



**CARE**

National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education

# The Relevance of Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders in the College Completion Agenda



**APIASF**® Today's Minds,  
Tomorrow's Future®  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund

## **Connecting Research to Policy and Practice**

This report was made possible by a collaborative effort between the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund (APIASF), and through the generous support of USA Funds. The CARE Project engages in research that identifies and examines key issues affecting Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) student access and success in U.S. higher education. APIASF is the nation's largest non-profit organization that provides college scholarships to AAPI students with financial need.

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## **National Commission**

**Margarita Benitez**

Excelencia in Education

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University of Southern California

**Carrie Billy**

American Indian Higher Education Consortium

**Michelle Asha Cooper**

Institute for Higher Education Policy

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Seton Hall University

**Antonio Flores**

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

**Larry Griffith**

United Negro College Fund

**J.D. Hokoyama**

Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc.

**Neil Horikoshi**

Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund

**Shirley Hune**

University of Washington

**Tim Johnson**

Office of Hawaiian Affairs

**Parag Mehta**

U.S. Department of Labor

**Mark Mitsui**

North Seattle Community College

**Don Nakanishi**

University of California, Los Angeles

**Doua Thor**

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

**Robert Underwood**

University of Guam

## **CARE Research Team**

**Robert Teranishi**

Principal Investigator

New York University

**Tu-Lien Kim Nguyen**

Project Coordinator

Steinhardt Institute for Higher Education Policy

**Daniel Choi**

Research Associate

New York University

**Loni Bordoloi Pazich**

Research Associate

New York University

**Siqing He**

Research Associate

Teachers College, Columbia University

**Cindy Uh**

Consultant

UCLA School of Law

## **Research Advisory Group**

**Mitchell Chang**

University of California Los Angeles

**Dina Maramba**

State University of New York, Binghamton

**Samuel Museus**

University of Hawaii, Manoa

**Julie J. Park**

University of Maryland, College Park

**Oiyan Poon**

University of Massachusetts, Boston

**Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner**

California State University, Sacramento

## **Editorial Team**

**Katie Tran-Lam**

Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund

**Patrick Calder**

The Design Foundry



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## Preface

The National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE), consisting of a national commission, research advisory group, and research team at New York University, aims to provoke thoughtful and actionable discussions about the mobility and educational opportunities for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) in America's education system.

With this charge, the CARE Project works toward three primary goals:

- conducting applied research that addresses the exclusion and misrepresentation of AAPIs in the broader discourse on America's commitment to equity and social justice;
- documenting the relevance of AAPIs to national higher education research and policy priorities; and
- offering solutions and strategies to inform the work of key constituents, such as researchers, policymakers, institutional leaders, and the civil rights community.

In this report, we focus most intently on the relevance of the AAPI population to the national college completion agenda, which is undeniably significant for today's higher education reform effort. With this issue in mind, our research is guided by four propositions about education and social change. First, we argue that **policy matters**: it dictates funding priorities, resource usage, and federal, state, and local involvement in educational efforts. Second, we assert that **institutions matter**: what colleges and universities *do* with funding and resources has a tremendous impact on student success. Third, **research matters**: policymakers and institutional administrators need accurate, disaggregated data that present the real assets and needs of college students

and their families. Finally, **strategic action matters**: now, more than ever, there is a strong public interest in institutional accountability. We are interested in identifying and studying areas of program effectiveness relative to the AAPI population to inform policymaking decisions. We challenge funders, policymakers, and higher education leadership to account for AAPI assets and needs when developing and/or building upon programs and policies. At the crossroads of our domestic policies and competition in the global arena is the AAPI population, a national asset and opportunity to heed the call for a greater investment in diversity throughout the pathways, from education to the workforce.

Appropriate responses to this challenge will require extraordinary efforts in both the policy and funding arenas.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps most notable are the federal investments being made in community colleges, Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), and college affordability. This targeted investment in higher education by the federal government is being driven by big goals: the expectation is that colleges and universities will play a central role in helping

### IN ADDITION TO THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION,

advisory group, and research team, there are other individuals who played integral roles in the production of this report. Our thanks to Katrina Chambers, Prema Chaudhari, Devita Bishundat, Sarah Ha, Mariko Hughes, and April Rongero at the Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund.

to decrease the unemployment rate; educate and train skilled workers for the jobs of tomorrow; re-tool industry for new technology; and create “green jobs” in an effort to improve environmental sustainability.<sup>2</sup>

With a focus on making college more affordable and investing in institutions that disproportionately serve high concentrations of low-income students and students of color, it is clear that a major policy strategy is to decrease longstanding disparities in college access and degree attainment. The participation of all Americans, including underrepresented racial minority groups, low-income students, immigrants, and language minorities, is essential to ensuring that the United States can lead the world in creativity, productivity, and achievement. It is

Paying attention to AAPI students matters – for the college completion agenda and the national economy, as well as AAPI students and their families.

**MAE LEE, DE ANZA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

within this context that this report draws attention to the AAPI student population and its potential role in meeting these goals. In particular, this report highlights mischaracterizations of the AAPI community that contribute to their exclusion from policies, pro-

grams and initiatives that could provide much needed attention, resources, and services.<sup>3</sup>

Given this context, the purpose of this report is to examine where, why, and how the AAPI population is relevant to America’s commitment to higher education. For key policy issues in which the AAPI population has been absent, this report describes the potential for positive, long-lasting impact for both the AAPI community and the nation at large through greater inclusion and representation. Specifically, the report focuses on three areas of higher education that are critical for AAPIs and the nation looking forward:

- ◆ **The Education and Workforce Development Needs of AAPIs:** The report examines the relationship between educational attainment and workforce participation for AAPIs; identifies key areas of the workforce where AAPIs are underrepresented; and discusses the need for AAPI leadership in the professions.
- ◆ **AAPIs in the Community College Sector:** The report identifies and examines the differences between AAPI students at two-year and four-year institutions; compares AAPI community college students with other community college students; and provides a profile of the community colleges that serve large concentrations of AAPI students.
- ◆ **AAPIs and Minority-Serving Institution Legislation:** The report examines how and why the MSI policy strategy is an effective policy mechanism for AAPI students; the resources, opportunities, and benefits that Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) provide students and their local communities; and the lessons that can be learned from AANAPISIs that can contribute to the collective strength of MSIs and higher education as a whole.

Relative to each of these issues, we provide data on a number of important factors that impact the AAPI student population, including: postsecondary access, participation and affordability; collegiate outcomes, including transfer rates and degree attainment; and higher education’s relationship to the professions. Central to these data are the contextualization of realities for AAPI students and their families.

## OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

Whether the United States can adequately respond to the demands of the global economy and maintain its standing as a global leader is inextricably tied to its ability to increase opportunities for all Americans to pursue a college degree. Within this broader context are the rapidly changing demographics of the United States and a commitment to equity and diversity. As the nation continues to grow and the population shifts in its composition, higher education must be more conscious of and responsive to these new realities relative to setting goals, priorities, and strategies for achieving higher rates of college participation and completion for all Americans.

This report examines America's college completion goals and priorities relative to the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community—a group that is increasingly relevant to higher education and other priorities for the United States. There is a dearth of knowledge about the demography of AAPI students, their educational trajectory and their postsecondary outcomes. Educational research for the most part excludes AAPIs from the broader discourse on equity and social justice and does not adequately represent the needs, challenges, and experiences of AAPI students, particularly with regard to the wide range of social and institutional contexts in which they pursue their educational aspirations. AAPIs are, in many ways, invisible in policy considerations at the federal, state and local levels, and in the development of campus services and programs.

