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The Relevance and Contributions of Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander  
Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) in the U.S. Higher Education Landscape

Written Testimony

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## **Overview and Background**

The Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) program was established by the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 (HEA, Title III, Part F, Section 371; CFDA# 84.382B) and the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEA, Title III, Part A, Section 320; CFDA# 84.031L).

According to the U.S. Department of Education, “the AANAPISI program provides discretionary grants to eligible institutions of higher education (IHEs) to enable them to improve and expand their capacity to serve Asian Americans and Native American Pacific Islanders and low-income individuals... and strengthen their capacity to make a substantial contribution to the higher education resources of the nation.”<sup>1</sup>

Eligibility for the AANAPISI program is based on several criteria as outlined in Section 312(b) of the Higher Education Act, including an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 10 percent Asian Americans and/or Pacific Islander students, a minimum threshold of low-income students, and a low average educational and general expenditures.<sup>2</sup>

As of 2020, there were 165 colleges and universities that were eligible AANAPISIs. These institutions are geographically distributed throughout the U.S., as well as U.S. territories in the Pacific, including American Samoa, Guam, Palau, Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands. The largest concentration of eligible AANAPISIs are in the West and the Pacific, but the states with the most institutions emerging in status are in the South and the Midwest.

### **AANAPISIs are Critical Sites for Serving an Increasingly Diverse Student Population**

The relevance of AANAPISIs – and all Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) – is directly tied to the significant demographic change we are experiencing in our nation. We are seeing a shifting demographic makeup where minority populations will be more than half the U.S. population by 2045.<sup>3</sup> We have already reached that tipping point in our K-12 public schools where minority students surpassed White enrollment in 2018.<sup>4</sup> The demographic change we are experiencing is largely driven by immigrant-origin students (school-aged youth who are immigrants or children of immigrants), which grew by 82% between 2000 and 2008.<sup>5</sup>

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are an important part of the shifting demographic landscape of our nation. While the AAPI population was relatively small up until 1960, it has been increasing exponentially since then.<sup>6</sup> Consider that between 2000 and 2020, the AAPI

population increased from 12.6 million to 25.6 million,<sup>7</sup> and between 2010 and 2020, the AAPI population was the fastest growing racial group in the U.S.<sup>8</sup>

Along with the remarkable growth in the AAPI population, it is also important to recognize the diverse demographic makeup of the population that is unlike any other major racial group in the U.S. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the AAPI racial category consists of 48 different ethnic groups that occupy positions along the full range of the socioeconomic spectrum, from the poor and under-privileged, to the affluent and highly-skilled.<sup>9</sup> AAPIs speak 300 different languages and have wide variation in immigration histories, cultures, and religions.<sup>10</sup>

AAPIs also have wide disparities in educational attainment, which often goes unnoticed because of the treatment of the population in the aggregate. Despite a perception of universally high educational achievement, there are significant differences in educational attainment between AAPI ethnic sub-groups. For example, approximately half of Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander students leave college without earning a degree, which is three-to-five times the likelihood of dropping out compared to East Asians and South Asians.<sup>11</sup>

There is a particularly disturbing demographic trend that is pointing to downward intergenerational mobility within the NHPI communities. We are seeing a decline in NHPI college enrollment and the bachelor's degree attainment rate of younger Guamanians, Native Hawaiians, and Samoans (18-24 years of age) is lower compared to the older cohort of these populations (55-64 years of age). As a result, the gap between NHPI sub-groups and the national average is increasing, rather than decreasing.<sup>12</sup>

These data represent the significant challenges that exist among many AAPI students, which are too often overlooked and underserved. It is the most marginalized and vulnerable AAPI students, and the institutions that serve them, that benefit the most from the AANAPISI program.

### **AANAPISIs are Important for Increasing College Completion and Student Success**

AANAPISIs are an important sector of higher education because it is a program that enables the federal government to target resources to a high concentration of low-income AAPI students. This is because two-thirds of all AAPI college enrollment is concentrated in only 200 postsecondary institutions.<sup>13</sup> In 2018, the 165 eligible AANAPISIs enrolled 40% of AAPI undergraduates, which is a sharp contrast to their enrollment of approximately 8% of the nation's total undergraduate enrollment.<sup>14</sup> And, a CRS study<sup>15</sup> found that AANAPISIs enroll three-quarters of all low-income AAPI students, so the AANAPISI program is an effective and

efficient way of providing resources for institutions that enroll the highest concentrations of low-income AAPI students.

