




# Building Capacity at Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI): Transforming the Educational Experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Students

Mike Hoa Nguyen

To cite this article: Mike Hoa Nguyen (2021): Building Capacity at Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI): Transforming the Educational Experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Students, The Journal of Higher Education, DOI: [10.1080/00221546.2021.1996170](https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2021.1996170)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2021.1996170>

 Published online: 03 Dec 2021.

---

 Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)

---

 View related articles [↗](#)


---

 View Crossmark data [↗](#)

---



# Building Capacity at Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI): Transforming the Educational Experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Students

Mike Hoa Nguyen 

Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver, Denver, Colorado, USA

## ABSTRACT

This study examines how Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) build capacity for student success. By contrasting a community college on the West Coast and a regional comprehensive university on the East Coast, new pathways are forged to recognize the critical role that federally-funded AANAPISIs play in supporting Asian American and Pacific Islander students. Implications for policy, practice, and research are also offered to advance the operations and understanding of AANAPISIs.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 2 January 2021  
Accepted 18 October 2021

## KEYWORDS

Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution; AANAPISI; Asian American and Pacific Islanders; AAPI; Minority-Serving Institutions; MSI; capacity building

In 2007, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act was signed into law, creating the Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) designation, the federal government's newest Minority-Serving Institution (MSI), designed to support Asian American *and* Pacific Islander (AAPI) students.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Department of Education (2016) tasks AANAPISIs with the responsibility to “improve and expand their capacity to serve Asian Americans and Native American Pacific Islanders and low-income individuals” (para 1). More specifically, AANAPISIs are deemed successful, and more likely to be awarded AANAPISI grants, if they are able to build capacity for student success. Federal policy makers primarily define and measure this outcome based upon a value-added model of increasing enrollment, retention, college completion rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2008; White House, 2011).

Yet, capacity building is a nebulous concept that lacks clarity, particularly with respect to how AANAPISIs, and by extension the greater MSI community, operate. Furthermore, AANAPISIs are uniquely positioned as “racial projects” (Park & Teranishi, 2008), and through federal resources may build capacity in transformative ways to advance racial equity.

Given this focus, there is a critical need to examine and understand the process in which AANAPISIs build capacity for student success, with particular consideration toward racialized structures. Thus, this investigation seeks to uncover how and why AANAPISIs build capacity for student success; and in that process, specifically determine and detail the necessary components and mechanisms used for capacity building. The overarching research question that undergirds this study is: how do AANAPISI programs build capacity for student success? And in relation, what are the mechanisms and structural components that AANAPISI programs utilize to build capacity? Answering these questions will yield greater understandings as to how AANAPISIs serve AAPI students and advance racial equity, while simultaneously satisfying federal demands.

### **Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving institutions**

Research on AANAPISIs is relatively emergent, given the short existence of this newly established MSI. Similar to other enrollment-based MSIs (e.g., Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Predominately Black Institutions, Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions, etc.) the AANAPISI designation is a competitive federal grant that provides funding for colleges and universities with a significant enrollment of a specific undergraduate population. In other words, institutions are able to apply for and receive the AANAPISI grant under two primary requirements: (1) if 10% of the undergraduate student enrollment identifies as Asian American and/or Pacific Islander; and (2) if the institution meets the Section 312(b) basic eligibility criteria of Title III and V programs.<sup>2</sup> If an institution is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an eligible AANAPISI, through these criteria, it can then apply for the AANAPISI grant, should there be an open competition. Institutions that are awarded federal funding often create an AANAPISI program on campus to provide a wide variety programming and resources for AAPI students. Indeed, the AAPI advocacy community and AAPI members of Congress's intentions for establishing AANAPISIs "came out of a desire to increase the capacity of AAPI organizations and institutions, as well as a frustration that AAPI needs in education were ignored or unknown" (Park & Teranishi, 2008, p. 115). Furthermore, they sought to counter pervasive stereotypes about AAPI educational achievement, ensure that AAPIs were understood to be a minoritized group, while attaching significant federal resources and funding to serve AAPI students (Park & Chang, 2009; Park & Dizon, 2021).

Despite this rationale, federal statute does not necessarily restrict institutions from using AANAPISI funds to develop programming for other student populations. In other words, it would not be out of the realm of possibility for some AANAPISIs, given the different and complex manner in which Asian American *and* Pacific Islander students are racialized in education, to intentionally develop programming on campus that is "race neutral," thus ignoring

AAPI students while still following the letter of the law. Nonetheless, Teranishi (2011) notes that typical AANAPISI programs, with a desire to support AAPIs, are structured around three activities: academic and student support services; leadership and mentorship opportunities; and research and resource development.

Much of the emerging empirical research on AANAPISI programs explores these three activities and the educational outcomes associated with it. For example, the National Commission on AAPI Research on Education (CARE, 2014) found that AANAPISI programs provided multiple positive outcomes including performance (e.g., GPA), increased persistence, degree attainment, and transfer from community college to universities. Efforts to achieve these outcomes focused on three themes: student-centered and community-oriented approaches, aiming for high-impact practices, and impact on campus and student outcomes (CARE, 2013). Nguyen et al. (2018) found that institutional agents were highly purposeful in utilizing Asian American Studies as a functionary aspect of the AANAPISI program in order to validate students' lived experiences, as well as shape and broaden their future aspirations. Furthermore, they argue that AANAPISI programs served as an institutional converter for first-generation AAPI students to "plug into," in order to navigate a complex and unwelcoming campus environment. Similarly, Museus et al. (2018) offer a similar set of criteria used to cultivate environments for AAPI students to thrive. Closer aligned to capacity building, Alcantar et al. (2019) examined the rationale and pursuit of becoming an AANAPISI, as well as how this process impacted the institutions' organizational identity and culture. They found that the process of seeking an AANAPISI grant influenced the thinking of institutional agents, which in turn shifted the institutional culture to develop a new awareness and expand their commitment toward their AAPI students.

Many of these foundational studies provide insight toward the benefits of AANAPISI programs, particularly regarding how students respond to academic and co-curricular activities or the institutional shifts that may occur when an institution becomes an AANAPISI. But they do not directly address how institutions build capacity or which mechanisms are necessary for this to occur. In various ways, the current body of scholarship concerning AANAPISIs is adjacent to capacity building, rather than exploring it as a phenomenon. Thus, this article expands on their foundational work. And given AANAPISIs are enrollment-based MSIs that are/were historically white institutions that through enrollment and demographic shifts have met federal requirements to become an MSI, these institutions were not originally established to serve AAPI students (Nguyen et al., 2018). Thus, examining how federal resources can be utilized toward capacity building is critical in understanding how AANAPISIs can shift institutions toward greater racial equity for AAPIs.

## Capacity building

There is limited research on capacity building at AANAPISIs. One potential explanation for this gap in the literature is the great disagreement that exists regarding this concept. For example, Paul (1995) argues that capacity building is simply a new label for development and training, while Potter and Brough (2004) suggest that it is used to address a lack in skills, resources, and training, where the process is focused on hiring more staff or equipment. In the field of education, multiple definitions and theories are used to explain capacity building, where some explore the concept at the organizational level (Lammert et al., 2015), and others at the individual level (O'Day et al., 1995). Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education offers similar definitions for both levels, where individual capacity building is defined as developing new “skills through trainings and coaching” (Boven, 2018, para 3); and organizational capacity building is defined as “in-depth training, coaching, and technical support” (Boven, 2018, para 5). To add additional confusion, U.S. Department of Education (2004) has also defined building capacity as the “scaling up” of institutions, programs, or services (para 2).