With a focus on the AAPI student population, this report demonstrates the potential for a more accessible and equitable system of education, the importance of diversity as a major factor in America's ability to compete in a global society, and the need for a greater investments that will expand opportunities and remove barriers at institutions that serve low-income minority populations. Ultimately, the goals for this report are to serve as a catalyst to disrupt the status quo that overlooks the relevance of the AAPI community, and to offer a broader vision of a higher education agenda that is inclusive of America's underserved communities. AAPIs,

along with other minority student populations, reflect the future demography of the United States. The ability to realize a better, more effective system of higher education is dependent on how AAPIs and other underserved students are integrated into the college completion agenda.

As the global work environment continues to evolve and workplace demand for postsecondary education increases, the United States is faced with critical questions about how to respond to urgent challenges that will ultimately determine the nation's ability to remain economically competitive. **The stark reality is that the demand for college-educated workers in this country is rapidly outpacing the number of college graduates.**

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### America's Degree Attainment Shortfall

College degree attainment rates in the United States have remained stagnant at approximately 39 percent over the last four decades, while other developed countries are experiencing an increase in attainment rates—

College completion matters, because each and every student matters. These are people who have worked hard to get to college. These are people cherished by their families, these are people who many others rely on and hope for in the future. Every single one of these students matters [and] we should do everything we can to move them toward achieving a college degree.

**JIM LARIMORE, BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION**

as high as 50 percent of young adults holding college degrees.<sup>4</sup> The consequences of the flat attainment rates in the United States are already materializing. Where the United States previously boasted the highest percentage of young adults with college degrees in the world, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has produced data showing that the U.S. now ranks tenth. It is projected that by 2018, the United States will experience a shortfall of about 3 million workers with a postsecondary degree.<sup>5</sup>

Within this context are the following realities that American higher education and the nation as a whole must respond:

- Globalization is challenging the long-term competitiveness of American workers, making degree production critical to sustaining the United States' economy.
- The shift of the nation's economy from industry-based to knowledge-based makes a college-educated workforce increasingly essential.<sup>6</sup>
- Low-skilled jobs that traditionally do not require a postsecondary degree are disappearing<sup>7</sup> and in their place are jobs requiring some level of postsecondary education which are estimated to become 63 percent of total jobs in this country over the next decade.<sup>8</sup>

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## The College Completion Agenda

The college completion agenda was developed in response to the declining position in degree attainment among Americans relative to other nations. President Barack Obama, for example, has committed to two goals for higher education: 1) to ensure that all Americans have the ability to pursue college, and 2) for the U.S. to “regain its lost ground” and have the highest proportion of young adults with college degrees compared to other developed nations by 2020. In addition to President Obama's education goals, the Lumina Foundation

introduced its “Big Goal” of increasing the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by the year 2025. In absolute numbers, this goal represents a significant challenge for American higher education. The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) prepared a report in 2010 stating that, adjusting for population growth and educational attainment, the U.S. needs an additional 8 million college degrees to close the gap for young adults aged 25 to 34.<sup>9</sup>

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## The Relevance of Equity and Diversity

In addition to the college completion agenda, American higher education continues to face many challenges associated with its historical vestiges of inequality and the demand for greater diversity. Thus, it is important to recognize the ways that equity and diversity in higher education are confounding issues with the college completion agenda. The changing demography of our nation, which has as its fastest growing groups people of color, immigrants, and English Language Learners, must be at the forefront of higher education discussions and are a critical component of efforts to secure America's future. The importance of equity in America's higher education agenda cannot be overstated. Making this poignant argument, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has said, “Education is the Civil Rights issue of our generation.” Equity and social justice in education is an unfinished agenda, and at the core of the college completion discussion.

Indeed, systemic political, social, and economic divisions have led to disproportionate gaps in educational attainment and workforce participation, and ultimately to intergenerational patterns of poverty. A 2007 report prepared by ETS suggests that inequalities linked to education could worsen with time, and “a looming question is whether we will continue to grow apart or, as a nation, we will invest in policies that will help us to grow together.”<sup>10</sup> Building on this point, the college

completion agenda needs to be viewed in the context of a broader commitment by the higher education community to mitigate disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes for marginalized and vulnerable populations. Moreover, the commitment to equality and diversity is not only an obligation of American higher education, but complementary to our national higher education priorities—a key component for fully realizing a more effective and responsive system of American higher education. Rectifying the inequality in higher education is not only an essential component of the democratic mission of higher education, but a necessary one considering that America is experiencing one of the most rapid demographic shifts in history. In the context of an increasingly globalized society, America's diversity needs to be reconceptualized as an asset, as opposed to a deficit.

The untapped potential of the AAPI student population—a large and growing segment in higher education that is often overlooked, underserved and fundamentally misunderstood—is becoming increasingly relevant to America's economic sustainability. The American higher education system is serving an ever-changing student body and the demographic changes and make-up of AAPI population are important factors in these changes. The different rates of degree attainment make it necessary for institutions and systems to change the way they approach the education of AAPI students. Institutions with large concentrations of AAPI students—including minority-serving institutions—are becoming optimal sites in which to expand opportunities, remove barriers, and impact the nation as a whole.

## SERVING THE EMERGING STUDENT DEMOGRAPHY

The stories of the future of American higher education and the nation as a whole cannot be told without regard to their changing demographic landscapes. The United States is at the crossroads of tremendous demographic changes to

which American higher education must respond. While the historical trends in the demography of the nation are a remarkable story in itself, the reshaping of the nation is projected to continue at a fast pace for decades to come and will be a fundamentally different story than in the past.

### The Size and Growth of the AAPI Population

The release of the 2010 U.S. Census data demonstrates significant changes in the U.S. population. For example,

the total U.S. population more than doubled between 1950 and 2010, from 151 to 309 million—a faster rate of growth than any other industrialized nation in the world. Trends in actual and projected data demonstrate that the AAPI population is a significant contributor to the growth of the U.S. as

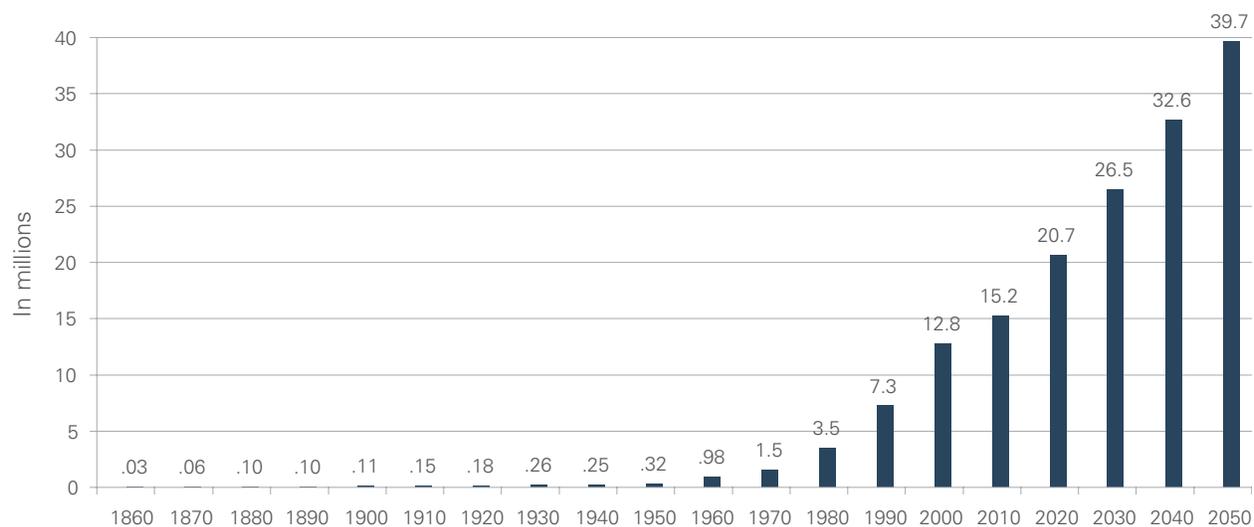
a whole. While the AAPI population was relatively small up to 1960 when it was less than one million persons, it has been doubling in size nearly every decade since then, which is a remarkable trend (Figure 1).