These institutions are also conferring a disproportionately high concentration of degrees to AAPI students. AANAPISIs are conferring nearly half (47.5%) of all associate's degrees<sup>16</sup> and almost one-third (29.4%) of all bachelor's degrees to AAPI students in the nation.<sup>17</sup> A significant proportion of these students are the first in their families to attend college,<sup>18</sup> which helps demonstrate the extent to which AANAPISIs are critical sites for addressing the significant disparities that exist between AAPI sub-groups with regard to their educational attainment.

As a group of institutions, AANAPISIs are also finding ways to collaborate, share best practices, and engage the broader field of higher education about ways to pursue greater student success for low-income AAPI students. For example, at the annual meeting of Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE), which is a network of over 2,700 higher education practitioners across two-year and four-year colleges and universities, there is an all-day preconference where faculty, staff, and students from AANAPISIs discuss updates about federal programs, new and emerging research findings, and best practices related to AANAPISI-funded programs.<sup>19</sup> Another way AANAPISIs are engaging the broader field is by partnering with non-profit organizations supporting student success, such as APIA Scholars, which is the nation's largest scholarship provider for AAPI students. APIA Scholars has distributed over \$4.2 million in scholarship to more than 1,700 low-income AAPI students at AANAPISIs through their collaborative work with these colleges and universities.<sup>20</sup>

### **AANAPISIs are Incubators for Innovation in Higher Education**

AANAPISIs are not only enrolling a disproportionately high concentration of low-income AAPI students, we have found that they are important sites for innovation in higher education. What we have found through our research is that AANAPISIs are utilizing their resources to respond to the unique needs of their students and engage in a range of initiatives that aim to increase access to and success in college.<sup>21</sup> These grant-funded activities are improving how AANAPISIs deliver student services, making improvements to curricular and academic program development, increasing their capacity to improve leadership and mentorship opportunities, and contributing to faculty and staff development.<sup>22</sup>

In partnership with APIA Scholars and three AANAPISI community colleges, we conducted research on AANAPISI-funded programs with explicit goals of improving student success.<sup>23</sup> We utilized a research design that enabled us to longitudinally track AAPI students in AANAPISI-funded programs (participants) and compare their outcomes against a comparable group of AAPI students who did not participate in the AANAPISI-funded program (comparison group).

Our analysis focused on the “added-value” of AANAPISI-funded programs relative to academic performance, credit accumulation, persistence, degree attainment, and transfer rates.

One of our campus partners was De Anza College, located in Cupertino, CA, which had a large concentration of AAPI students, which made nearly 40% of the total enrollment.<sup>24</sup> De Anza used their grant to develop learning communities that paired developmental English with an AAPI literature course. The program also included wrap-around support services with an embedded counselor. Our analysis compared the outcomes of AAPI students in these learning communities with characteristically similar students who did not enroll in learning communities. We found that IMPACT AAPI students, compared to the control group, passed their developmental course at a higher rate, were more likely to transition from developmental to college-level English, and were more likely to earn associate’s degrees, and accomplish this in less time.<sup>25</sup> These findings helped to inform an effort by De Anza to bring these grant-funded activities to scale and serve a larger number of student.

Another campus partner was the City College of San Francisco (CCSF), which is among the oldest and largest community colleges in the nation. AAPI students made up nearly 40% of the total enrollment, with Chinese and Filipinos representing the two largest AAPI sub-groups. CCSF used their AANAPISI grant to create the AANAPISI STEM program, which was a cohort program with dedicated counseling, tutoring, and improvements to access to course material and research opportunities. We found that AANAPISI STEM students, compared to the control group, attempted more academic credits per term, enrolled in more academically rigorous courses, had a significantly higher transfer rate to four-year institutions, and transferred in fewer terms.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, I want to talk about what UNLV has been doing as an AANAPISI, which is another good example of a campus using their AANAPISI grant to pursue innovative practices. One aspect of their grant-funded activities is focused on improvements to how UNLV collects and reports data on their AAPI student population. This is a noteworthy effort considering the extent to which disaggregated data is critical for revealing differences between AAPI sub-groups with regard to their access and utilization of services on campus, as well as disparities in college participation and degree attainment, which is concealed by aggregated data on AAPI students.<sup>27</sup> Improvements to data systems and practices that capture more granular sub-group information is critical as the demography of the states, such as Nevada, are becoming increasingly diverse. Given these demographic trends, this grant-funded effort will serve as a model for the rest of the institutions within the Nevada State System of Higher Education (NSHE), as well as for the broader field of higher education.