Since capacity building does concurrently occur at both the individual and organizational levels (Baggetta et al., 2013), this study relies on two conceptual frameworks to assist in defining capacity building. More specifically, Han (2014) and Andrews et al. (2010) posit that in order to build capacity, institutions must engage in three areas: developing leaders, mobilizing participation, and gaining recognition in the public arena. They argue that beyond studying “goal attainment models” (Kanter & Brinkerhoff, 1981; Webb, 1974), multidimensional frameworks are better suited for studying organizations, and the individuals within them, as it recognizes that effectiveness is understood differently for different types of institutions that are situated in different types of environments (Cameron, 1986; Knoke & Prenskey, 1984). This approach is necessary, as many previously discussed conceptualizations do not consider the interconnectedness of the individual and organizational levels or some of the characteristics found in AANAPISIs. For example, these organizations, institutions, or programs often exercise shared governance, are loosely coupled, and rely on, to a certain extent, voluntary participation with similar organization objectives. In the case of AANAPISI programs, those involved typically do so voluntarily, practice shared governance programmatically and institutionally, and desire to support AAPIs on campus. Additionally, other education researchers (e.g. Hinton, 2015; Winston, 2015) have used these frameworks to conclude that an infusion of funding or resources may not fully explain capacity building, but instead is better explained when examining the process of

leadership development and individual commitment. This is highly relevant for AANAPISIs given the federal funding that they receive and the realities of designing programs to serve AAPIs.

### **The centrality of race**

This framework alone is insufficient and does not fully explain capacity building for AANAPISI programs. Since these programs are federally-funded racial projects (Park & Teranishi, 2008), it is paramount to consider the centrality of race. Thus, this study also relies on Chesler et al. (2005) who detail the progression in which institutions strive to achieve racial diversity and a multicultural environment, via three stages (monocultural, transitional, multicultural) across eight dimensions (mission, culture, power, membership, climate, technology, organizational dimension, resources, and boundary management). They posit that institutions, like society in general, are organized and operate in a manner that disenfranchises people of color. However, colleges and universities are unique in that many possess a willingness to address systems of inequities, and to create opportunities for people of different experiences to interact and learn from one another. Specifically, the dimensions, working in concert with one another, reimagine academic, co-curricular, and research opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. These coordinated approaches are critically important in advancing organizational shift toward greater racial equity by challenging racism and advancing justice for diverse populations (Hurtado et al., 2012; Museus, 2014).

Garcia (2018) used this organizational approach to explore and develop an institutional framework specific to Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI). She argues that HSIs must affirmatively recenter their mission and purpose to appropriately serve Raza students and their racial and cultural ways of knowing, and in doing so actively work to liberate and decolonize the institution. Similarly, for AANAPISIs, any examination of how they build capacity, requires an organizational framework that utilizes a racial lens to situate how this process contributes to programmatic and institutional shifts toward greater racial equity for AAPIs.

### **Methodology**

This study utilized a two-site case study approach, as AANAPISI programs are an ideal bounded system (Merriam, 2009). Case studies are a useful approach to understand complex social and unique phenomena, while also ideal to empirically investigate complex organizational processes (Kezar, 2006; Yin, 2014). Merriam (2009) notes that a case study design has been exceptionally helpful for studying educational innovations, evaluating programs, and informing policy — all of which are particularly relevant to AANAPISI

programs and are broader goals of this research agenda. This study's unique advantage is that it examines AANAPISI programs at two exceptionally different institutional types. Thus, the use of multiple case studies allows for the testing of theoretical frameworks in two different environments, as well as for a more experimental approach, where the researcher replicates the results across multiple sites, which enhances the rigor of the study (Yin, 2014). This method is often understood as a "two-tail" design where cases from "different extremes" are deliberately chosen: institutional type and geography (Yin, 2014, p. 62). By using a two-tail design, the overall study results are more likely to demonstrate if certain theoretical propositions about AANAPISIs are fulfilled or not, as well as the ability to establish potential similarities between two different sites.

### ***Sites and selection***

AANAPISIs on the mainland are primary concentrated on the West and East Coasts, and nearly equally distributed between community colleges and universities. Thus, the two study sites accounted for these differences: (1) Atlantic Harbor University (AHU; a pseudonym), a large and urban, regional comprehensive university; and (2) Pacific Valley College (PVC; a pseudonym), a very large, public community college. Beyond fulfilling the study's "two-tail" design, theoretical sampling was also used in order to test and extend existing theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). More specifically, the ability to examine if and how these two AANAPISI programs engaged in capacity building and how AANAPISIs are understood as racial projects were a major consideration in site selection. Thus, these two sites were chosen because they were both awarded multiple AANAPISI grants and therefore, compared to other AANAPISIs, have retained their AANAPISI programs for longer periods of time. This provided more opportunity to examine how capacity building efforts were designed and implemented, as well as if any organizational shifts occurred as a result. And in consideration of the centrality of race, the two institutions were selected because of the programs' specific attention to the unique racialized experiences of AAPI communities.

### ***Data sources and collection***

In order to ensure construct validity, multiple sources of evidence were collected to triangulate findings (Yin, 2014). The first data source consists of multiple documents from both AANAPISIs, regarding the development and implementation of the program. Second, observations were conducted on site. They comprised of classroom activities for courses, meetings between AANAPISI program staff and students, and co-curricular activities. Finally, 30 interviews (14 at PVC and 16 at AHU) were conducted with students, staff,



faculty, and administrators. Given that both AANAPISI programs were unique and distinct units on campus, all staff, faculty, and administrators who are a part of the AANAPISI program were identified on programmatic websites and recruited directly via e-mail. Additionally, recognizing their expertise and experiences, AANAPISI program directors were consulted to include other staff, faculty and administrators that were not included during the first round of recruitment.

Students were recruited through purposeful sampling strategies (Creswell, 2009). Again, in recognizing their expertise, convenience sampling was used based upon consultations with AANAPISI staff, faculty, and administrators (Creswell, 2009). From there, snowball sampling was used to recruit additional student participants (Patton, 2002). After informal conversations with this initial pool of students, maximum variation sampling was used to determine a wide range of students to invite to participate in the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Characteristics for maximum variation included diversity in age, year in school, ethnicity, gender, major, types of involvement with the AANAPISI program, among others. Utilizing a modified Seidman (2013) approach, semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes in length and were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Interview protocols probed how AANAPISI programs build capacity and were focused on identifying the components for this process. Additionally, interviews sought to obtain the perceived impact and rationale for capacity building at AANAPISI programs, and were aligned with the conceptual frameworks. Specifically, questions probed the three components of Han (2014) and Andrews et al. (2010) framework, while also incorporating the eight dimensions from Chesler et al. (2005). For example, interview questions regarding the *leadership development* component that incorporated *technology* included: What initiatives are in place to develop, improve, and retain your knowledge, skill-set, and abilities to better do your job? What types of courses/co-curricular activities do you teach/oversee and implement for the AANAPISI? What is the purpose of teaching this course/providing this program (probe about racial justice)? For students, a question that examined *public recognition* which incorporated the *boundaries* dimension was: Are you involved with any projects that collaborate with groups outside of the AANAPISI program? Why are these activities important to the AANAPISI program?

### **Data analysis**

In order to systematize data in a meaningful way (Patton, 2002), two analytic coding strategies were utilized to organize the database: relying on theoretical propositions and developing a case description (Yin, 2014). After the data was



organized into a meaningful and navigable database, explanation building served as the primary analytic technique, in order to construct an explanation about the case (Yin, 2014).

Data analysis was conducted iteratively, in six steps. They include: (1) making an initial theoretical statement or an initial explanatory proposition; (2) comparing the findings of an initial case against such as statement or proposition; (3) revising the statement or proposition; (4) comparing other details of the case against the revision; (5) comparing the revision to the findings from a second, third or more cases; (6) repeating this process as many times as is needed (Yin, 2014, p. 149). This was a gradual process with close adherence to the conceptual framework (Saldaña, 2016). In order to begin the first step, theoretical and explanatory propositions were developed into a priori codes, based upon the components and dimensions of the conceptual frameworks (Saldaña, 2016). For example, “curriculum and content of activities guided by a strong focus on diversity and AAPI experiences” was a code that represented the *leadership development* component which incorporated the *technology* dimension. As the analysis moved into the later stages, these codes were refined and clustered into conceptually similar categories, and from there, a set of themes were generated that detail and explain how AANAPISI programs build capacity.