Contributing to the changing demography of the nation as a whole, the growth in the population is anticipated to continue at a significant pace based on projections to 2050, when AAPIs are estimated to reach nearly 40 million persons. The remarkable growth of the AAPI population has been well documented,<sup>11</sup> particularly following changes to immigration policy in 1965 and refugee policy in 1975 and 1980, which vastly increased the growth, diversity, and complexity of the AAPI population.<sup>12</sup> These

The demographics [of AAPIs] are quite distinct. Even though they are all categorized under the broader group of “Asian American,” each individual ethnic group may have its unique set of challenges not common to others.

**VIETNAMESE FEMALE  
Ed.M CANDIDATE**

**Figure 1. Asian American and Pacific Islander Population in the United States, 1860-2050**



Note: For purposes of comparison, these data are reported for race alone, and do not include race alone and in combination. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division.

changes to immigration policy and its implications for AAPIs have resulted in the shifting demographic makeup of the population that is unlike any other major racial group in the U.S. with regard to their heterogeneity.

### AAPIs are a Characteristically Unique Population

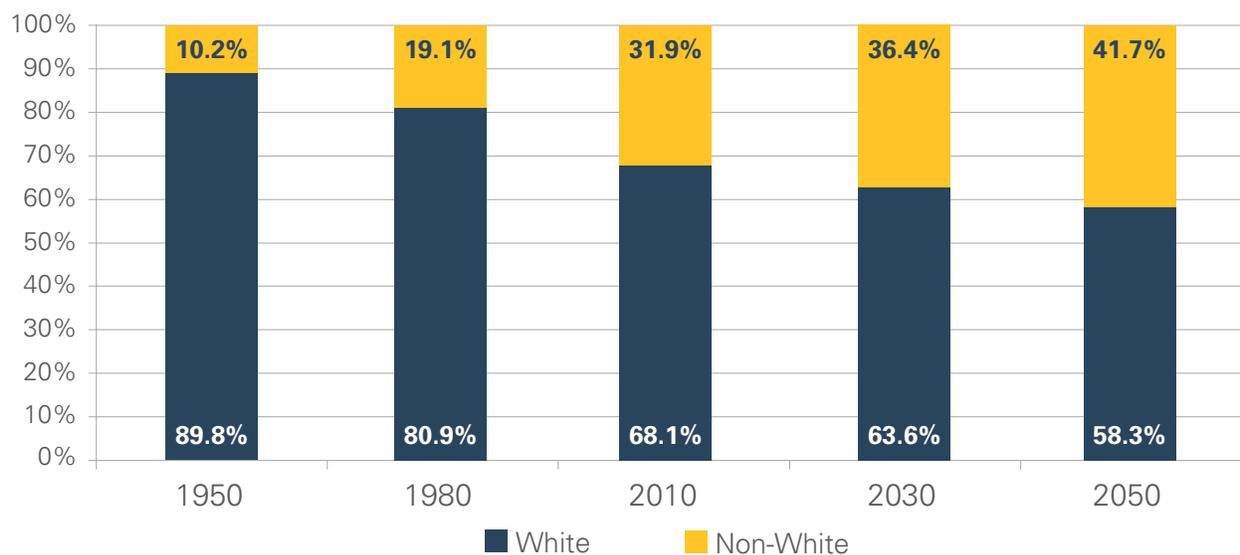
The U.S. population is experiencing tremendous change with regard to its composition and profile. The U.S. Census reports the majority of the increase in the U.S. population is attributable to people who reported race as other than White. In 1950, about one in 10 Americans was of a race other than White. By 2000, the non-White population increased to about one in four (Figure 2). Projected changes in the population will render a new American “minority-majority” between now and 2050, with the White population projected to decrease to less than half of the total population.

With these shifting demographic trends over time, it is important to note the age distribution of the U.S. population. William Frey at the Brookings Institution recently said of this phenomenon, “the White population

is older and very much centered around the aging baby boomers... [and] the future of America is epitomized by the young people today.”<sup>13</sup> He said of America’s youth, “they are basically the melting pot we are going to see in the future.” This change is already having an impact on the makeup of schools and colleges in this country.

Figure 2 depicts another change that is frequently underemphasized—the growth in minority groups can be attributed largely to increases among two populations, Latinos and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, with the Black population merely maintaining its proportional representation from 2010 to 2050. In California, for example, nearly all of the growth in the population between 2000 and 2010 could be attributed solely to Latinos and AAPIs.<sup>14</sup> Three other states in addition to California—Hawaii, New Mexico, and Texas—as well as Washington, D.C., have minority populations that exceeded 50 percent. Approximately one in 10 counties nationally now have minority populations of 50 percent or greater, which is a 25 percent increase since 2000.

**Figure 2. Actual and Projected Proportional Representation of White and Non-White Populations in the United States, 1950 to 2050**



Note: 1950 to 2010 are actual data; 2030 and 2050 are projected data.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division.

These dramatic increases are fueled largely by high rates of immigration. By 2007, the foreign-born population had doubled over the past two decades to more than 38 million residents with the foreign-born population representing 13 percent of the total U.S. population.<sup>15</sup> This trend in rapid growth among immigrants is projected to increase in coming decades. While the U.S. population is projected to expand by 50 percent between 2010 and 2050, immigrants are estimated to represent 82 percent of that growth.<sup>16</sup> By 2050, it is estimated that one in five U.S. residents will be foreign born, making them an increasingly formidable sector of American society by any measure. With foreign-born residents making up nearly seven out of 10 AAPIs, the issue of immigration is quite salient for the community.

The future well-being of this country is tied to the children who are now attending our elementary schools; strengthening educational outcomes for AAPIs and other students of color will strengthen the U.S. as a whole.

**LINDA WONG, CENTER FOR URBAN EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

Among these demographic changes are differences that emerge from within broad racial categories. Disaggregated data on the AAPI population reveal a wide range of demographic characteristics that are unlike any other racial group in America with regard to their heterogeneity. 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. AAPIs also vary demographically with regard to language background, immigration history, culture, and religion.

### Key Indicators for the AAPI Community

Number of ethnicities . . . . .	48
Number of languages spoken . . . . .	More than 300
Percent foreign-born . . . . .	69%
Percent below poverty . . . . .	6% (Filipinos)
	20% (Samoans)
	38% (Hmong)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division

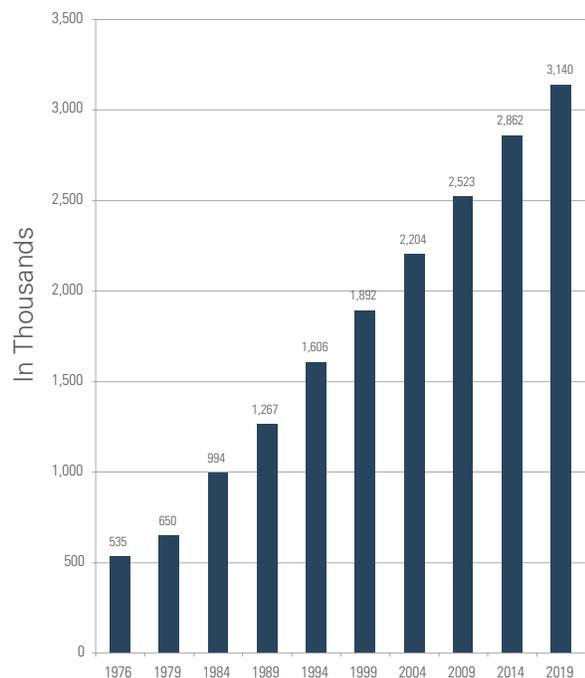
Consider that while a significant proportion of immigrants from Asia come to the U.S. already highly educated, others enter the U.S. from countries that have provided only limited opportunities for educational and social mobility. Pacific Islanders, defined as people whose origins are from Polynesia, Micronesia, or Melanesia, are a diverse pan-ethnic group in themselves, whose histories include such challenges as the struggle for sovereignty. Yet, these and other very unique circumstances are often overshadowed by being grouped with Asian Americans. Thus, while the AAPI population represents a single entity in certain contexts, such as for interracial group comparisons, it is equally important to understand the ways in which the demography of the population is comprised by a complex set of social realities for individuals and communities that fall within this category.

