

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### A Renewed Public Vision

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Unless educators and advocates dispel and replace the myths about Asian American and Pacific Islander students or other groups, both higher education and society as a whole will miss fully developing and engaging these students, who have much to contribute to our schools and our communities. In this report, we have examined both data and stories that encourage us to develop a renewed public vision for implementing policies and practices based on facts about Asian American and Pacific Islander students.

First, we need to dispel the fictions and myths that Asian American and Pacific Islander students are:

- taking over institutions of higher education, especially in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM);
- concentrated in elite higher education and are outperforming all other groups;
- all high-achieving “model minorities”; and
- a homogenous mass that can be dealt with as a whole.

We then need to replace those fictions with the facts about Asian American and Pacific Islander students in higher education:

- Asian American and Pacific Islander students pursue a broad range of academic fields of study.
- The growth in college attendance by Asian American and Pacific Islander students parallels that of African-American and Hispanic students; however, there are a small number of states and institutions with high concentrations of Asian American and Pacific Islander students.

- Asian American and Pacific Islander students enroll most heavily in their local public two-year and four-year institutions.
- Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders constitute a group characterized by a variety of ethnicities and cultural backgrounds.

Were these facts driving our educational practices, we would have:

- data collection and reporting mechanisms that tell us more about who comes to our campuses, including ethnicity, generational status, language spoken at home, and other diagnostic evidence;
- systems and mechanisms to improve the tracking and delivery of programs and services for AAPI students, such as academic advisement, mental health services, career placement, and to monitor outcomes informed by disaggregated data;
- faculty, administration, and academic support staff who are educated and skilled in teaching and supporting the specific cultural and ethnic backgrounds of their Asian American and Pacific Islander students; and
- a proportional representation of AAPI educational leaders, administrators, and faculty to serve as role models for Asian American and Pacific Islander students and to serve as subject matter experts for policy development.

These significant changes will not occur without purposeful action by educators and educational advocates. These are key elements that we offer to bring about the types of changes needed to better align educational policy and practice with today’s reality.

## From Vision to Action

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*Actionable Research Is Key.* Through relatively straightforward research, we can move beyond misleading and potentially harmful assumptions that have dominated American thought about Asian American and Pacific Islander participation in education. We must develop methods to critically and effectively study what is truly happening to our young people—both in formalized education and informally in the culture at large—rejecting what is fiction and embracing what is fact. This suggests a combination of both quantitative and qualitative evaluation research, which includes:

- collecting data in a way that allows for further deconstruction of the variation within the AAPI racial category (by ethnicity, nationality, etc.);
- changing data reporting and analysis approaches by disaggregating data by ethnicity and other important background factors; incorporating focus groups and other qualitative methods to develop our knowledge about ethnic differences within AAPI communities; and
- changing from a narrow set of evaluative indicators (test scores, high school grades, etc.) to a broader set that includes such indicators as first language and immigrant generational status in predicting educational outcome, not only for use in admissions practices, but for student services, outreach, and developing new institutional initiatives.

*Acting Collectively Is Key.* In order to address the realities of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders—as well as other minority student groups—we need to build an inclusive coalition of educators, policymakers, philanthropists, advocates, and community leaders who will challenge institutional barriers and systematic misrepresentation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other peoples, by:

- hiring Asian American and Pacific Islander staff, consultants, community leaders, and scholarly researchers to identify and guide work in education at every level, on behalf of all groups, including Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders;
- seeking out Asian American and Pacific Islander community leaders to enhance the cultural capacity of our institutions and improve student outcomes; and
- building relationships between federal, state and local institutions, community-based organizations, and affected communities.

Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that AAPI college students are becoming more aware of the importance of holding leadership positions. Using data from “the nation’s largest and oldest study of college students,” the 2007 UCLA report *Beyond Myths: The Growth and Diversity of Asian American College Freshmen, 1971–2005*, notes that the “percentage of Asian American freshmen reporting that becoming a community leader is ‘very important’ or ‘essential’” has more than doubled from 13 percent in 1971 to 32.3 percent in 2005.<sup>36</sup>

The results of effective collaborations will impact both K–12 and higher education in positive ways.

### K–12 EDUCATION

- School counselors will be aware of cultural backgrounds of the Asian American and Pacific Islander students for whom they are responsible, resulting in targeted support for at-risk students as well as meaningful involvement and participation by parents with little or no formal U.S. education.
- More school level teachers will be trained to educate English Language Learners, thus raising the quality of schools across the spectrum, and the potential for student success in college.

- Asian American and Pacific Islander students will be encouraged to pursue careers as educators and administrators in the K–12 level to increase the number of mentors and role models for AAPI youth.
- More schools will be able to provide curricula that reflects Asian American and Pacific Islander histories, art, literature, and culture, which will benefit all students by increasing their ability to participate at the college level, where multicultural competence is expected.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

- Colleges with better information about the challenges faced by AAPI students will be able to attract this group of students through better information dissemination and more effective outreach.
- Colleges can more equitably support low-income Asian American and Pacific Islander students who have real financial need that may have been overlooked under old models.
- Retention of Asian American and Pacific Islander students will improve because increased role models—faculty, staff, and administrators—will be present to interact and develop relationships with them.
- Asian American and Pacific Islander student self-esteem and self-efficacy will improve over time because colleges will better understand and meet the needs of these, including effective communications with parents with little or no formal U.S. education.
- The participation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in civic roles will increase because more role models will be visible in positions of leadership on campus.

## Additional Resources

This report is just one aspect of the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education. We encourage educators, advocates, and scholars to go to the project Web site located at: <http://www.nyu.edu/projects/care/> for additional resources, including an extensive annotated bibliography, a list of activities by the commission related to the project, and other papers that examine key issues and trends related to AAPIs in education.