



Policy Brief
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Asian American & Pacific Islander Serving Institutions

by

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Background and Rationale for AAPI Serving Institutions

In August 2007, Congress passed the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA) which contained a designation for federal recognition of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) serving institutions. Institutions with at least a 10% enrollment of AAPI students, a certain threshold of low-income students, and lower than average educational and general expenditures per student are now eligible to participate in a yearly competitive grant process for funds that will contribute to the recruitment and retention of AAPI students, particularly communities of students who have been traditionally underserved by higher education.

While over half of Indian Americans had at least a bachelor's degree in 2000, fewer than 10% of Hmong, Laotian, and Cambodian Americans had a college degree.¹ While 24.4% of the overall population over the age of 25 had a college degree, only 13.8% of Pacific Islanders had at least a bachelor's degree.² It is important to note that disparities in educational attainment exist within AAPI subgroups themselves due to variations in traits such as income level, immigration history, generational status, residential segregation, and English language ability. Thus, programs to improve access for underserved AAPI subgroups are pertinent to reach students who may be easily overlooked due to the widespread assumption that AAPIs are a monolithically successful population.

What Type of Institutions are AAPI Serving Institutions?

Almost half of Asian American students enrolled in higher education attend community colleges.³ A number of these community colleges with low educational expenditures for students would qualify for the AAPI serving institutions designation.⁴ There are also high concentrations of Asian American students at large state

universities outside of the University of California system. Lastly, the AAPI serving institutions designation may affect institutions with high concentrations of Pacific Islander students that do not already qualify as Native Hawaiian serving institutions. Just as a number of HSI are located in Puerto Rico, a sizeable portion of potential AAPI serving institutions exist outside of the continental U.S.

AAPI Serving Institutions must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- At least a 10% AAPI student enrollment
- Average educational and general expenditures per full-time equivalent enrolled undergraduate must be low in comparison with peer institutions.
- A certain threshold of needy students.
Option 1: 50% of students receive financial aid.
- Option 2: The percentage of students meets or exceeds the median level of Pell Grant recipients within its category of institutions. See the table at the end of the brief for figures used by the U.S. Department of Education in determining eligibility in 2008.

If an institution does not meet these requirements, it may still request a waiver. Information on the waiver process is included in the guidelines administered by the Federal Register (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/>).

How Can Funds Be Used?

The passage of the Higher Education Opportunity Act expanded the scope of programs that may be funded through AAPI Serving Institution grants. Some eligible activities include funds for:

- Curriculum development and academic instruction

- Purchase of library books, periodicals, microfilm, and other educational materials
- Academic tutoring and counseling programs and student support services
- Establishing community outreach programs that will encourage elementary school and secondary school students to develop the academic skills and the interest to pursue postsecondary education
- Conducting research and data collection for Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander populations and subpopulations
- Establishing partnerships with community-based organizations serving Asian Americans and Native American Pacific Islanders⁵

What are Minority Serving Institutions?

When H.R. 4825 was first introduced in 2002 by Rep. Robert Underwood (D-Guam) to create a federal designation for AAPI serving institutions, designations for Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) already existed in the Higher Education Act for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCU), and Native Hawaiian/Alaska Native Serving Institutions (NH/ANSI). Understanding the context of these designations and how they resemble or differ from the designation for AAPI serving institutions is useful for fostering collaboration between advocates for AAPI serving institutions and the already existing MSI advocacy community.

- The HBCU designation is historical, dating back to the 19th century, and is not based on the percentage of Black students at an institution.
- TCCUs are also not based on the percentage enrollment of American Indian students; they were first created in the 1960s to allow students to pursue higher education and job training on the reservation.
- Eligibility for HSI and AN/NHSI designations are partially related to the percentage of enrolled students of a certain background. HSI must have a Hispanic full-time student enrollment of 25% or more and have at least 50% of students on federal financial aid or have a certain percentage of students receiving Pell Grants. ANSI must have at least 20% of Alaska Native students enrolled and NHSI must have at least 10% Native Hawaiian students.
- AAPI serving institutions share some similarities with HSI. Eligibility for both are determined by a combination of percent student enrollment and needy student enrollment. Both types of designations address populations

heavily shaped by immigration. Federal recognition of HSI is a relatively recent event, dating back to 1992. HSIs received \$12 million the first year funds were appropriated for them, in 2008, \$93.2 million in grant funding was allocated to HSI. Advocates of AAPI serving institutions would be well-advised to note the process by which the HSI program expanded.

Future Considerations for AAPI Serving Institutions

Although the inclusion of AAPI serving institutions in the CCRAA marks a key event in AAPI educational history, being the first time that federal education legislation that specifically addressed the needs of AAPIs in education passed, there are several considerations to take into account for the future of the designation.

- The CCRAA allocated \$10 million for AAPI serving institutions over two years. Under the Higher Education Opportunity Act, signed into law in August 2008, the program is now authorized until 2013. Still, the future sustainability of the program is uncertain
- Little infrastructure exists within the AAPI non-profit and advocacy world around advocacy and lobbying for AAPI needs in education, in contrast to other minority communities. The advancement of an AAPI voice in the education policy world is contingent on building and strengthening of this infrastructure.
- The question remains of whether institutions that have a great capacity to serve traditionally underserved AAPI subgroups will be able to benefit from the passage of the CCRAA. A number of these institutions in states such as Wisconsin and Minnesota do not meet the 10% AAPI student enrollment requirement. Thus, policymakers should see if there is any way to address this concern in future iterations of eligibility requirements for AAPI serving institutions.

Table: Figures used by the U.S. Department of Education in determining eligibility in 2008.

Type of institution	2005-2006 median Pell Grant percentage	2005-2006 Average E&G expenditures per FTE student
2-year Public Institutions.....	25.1	\$9,956
2-year Non-profit Private Institutions..	36.7	21,733
4-year Public Institutions.....	24.6	24,690
4-year Non-profit Private Institutions.	25.0	38,811

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education⁶

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¹ Reeves, Terrance and Claudette Bennett. 2004. *We the People: Asians in the United States*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce.

² Harris, Phillip and Nicholas Jones. 2005. *We the People: Pacific Islanders in the United States*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce.

³ The Chronicle of Higher Education. 2007. "College Enrollment by Racial and Ethnic Group, Selected Years." The 2007-2008 Almanac <<http://chronicle.com/weekly/almanac/2007/nation/0101503.htm>> as of August 14, 2008.

⁴ Laanan, Frankie and S. Starobin. 2004. Defining Asian American and Pacific Islander-serving institutions. Pp. 49-59 in

Serving Minority Populations: New Directions for Community Colleges, ed. Berta Vigil Laden. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

⁵ U.S. Congress. 2008. "H.R. 4137, Higher Education Opportunity Act." Thomas <<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?c110:6:./temp/~c110WtdXUX:e3287:>> as of August 19, 2008.

⁶ Office of Postsecondary Education. 2008. "Notice Inviting Applications for Designation as Eligible Institutions for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008." <<http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/announcements/2008-1/031008f.html>> as of July 15, 2008.