### The Demography of AAPI Students is Rapidly Changing

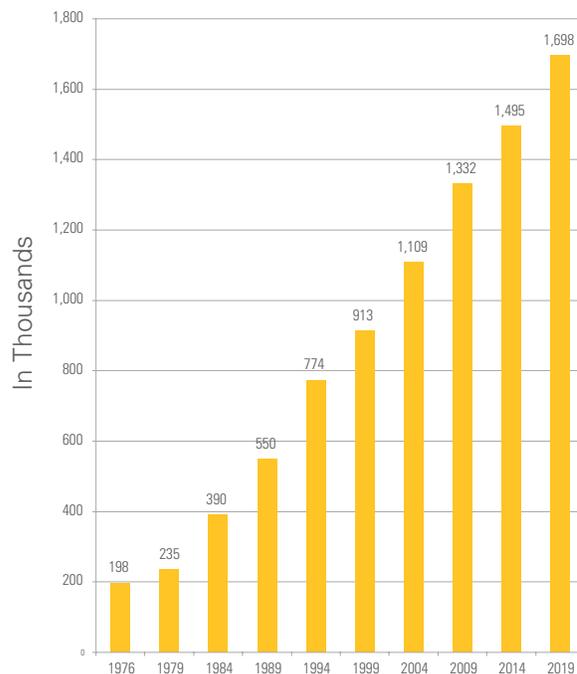
Changing trends in the demography of the U.S., and especially among young Americans, have profound implications for the educational system. Among the most significant trends in public K–12 enrollment is that students are increasingly diverse and non-White. For example, the share of White enrollment in K–12 decreased from 68 percent to 55 percent between 1989 and 2009.<sup>17</sup> These shifting demographics can be attributed to significant increases among AAPIs and Latinos, who are also largely immigrants and English Language Learners.

While these changes are quite remarkable on a national level, it is also important to note the impact on individual states and local communities. In the state of Washington, for example, 40 percent of all Asian American and Pacific Islander students are non-Native English speakers, a trend that is similar to other states with high concentrations of AAPIs.<sup>18</sup> In 12 states (Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico,

**Figure 3. AAPI Public K-12 Enrollment (Actual and Projected)**



**Figure 4. AAPI Undergraduate Enrollment (Actual and Projected)**



Note: Actual data, 1979-2009; projected data, 2014 and 2019.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Common Core Data; U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS.

New York, and Texas) and the District of Columbia, a minority-majority enrollment has already occurred. For many of these states, the trend was initiated by the large concentrations of immigrant students of color, which are predominately Latinos and AAPIs. These changes are occurring at a rapid pace; in Georgia, for example, the number of AAPI students went from 32,584 to 57,339 resulting in a 76 percent increase over the past decade.<sup>19</sup>

These national and local demographic trends are representative of the changing demography of schools and colleges, and these changes in enrollment are projected to continue in the future. Public K-12 enrollment of AAPIs, grew four-fold in the 30 year period between 1979 and 2009, from 600,000 to 2.5 million (Figure 3). Enrollment projections show that this growth will continue through 2019. While the proportional representation of Whites and Blacks is projected to decrease

by 4 percent each, Latinos are projected to increase by 36 percent, AAPIs by 31 percent, and Native Americans by 13 percent.<sup>20</sup>

The face of American higher education has also experienced profound changes that are important to note. Between 1979 and 2009, the AAPI college enrollment grew five-fold from 235,000 to 1.3 million (Figure 4).<sup>21</sup> While college enrollment is projected to increase for all racial groups, AAPIs will experience a proportionally high increase of 30 percent between 2009 and 2019. Given these trends, equity and diversity need to be at the heart of reform efforts in higher education and the increasing relevance of the AAPI population makes it central to the success of the national college completion agenda.

## DECONSTRUCTING AAPI EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

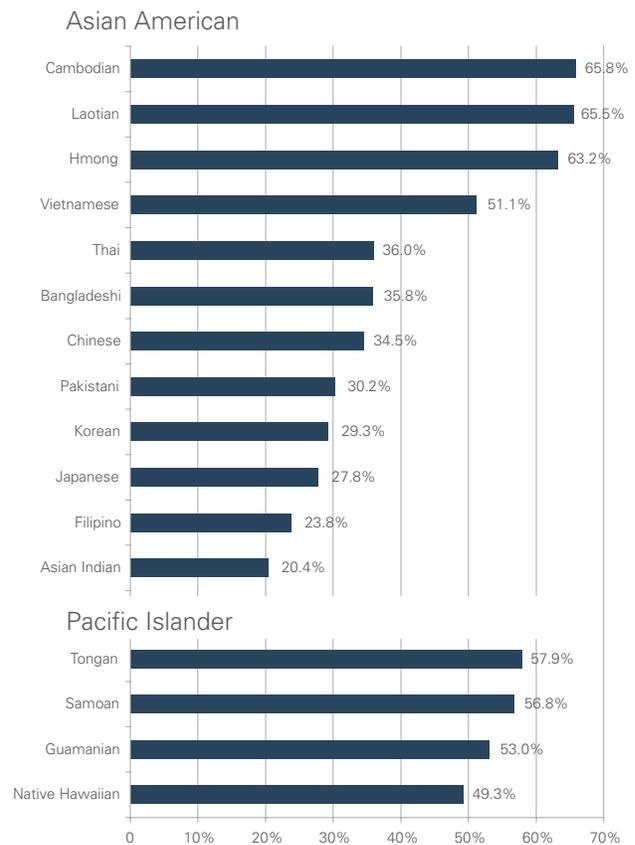
One of the most misunderstood trends in AAPI educational achievement is educational attainment. With the number of AAPI college students at its highest, and growing at one of the fastest rates of any major racial population in American higher education, it is important to understand the experiences and outcomes of this unique student population.<sup>22</sup> Among broader trends in AAPI college participation, a key issue is the varying rates that occur among each ethnic group.

### Access to Higher Education Differs Among AAPIs

While much of the college completion agenda is focused on increasing the persistence and graduation rates of existing college students, it is important to recognize that access to higher education remains a significant challenge for many marginalized and vulnerable populations in America. Trends in educational attainment for a number of AAPI sub-groups are representative of this problem. Consider that 51.1 percent of Vietnamese, 63.2 percent of Hmong, 65.5 percent of Laotian, and 65.8 percent of Cambodian adults (25 years or older) have not enrolled in or completed any postsecondary education (Figure 5). Similar trends can be found among Pacific Islanders with 49.3 percent of Native Hawaiian, 53.0 percent of Guamanian, 56.8 percent of Samoan, and 57.9 percent of Tongan adults who have not enrolled in any form of postsecondary education.

For many AAPI students, barriers to education begin at an early age creating a poor pipeline to higher education. There is a large sector of the AAPI population that continues to experience very low rates of attainment at the elementary and secondary level. Consider that 34.3 percent of Laotian, 38.5 percent of Cambodian, and 39.6 percent of Hmong adults do not even have a high school diploma or equivalent.<sup>23</sup> In the Hmong community, nearly a third of the adults have less than a fourth grade education. These data demonstrate that access is a critical issue for many AAPI sub-populations and a factor that must be addressed in the broader college completion agenda.