Additionally, there were two stages of analysis. The within-case analysis, where “each case is first treated as a compressive case in and of itself” (Merriam, 2009, p. 204). Once the analysis of each case was completed, a cross-case analysis was conducted to examine the similarities between the two different cases. However, as stated previously, the overall process of analysis worked toward building a general explanation that fit into each of the cases (Yin, 2014).

### ***Trustworthiness, limitations, and considerations***

Several steps were taken to ensure trustworthiness. The sites were visited on multiple occasions, permitting sustained engagement with study participants to account for unanticipated activity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure trustworthiness of analyses, data triangulation, member checks, and peer review strategies were employed (Merriam, 2009). However, with any empirical study, certain limitations will exist. Specifically, the purposeful selection of study sites is a consequential limitation. Both institutions are understood as exemplars with the AANAPISI community, given their multiple grant awards and leadership in service within this community. Thus, this study speaks to how AANAPISIs can build capacity with various institutional components that may not exist at other AANAPISIs, or where specific racialized policies may prevent their utilization. Findings may not be fully generalizable for all AANAPISIs. Additionally, AANAPISIs in different geographic contexts (i.e.,

the South Pacific, South or Midwest) may approach capacity building differently. However, by conducting a “two-tailed” case study, this study design is better situated to provide results with validity and transferability, but where implications were also developed in consideration of limitations.

### ***Positionality***

As an Asian American researcher who is heavily involved with the AANAPISI community, it is my intention that this empirical study contribute to “improv[ing] the application of research toward advancing social change” (Chang, 2018, p. 28). Thus, my broader purpose is for institutions, policymakers, and society to better understand and serve AAPI students. In doing so, this inquiry is shaped by my continued desire to frame my research through the lens of social justice, in order to support the dismantling of institutional and systemic forms of oppression.

### **Case descriptions of institutions and AANAPISI programs**

In order to explore the components used to build capacity, this section consists of case descriptions to provide context about the institutions and their AANAPISI programs. Equally important, the descriptions also describe how the AANAPISI programs are organized and operationalized.

#### ***Atlantic Harbor University***

Atlantic Harbor University (AHU) is a public regional comprehensive university on the East Coast. AHU maintains an enrollment of over 16,000 students, where AAPI comprise of 14% or 2,240 of the campus population. The university offers over 200 undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programs within the 10 colleges and graduate schools. AHU is one of the few public institutions in the region and primarily serves students from the local community, unlike many of the other private institutions in the near vicinity. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, AAPIs comprise of about 9% or 420,000 of the greater metropolitan region. Although not a large share of the region’s population, Asian Americans have a rich history in this area. Like other parts of the United States, the growth of Asian Americans in the region can be attributed to the Immigration Act of 1965. The area boasts an active Chinatown, and within the last 50 years has seen growth of Asian Americans in the adjacent suburbs. Southeast Asian American refugees began to resettle in the area, and nearby cities maintain large concentrations of Cambodian and Vietnamese Americans. More recently, other Asian American groups have been resettling in the region, including those from Burma.

### ***AHU's AANAPISI program***

AHU is home to one of first AANAPISI programs at a university. Employing an integrated model, AHU's AANAPISI program is built into preexisting structures within the institution, namely the Asian American Studies Program (AASP) and the Asian American Research Center (AARC). However, the AANAPISI grant was used to create one new structure, the Asian American Student Success Center (AASSC), which houses co-curricular programming and student services. With an integrated model, students do not apply into a program or matriculate through the academic and co-curricular activities within the AANAPISI as a cohort. Instead, students participate through a combination of these three functionary units.

AASP, one of the few in the region, offers a robust set of courses that focuses on the experiences of AAPIs in the United States. This academic unit prides itself as offering culturally-responsive pedagogy and holistic curriculum that includes research, mentoring, community-building, service-learning, and advocacy to critically address the educational needs of students and their local Asian American communities. AASP also conducts faculty and staff development and training on the Asian American student experience, on campus and in the community.

AARC engages in community-based and applied research on AAPI issues and provides resources for the region, state, as well as nationally. AARC disseminates their findings to the general public, policymakers, and key AAPI consistencies on a wide range of topics. Their research projects have focused on education; environmental issues; small business and entrepreneurship; land-use and gentrification; gambling; health disparities, civic engagement, political participation, and voting; economic development; demographic studies; and the history of different AAPI communities in the region. AARC also awards grants to researchers from diverse disciplines, and hosts research to practice conferences where, awardees share their findings with policymakers and practitioners.

AASSC is focused on academic student support and provides direct services to AAPI students, with the specific goal of increasing college access, retention, and graduation rates of underserved and underrepresented Asian American students. AASSC organizes its work into multiple areas, which include: high school outreach programs; career services; academic advising and tutoring; peer mentoring; a student advisory board; and physical space for students.

Finally, each of the three units maintains a physical space for students to congregate, do their schoolwork, interact with staff and faculty, pass time in between classes, organize events and activities, and develop lasting friendships. Given that many of AHU's students do not live on campus, these spaces are critical for students.

## ***Pacific Valley College***

Pacific Valley College (PVC) is located on the West Coast, in a region shaped by the technology industry. Through the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, Asian Americans migrated to the region for a number of reasons including employment. Southeast Asian refugees arrived after the dramatic and horrific wars in Southeast Asia. Today, the area boasts an AAPI population of approximately 711,000 or 37% of the county's population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. However, by AAPI subgroup, the area is segregated, with East Asians mainly residing on the western region of the county, while Southeast Asians and Filipinx Americans reside along the east. Interestingly, PVC is located on the western region of the county, where the residents have higher levels of social-economic status, college attainment, and other social demographics. This means that many of PVC's Southeast Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students travel some 20 or more miles across the county to attend their classes.

PVC maintains an massive enrollment of 23,000 students where AAPIs account for 48.2% of the student population or nearly 10,000 students. The college offers 63 different associate's degree programs and 97 certificate programs. PVC is deeply invested in civic engagement with several different programs for students, some of which are identity-based. This is atypical for most community colleges in the region, and so the institution stresses this point to demonstrate the wide range of opportunities that exist. Indeed, these factors help contribute to PVC's reputation as a prestigious community college in the region.

### ***PVC's AANAPISI program***

PVC was one of the first community colleges to become an AANAPISI. PVC employs a cohort model, where students apply into the AANAPISI program. Together, they progress through a series of courses via curricular pathways. This initiative consists of three different learning communities (LC) that integrate classes or curriculum from PVC's ethnic studies department. The LCs are: reading and success in college-level English; reading and success in college-level math and English; and strategies for preparation in STEM. Students select one of the three thematic LCs, depending on their academic interests and goals. Within the LCs, the classes are linked together, where faculty jointly collaborate in planning and teaching. As students collectively advance through the LCs, they complete classes that are intentionally offered, in order to fulfill multiple general education requirements, as well as transfer requirements.

In addition to the LCs, the AANAPISI program consists of other units to strengthen and build capacity for the program and the institution, as well as for civic engagement. These units include a library of materials

focused on the AAPI experience; physical space for students to gather; several student success services; a partnership with the PVC's AAPI Leadership Institute; and an AANAPISI advisory board. PVC's AANAPISI program also includes several faculty and staff development initiatives. One initiative offers four curriculum modules focused on underserved and underrepresented AAPI groups, specifically on Southeast Asians, Filipinx, and Pacific Islanders, as well as a fourth module on the model minority myth. Furthermore, faculty and staff development also includes pedagogy workshops about integrating AAPI history, storytelling, and issues into curriculum, as well as a speaker series that hosts filmmakers, researchers, and activists to showcase the diversity, history, and complex experiences of the AAPI community. For the faculty and staff who participated in the AANAPISI program as course instructors or counselors, additional development opportunities exist, including resources to travel to conferences and faculty learning communities.

