four-year institutions across the country in Fall 2018. While AANAPISIs comprised only 5.1 percent of the over 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States, they enrolled nearly 40 percent of all APIDA undergraduates in the nation. This is a remarkable proportion of students, and this finding points to the large concentration of APIDA students enrolled at only a handful of institutions located across the United States. With regard to institutional type, two-year AANAPISIs enroll the majority of APIDA college students compared to four-year institutions. However, over the past decade, the proportion of APIDA undergraduate enrollment at four-year AANAPISIs has steadily grown from 28.8 percent in 2013 to 33.2 percent in 2018. To put it in another way, one out of every three APIDA students attending a four-year institution is doing so at an AANAPISI. With regard to two-year institutions, over half, or 51.7 percent, of all APIDA community college students are enrolled at a two-year AANAPISI.

Given that an outsized proportion of APIDA college students are attending one of the few AANAPISIs in the country, it is no surprise that AANAPISIs are also playing an increasingly large role in conferring degrees to APIDA students. A total of 47.5 percent of all associate's degrees that were conferred to APIDA college students were at an AANAPISI. In other words, nearly half of all the associate's degrees that were awarded for APIDAs nationwide were at an AANAPISI. Similarly, for four-year institutions, 29.4 percent of all baccalaureate degrees conferred for APIDAs were at eligible or funded AANAPISIs. Thus, AANAPISIs are of critical importance to APIDA students in higher education as they are enrolling and graduating large proportions of APIDA college students, where the majority are overwhelmingly low income and first generation.

Since its founding, approximately $102 million has been appropriated by the federal government to AANAPISIs, averaging a combined $7.8 million in discretionary (Part A) and mandatory (Part F) funding per year. This annual amount is divided among the funded AANAPISIs, with each institution receiving roughly $350,000 annually, over a five-year period. Given the chronic underfunding of the AANAPISI program, typically 20 to 25 of the 160 currently eligible institutions are funded at one given time. Based on an analysis of the U.S. Department of Education's budget documents, Nguyen et al. (2020) noted that AANAPISIs are the least funded Minority Serving Institution (MSI), despite maintaining some of the highest numbers of eligible institutions. Additionally, from 2013 to 2020, funding for AANAPISIs increased by a mere $1.4 million while overall appropriations for Hispanic Serving Institutions, for example, increased by over $40 million in the same timeframe. Importantly, these data points are not presented in order to create a competition among different MSIs; instead, they simply represent the limited funding that AANAPISIs have and continue to receive, and should only be interpreted as such. As Nguyen (2019) argues, any increase in funding for AANAPISIs should not be at the expense of other MSI programs, as all MSIs must advocate for one-another collectively, in order to create greater equity for all students of color.

> **Based on an analysis of the U.S. Department of Education's budget documents,…AANAPISIs are the least funded Minority Serving Institution, despite maintaining some of the highest numbers of eligible institutions.**

AANAPISIs in Practice: Programming and Campus-Based Initiatives

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES that are funded as AANAPISIs often create programs on their campuses to support and enhance APIDA student achievement and success, and in doing so, improve several important college outcomes such as retention, transfer, graduation, and civic engagement, to name a few. As Teranishi (2011) specifically detailed, AANAPISI programs typically provide three interconnected initiatives for APIDA students, faculty, staff, and administrators: (1) academic and student support services; (2) leadership, mentorship, and community-based opportunities; and (3) research and resource development. We present this information as a guide that educators and administrators can use to inform their work or to develop programming for APIDA students regardless if they are located at AANAPISIs or not.

Academic and Student Support Services

In their new edited book, Maramba and Fong (2020), and their colleagues, highlight several common strategies incorporated in AANAPISI-funded academic and student support services. These include critically and culturally relevant and responsive curriculum, academic counseling, career development, leadership development, learning communities, peer mentorship, and peer tutoring. For example, De Anza College's AANAPISI program—IMPACT AAPI—developed new courses that weave culturally relevant curriculum into writing and literature courses as well as in STEM classes. In doing so, IMPACT AAPI and other AANAPISI programs invite students to critically (re)imagine their own histories and lived experiences through Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies, a discipline they may not have been exposed to prior to college. Measuring the educational outcomes of APIDA students in IMPACT AAPI, the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (2014) found that APIDA undergraduates in IMPACT AAPI were more likely to transition to, as well as pass, college-level English courses compared to their APIDA counterparts who did not participate in the program. Furthermore, Teranishi et al. (2015), Museus et al. (2018), and Nguyen et al. (2018) have shown how these AANAPISI-funded strategies yield positive academic (e.g., degree attainment, persistence, retention, transfer, transition from basic skills or developmental to college-level courses) and psychosocial (e.g., facilitating self-concept, fostering engagement on campus, increasing sense of belonging) outcomes for students. As a result, students have higher retention and degree attainment rates relative to their nonparticipant peers.