## **Barriers, Challenges, and Opportunities**

We have also learned a lot through our research about the unique needs and challenges of AANAPISIs, as well as where there are opportunities for a greater return on investment.

### A Greater Investment in AANAPISIs

Perhaps the most significant challenge for AANAPISIs is the inadequate level of funding available for eligible institutions. The current level of funding, for example, has resulted in 30 AANAPISIs receiving grants in 2020 and 2021, which is only 18% of the eligible institutions. While these 30 institutions enroll 122,400 AAPI undergraduate students and confer over 15,000 associate's and bachelor's degrees, a higher level of funding for the AANAPISI program would result in an exponential increase in the number students who can benefit from these resources.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, a greater investment would result in more opportunities to expand, replicate, and bring to scale innovative grant-funded initiatives.

I appreciate the leadership and support of the Subcommittee on Higher Education to ensure that MSIs, including AANAPISIs, received significant funds through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Funding, including in the American Rescue Plan. I am also heartened to see that Congress included significant increased investments in MSIs in recent legislation, including Build Back Better, which would result in funding that is three to five times greater than the current level of funding. I am hopeful that Congress can find a middle ground to make that investment a reality. Also, given the exponential growth in the AAPI student population, the importance of this funding will only increase.

### The Need for Disaggregated Student Data

AANAPISIs are the most important sector of higher education to uplift best practices for a better understanding of and response to the unique needs and challenges of low-income AAPI students. To this point, institutions that are disaggregating data for AAPI students are revealing the importance of tracking differences between AAPI sub-groups.

Throughout higher education, there is a need for greater attention to and action on the limitations of the current data systems and practices in higher education and AANAPISIs can play an important role in modeling innovative ways of leveraging data and research to inform higher education services, practices, and policies. This is a particularly important civil rights issue for the AAPI community because aggregated data is literally rendering the most marginalized and vulnerable groups invisible.<sup>29</sup>

### The Need for Strengthening Research Capacity

There is much more we can learn from AANAPISIs and other MSIs with regard to their role and function in higher education. Yet, there is a need for a greater investment in research that is targeted at the study of this sector of higher education. While the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) provides targeted support for AANAPISIs and other MSIs, these programs are relegated to training students in particular fields and disciplines. Additionally, there is a need for other federal agencies, including National Science Foundation (NSF), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) establish grant programs for AANAPISIs, as they do for other types of MSIs.<sup>30</sup>

There is also a need for programs that can increase the research capacity of AANAPISIs and other MSIs. This funding can support research that can yield insight into the effects of innovative practices that are being pursued by AANAPISIs and other MSIs and increase knowledge about the relative contribution of these institutions to higher education and society. Greater funding for research on AANAPISIs and other MSIs is also an opportunity to harness the research capacity of the growing number of research intensive AANAPISIs and other MSIs. This growing segment of MSIs include 17 HSIs that are classified as R1 (very high research activity) by the Carnegie classification system. Of these 17 R1 HSIs, eight are also eligible AANAPISIs.<sup>31</sup> Three HSI/AANAPISI R1 institutions also have membership in the Association of American Universities (AAU).<sup>32</sup>

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

I want to thank the committee for including me in what I believe to be a historic occasion for AANAPISIs because, to my knowledge, this is the first time there has been a substantial focus and inclusion of AANAPISIs in a congressional hearing on higher education. Given the current climate of anti-Asian racism during the COVID pandemic, AANAPISIs are important for not only providing leadership in the field when it comes to solidarity with the AAPI community, but also in helping AAPI students find a space and place in higher education. I am very appreciative of your attention to the important contributions AANAPISIs are making to the higher education landscape and I hope there are other opportunities to include AANAPISIs in broader conversations about MSIs in the future. AANAPISIs are only going to be increasingly relevant as the demographic landscape of our national continues to shift.