A critical component of PVC's AANAPISI program is their multi-pronged student services, which operates through embedded counseling and advising. Here AANAPISI staff work in conjunction within the LCs to provide real-time services. They also teach student success courses on academic, career, and life skills. Additionally, tutoring and workshops on the transfer process, applying to scholarships, and other academic and learning strategies are housed under this umbrella. Finally, the program utilizes teaching assistants and peer mentoring, where students who have matriculated through the LCs are asked to return as peer mentors for the next cohort. Teaching assistants and peer mentors assist new students in their transition to college life, and provide knowledge on how to succeed at PVC, as well as for their civic engagement work within larger community.

### **Building capacity for student success**

This section delves into the principal findings of this study. More specifically, both AANAPISI programs build capacity for student success through two primary mechanisms. First, members of the AANAPISI programs co-constructed a programmatic level AAPI-based identity. Second, they deployed this identity through a transformative and systematic approach to programmatic design. These two mechanisms aligned with the theoretical frameworks, in that they were strategically designed to focus on developing AAPI students academically and professionally, increasing their levels of engagement and participation, and in the process, strengthening the AANAPISIs recognition both on and off campus, all while threading the saliency of their shared and diverse AAPI experiences throughout this process. The following sub-sections will discuss these themes in greater detail.

### ***Co-construction of a programmatic level AAPI-based identity***

Both AHU and PVC regularly drew attention to the minoritized and racialized positioning of AAPIs, leaning into their AANAPISI programs as *racial projects* (Omi & Winant, 2015). Specifically, members of the AANAPISI program co-constructed a programmatic level AAPI-based identity, where administrators, faculty, staff, and students advanced the notion and the validity of the presence of AAPIs in higher education, in order to aggressively oppose the common stereotypes about overrepresentation and achievement, at times at odds against institutional or societal pressures.

### ***Mission of the AANAPISI program***

In order to construct this identity, the mission statements of both programs used language that positions AAPIs as a minoritized and underrepresented group. Terminology such as “subgroups that are historically underrepresented in higher education” and “low-income or first-generation college-goers and for traditionally underrepresented Asian American ethnic populations” affirmatively declare that they diametrically opposed to stereotypical representations of AAPIs in education — thus representing a more realistic and accurate depiction. Furthermore, not only is the goal of the program to serve AAPI students, but that their value system opposes the uncritical approach and examination of AAPIs at their institutions and also within higher education writ large. This approach permeated throughout the AANAPISI program, where institutional agents shared these values in order to advance AAPI issues and concerns. When asked about this, Makayla (PVC, administrator and faculty) replied with a rhetorical question:

Well that would seem to make sense, wouldn't it? . . . If you have a program that's named Asian American and Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, you would think that they are going to be at the center of this, right? It matters to pay attention to [AAPI] students. It actually matters that specific dedicated attention is given to this population to address their educational needs and whatever aspirations we have for them educationally.

Similarly, Connie (PVC, faculty) connected the AANAPISI's mission of serving AAPIs to educational equity. She stated:

I believe in equity, right? And so again with so many of our AAPI students . . . a lot of them are struggling and people don't know that . . . that was a big equity issue and that's something that we really wanted to get on the table so that we could bring these students up.

She explained that striving for educational equity must also include a real understanding of the diversity and complexity of AAPI communities, in one's individual work, and in the broader institutional work required for the larger campus community, in order to best serve students.

### ***Recruiting and hiring of faculty and staff***

These values were also represented in how the AANAPISI program hired new faculty and staff. Much of this critical perspective was formalized through academic training in Asian American Studies. Thus, it was logical for AANAPISI programs to seek out individuals who had a background in Asian American Studies. Ernie (PVC, staff) spoke passionately about how the AANAPISI program allowed for:

an infusion of AAPI critical educators into our system . . . what I've seen . . . is the opportunity to infuse critical AAPI educators . . . into the education system. Not that they didn't exist before, but a lot of us, when you ask why was it important? Because we were serving our communities.

A similar requirement and process existed at Atlantic Harbor University (AHU). Pearl (AHU, administrator) spoke at length, retelling the process of recruiting and hiring the current AANAPISI program staff. Specifically, she sought to build a team where “everybody’s heart is in it” specifically referring to their backgrounds in [Asian American Studies] and how they viewed AAPIs. This was also a two-way street, where applicants sought out these AANAPISI programs because of their deep commitment and focus toward AAPI issues. For example, Susan (AHU, staff) discussed why she gravitated toward AHU, initially as a graduate student:

So, when it came to AHU, I was looking for a way to get involved . . . one of the reasons I chose AHU for my master’s program was because I knew that they had a really strong Asian American Studies program. Beyond academics, a really strong Asian American community. When I looked online I saw stuff about the Asian American Research Center, I saw stuff about the student clubs . . . and I was like “wow,” this is where I wanna be.

The focus on critically serving AAPI students, and through them the AAPI community, is a salient aspect of both AANAPISIs. Faculty and staff shared, in several conversations and as organic discussion topics during meetings, the importance of designing and operating an AANAPISI program that acknowledged and addressed the educational disparities that AAPI students faced. Furthermore, in visiting both AANAPISI programs, one cannot help but notice physical artifacts and symbols through their spaces that reflect this commitment to AAPIs in higher education. Posters, pictures, and flyers decorate their offices showing achievements, accomplishments, events organized by AAPIs on campus, among others that reflect the identify of a program that centers the experiences of AAPIs loudly and proudly.

### ***Transformative and systematic approach to programmatic design***

Both AHU and PVC employed a transformative and systematic approach to their AANAPISI programmatic design in order to build capacity. This process incorporated multilayered initiatives from the fields of Asian American and



Pacific Islander Studies, whereby exposing students to the histories and approaches to studying and engaging with AAPIs in their own communities and in the United States. This allowed for AANAPISI members to develop programming that validated the experiences of students, where they can learn, read, and write about their own and their family's histories; which was imbedded within their coursework, co-curricular, and research activities. Furthermore, the curriculum was critical in connecting an inclusive narrative, which affirms the AAPI experience at the individual, family, and community levels, and ultimately, engaging students academically, civically, and politically.

### *Honoring our stories*

One key aspect of this design was proactively and prominently incorporating students' lived experiences into the classroom, research, and co-curricular activities, something PVC called "Honoring our stories." Honoring our stories was then operationalized through a full suite of programming for students and for faculty, with the intention to provide a full college experience and opportunity for students, while also investing in the professional development and advance for faculty and staff. Honoring our stories focuses on proactively bringing AAPI experiences into the classroom. For example, one course syllabus begins with:

We will read, discuss, write about, and honor stories, essays, poetry, and films about the experiences of Filipino, Southeast Asian (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and/or Thai) and Polynesian/Oceanic (Guamanian, Hawaiian, Samoan, and/or Tongan) Americans. This class will also honor your stories.

Similarly, at AHU the courses drew great attention and detail to Asian American experiences:

Grounding our curriculum, teaching, and applied research in the realities of local Asian American communities and by respecting the knowledge and bilingual/bicultural skills that many AHU students bring to the classroom, the Asian American Studies Program creates powerful learning environments for all students to gain critical understanding about the historical experiences, voices, contemporary issues, and contributions of diverse Asian populations in the U.S.

With an intentional focus on the geography and regional demographics of both institutions, PVC's curriculum emphasizes the experiences of Southeast Asians, Filipinx, and Pacific Islanders, while AHU's courses reflect the experiences of Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Chinese Americans.

