

## Asian American and Pacific Islander Students in the Community College Sector

Despite the perception that AAPI students only attend selective universities, the largest number of AAPI students can be found in community colleges, which comprises 47.3% of all AAPI student enrollment. These trends are projected to continue with AAPI enrollment at community colleges outpacing growth in all other sectors of U.S. higher education. This policy brief reveals significant differences between AAPI students at two-year and four-year institutions, identifies similarities and differences between AAPIs and other students at community colleges, and provides institutional profiles of the community colleges that serve large concentrations of AAPIs.

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### Differences Between AAPI Students at Two-Year and Four-Year Colleges

AAPI students in community colleges carry many of the “risk factors” that are correlated with lower rates of college persistence and degree attainment. Compared to AAPIs in four-year colleges, AAPI community college students are more likely to be older, attend part-time, and enter college with lower levels of academic preparation. AAPI community college students also have significant financial need; a large proportion of students (45.5%) have more than \$2,000 in financial need after taking into account their estimated family contribution and all sources of financial aid.

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### AAPI Community College Students Compared to Other Community College Students

AAPI community college students are more likely than others to work more than 20 hours per week while taking courses, be recent immigrants to the U.S., and have a history of foreign schooling. A greater proportion of AAPI community college students have enrolled or planned to enroll in English Language Learner courses and remedial or developmental reading courses than do their peers, and 10.6% reported more than \$8,900 in financial need—a larger proportion than any other racial or ethnic group at two-year colleges.

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### The Community Colleges that Serve AAPI Students

AAPI community college students are concentrated in a small number of institutions; 80% attend institutions in just eight

states, with the majority concentrated in community colleges in California, Hawai‘i, and New York. 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. California, which enrolls 55.3% of the nation’s AAPI community college students, recently reduced their community college enrollment by approximately 21,000 students due to budget cuts.

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### Recommendations

A greater investment in research on AAPI students is necessary to better understand and respond to why gaps occur within the AAPI community college population, and between the AAPI population and other community college students.

There is a need for institutions and organizations to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach to community college students and their families, with special focus on financial aid and FAFSA, community resources available at the college, ELL opportunities, and transfer opportunities.

Community college institutions and systems should formalize mentorship programs between first-time AAPI students, existing AAPI students, and faculty at community colleges.

<sup>1</sup> Chang et al., *Beyond Myths*

<sup>2</sup> NPSAS:08

<sup>3</sup> C. Rivera, “Enrollment Down at California Community Colleges”