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The Campaign for
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LATINOS



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ASIAN AMERICANS
NATIVE HAWAIIANS
PACIFIC ISLANDERS

Initiative to Maximize Positive Academic Achievement and Cultural Thriving (IMPACT) AAPI - De Anza College

As the Campaign for College Opportunity releases its 2015 State of Higher Education in California: Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Report, we felt it was important to highlight best practices that can support AANHPI student success. This profile is one of two that showcases initiatives that are targeting subgroups of AANHPI students who have low levels of academic success and college completion.

"My mom currently works three nursing jobs since my dad got laid off. She's one of the hardest working people I know. She started off working in a grocery store when we came to the U.S. and went to college to earn a nursing degree while raising her two sons. She's big on education because, coming from the Philippines, she knows what it's like to live in poverty."

—Reinaldo Llaban

As a Filipino student, Reinaldo Llaban represents one of eleven different Asian American, Pacific Islander subgroups that attend De Anza College. The educational needs of college students like Reinaldo are often misinterpreted because they are labeled as "Asian American" and may be presumed, thought to have higher levels of academic achievement and little need for support. This is known as the model minority myth, where the assumption is that all members of the community are academically and economically successful compared to other minority groups. However, the truth is that he is part of a subgroup of Asians who have lower levels of academic success and college completion. These students need additional support to reach their college dreams and thanks to the Initiative, to Maximize Positive Academic Achievement and Cultural Thriving (IMPACT) AAPI program at De Anza College they are receiving it.

Located in Santa Clara County, 42% of De Anza's almost 35,000 students identify as AAPI. The large AAPI student population reflects the county's growth of the AAPI community over the last few years. In fact, Santa Clara now has the highest concentration of AAPIs in the United States. The growing community prompted administrators at De Anza to take a closer look at course success rates for various Asian student subgroups. What they found was that Chinese and Japanese students ranked at the top of achievement measures; Asian Indians, Koreans, and Vietnamese ranked average; and Filipinos, Cambodians, Laotians, and Pacific Islanders ranked below average and low. The latter of the subgroups struggled with basic skills English and math. In 2008, De Anza College was identified by the U.S. Department of Education as an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI)—an institution that has an enrollment of undergraduate students that is at least 10% Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander—and was awarded a federal grant to help students like Reinaldo who don't experience the same levels of academic success as other AAPI groups.



Under the grant, the college focused on helping Filipino, South East Asians (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong), and Pacific Islander students. The Dean Administrator, Interim Dean of Language Arts, and Dean of Counseling worked together to create the grant. The college already had successful cohort-based learning communities on campus for Latino and Black students and knew this practice had been proven to promote student engagement, retention and graduation for students. The decision to create a learning community for AAPI groups was therefore a natural move. As part of the communities, students take two or more linked courses as a group and often work closely to explore a topic or service learning project. Administrators decided the focus of the communities should be on basic skills English and math given the large numbers of students who place into these courses and who struggle to pass them. To strengthen the communities, they also decided to include intrusive intervention counseling and advising which had been identified as a successful high practice through the California Community Colleges Basic Skills Initiative in 2006. The learning communities with intrusive counseling formed the basis of the IMPACT AAPI program now in its 7th year.



The majority of students in the IMPACT AAPI program are not much different from Reinaldo. They are low-income students, many of whom come from East Side San Jose, like he does and ride the bus for an hour and a half to get to campus in Cupertino. After high school, Reinaldo knew he needed to continue his education but couldn't afford to attend a four-year public university. He had heard that many people in his community attended De Anza College and decided to enroll. During his second year at De Anza, Reinaldo learned about IMPACT AAPI through a community organizer in his hometown and signed up to receive more information. Most students find out about the program through word of mouth and outreach events.

How Students Join

Students who are interested in the program do not need to apply to join. Through various events throughout the year, program staff outreach to prospective students and collect student intake forms which are then used to follow-up with students. A key part of this outreach includes partnerships with local high schools and organizations like the Filipino Youth Coalition and the Asian Pacific American Leadership Institute (APALI). Once students submit an interest form, three counselors and a few student ambassadors reach out to students based on their English and math placement exam scores to provide them with more information and walk them through the enrollment process. Students can choose from these curricular pathway options:

- **English, Reading, and General Education:** provides students with the opportunity to progress from developmental- to college-level English reading/writing courses, and to complete other GE and transfer requirements, while learning about cultural identity.
- **Counseling, Reading, English and Math:** combines reading, writing and math classes with additional counseling assistance.
- **Math Performance Success (MPS) and Science Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM):** provide academic and counseling support to math students while encouraging them to consider STEM majors.