Since the process of honoring our stories relies on curriculum and pedagogical tools from the field of Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies, the development of students into critical scholars was a primary objective. For example, learning outcomes on a Pacific Islander Studies course syllabi at PVC focused on analyzing and comparing the "patterns of social culture and values

that have framed the experiences of Pacific Islanders in the U.S. and broader diaspora” and the “impact of European and U.S. colonialism on Pacific Islander communities and identities,” while applying the “Oral Storytelling Tradition to Pacific Islander lives in the U.S.” Honoring our stories, as a pedagogical design, was imbedded throughout both AANAPISIs, specially within academic coursework, co-curricular activities, and research opportunities.

### *Academic coursework*

In using this approach, faculty are also deeply concerned with students’ academic abilities, which is in line with institutional and AANAPISI regulations. For example, one syllabus stated that the course is an “introduction to university level reading and writing, with an emphasis on analysis,” where students will engage in a “close examination of a variety of texts (personal, popular, literary, professional, academic) from culturally diverse traditions,” while developing “rhetorical strategies used in academic writing,” such as “composition of clear, well-organized, and well-developed essays, with varying purposes and differing audiences, from personal to academic.” Connie’s (PVC, faculty) rationale for this dual approach was that:

The ... literature proves that you tap into their personal experiences, which is where the Asian American Studies content came in ... Bringing in all of that content material and teachers who reflected who they were ... The idea was it would increase their academic success. Because if you’re giving them not just materials to read that reflect their community, but to be able to write about those experiences, you already have the language and the knowledge ... to be able to write more in that area. And therefore, better.

In other words, student success, per federal accountability measures, was a primary objective. But to achieve those results, AANAPISI faculty focused on another objective — to connect students’ AAPI experiences to the course materials while developing a critical consciousness regarding their identities. This pedagogical approach had predictable yet positive impacts on students. Katerina (AHU, student) expressed how the courses were:

based on our personal lived experiences. My experiences in education prior to Asian American Studies is that when I come into the class I have to leave pieces of my history, of my experiences outside. I just come in, the teacher just throws information at me, I remember it, and then I would regurgitate it ... Then in Asian American Studies this is the first time someone has said, “What’s your experience growing up Southeast Asian American or Cambodian American?” I had never even really thought about that ... But because the curriculum and the pedagogy is so student centered ... I’m able to bring all of myself to the classroom ... I felt very whole in the classroom.

Keith (PVC, student) further discussed how these classes were “a pivotal moment in my life where that like one assignment actually helped me to pursue what I am doing today ... a lot of community organizing.” Indeed,

curriculum and assignments offered in the AANAPISI programs were designed to begin shifting student perspectives, given that students were encouraged and empowered to develop a commitment toward civic engagement and social change.

### *Co-curricular activities*

Students were able to engage in a variety of co-curricular activities both on campus and in their communities. At PVC, this notion was focused on civic engagement-based projects. Given their AAPI Leadership Institute, preparing and providing students with opportunities outside of the institution was natural extension to their work. PVC focused on politics, policy, and government, as the AAPI Leadership Institute often convenes meetings, summits, and professional development events for AAPI elected officials and candidates in the region. This allowed for AANAPISI students to participate directly in public policy and government. Marshall (PVC, student), through the AAPI Leadership Institute, was placed with a local Filipinx American advocacy organization, where he was able to:

engage in the community at [a] policy level . . . before the classes . . . the only kind of civic engagement I could do was . . . vote. But I never thought that I could actually be part of that space, be part of the dialogue to actually make a change in my community. Now that I've been exposed to the process, how it works, why it works, definitely made me more aware . . . made me want to do those things, and made me want to [be] . . . more political [and] policy-based.

At AHU, the level of commitment to provide students with external opportunities mirrored PVC. Although some students were involved with politics and government, AHU's community based-approach tended to focus more on the education and direct-services. For example, Chloe (AHU, student) who has recently graduated and organizes for a nonprofit organization in Chinatown focused on fighting gentrification and displacement, as well as works in community affairs at a local university, spoke about how the AANAPISI program strengthened her capacity while providing her with the tools to engage in community work. Specifically, she shared:

I definitely would not be as involved . . . if it weren't for . . . these classes . . . it . . . really activated some sort of greater sense of community . . . to contribute to the community . . . I grew up in Chinatown . . . nothing was ever mentioned [about] what Chinatown's history was, and it wasn't until I entered college where I was exposed to it . . . I felt like . . . "Now I understand why my mom is an immigrant worker in the United States, and working in a Chinese restaurant" . . . it also has encouraged me to dig deeper and think more critically . . . helped me increase my sense of self-awareness.

AHU maintains direct ties with several AAPI focused community-based organizations in the region, including those that serve Chinatown area. This direct connection creates formal programs that allow for AANAPISI students

to gain professional experience, while serving their communities. A civic education approach to co-curricular programming is grounded in both AANAPISIs' dedication to develop students holistically, connect their academic coursework to their own communities, while advancing various forms of social justice.

### *Research opportunities*

The AANAPISI program also created opportunities for students to engage in research. At PVC, students conducted participatory-based research projects that were connected to improving the AANAPISI grant. In other words, students engaged in research projects with the intention to present findings and best practices to improve practices and services for AAPI students at PVC as well as within their AANAPISI program. For example, students helped examine, design, coordinate, and facilitate how PVC “can have a lasting and sustainable impact on the campus through civic engagement work and our grant program. This will be a great opportunity to help faculty and staff working with students who fit the API demographic of our program explore how civic engagement activities might fit into their courses or services,” as stated on AANAPISI documents.

At AHU, their capacity to engage in research was also a critical component of the AANAPISI program, where students are given funding to participate in this academic enterprise. Hazel (AHU, student) excitedly discussed her study on AAPI student resiliency, and was slated to present her findings at a national education conference. The rationale to include research opportunities for students was to further develop their skillsets and educational training, while advancing new knowledge on the AAPI experience. Phil (AHU, faculty) detailed this purpose:

We try to increase our presence of Asian American students at conferences . . . because we want them to get involved in the environment where research is discussed . . . and many of these cases the students actually are presenters themselves. So, it gives them some experience . . . I think just as importantly . . . that it could have a significant impact on students . . . in terms of trying to promote, increase the corpus of research that focuses on Asian American student success.

Students at PVC were also able to present their research projects at conferences. Joe (PVC, faculty) described the experiences of students who conducted research on STEM pedagogy and how that impacted their learning, growth, and confidence:

[We] took students down to present . . . they were part of a plenary talk . . . It wasn't even just like a breakout session . . . It was every single person at the conference was watching them . . . to have them up at the podium speaking, those students all of a sudden were like . . . “Here I am in front of all these university faculty and university administrators, and I'm teaching them something” . . . that was just so transformative for them.

Although not the traditional route of academic research that necessarily resulted in publications, students at PVC conducted research and presented their findings in order to inform the work of faculty, staff, and administrators at their institution, as well as for other AANAPISIs. Through both AANAPISI programs, culturally relevant and engaging programming was intentionally designed, which enabled students to make meaning of and value their identities and family's/community's lived experiences, while in the same process develop skillsets to serve them academically and professionally.

## **Discussion**

As AANAPISIs grapple with accountability measures that impact their ability to access federal funds, they are expected to design their programming and initiatives to satisfy external interests (Davis & Cobb, 2010; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Thus, focusing on capacity building for AAPI student success becomes an important aspect of AANAPISI programs. This study suggests that this process for AANAPISIs is unique in that AHU and PVC's AANAPISI program build capacity through two primary mechanisms: (1) members of the AANAPISI programs co-constructed a programmatic level AAPI-based identity; and (2), they deployed this identity through a transformative and systematic approach to the AANAPISI's programmatic design. And integrated throughout was a strategically designed focus on developing AAPI students academically and professionally, increasing levels of engagement and participation, and strengthening the AANAPISIs recognition both on and off campus, all while threading the saliency of their shared and diverse AAPI experiences throughout this process (Andrews et al., 2010; Chesler et al., 2005; Han, 2014). These findings reaffirm previous studies on AANAPISIs that reference the importance of academic, co-curricular, and research initiatives that connect to a broader and shared AAPI experience (Nguyen et al., 2018; Museus et al., 2018).