Leadership, Mentorship, and Community-Based Opportunities

AANAPISIs are natural bridges to APIDA communities. As a result, these institutions provide students with multiple opportunities for leadership and mentorship development, as well as community-based engagement. For example, the University of Massachusetts, Boston's AANAPISI program has developed cocurricular initiatives to support students through internship placements in the offices of elected officials, local nonprofits, and national advocacy organizations—all of which focus on advancing a wide variety of APIDA priorities. Additionally, their AANAPISI program develops and implements college access and outreach programs at local high schools in order to demystify the college application process for underserved APIDA students. As Nguyen (2019) has demonstrated, these types of cocurricular programs not only increase academic, social, and civic engagement among APIDA students but they also improve their academic and career trajectories.

Research and Resource Development

In addition to academic and cocurricular programming, AANAPISIs are engaged in the development of new research and resources that explore innovative methods to better support student success in higher education. By centering APIDA communities and experiences in these efforts, AANAPISI programs provide students, faculty, and staff with greater opportunities to advance cutting-edge knowledge, scholarship, and interventions that critically examine the ways in which institutions are able to strengthen their commitment to serving APIDA students. For example, the University of Illinois, Chicago, and California State University, Sacramento, both conducted research and advocated for the use of disaggregated data in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse experiences and needs of the different subgroups within the larger APIDA racial category at their institutions. Indeed, APIDA scholars, practitioners, and policymakers have long called for the use of better data collection processes (e.g., disaggregated data) to inform campus policies and practices. In doing so, AANAPISIs can be more intentional in their delivery of services and programs for a growing, diverse, and underserved APIDA population.

AANAPISIs are natural bridges to APIDA communities. As a result, these institutions provide students with multiple opportunities for leadership and mentorship development, as well as community-based engagement.

Looking to the Next Decade

GIVEN THEIR SIGNIFICANT role and innovative practices in educating a large proportion of APIDA students, AANAPISIs are the backbone of the U.S. postsecondary education system. As more colleges and universities become AANAPISIs, it is incumbent upon policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to recommit their efforts to strengthen this critical program for the next generation of APIDA students. Indeed, there is much more to learn about AANAPISIs and how they foster student learning and development. Doing so will greatly benefit educators at AANAPISIs and non-AANAPISIs alike, in their efforts to support APIDA students.

Toward that endeavor, there remains many areas to improve the work and quality of AANAPISIs over the next decade. AANAPISIs should continue to develop innovative practices to support their APIDA students, and educators at all institutions can apply these practices to support their APIDA students. Additionally, more research is needed to examine how these initiatives are best implemented for students, but also for faculty, staff, and administrators. Certainly, policymakers should appropriate a significantly greater amount of federal funds to the growing number of AANAPISIs; this will ultimately provide the necessary resources to expand the capacity of AANAPISIs to best support APIDA students, as well as fund new research and scholarship on AANAPISIs. As AANAPISIs begin their next decade of operation, considering these practices will help yield a new generation of APIDA students who are prepared to contribute to the advancement of their communities. For more information and resources on AANAPISIs, please visit: http://portfolio.du.edu/AANAPISI.

ORCID ID

Mike Hoa Nguyen ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8963-0011
Kristine Jan Espinoza ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7102-4091

NOTES

Maramba, D. C., & Fong, T. P. (Eds.). (2020). *Transformative practices for minority student success: Accomplishments of Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions*. Stylus Publishing.

Museus, S., Wright-Mair, R., & Mac, J. (2018). *How Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) are creating the conditions for students to thrive*. University of Pennsylvania Center for Minority Serving Institutions.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). *Integrated postsecondary educational data system fall enrollment survey*. U.S. Department of Education.

National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education. (2014). *Measuring the impact of MSI-funded programs on student success: Findings from the evaluation of Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions*.

Nguyen, M. H. (2019). *Building capacity at Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI): Cultivating leaders and civic engagement through federal policy* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of California, Los Angeles.

Nguyen, M. H., Espinoza, K. J., Gogue, D. T. L., & Dinh, D. M. (2020). *Looking to the next decade: Strengthening Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions through policy and practice*. National Council of Asian Pacific Americans.

Nguyen, T. H., Nguyen, B., Nguyen, M. H., Gasman, M., & Conrad, C. (2018). Inviting "other" into the circle: An in-depth case study of an Asian American, Native American and Pacific Islander serving institution's efforts to provide academic and social justice programming for Asian American and Pacific Islanders. *Review of Higher Education*, *41*(1), 327-363.

Teranishi, R. T. (2011). Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institutions: Areas of growth, innovation, and collaboration. *AAPI Nexus: Policy, Practice and Community*, *9*(1-2), 151-155.

Teranishi, R. T., Alcantar, C. M., Martin, M., & Nguyen, B. M. D. (2015). *The return on investment for an AANAPISI-funded program: Outcomes for Asian American and Pacific Islander community college students*. Paper presented at the National MSI Return on Investment Convening, Princeton, NJ.