In addition, students have access to counselors who only work with IMPACT AAPI students. The three program counselors oversee 100-120 students a semester and supplement the 19 counselors on campus who help the almost 35,000 students that attend the college. They assist students with academic planning and work closely with instructors to stay up to date on student progress. Some counselors will even join classes throughout the week to help students feel constantly supported. They advocate with the administration on student issues, present the IMPACT AAPI model at conferences, and reach out to prospective students.

**"We practice a pedagogy of caring so students open up with a lot of different things... from academic to personal, from not doing well in classes to homelessness."
—Erick Aragon, Counselor**

Students also participate in a number of workshops throughout the year on financial aid, career exploration, math anxiety reduction, writing personal statements for transfer, etc. Students also have the option of taking a leadership academy in the summer through the program's partnership with APALI. Another key aspect of IMPACT AAPI, is the partnership they have formed with the Asian and Pacific Islander American

Scholarship Fund (APIASF). Students in the program can apply for a scholarship through APIASF for two-years in a row to help with the costs of tuition, books, transportation, and other resources for college that they need. Students who receive the APIASF scholarship also increase their access to higher education and resources that cultivate their academic, personal and professional success beyond De Anza as they become part of a national network of AAPI student scholars and professionals across various disciplines and careers.

Success to Date

Reinaldo has just completed his first year in the English, Reading, and General Education pathway and says the program has helped him tremendously. He has a strong bond with his cohort and is now comfortable asking for help and seeking resources, something he was not equipped to do his first year. His counselor has inspired him to want to be a higher education counselor because the guidance he has received has made a big difference. Reinaldo will be working as a student ambassador for the program in the upcoming school year and is now able to help his younger brother with his college education when he begins in the fall. Reinaldo hopes to transfer to either the University of California at Los Angeles, Berkeley, or San Diego next year.

Over the last seven years of IMPACT AAPIs existence it has:

- Served 636 AAPI students
- Increased the course success rates of Filipino, Pacific Islander, and Southeast Asian students to 90%, 91%, and 95%, respectively. Almost 20% above, the overall college success rate.
- Increased the percentage of Filipino students who enrolled in pre-college level English who then succeed in college level English from 34% to 61%.
- Increased the percentage of Filipino and Pacific Islander students who enrolled in pre-college Math who then succeed in college level Math from 35% and 33% respectively to 44% and 41%.
- Increased the fall-to-winter persistence rate for first-time, full-time Filipino (78%), Pacific Islander (75%) and Southeast Asian (85%) students to 90%, 100%, and 98% respectively.

- Engaged over 50 faculty and staff in professional development activities to support AAPI students

"We need to move away from a student deficit model and take seriously student equity. Recognizing students' strengths and cultural resiliency is a key first step. You also have to shift the institutional mindset in relation to resource allocation and student success programs; so that when budget cuts come you maintain the level of personal and academic achievement of all students"
– Rowena Tomaneng
Associate Vice President of Instruction

Shifting Campus Culture

The struggles of AANHPI students only became evident when administrators used data to examine how students were faring. Problem areas were then recognizable and a sustainable solution to address them was created. Administrators were intentional in their efforts to better serve students and created an awareness campaign at the onset of the program to teach faculty and staff about the model minority myth, and to build visibility of the students who get lost without the support they need. Then, administrators focused on developing a community within the college that was able to intervene so more students could succeed.

To ensure the sustainability of this effort, administrators built on existing programs that were proven to work and leveraged internal resources such as using existing faculty members to teach courses, so that IMPACT AAPI could outlive the federal grants they receive. In addition, professional development is regularly offered so that faculty can learn from experts in the field and continue to build on their cultural competency. At least one large workshop is offered per quarter and smaller ancillary ones are offered at the request of instructors. Program administrators have developed IMPACT video modules to demonstrate the intentional and focused interventions based on data that can help students thrive. Some family stories of students are included in these videos, but faculty also learn first-hand about student experiences during convocation when a student panel discusses factors that have been important to their success.



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