### ***Co-construction of a programmatic level AAPI-based identity***

This finding aligns with several of the components detailed in the theoretical frameworks. Specifically, the programmatic-level identity mission of both AANAPISI programs is focused on the academic and professional development of AAPIs and increasing their levels of engagement and participation (Andrews et al., 2010; Han, 2014), while explicitly focused on advancing racial equity (Chesler et al., 2005). Both AHU and PVC shared a more complex alignment of identity and values that go beyond the purported mission of enhancing student success, as represented by traditional educational outcomes. In addition to addressing student success, the values of these

AANAPISI programs, advanced through its individual members, further the notion that AAPIs are diverse, exist and belong in higher education, and have unique educational needs, beyond the stereotypically understood paradigm (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Ngo & Lee, 2009). PVC and AHU regularly drew attention to the minoritized and racialized positioning of AAPIs at their institutions. In doing this, members of the AANAPISI program co-constructed a programmatic level identity focused on advancing the notion and validity of the presence of AAPIs in higher education, while aggressively opposing the common stereotypes about overrepresentation — at times at odds against institutional or societal pressures.

In order to maintain this co-constructed identity, the AANAPISI increased levels of engagement and participation (Andrews et al, 2010; Han, 2014) by recruiting and hiring new faculty and staff with backgrounds in Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies, a field that critically investigates the experiences, contributions, and marginalization of AAPIs, while maintaining deep roots in activism and the needs of the AAPI community (Schlund-Vials et al., 2015; Umemoto, 1989). By insisting that members of the AANAPISI share these values and worldviews, both programs seek to reposition how the AANAPISI is viewed, understood, and operates with the institutional context.

Members that share similar values within an institutional unit are not uncommon (Chesler et al., 2005), particularly within organizations that are focused on racial equity or services for AAPI and other minoritized students (Liu et al., 2010). Although both AANAPISI programs were consistent in advancing these issues, their shared values did not necessarily connect to the values and culture of the institution, as there are often separate cultures for distinct groups on campus, which often conflict and contradict one another (Besharov & Smith, 2014; Chesler et al., 2005). For AHU and PVC, members discussed these conflicting values and through their AANAPISIs designed a new initiative to counter how AAPI students were perceived on campus, making them courageous in their advocacy to correct harmful assumptions of AAPI students. Thus, the findings suggest that AANAPISI programs serve as an institutional vehicle to advance organizational change on their respective campuses, given the glaring and enduring misconceptions of AAPI students as model minorities. In doing so, the findings also suggest that members of the AANAPISI program recognized a politicized identity to their work (Philip, 2014), that complicates the notion of a black-white paradigm in order to combat the racial triangulation that AAPIs experience both on their campuses and in society (Kim, 1999). These shared values regarding the representation of AAPIs in education and society, as well as the types of institutional commitment that is necessary for AAPIs, exemplify on a more accurate understanding and representation of AAPIs in education and in society (Museus et al., 2013).

### ***Transformative and systematic approach to programmatic design***

There is a tightly-coupled relationship between the identity of the AANAPISI and its organizational structure (Hinings et al., 1996), where the values are operationalized in a manner that enables for the delivery of programming for students. More specifically, the results suggest that the AANAPISI programs were designed and structured, in order to provide a suite of culturally-competent resources and opportunities, while adhering to federal accountability goals. Similar to Teranishi's (2011) findings, these AANAPISI programs utilized three primary initiatives: new academic curriculum and coursework; co-curricular activities, both on and off campus that were community-centered and civically-based; and research opportunities. Weaved throughout the three activities, as the connecting thread, is the "honoring our stories" philosophy. This finding aligns with the theoretical frameworks. Specifically, in offering new academic curriculum, the AANAPISI program developed the talents and skillsets of AAPI students. Co-curricular activities were equally focused on developing students, while also strengthening the recognition of the AANAPISI program on and off campus. Similarly, the intention to offer applied research opportunities aligned with the very same components of the frameworks.

This pedagogical approach is a core tenet of diversity courses and Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies (Chang & Kiang, 2002; K. S. Chan, 2000). And utilizing the federal AANAPISI initiative to institute programming moves beyond what is typically expected of AANAPISIs, and provides needed opportunities for underserved and underrepresented AAPI students. Using transformative curriculum at AANAPISIs is critical in helping students developmentally progress through school (CARE, 2013; 2014; Kem et al., 2020; Teranishi et al., 2015), while maintaining a strong focus on social justice and engagement-based projects (Wang et al., 2021). Indeed, this study's findings illustrate how a more comprehensive approach, as noted by respondents, is intended to strengthen students' academic engagement and achievement, while also providing a form of agency and personal empowerment for AAPI students. And at the practical level, the findings suggest that, AANAPISIs provide students with concrete skillsets and leadership experiences to prepare them for the next stage of their careers upon graduation — with an expectation that these students will, in some form, contribute civically to their communities.

By doing so, the curriculum explicitly speaks to the experiences of AAPI students, and their families and communities, which serves as a mechanism to mitigate experiences on campus that are unwelcoming or unfamiliar (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Quaye et al., 2015) — something that is common among first generation students of color, who are more likely to enroll at an MSI (Gasman et al., 2008). And AANAPISI faculty understood the benefits of this design and



the relevance of Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies in supporting these outcomes. These findings align with previous research that indicate the benefits of Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies in fostering and enhancing students' academic outcomes (Bowman, 2010; Dee & Penner, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2018; Sleeter, 2011), and their commitment to their communities, social justice, engendering a sense of agency, activism, and civic engagement (Astin, 1993; Bowman et al., 2015; Inkelas, 2004).

Using AANAPISI funds to develop a more comprehensive program is unique on two fronts. First, AANAPISIs, per federal statute, do not have to use their grant funding on programmatic offers for AAPI students or with AAPI students in mind. Second, most AANAPISIs are community colleges and regional comprehensive universities, which have fewer resources to offer ethnic specific academic, co-curricular, and research opportunities (Maramba & Fong, 2020; Nguyen, 2020; Orphan & Miller, 2020), where AANAPISI funding offers one solution to develop, encourage, and strengthen these educational practices. Thus, the findings suggest that the process of building capacity at AANAPISI programs requires members to co-construct a programmatic level AAPI-based identity, and implement this identity through a transformative and systematic approach to their programmatic design, all while threading the saliency of their shared and complex AAPI experiences throughout this process. In doing so, AANAPISIs are able to satisfy federal requirements through a more robust, unique, and strategic AAPI-focused suite of interconnected resources and programming for students.

## Implications

As AANAPISIs reach their 15-year milestone, policymakers should begin to reexamine the role of AANAPISIs within the larger MSI context. In consideration of the findings, policymakers should expand their federal understanding of capacity building to include additional outcomes beyond enrollment, retention, transfer, and graduation. As demonstrated by these two AANAPISIs, civic and community engagement and research production, with a focus on AAPI issues and racial justice, should be outcomes used to evaluate the success of an AANAPISI program. Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Education should consider revising their regulations to underscore specific grant application priorities, which should include utilizing Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies curriculum. Finally, AANAPISIs are the lowest funded MSIs, yet maintain some of the highest level of eligible institutions (Nguyen et al., 2020). In order to establish greater equity for AAPI communities, U.S. Department of Education officials should request, *and* members of Congress should appropriate funding levels for AANAPISIs that are commensurate with their MSI counterparts. However, this should not come at the expense of funding for other MSIs.

