



CollegeBoard News Release

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‘Model Minority’ Stereotype Obscures Reality of Asian American and Pacific Islander Educational Experience

College Board/New York University/CARE Research Challenges Assumptions and Recommends Solutions

New York — When “too good to be true” fails to be either good or true, long-term repercussions can be devastating and pervasive. That’s the urgent message found in a groundbreaking report challenging long-held beliefs about Asian American and Pacific Islander students’ academic success.

In collaboration with the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, the College Board released “Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders—Facts, Not Fiction: Setting the Record Straight,” a report detailing why false assumptions can lead to misinformed policy and practice that can be harmful to AAPI students.

In exploring key prevailing fictions about the AAPI community, the report builds on the simple premise that educational policies and practices must be based on fact, not fiction. Without this basis, such policies and practices will have little value “to teachers, students, parents and society as a whole.”

In addition to dispelling the myths with empirical data, “Facts, Not Fiction” goes on to reveal how the “model minority” stereotype is detrimental, explaining that in assuming universal academic strength, teachers and counselors often do not extend help to their AAPI students in the same way they do to other students.

“To successfully meet the needs of all our young people, schools and colleges must recognize that students differ. Institutions must involve everyone in efforts to meet individual needs — students, parents, advocates, teachers and administrators,” said Gaston Caperton, president of the College Board. “We also can help these students by recognizing the many wonderful contributions of Asian Americans and how they can assist the United States in becoming a better participant in the global society.”

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that there are now almost 17 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States. The umbrella term AAPI shelters 48 different ethnic groups, the report notes, from such historically different places as East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. Historically, some individuals entered the country because U.S. employers needed their expertise, while others came as refugees with few resources and opportunities. Still others come to study and then return home. Yet they are all seen as the same studious, self-sufficient high achievers.

“In reality, there is no single AAPI composite,” according to Robert Teranishi, professor of education in the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development at NYU and the co-principal investigator of CARE. “A single story does not represent the AAPI experience.”

With such varied backgrounds, Asians should not be lumped together as a homogenous group with uniformity in educational and financial attainment, culture, religion and histories. For example, AAPI students are evenly distributed in community and four-year colleges in the United States. They are not “taking over” U.S. higher education, as one myth suggests, although their concentration in a small number of institutions may create such an impression. Two hundred colleges and universities enroll two-thirds of all AAPIs attending college nationally, which is less than 5 percent of all postsecondary institutions in the United States. Nearly half of all AAPI students attend college in just three states: California, New York and Texas.

“Despite the growth in the number of AAPIs in the United States during the past two decades, it continues to surprise me how little we know about the population,” said Teranishi. “Prior to this report, there wasn’t even basic baseline information about AAPI participation in U.S. higher education.”

Another debunked myth is that AAPI college students only pursue degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math. While there are a number of AAPIs who do pursue STEM fields, trends also show that a large proportion of AAPI students obtain degrees in the social sciences and the humanities.

The report was released in conjunction with the Education Summit hosted by the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, which featured three panels of experts, and highlighted the diverse needs of AAPI students and educators. Congressman Mike Honda, D-Calif., CAPAC chair, said “I applaud the College Board and NYU for investing in Asian American and Pacific Islander students through a study of this kind. The myth of student achievement throughout our communities has masked particular linguistic and cultural needs of our young people for far too long. I will continue to advocate for greater attention to this community in the national debate on education, and look forward to future collaboration with the College Board and NYU.”

A series of regional events are planned to bring together local constituents, including representatives from the K-12 and higher education sectors, AAPI community-based organizations and AAPI advocacy groups.

National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education

The National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) was formed through a collaboration of the Asian/Pacific/American Institute at New York University, the Steinhardt Institute for Higher Education Policy at New York University, and the College Board. <http://www.nyu.edu/projects/care/>

The College Board: Connecting Students to College Success

The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 5,400 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves seven million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admissions, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT[®], the PSAT/NMSQT[®], and the Advanced Placement Program[®] (AP[®]). The College Board is committed to the principles of excellence and equity, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns. www.collegeboard.com

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