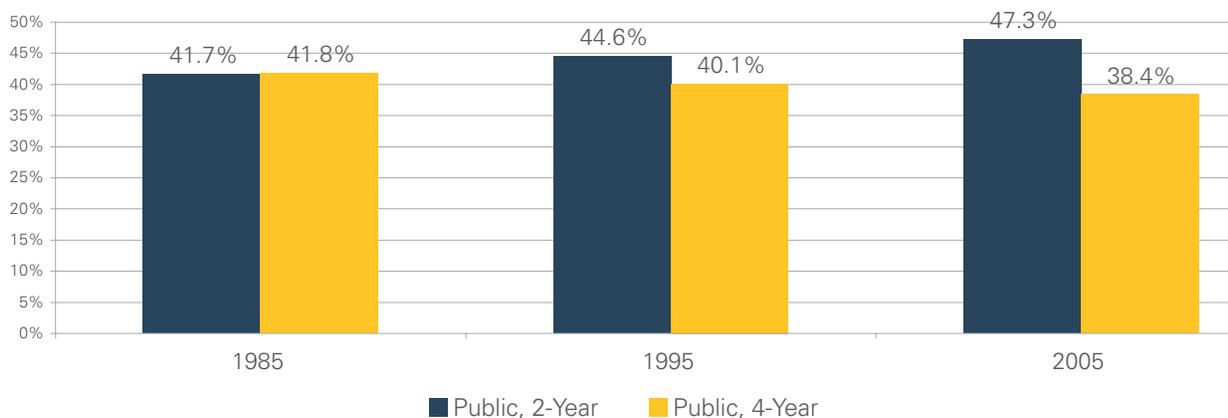
**Figure 5. Percentage of Adults (25 Years or Older) Who Have Not Attended College, by AAPI Ethnicity 2006-2008**



Note: Data includes individuals with high school attainment as their highest level of education. It does not include individuals with some college and no degree.

Source: American Community Survey, 3-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

**Figure 6. Percent of AAPI Total Enrollment in Public Two-Year and Public Four-Year Institutions, 1985 to 2005**



Source: U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS.

### Trends in AAPI College Enrollment by Higher Education Sector

AAPI students that enroll in college choose to attend a broad range of postsecondary institutions, which presents a complex set of challenges for higher education.<sup>24</sup> Past research by the CARE Project, for example, found that the largest sector of AAPI college enrollment, at 47.3 percent, was in the community college sector in 2005<sup>25</sup> (Figure 6). While AAPIs made up less than 5 percent of the national population in 2007, they represented nearly 7 percent of all community college students. These trends are projected to continue with AAPI enrollment at community colleges outpacing all other sectors of higher education. Between 1990 and 2000, for example, AAPI community college enrollment increased by 73.3 percent, compared to an increase of 42.2 percent in public four-year institutions.<sup>26</sup>

AAPI community college students are also characteristically different from AAPI students in four-year institutions. Analysis of recent data on AAPI community college students shows that 62.9 percent enrolled as part-time students and 31.7 percent delayed matriculation by two years or more.<sup>27</sup> With an average age of 27.3 years, AAPI community college students also tended to be older than their AAPI counterparts at four-year institutions. These differences suggest that AAPIs at community colleges, compared to AAPI students

at four-year institutions, were more likely to fit the characteristics of “non-traditional” students.

Compared to AAPIs at four-year institutions, AAPI community college students were more likely to enter college with lower levels of academic preparation in English and mathematics. In 2003, 55.2 percent of AAPI students entering two-year colleges had never taken a math course beyond Algebra II in high school, compared to 12.7 percent of AAPI students entering four-year institutions in that same year.<sup>28</sup> With one in five needing remediation in English,<sup>29</sup> AAPI students are particularly vulnerable to policies and practices that relegate remedial English courses to two-year institutions. These data demonstrate that AAPI students in community colleges carry many “risk factors” that are correlated with lower rates of persistence and completion (Figure 7). These risk factors include delayed enrollment, lack of a high school diploma (including GED recipients), part-time enrollment, having dependents other than a spouse, single parent status, and working full-time while enrolled (35 hours or more).

### Differential Postsecondary Outcomes Among AAPIs

Differential access to various types of institutions has a number of implications for the likelihood of degree attain-

ment. For example, less than one-third of students who enter community college with the intention of earning a degree accomplish this goal in a six-year period.<sup>30</sup> Significantly underfunded compared to their public four-year college counterparts, community colleges often lack the resources

needed to support their student population. This dearth of resources becomes particularly relevant as community colleges serve high portions of students who may lack the academic skills needed to succeed in college, those without the resources to finance a college education, working adults, parents, English Language Learners (ELL), and first generation college-goers.

Some AAPI sub-groups are more likely to be relegated to community colleges and less selective institutions, resulting in significant differences in degree attainment rates within the AAPI student population. While more than four out of five East Asians (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) and South Asians (Asian Indian and Pakistani) who enrolled in college earned at least a bachelor's degree, large proportions of other AAPI sub-

groups are attending college, but not earning a degree (Figure 8). Among Southeast Asians, 33.7 percent of Vietnamese, 42.9 percent of Cambodians, 46.5 percent of Laotians, and 47.5 percent of Hmong adults (25 years or older) reported having attended college, but not earning a degree.

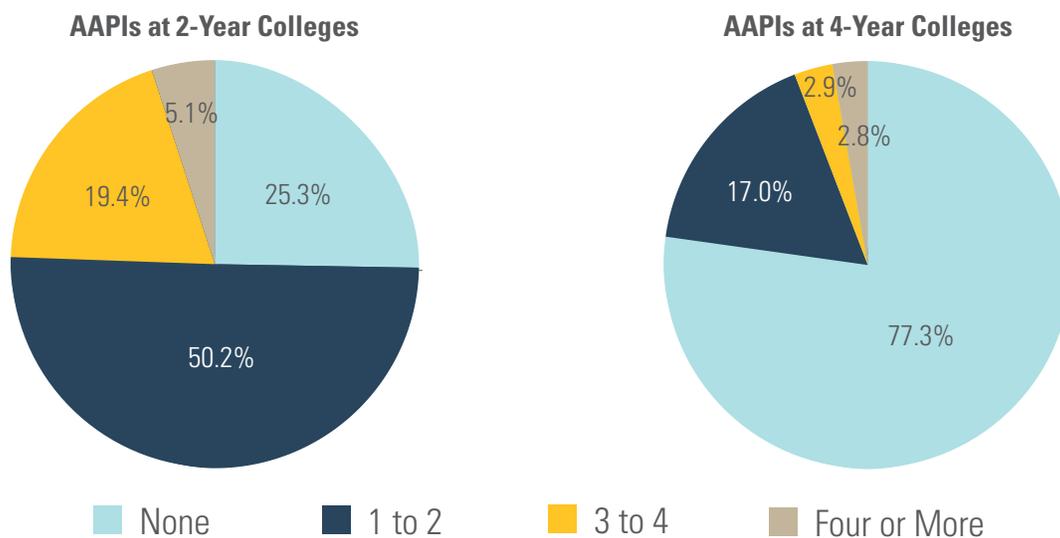
Similar to Southeast Asians, Pacific Islanders have a very high rate of attrition during college. Among Pacific Islanders, 47.0 percent of Guamanians, 50.0 percent of Native Hawaiians, 54.0 percent of Tongans, and 58.1 percent of Samoans entered college, but left without earning a degree. Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders also had a higher proportion of college attendees who earned an associate's degree as their highest level of education, while East Asians and South Asians were more likely to have a bachelor's degree or advanced degree.

These data represent the significant challenges that exist among marginalized and vulnerable groups of AAPI students, and demonstrate why AAPIs are relevant to the college completion agenda. To increase degree attainment, institutions must recognize the unique needs and challenges that exist within the AAPI community and begin addressing the factors that are contributing to high rates of attrition and low completion rates among various ethnic groups.

Higher education barriers are present in my community. I see peers either at a halt with their education, or never completing it.