Considerations for practice may prove to be useful for current and future AANAPISIs, as well as other institutional contexts, including fellow MSIs, that are considering interventions to benefit AAPIs on their campuses. From a design perspective, administrators should consider building AANAPISI programs that move beyond only providing academic support services to a full initiative that includes co-curricular activities, new and updated coursework, and research opportunities — that expresses the complexity and heterogeneity of AAPIs. The last two require faculty to be intimately involved with the AANAPISI program, especially those who maintain lines with Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies. Although many community colleges and some universities may not have formal departments or programs, faculty from other disciplines can help design new or revise existing courses that explicitly speak to the experience of AAPI students. At institutions that have been striving to create Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies, an AANAPISI program may provide additional resources to begin building the necessary infrastructure.

Staff members within an AANAPISI have some of the most difficult responsibilities, as they are tasked with co-curricular programming that can have near infinite possibilities. These activities should be catered to the specific AAPI population(s) on campus, and are typically expected to embody student success initiatives, such as tutoring services to enhance reading and writing, academic counseling, and other college access and retention initiatives. Both AANAPISI programs in this study offered these services for students, but they also created other opportunities for learning that indirectly prepared students for success. Some initiatives to consider are internships with community-based organizations and government offices, college access and recruitment initiatives at local high schools, or space for student activism, leadership, and organizing (Gogue et al., 2021b). These co-curricular activities positively benefit students, and also offer great potential to make a lasting impact on local schools, communities, and the institution. It is worth noting that these implications should not be generalized for all AANAPISI programs. Instead, the findings and resulting implications should be used as a roadmap for current and future AANAPISIs to consider in their design and operations.

Finally, as the body of research concerning AANAPISIs continues to grow, there is a need to understand the experiences of faculty, staff, and administrators. Since the majority of federal funds are typically allocated to salaries, it would be useful to understand the impact of the AANAPISI on these members and their efforts to build and institutionalize their programs. Additionally, as more types of institutions, and in different geographic regions of the United States become AANAPISIs, it is imperative to examine AANAPISIs and their AAPI students, beyond the East and West Coasts (Chan, 2018). For example, there are several AANAPISIs located throughout the Midwest, and with great diversity in consideration of their institutional types. Furthermore, as the

AAPI population continues to grow, particularly in the South, examining AANAPISI programs in that region would enhance our understandings of this MSI category. And perhaps most ignored in AANAPISI scholarship are examinations of institutions located in the South Pacific. Nearly, if not, all of the institutions in Hawaii, Guam, the Northern Marianas, Palau, and American Samoa, are funded or eligible AANAPISIs. Scholarship on the experiences Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders is limited, and research in partnership with these institutions is not only worthwhile, but of critical importance.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates how AANAPISI programs build capacity in order to enhance student success, while also cultivating critical engagement for AAPI students. It expands our limited and growing knowledge of MSIs and contributes toward the argument for shifting the policy conversation to include new definitions of student success. These AANAPISIs serve as a model to demonstrate how MSIs can navigate the tensions that stem from the requirements for federal funding, thereby, allowing us to reimagine how federal MSI policy can be interpreted and implemented, in order to ensure that AANAPISIs and other MSIs can live up to their potential, and fulfill their promise of working to advancing a more equitable and diverse society.

## Notes

1. It is important to note that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are two distinct and unique communities that are often grouped together. While in some cases, both communities have worked together in pan-racial solidarity, there are many other examples where Pacific Islanders have been subsumed into a larger AAPI framework that ignores and erases their different racialized experiences and politicized histories of colonization (Gogue et al., 2021a; Wright & Spickard, 2008).
2. This requirement is often operationalized as maintaining a significant population of low-income students and low institutional expenditures, among others.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and the UCLA Institute of American Cultures for funding this study; and Jason Chan and the anonymous reviewers for their generous and thoughtful feedback. And most importantly, I am indebted to the study's participants, who work tirelessly to enhance and advance the important work of AANAPISIs.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

**ORCID**

Mike Hoa Nguyen  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8963-0011>

**References**

- Alcantar, C. M., Pazich, L. B., & Teranishi, R. T. (2019). Meaning-making about becoming a Minority-Serving Institution: A case study of Asian-American serving community colleges. *Review of Higher Education*, 42(5), 309–335 <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2019.0054>.
- Andrews, K. T., Ganz, M., Baggetta, M., Han, H., & Lim, C. (2010). Leadership, membership, and voice: Civic associations that work. *American Journal of Sociology*, 115(4), 1191–1242. <https://doi.org/10.1086/649060>
- Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college?: Four critical years revisited*. Jossey-Bass.
- Baggetta, M., Han, H., & Andrews, K. T. (2013). Leading associations: How individual characteristics and team dynamics generate committed leaders. *American Sociological Review*, 78(4), 544–573. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122413489877>
- Besharov, M. L., & Smith, W. K. (2014). Multiple institutional logics in organizations: Explaining their varied nature and implications. *Academy of Management Review*, 39(3), 364–381. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2011.0431>
- Boven, J. (2018). *Building capacity for educators and education agencies in the central region*. Regional Educational Laboratory Central, U.S. Department of Education. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/central/blog/tcts-building-capacity.asp>
- Bowman, N. A., Park, J. J., & Denson, N. (2015). Student involvement in ethnic student organizations: Examining civic outcomes 6 years after graduation. *Research in Higher Education*, 56(2), 127–145. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-014-9353-8>
- Bowman, N. A. (2010). College diversity experiences and cognitive development: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 80(1), 4–33. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654309352495>
- Cameron, K. S. (1986). Effectiveness as paradox: Consensus and conflict in conceptions of organizational effectiveness. *Management Science*, 32(5), 539–553. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.32.5.539>
- Chan, J. (2018). *Geographic constructions of racial identity: The experiences of Asian American college students in the Midwest* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of California.
- Chan, K. S. (2000). Rethinking the Asian American studies project: Bridging the divide between campus and community. *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 3(1), 17–36. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jaas.2000.0001>
- Chang, M. J. (2018). Changing the course of history: Imagining new possibilities for addressing old business. In L. W. Perna (Ed.), *Taking it to the streets: The role of scholarship in advocacy and advocacy in scholarship* (pp. 23–29). JHU Press.
- Chang, M., & Kiang, P. (2002). New challenges of representing Asian American students in U. S. higher education. In W. Smith, P. Altbach, & K. Lomotey (Eds.), *The racial crisis in American higher education: Continuing challenges for the twenty-first century* (pp. 137–158). State University of New York Press.
- Chesler, M., Lewis, A., & Crowfoot, J. (2005). *Challenging racism in higher education: Promoting justice*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.

