

Federal Higher Education Policy Priorities and the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community

The Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community faces a pervasive problem of being invisible and misunderstood in federal higher education reform efforts. This report examines key federal policy priorities in higher education, including community college, minority-serving institutions, and higher education's role in workforce development, and demonstrates that for key policy issues in which the AAPI population has been absent, there is potential for a positive, long-lasting impact for both the AAPI community and the nation at large through greater inclusion and representation.

Policy Area 1: AAPIs in the Community College Sector

Compared to AAPIs in four-year colleges, AAPI community college students are more likely to be older, attend part-time, enter college with lower levels of academic preparation, and have significant financial need.

AAPI community college students are more likely than other community college students to work more than 20 hours per week, to be recent immigrants to the U.S., and to enroll in remedial education courses.

The 50 institutions that serve the largest numbers of AAPI community college students are in states that made significant cuts to their higher education budgets following the recession that began in 2007.

Recommendations: There is a need for a greater investment in research on AAPI community college students, and a need for institutions and organizations to provide culturally appropriate outreach to the AAPI community.

Policy Area 2: AANAPISIs: Exploring Areas of Growth, Innovation, and Collaboration

AANAPISIs enrolled nearly 60,000 AAPI undergraduates and awarded nearly 5,000 associate's and bachelor's degrees to AAPI students in 2006-2007.

AANAPISI grantees are utilizing a range of innovative practices to promote AAPI student success, including student learning communities, leadership development, and new research about the AAPI population.

AANAPISIs are in a position to both benefit from and contribute to the common interests of MSIs,

Recommendations: There is a need for greater investment in the AANAPISI program, including outreach to raise awareness about the program among other federal agencies.

Policy Area 3: Higher Education, Workforce Development, and the AAPI Community

Large sectors of the AAPI population suffer from high secondary school drop-out rates, low rates of college participation, and low college completion rates.

The unemployment rates of Pacific Islanders and Southeast Asians three to five times greater than those of many East Asians and South Asians.

There are significant sub-group differences in workforce participation within the AAPI population, with some groups relegated to low-skilled, low-waged jobs.

AAPIs face barriers in access to positions of leadership in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. AAPIs comprise only 2.3% of senior executives and 1.5% of all Board seats of Fortune 500 Companies.

Recommendations: There is a need to identify, acknowledge, and be responsive to the lack of AAPIs in certain occupational sectors, and to address the lack of AAPIs in positions of leadership.

From Awareness to Action

The APIASF Higher Education Summit will build on this research to pursue a dialogue about how to effectively increase awareness about and respond to the needs of AAPIs within our nation's higher education policy priorities.