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Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions:

Areas of Growth, Innovation, and Collaboration[1]

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Summary

This policy brief aims to raise the national visibility of the Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) program and link the needs of these institutions to the hundreds of similar Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) (e.g., historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and tribal colleges and universities). More specifically, this brief demonstrates how and why the MSI policy strategy is an effective way to increase the success of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) college students, and how the AANAPISI program can be further strengthened.

Overview

The changing demography of our nation means that our system of higher education must realize a fundamentally different approach to teaching and learning. Responding to this twenty-first-century challenge is the AANAPISI federal program, which is structured as a competitive grant process for institutions with at least a 10 percent enrollment of AAPI full-time equivalent students, a minimum threshold of low-income students, and lower than average educational and general expenditures per student. As of FY2011, there were fifty-two institutions with the AANAPISI designation—of which fifteen that have been funded (see n. 1)—and sixty-four more that met the criteria but were not designated or funded.

The AANAPISI program, which is one of the most significant investments ever made for the AAPI college student population by the federal government, is notable because it:

- Acknowledges the unique challenges facing nearly 1.2 million AAPI students relative to college access and completion (Teranishi, 2010),

- Represents a significant commitment of much-needed resources to improve the postsecondary completion rates among low-income AAPI students, and

- Recognizes that campus settings are mutable points of intervention—sites of possibilities for responding to the impediments encountered by AAPI students (CARE, 2010).

This policy brief aims to raise the national visibility of the AANAPISI program and link the needs of these institutions to the hundreds of similar MSIs (e.g., historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and tribal colleges and universities). More specifically, this brief demonstrates how and why the MSI policy strategy is an effective way to increase the success of AAPI college students and how the AANAPISI program can be further strengthened.

How and Why the MSI Policy Strategy Works for AAPI Students

The AANAPISI program not only demonstrates a significant commitment to the AAPI community by the federal government, but also it provides much-needed resources to high concentrations of AAPI students with economic challenges and responds to specific needs that impact college access and success.

- A large proportion of AAPI students are from low-income backgrounds, are the first in their families to attend college, and struggle to secure the financial resources to support themselves while in school (CARE, 2008; Yeh, 2004). AAPI students are also more likely than other students to be immigrants, non-native speakers of English, and often enroll in English Learner programs (often geared toward Spanish speakers) (CARE, 2010; Suzuki, 2002; Yeh, 2004).

- AAPI undergraduates are highly concentrated in a small number of postsecondary institutions. In 2009, two-thirds of AAPI students were concentrated in two hundred institutions (CARE, 2010). The 116 institutions that met the criteria for AANAPISI eligibility enrolled 75 percent of the low-income AAPI undergraduate students (Congressional Research Service, 2009).

- Nearly one in ten AAPI undergraduate students[2] nationally attended one of the first fifteen AANAPISI campuses, which is in sharp contrast to their enrollment of 1.5 percent of the nation's total undergraduate population. These institutions enrolled nearly 89,000 AAPI undergraduates and awarded nearly 9,500 associate and bachelor degrees to AAPI students in 2009 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

AANAPISI Grantees Promoting AAPI Student Success

Federal funding is incentivizing institutional reform on AANAPISI campuses by supporting programs to increase access (increase in enrollment) to and success (e.g., persistence, degree attainment, and transfer) in college for AAPI students. Although each one of the AANAPISIs uses the funding in unique ways, several commonalities exist among the programs. These services were concentrated around the following three areas:

- *Academic and Student Support Services*. AANAPISI funding increases access to and utilization of academic counseling, learning communities, financial aid counseling, and tutoring programs, which help students to be more academically engaged and improve retention and degree attainment.

- *Leadership and Mentorship Opportunities*. AANAPISI funding provides students with greater leadership development and mentorship opportunities, which increase academic and social engagement among AAPI students and improve their academic and career trajectories.

- *Research and Resource Development*. AANAPISI funding is being used to improve the quality of statistical information on AAPI students. This more accurately reflects the variations that exist between AAPI ethnic subgroups and develops better systems for tracking student progress and degree-attainment rates.

Recommendations and Areas of Opportunity

AANAPISIs are in a position to benefit from and contribute to the common interests of MSIs, including the need for greater policy advocacy, the promotion of targeted services for minority students, and faculty and staff development for institutions that serve disproportionately high concentrations of low-income students of color. To strengthen the AANAPISI program further, we offer the following recommendations:

- Make it clear that any references to MSIs include AANAPISIs. These institutions can then gain access to opportunities and resources for designated MSIs and participate in dialogue among MSI leaders. Being more fully recognized as MSIs, AANAPISIs can gain access to a number of federal and private initiatives that are targeted at MSIs.

- Increase investment in the AANAPISI program, including funding to increase the number of AANAPISIs and a greater investment in each individual campus, and resources for outreach to and greater awareness among other federal agencies. A need exists for outreach to "emerging AANAPISIs" and technical assistance for existing programs.

- Promote modifications to existing legislation to allow for outreach activities and community engagement, which are currently prohibited under Title III-Part F, and the ability for institutions to carry both AANAPISI and another MSI designation, which is also currently prohibited.

- Support the development of the new AANAPISI umbrella organization. A new advocacy organization, Asian American and Pacific Islander Association for Colleges and Universities, has been created to help advocate for AANAPISI institutions, support research, and sustain contact among the institutions. A need exists for greater awareness about this organization among institutions and the broader MSI community.

Notes

1. This briefing material was a part of a presentation to Martha Kanter, Under Secretary of Education and Eduardo Ochoa, Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education on April 21, 2011. The author would like to acknowledge the input of representatives from a number of AANAPISI campuses during the preparation of this brief.

2. Among Title IV undergraduate degree-granting, public institutions.

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