- Davis, G. F., & Cobb, J. A. (2010). *Resource dependence theory: Past and future*. In *Stanford's organization theory renaissance, 1970–2000*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Dee, T. S., & Penner, E. K. (2017). The causal effects of cultural relevance: Evidence from an ethnic studies curriculum. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1), 127–166. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216677002>
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532–550. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258557>
- Garcia, G. A. (2018). Decolonizing Hispanic-serving institutions: A framework for organizing. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 17(2), 132–147. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192717734289>
- Gasman, M., Baez, B., & Turner, C. S. V. (Eds.). (2008). *Understanding minority-serving institutions*. SUNY Press.
- Gogue, D. T. L., Poon, O. A., Maramba, D. C., & Kanagala, V. (2021a). Inclusions and exclusions: Racial categorizations and panethnicities in higher education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2021.1982045>
- Gogue, D. T. L., Venturanza, R. J., Cuenza-Uvas, A., & Nguyen, M. H. (2021b). The role of Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions in reframing leadership education. In R. Whitney & J. D. Collins (Eds.), *New Directions for Student Leadership: No. 171. Advancing racial equity in leadership education: Centering marginalized institutional contexts* (pp. 101–111). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20460>
- Han, H. (2014). *How organizations develop activists: Civic associations and leadership in the 21st century*. Oxford University Press.
- Hinings, C. R., Thibault, L., Slack, T., & Kikulis, L. M. (1996). Values and organizational structure. *Human Relations*, 49(7), 885–916. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679604900702>
- Hinton, K. A. (2015). Undocumented citizens: The civic engagement of activist immigrants. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 10(2), 152–167. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2F1746197915583933>
- Hurtado, S., Alvarez, C. L., Guillermo-Wann, C., Cuellar, M., & Arellano, L. (2012). A model for diverse learning environments: The scholarship on creating and assessing conditions for student success. In J. C. Smart & M. B. Paulsen (Eds.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 41–122). Springer.
- Inkelas, K. K. (2004). Does participation in ethnic cocurricular activities facilitate a sense of ethnic awareness and understanding? A study of Asian Pacific American undergraduates. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45(3), 285–302. [https://muse.jhu.edu/article/171138#info\\_wrap](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/171138#info_wrap)
- Kanter, R. M., & Brinkerhoff, D. (1981). Organizational performance: Recent developments in measurement. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 7, 321–349. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.07.080181.001541>
- Kem, P., Boxell, S., & Kiang, P. (2020). Asian American Studies and AANAPISI writing initiatives. In D. C. Maramba & T. P. Fong (Eds.), *Transformative practices for minority student success: Accomplishments of Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions* (pp. 116–130). Stylus.
- Kezar, A. (2006). Redesigning for collaboration in learning initiatives: An examination of four highly collaborative campuses. *Journal of Higher Education*, 77(5), 804–838. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2006.11778945>
- Kim, C. J. (1999). The racial triangulation of Asian Americans. *Politics & Society*, 27(1), 105–138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329299027001005>
- Knocke, D., & Prensky, D. (1984). What relevance do organization theories have for voluntary associations? *Social Science Quarterly*, 65(1), 3–20. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1291645044/fulltextPDF/34A1FFC1FBC94125PQ/1?accountid=14608>

- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–491. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465>
- Lammert, J. D., Johnson, L., & Fiore, T. A. (2015). *Conceptualizing capacity building*. Westat.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
- Liu, W. M., Cuyjet, M. J., & Lee, S. (2010). Asian American student involvement in Asian American culture centers. In L. D. Patton (Ed.), *Culture centers in higher education* (pp. 2648). Stylus.
- 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.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation: Revised and expanded from qualitative research and case study applications in education* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Sage.
- Museum, S. D., & Kiang, P. N. (2009). Deconstructing the model minority myth and how it contributes to the invisible minority reality in higher education research. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 142(142), 5–15. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.292>
- Museum, S. D., Maramba, D. C., & Teranishi, R. T. (Eds.). (2013). *The misrepresented minority: New insights on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and the implications for higher education*. Stylus.
- Museum, S. D. (2014). The Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model: A new theory of college success among racially diverse student populations. In M. B. Paulsen (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 187–227). Springer.
- Museum, S. D., 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 Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE). (2013). *Partnership for Equity in Education through Research (PEER): Findings from the first year of research on AANAPISIs*. CARE.
- National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE). (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*. CARE.
- Ngo, B., & Lee, S. J. (2009). Complicating the image of model minority success: A review of Southeast Asian American education. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(4), 415–453. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654307309918>
- 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, M. H. (2020). Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs): Serving and advocating for the educational needs of Southeast Asian American students. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*, 15(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.7771/2153-8999.1205>
- Nguyen, T. H., Nguyen, B. M. D., Nguyen, M. H., Gasman, M., & Conrad, C. (2018). From marginalized to validated: An in-depth case study of an Asian American, Native American and Pacific Islander-Serving Institution. *Review of Higher Education*, 41(3), 327–363. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2018.0011>



- O'Day, J., Goertz, M. E., & Floden, R. E. (1995). *Building capacity for education reform (CPRE policy briefs: Reporting on issues and research in education policy: RB-18)*. Rutgers University Press.
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2015). *Racial formation in the United States*. Routledge.
- Orphan, C. M., & Miller, G. N. (2020). The company regional comprehensive universities desire to keep: Choosing institutional membership associations. *Journal of Higher Education*, 91(2), 300–325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2019.1631073>
- Park, J. J., & Chang, M. J. (2009). AAPI Serving Institutions: The motivations and challenges behind seeking a federal designation. *AAPI Nexus: Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders Policy Practice and Community*, 7(2), 107–125. [https://doi.org/10.36650/nexus7.2\\_107-128\\_ParkChang](https://doi.org/10.36650/nexus7.2_107-128_ParkChang)
- Park, J. J., & Dizon, J. P. M. (2021). The push for Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions: Highlighting the perspectives of student activists. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2021.1979848>
- Park, J., & Teranishi, R. (2008). Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions: Historical perspectives and future prospects. In M. Gasman, M. Baez, & C. V. S. Turner (Eds.), *Understanding minority-Serving Institutions* (pp. 111–126). SUNY Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Paul, S. (1995). *Capacity building for health sector reform* [No. WHO/SHS/NHP/95.8. Unpublished]. World Health Organization.
- Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (2003). *The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective*. Stanford University Press.
- Philip, T. M. (2014). Asian American as a political–racial identity: Implications for teacher education. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 17(2), 219–241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.674024>
- Potter, C., & Brough, R. (2004). Systemic capacity building: A hierarchy of needs. *Health Policy and Planning*, 19(5), 336–345. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czh038>
- Quaye, S. J., Griffin, K. A., & Museus, S. D. (2015). Engaging students of color. In S. R. Harper & S. J. Quaye (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations* (2nd ed., pp. 15–36). Routledge.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Schlund-Vials, C. J., Võ, L. T., & Wong, K. S. (Eds.). (2015). *Keywords for Asian American Studies* (Vol. 4). NYU Press.
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social science* (4th ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2011). *The academic and social value of ethnic studies: A research review*. National Education Association.
- Teranishi, R. T., Martin, M., Bordoloi-Pazich, L., Alcantar, C. M., Nguyen, B. M. D., Curammeng, E. R., Nguyen, M. H., & Chan, J. (2015). *The impact of scholarships for Asian American and Pacific Islander community college students: Preliminary findings from an experimental design study*. National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education.
- 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. [https://doi.org/10.36650/nexus9.1-2\\_151-155\\_Teranishi](https://doi.org/10.36650/nexus9.1-2_151-155_Teranishi)
- U.S. Department of Education. (2004). *Comprehensive school reform capacity building grants*. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/capacitybuilding/index.html>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2008). *Application for grants under the Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions Program 84.382b and Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions Program*.



- U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions Program*. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/aaapi/index.html>
- Umemoto, K. (1989). "On Strike!" San Francisco State College Strike, 1968–69: The Role of Asian American Students. *Amerasia Journal*, 15(1), 3–41. <https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.15.1.7213030j5644rx25>
- Wang, A. C., Mac, J., & Museus, S. (2021). The power of Ethnic Studies at Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions. *About Campus*, 26(1), 10–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086482220953164>
- Webb, R. J. (1974). Organizational effectiveness and the voluntary organization. *Academy of Management Journal*, 17, 663–677 <https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/255645> .
- White House. (2011). *Winning the future: A roadmap for the Asian American and Pacific Islander community*.
- Winston, F. (2015). Reflections upon community engagement: Service-learning and its effect on political participation after college. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 19(1), 79–103 <https://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/jheoe/article/view/1186> .
- Wright, D. H., & Spickard, P. (2008). Pacific Islander Americans and Asian American identity. In L. T. Vo & R. Bonus (Eds.), *Contemporary Asian American communities* (pp. 105–119). Temple University Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Sage.