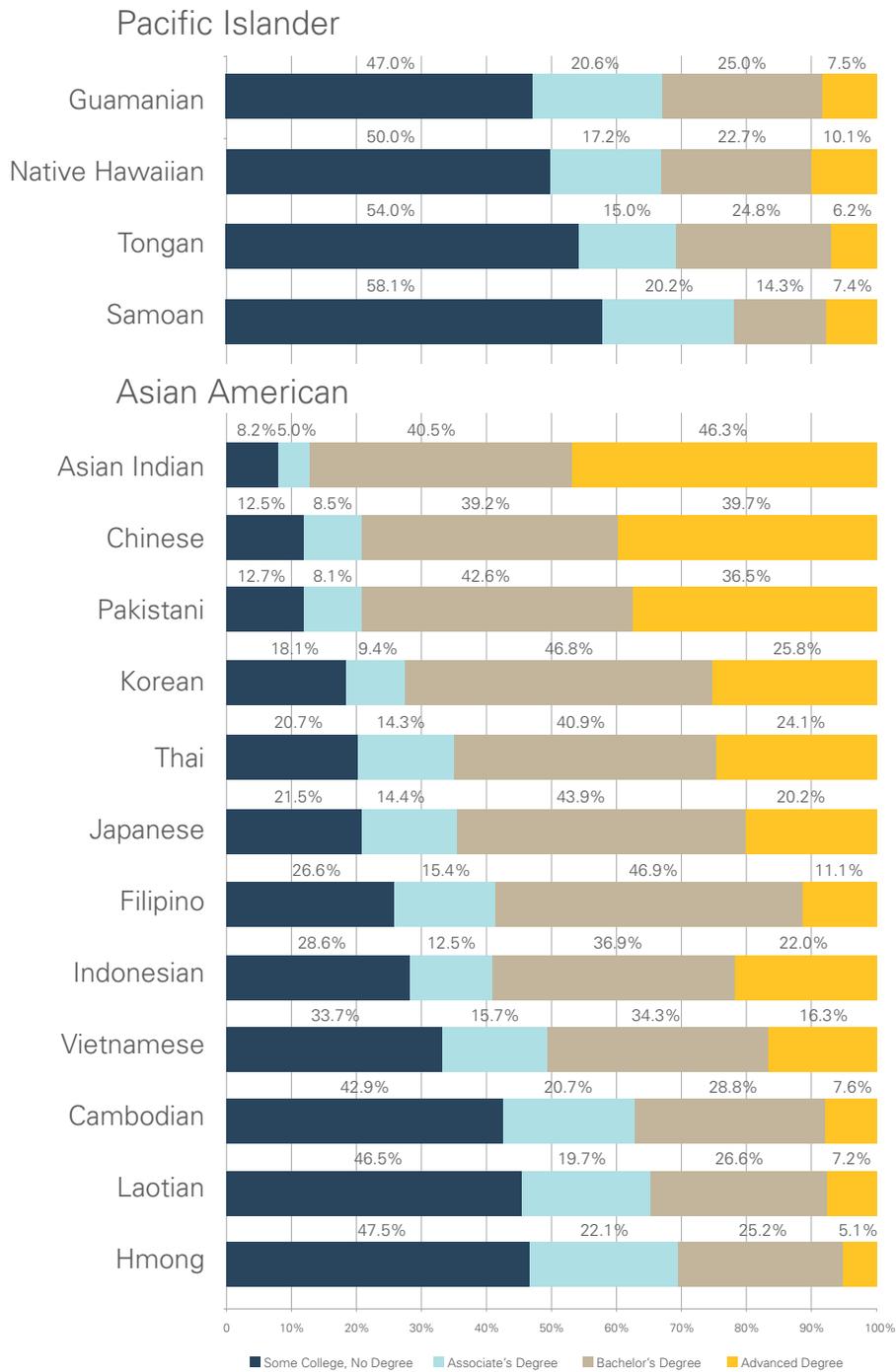
**BANGLADESHI FEMALE  
THIRD-YEAR STUDENT**

**Figure 7. Number of Risk Factors for Asian American and Pacific Islander Students by Institutional Type, 2003-2004**



Source: U.S. Department of Education, BPS Longitudinal Study, First Follow-Up

**Figure 8. Educational Attainment for Asian American and Pacific Islander College Attendees, by Ethnic Sub-Group (Age 25 or Older), 2006-2008**



Note: Data reported for individuals with at least some college.  
 Source: American Community Survey, 3-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).

## INVESTING IN INSTITUTIONS THAT SERVE AAPI STUDENTS

The changing demography of the United States means that the higher education system must realize a fundamentally different approach to teaching, learning, and student support. With a high concentration of students of color within certain sectors of higher education, one effective policy effort is the federal investment in minority-serving institutions. The Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) federal program, for example, initially authorized by the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007, is structured as a competitive grant process for institutions with at least a 10 percent enrollment of AAPI students and a minimum threshold of low-income students (similar to requirements for Hispanic-Serving Institutions<sup>31</sup>). As of 2011, there were 52 institutions that have received the AANAPISI designation, among which only 15 that have received funding.

The AANAPISI program, one of the most significant investments ever made for the AAPI college student population by the federal government, is also notable for at least three reasons. First, it acknowledges the unique challenges facing AAPI students in college access and completion. Second, the AANAPISI designation represents a significant commitment of much-needed resources to improving the postsecondary completion rates among AAPI and low-income students. Third, it acknowledges how campus settings can be mutable points of intervention—sites of possibilities for responding to the impediments AAPI students encounter. Research conducted by the CARE Project produced some important findings about the AANAPISI program, including the extent to which the program is reaching AAPI students, an overview of the opportunities and resources that have been created by the program, and the growth potential of the program to reach more low-income AAPI students.

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### The AANAPISI Program Reaches Large Concentrations of AAPI Students

Enrollment trends for AAPIs are quite unique and have broad implications for higher education policy strategies that target underserved students. AAPI undergraduates

are highly concentrated in a small number of postsecondary institutions and as of 2009, nearly two-thirds of AAPI undergraduate enrollment was concentrated in 200 institutions.<sup>32</sup> Descriptive data on the 15 campuses in the first three years of the AANAPISI program (2008-2010) indicates some interesting findings (Table 1). With regard to location, they were geographically dispersed across eight states—California, Hawaii, Illinois, New York, Massachusetts, Maryland, Texas, and Washington—and the unincorporated territory of Guam. More than half of these institutions were public two-year colleges, and the balance were public four-year colleges or universities.

The 15 funded AANAPISIs have a large range of proportional representation of AAPI undergraduate enrollment (11.5% to 90.9%), but combined they enrolled nearly one in 10 AAPI undergraduates nationally.<sup>a</sup> This is in sharp contrast to their enrollment of 1.5 percent of the nation's total undergraduate population. In sheer numbers, AANAPISIs are enrolling and conferring degrees to a significant number of AAPI students. In 2009, for example, these 15 institutions enrolled nearly 89,000 AAPI undergraduates and awarded nearly 9,500 associate's and bachelor's degrees to AAPI students.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Among Title IV undergraduate degree-granting, public institutions.

**Table 1. Descriptive Data on Funded AANAPISIs**

Institution	State/Territory	Higher Education Sector	Percent AAPI Enrollment	Cohort Year
University of Guam	Guam	Public, 4-year	90.9%	2010
Guam Community College	Guam	Public, 2-year	79.2%	2008
University of Hawaii at Hilo	HI	Public, 4-year	54.1%	2008
Mission College	CA	Public, 2-year	48.1%	2010
De Anza College	CA	Public, 2-year	37.1%	2008
City College of San Francisco	CA	Public, 2-year	35.8%	2008
Laney College	CA	Public, 2-year	29.3%	2010
CUNY Queens College	NY	Public, 4-year	22.6%	2009
University of Illinois at Chicago	IL	Public, 4-year	22.4%	2010
Coastline Community College	CA	Public, 2-year	19.9%	2010
Richland College	TX	Public, 2-year	15.2%	2010
University of Maryland-College Park	MD	Public, 4-year	14.4%	2008
Santa Monica College	CA	Public, 2-year	14.1%	2009
University of Massachusetts-Boston	MA	Public, 4-year	11.6%	2010
South Seattle Community College	WA	Public, 2-year	11.5%	2008

Note: Undergraduate enrollment calculated using 12 month unduplicated headcount for 2008-09, the most recent year available in IPEDS. Sources: U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS; U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution Program Awards. Retrieved June, 2011.