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- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions Program*, 2021, <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/aanapi/index.html>.
- <sup>2</sup> Higher Grants, *Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)*, n.d., <https://www.higheredgrants.info/GrantDetails.aspx?gid=40311>.
- <sup>3</sup> W. H. Frey, *The U.S. Will Become 'Minority White' in 2045*, *Census Projects*, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/03/14/the-us-will-become-minority-white-in-2045-census-projects>.
- <sup>4</sup> K. Schaeffer, *U.S. Public School Students Often Go to Schools Where at Least Half of their Peers are the Same Race or Ethnicity*, 2012, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/12/15/u-s-public-school-students-often-go-to-schools-where-at-least-half-of-their-peers-are-the-same-race-or-ethnicity>.
- <sup>5</sup> J. Batalova & M. Feldblum, *Immigrant-Origin Students in U.S. Higher Education: A Data Profile*, 2020, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/immigrant-origin-students-postsecondary-ed-final.pdf>.
- <sup>6</sup> A. Budiman & N. G. Ruiz, *Key Facts about Asian Americans, A Diverse and Growing Population*, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/29/key-facts-about-asian-americans>.
- <sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *The Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Population: 2010*, 2012, <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-12.pdf>. 21 Feb. 2022; U.S. Census Bureau, *Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 and 2020 Census*, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html>.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> R. T. Teranishi, *Asians in the Ivory Tower: Dilemmas of Racial Inequality in American Higher Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010).
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, *iCount: A Data Quality Movement for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Higher Education* (New York, NY: Educational Testing Service, 2013).
- <sup>12</sup> Teranishi, R. T., Le, A., Gutierrez, R. A., Venturanza, R., Hafoka, I., Toso-Lafaele Gogue, D., & Uluave, L. *Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in Higher Education: A Call to Action* (Washington, D.C.: 2019).
- <sup>13</sup> National Commission of Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, *Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders: Facts, Not Fiction: Setting the Record Straight* (New York, NY: 2008).
- <sup>14</sup> M. H. Nguyen, K. J. Espinoza, D. T.-L. Gogue, & D. Ding, *Looking to the Next Decade: Strengthening Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions through Policy and Practice* (Washington, D. C.: National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, 2020); National Center for Education Statistics, *Table 306.10. Total Fall Enrollment in Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions*, 2019, [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19\\_306.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_306.10.asp).
- <sup>15</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Memorandum Regarding the Number of Institutions Potentially Eligible to Receive Grants Under the Assistance to Asian American and Native American and Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions Program* (Washington, D.C.: Author, 2009).
- <sup>16</sup> M. H. Nguyen, K. J. Espinoza, D. T.-L. Gogue, & D. Ding, *Looking to the Next Decade: Strengthening Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions through Policy and Practice* (Washington, D. C.: National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, 2020).
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> Teranishi, R. T., Martin, M., Bordoloi Pazich, L., Alcantar, C. M., Bach Mai Dolly Nguyen, B. M. D., Curammeng, E. R., Nguyen, M. H., & Chan, J. *The Impact of Scholarships for Asian American and Pacific Islander Community College Students: Preliminary Findings from an Experimental Design Study* (Los Angeles: CARE Project, 2015).
- <sup>19</sup> Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education, *About*, n.d. [http://apahenational.org/?page\\_id=2](http://apahenational.org/?page_id=2). Accessed 24 Feb. 2022.
- <sup>20</sup> APIA Scholars, *Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) Scholarships*, n.d., <https://apiascholars.org/scholarship/aanapisi-scholarship/>



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<sup>21</sup> National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, *Partnership for Equity in Peer Education through Research (PEER): Findings from the First Year of Research on AANAPISIs* (New York, NY: Author, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> R. T. Teranishi, M. Martin, L. Bordoloi Pazich, C. M. Alcantar, & T-L. K. Nguyen, *Measuring the Impact of MSI-Funded Programs on Student Success: Findings from the Evaluation of Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions* (New York, NY: National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education and Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> R. T. Teranishi, L. Lok, & B. M. D. Nguyen, *iCount: A Data Quality Movement for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Higher Education* (New York, NY: National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education and Educational Testing Service, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> M. H. Nguyen, K. J. Espinoza, D. T.-L. Gogue, & D. Ding, *Looking to the Next Decade: Strengthening Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions through Policy and Practice* (Washington, D. C.: National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, 2020).

<sup>29</sup> R. T. Teranishi, L. Lok, & B. M. D. Nguyen, *iCount: A Data Quality Movement for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Higher Education* (New York, NY: National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education and Educational Testing Service, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Nguyen, M.H., Hoang, S.B., & Ching, C.D. (2022). Supporting Students of color at broad access colleges and universities: The potential of federal policy. In G.E. Crisp, K. McClurek, C. Orphan (Eds.), *Unlocking Opportunity through Broadly Accessible Institutions*. Routledge.

<sup>31</sup> University of Arizona Hispanic-Serving Institutions Initiative, *R1 Hispanic Serving Institutions, 2019-2020*, n.d. <https://hsi.arizona.edu/about/hispanic-serving-institution>.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*