

Asian students need graduation aid, too - Sacramento Bee, The (CA) - October 14, 2015 - page 7B

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A recent Sacramento Bee article highlighted the importance of federal designation and funding as Hispanic-Serving Institutions to provide higher education opportunities to California's Latinos. Today, 18 out of 23 California State University campuses, including Sacramento State, are so recognized.

Sacramento State and 13 other CSU campuses are also designated by the U.S. Department of Education as Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, but CSUS is one of just 21 colleges and universities in the nation with the designation that is receiving federal funding for academic and student support programs.

Almost every CSU campus has one designation, and most have both. Last month, the Campaign for College Opportunities released a report focusing on Asian American and Pacific Islanders in California higher education. The report highlights the misperception that these students are one monolithic "model minority" that overwhelmingly attends highly selective universities.

The truth is the majority of Asian students in California attend community colleges and CSUs. They are quite diverse and many have needs that are similar to other underrepresented racial and ethnic populations.

Together, Asians and Latinos make up about 50 percent of the undergraduate population at Sacramento State. Only about 5 to 7 percent of Asian Americans (including Southeast Asian and Filipinos) and Pacific Islanders who enter as freshman graduate in four years, and less than 40 percent in six years. This has been the trend for two decades.

Federal funding supports the Full Circle Project at Sacramento State, a comprehensive approach to improving retention and graduation rates of Asian and Pacific Islander students. About 90 percent of students in the Full Circle Project are low income, and 60 percent are first in their families to attend college.

The federal designations for serving Latino, Asian and Pacific Islander students have far-reaching implications for all students on our campus and for broader institutional change. More importantly, the long-term benefits of an educated population and workforce extend to the region and the state.

Education and economic experts agree California needs to produce 1 million more bachelor's degrees beyond what current trends are expected to yield. This is a good reminder of the enormous scope of the challenges ahead.

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