### AANAPISIs Respond to the Unique Needs of AAPI Students

The backgrounds of students attending AANAPISI campuses present a number of unique challenges for which resources can be targeted. The 2010 CARE Report provided analyses of 2008 American Community Survey (ACS) data and found that the neighborhoods served by the University of Hawaii at Hilo had an average poverty rate for Pacific Islanders that was 20.1 percent—nearly twice the national poverty rate of 12.4 percent. In the neighborhoods served by South Seattle Community College, 57.8 percent of Asian Americans and 70.8 percent of

Pacific Islanders had a high school diploma or less. These results are consistent with other research that has found that the institutions that met the criteria for AANAPISI funding enrolled 75 percent of the low-income AAPI students in U.S. higher education in 2007.<sup>34</sup>

The 2010 CARE Report also found that large proportions of AAPI students arrive on campuses underprepared for college-level work, often as a result of growing up in poverty, attending low-performing schools, and being the first in their families to attend college.<sup>35</sup> At De Anza College, most of the AAPI students are not prepared for college-level work with AAPI students accounting for more

than half of all students enrolled in remedial English and other basic skills classes. More than 80 percent of the students at Guam Community College were eligible for financial aid, and 58 percent of the students were older than the traditional college age (18 to 22-years-old). The AANAPISI program not only represents a significant commitment to the AAPI community, it also provides much-needed resources to respond to specific needs that impact college access and success for AAPI students.

AANAPISIs engage in a range of initiatives aimed at increasing access to and success in college for AAPI students. While each one of the AANAPISIs is using the funding in unique ways, several commonalities exist among the programs. These services were concentrated around the following areas: 1) student services, 2) curricular and academic program development, and 3) resource and research development.

**Table 2. Descriptive Data on AANAPISI Programs and Services**

Type of Programming	Examples of AANAPISI Projects	Desired Outcomes
Student Services	Academic Achievement Programs	Increase grades of underperforming minority students in core courses; Increase success in gatekeeper courses.
	Freshman Transition/Bridge Programs	Increase college access and persistence in the first year of college.
	College Transfer Programs	Improve the transition, progression, transfer, and graduation rates.
	Educational Engagement Initiatives	Connect students to community; enhance student support services; engage students on campus.
Curricular and Academic Program Development	English Language Learner Program Improvement	Develop a more collaborative curriculum.
	Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies Programs	Create/enhance curriculum that introduces knowledge about AAPI communities.
	AAPI Student Leadership Programs	Improve academic and leadership skills, critical and analytic thought, high-level organization, and public speaking skills.
	Faculty and Staff Development Workshops	Educate faculty and staff to better understand the complexities of the AAPI student population.
Resource and Research Development	Learning Resource Centers	Create accessible space for student use.
	Initiatives to improve collection and analysis of data on AAPI students	Improve systems of data collection on AAPI students.

In the area of student services, AANAPISI funding is used to develop student learning communities, first-year experience programs, academic and personal counselors and advisors, and tutoring programs. These programs improve the quality of students' experiences during college, improve persistence, and connect students with services that they may have not otherwise utilized.

Funding also supports curricular and academic program development, which includes improving the academic quality of the education offered, increasing the quantity and variety of courses being offered to students, and increasing student participation in certain academic programs. AANAPISI funding provides resources to increase access to leadership development and mentorship opportunities for students, which contributes to the academic and career success of the students involved, both during college as well as post-graduation. Other uses of the funding include the development of new research about the AAPI population, and staff development opportunities to help administrators, faculty, and campus personnel better understand the complexities of the AAPI population.

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### The AANAPISI Program has Substantial Growth Potential

The varying educational attainment rates among subgroups and the exponential growth of AAPI college enrollment has several implications for the expansion of the AANAPISI program. In 2009, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) published a report commissioned by Congress to identify the number of institutions that met the criteria for AANAPISI funding. Using IPEDS data from Fall 2006 and information on Title III and Title V eligibility from 2005 and 2008, CRS found that 116 institutions met the criteria for the AANAPISI designation.

The CARE Project replicated this study using the same data sources, but with more recent enrollment data (2008–2009) and a more recent list of institutions with

Title III or Title V eligibility (2008–2011). Based on the new information, there are now 148 institutions that meet the criteria for the AANAPISI designation. This is an additional 32 institutions over the list of eligible institutions identified in the 2009 CRS report (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Current and Projected Number of Postsecondary Institutions Meeting Eligibility Criteria for the AANAPISI Designation**

Year	Number of Institutions That Meet Criteria for Designation	Two-Year Numerical Change
2009	116	--
2011	148	+32
2013	160	+12

Note: Number of institutions eligible for AANAPISI designation in 2009 is derived from a CRS Report; 2011 reports on actual data using the same methodology in CRS Report; 2013 is a projected increase in AAPI enrollment based on change in enrollment from 2005 to 2009. Source: U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.

Analysis was also conducted to identify institutions that are emerging in status—those that are on the threshold of meeting the criteria. Using 2004–2005 and 2008–2009 enrollment data, we calculated the projected growth of AAPI students for institutions that were below the 10 percent AAPI enrollment threshold. We estimate that there are at least 12 more institutions that will meet the criteria for AANAPISI status by the 2012–2013 academic year. These institutions will meet the 10 percent threshold, and also are currently listed as Title III and Title V eligible. All of these institutions

Minority-Serving Institutions have made a lot of strides, but there are also some things that could be done better. AANAPISIs have a fresh slate and could learn from what HBCUs, HSIs, and TCs have done. Collegiality is not always seen, but this may change with a new alliance.

**MARYBETH GASMAN,  
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

have either public or private not-for-profit status, with four that are public two-year institutions, two that are public four-year institutions, and six that are private four-year institutions. Four of these institutions are located in California and three are located in New York. Other institutions are located in Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Texas.

These data capture the growth and need for the AANAPISI program to help facilitate college completion for AAPI students. Working with AANAPISIs is an effective way to accomplish many of the desired outcomes for the

AAPI student population. AANAPISIs represent important organizational settings for improving retention, transfer and graduation rates for low-income, high-need, AAPI students. These institutions are also excellent sites for conducting institution-level research on programs, student outcomes, and policy-relevant studies for institutions, states, and the federal government. Working with the AANAPISI program and its campuses provides a great opportunity to engage institutional, state, and national audiences about how to better respond to the unique needs, challenges, and potential of the AAPI college student population.

## STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING AAPI HIGHER EDUCATION OUTCOMES

This report demonstrates the relevance of AAPI students to America's college completion agenda. There is a real urgency to ensure that all underserved students, including Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, have the knowledge and skills needed to fully participate in the 21st century workplace. While the national college completion agenda is largely focused on reaching a numerical goal, which is important in the context of the growing AAPI student population, this report also demonstrates that there are other higher education priorities that should not be ignored. To further a college completion agenda that keeps the needs of AAPI students in mind and moves national higher education priorities into the 21st century, the following must be considered:

- Higher education policymakers and practitioners need to be mindful of the significant disparities that exist with regard to educational access and attainment. For AAPI students, gaps in college participation and degree attainment are often concealed by comparisons between AAPIs and other racial groups, or by comparisons between AAPI sub-groups—many of which are being overlooked and underserved.
- There is a great deal of untapped potential in higher education. While working toward degree attainment goals, colleges and universities should be more mindful of and responsive to the needs of their diverse student populations, including AAPIs. This is particularly an issue for institutions serving large concentrations of AAPIs and other students of color, but also in institutions with lower representation of minority student populations.
- With globalization as a mantra in the college completion agenda, it is important to look at the importance of reaping the full benefits of diversity in American society, a demographic reality whereby the U.S. holds an advantage over other nations. Working toward a diverse democracy is critical in the context of the changing demography of our nation.

This report demonstrates the relevance of AAPI students to America's college completion agenda. There is a real urgency to ensure that all underserved students, including Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, have the knowledge and

skills needed to fully participate in the 21st century workplace. While the national college completion agenda is largely focused on reaching a numerical goal, which is important in the context of the growing AAPI student population, this report also demonstrates that there are other higher education priorities that should not be ignored. To further a college completion agenda that keeps the needs of AAPI students in mind and moves national higher education priorities into the 21st century, the following must be considered:

In order for these propositions to be fully realized, the nation must work toward meaningful change for the AAPI population. The following recommendations emerged from the 2011 Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund Higher Education Summit, through a day of dialogue on the needs of AAPIs in higher education.

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### Expanding Knowledge and Broadening Awareness

The field of higher education needs to broaden its awareness about and be more responsive to the AAPI community. This is not only important to the AAPI community, but also to higher education as a whole as the AAPI student population continues to grow. While research in itself cannot fulfill this goal, it is an important and necessary first step toward expanding knowledge and building awareness about the needs and challenges of AAPI students. Below are specific recommendations toward the goal of advanc-

Knowing that AAPI community members are committed to college completion has instilled great confidence, energy, inspiration, and empowerment in me and other scholars. Demonstrating to us that making a difference is possible regardless of the tasks as long as we collaboratively work together.

**VIETNAMESE MALE  
SECOND-YEAR STUDENT**

ing new perspectives on AAPI students in the higher education field:

- **Leverage existing knowledge and expertise.** Existing research should be leveraged to further educate key stakeholders to promote change. National, state, local, and institutional audiences, including media outlets, need to be exposed to studies about the AAPI student population. Knowledge and expertise on AAPI issues in education can be accessed through conferences, meetings, and other engagements.
- **The pursuit of new research.** There is an urgent need for research that addresses the lack of information and knowledge about the policy needs and priorities for the AAPI population. Additional research on AANAPISIs and other institutions that serve high concentrations of AAPI students must be developed. This research should be collaborative and involve a co-investigative

process between AAPI students, the AAPI community, researchers, practitioners, governmental and non-governmental agencies, and industry, so that the research can work toward practical and actionable solutions.

- **The need for disaggregated and cross-tabulated data.** Research should be based on more accurate and refined data that enables decision-making processes to be guided by informa-

tion that reflects the demography of the AAPI student population. There is a need for a concerted effort in the research community to create guidelines for disaggregating and cross-tabulating data by race, ethnicity, gender, and generational status. These changes to data on AAPIs should occur among institutions, K–12

and higher education systems, states, and among the federal government.

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## Building Institutional Capacity

For institutions serving high concentrations of AAPI students, it is essential to build capacity to better understand and respond to their unique needs. In particular, it is important to examine current programs and policies and the extent to which they are mindful of and responsive to their AAPI students. Below are specific recommendations toward the goal of increasing the capacity of institutions to be more responsive to AAPI students:

- **Increase resources for institutions serving AAPI students.** There is a need for greater awareness about the needs of institutions that serve high concentrations of AAPI students. The AANAPISI program, for example, targets resources and services to respond to the unique needs of AAPI students. It is important to increase support for this program at the federal level and for AANAPISI campuses to gain access to the opportunities that exist for Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) broadly.
- **Improving access to and effectiveness of services.** Institutional leaders and practitioners should align campus programs and services with the needs of their AAPI students. This includes supporting existing programs such as English as a Second Language programs and culturally competent counseling services, and scaling up effective programs or creating new ones. These efforts should be developed with sustainability and longevity in mind and should be evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that they are effective in reaching their goals.
- **A need for a shared vision of institutional change.** A shared vision of institutional goals, including strategic plans, and initiatives that support AAPI student success on a campus is needed to affect long-term

AANAPISIs and HSIs should work together to leverage advocacy efforts. The association that supports AANAPISIs should join the Alliance for Equity in Education. There is greater strength in numbers. We can identify common issues across our communities and create a common legislative and advocacy agenda.

### ANTONIO FLORES, HISPANIC ASSOCIATION FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (HACU)

change. In addition to being mindful of AAPI students on campus, it is also important to recognize the dearth of AAPI faculty and administrators when recruiting for these positions. Finally, colleges and universities should be mindful of their role in improving the pipeline for AAPIs in fields where they are underrepresented, such as in the education field.

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### Coalition Building and Advocacy Efforts

Advocacy is a key step toward greater access to resources and opportunities for AAPI students. AAPI and other minority-serving advocates should work in concert by discussing the ways in which their goals and interests are aligned around broad reform efforts. This should occur among AAPI advocates and organizations, in addition to other minority constituents. Below are specific recommendations regarding coalitions and advocacy efforts:

- **Generate actionable goals and establish benchmarks.** It is important to identify key areas of focus, action steps, and establish benchmarking activities to shape and influence efforts to better support the AAPI student population. A more focused collaborative effort can lead to better efficiency and less time to reach goals.
- **Broaden partnerships to be more inclusive.** On college campuses, advocacy initiated by students, faculty, and staff can help maintain and expand on institutional capacity building for the support of mentorship, internships, tutoring services, and professional development for AAPI students. It is also important to consider multi-campus initiatives, or the inclusion of off-campus constituents.
- **Public/private partnerships should be explored.** Among the partnerships that should be explored are the opportunities that exist with government and non-government agencies to help increase student success. The college completion agenda is being driven by such a partnership and AAPIs need to be more central to the broader efforts. Coupling AANAPISIs with foundation support and community efforts, for example, will help maximize the potential of reaching the goals of these various entities.

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## **APPENDIX: DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY**

Data in this report were drawn from a number of sources to identify trends in two- and four-year college participation and completion, degree-attainment, workforce participation and employment, and demographic compositions within and across communities for AAPIs.

Our main source of data for demographic and community trends was the U.S. Census Bureau. Summary File 1 (SF1) is a 100 percent file that contains detailed demographic information collected from all people and households in the United States. Summary File 3 (SF3) consists of responses from a sample of approximately 19 million housing units to questions about social, economic and housing conditions of households. SF3 is particularly useful because it allows for disaggregation of 18 Asian and 12 Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander ethnic sub-populations. To examine data about AAPI subgroups in the workforce, we used the American Community Survey (ACS) 3-year Public Use Microdata Sample files (PUMS), a database that allows for the analysis of data for the nation, states, and Puerto Rico aggregated over a three year period. We opted to use data from this source because it contained larger sample sizes for sub-populations.

Institution- and student-level data about AAPIs in higher education were drawn from four different federal databases, and one annual national survey of community college students. Analyses specifically about trends in

enrollment and participation in higher education relied heavily on the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Additional analyses about students' academic programs, college preparation, and outcomes were drawn from the 2008 NCES National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS:08) and the 2009 follow-up of the Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS:04/09) longitudinal study, which includes responses from 113,500 undergraduates. Some of the analysis of faculty in two- and four-year institutions relied on data from the most recent (2004) NCES National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF:04), which includes data about the backgrounds, current employment conditions, and attitudes drawn from a sample of 35,000 faculty and instructional staff members at 1,080 public and private not-for-profit degree granting postsecondary institutions. Finally, we report data from the 2009 Community College Survey of Student Engagement, a survey of students at 313 community colleges in 38 U.S. states, developed by the Community College Leadership Program at The University of Texas at Austin.





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