

First program to provide Asian-American and Pacific Islander students with resources

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Full Circle Project is the first program at Sacramento State to serve underrepresented Asian-American and Pacific Islander students.

Director of the Full Circle Project Timothy Fong said there are many programs on campus reaching out to other minority groups such as African

Americans or Chicano-Latino students, but there has never been a program at Sac State for Asian-American and Pacific Islander students, even though the groups make up a large percentage of the campus minority population.

According to the Education Opportunity Program Adviser Paolo Soriano, Asian-American and Pacific Islander students made up 21 percent of Sac State's undergraduate student body in fall 2013.

"People have images that Asians are doing well in education, but what is important and is not [noticed] is that there are certain Asian-Pacific Islander groups that have problems in higher education," Fong said.

The model minority myth has made many believe Asian-Americans have had great success in higher education and are the prime example of the "American dream."

However, according to the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander, Asian-American students are more likely to enroll in community colleges than in public or private four-year colleges.

The national commission also found that many South and East Asian

American groups such as Asian-Indians and Japanese have been successful in receiving high school, bachelors and advanced degrees, but groups like

Hmong, Cambodians and Laotians rarely finish high school and their rates in higher education are comparable if not lower than other racial minority groups.

The high school dropout rate among Southeast Asian-American population is 40 percent of Hmong, 38 percent of Laotian and 35 percent of Cambodian populations not completing high school.

The Full Circle Project was created in 2011, after being funded by the United States Department of Education, to improve retention and graduation rates among Asian-American and Pacific Islander students, assist them throughout their college career and provide services for students to engage on and off campus to enhance their university experience.

Fong said in just about two years, the Full Circle Project has received national recognition as it is seen as a model program in terms of what it does for the underrepresented Asian-American and Pacific Islander populations.

According to Soriano, the Full Circle Project participant's retention rate from fall 2012 to fall 2013 was 92.1 percent, which was 10 percent higher than Asian, Filipino, Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander students who were not a part of the program.

The program's participants also had a 3.27 GPA compared to a 2.76 for non-participant Asian-American and Pacific Islander students.

The Full Circle Project provides a variety of resources to help its members succeed at Sac State, including academic advising, personal counseling, first year experience courses, tutoring, leadership development, academic celebrations of achievement and culturally enriching activities.

Pre-nursing major Tria Vue said the program has provided her with opportunities to grow personally and professionally.

“Through the learning communities, I was provided the opportunity to learn about my own identity as Hmong American,” Vue said. “The program helped me understand the stereotypes of Asians being quiet. I am slowly but surely growing and developing myself to step away from that assumption and have learned to voice my thoughts and opinions.”

Vue said the program also helped to be more active on campus through the leadership development program Leadership Initiative, where students receive certificates for the amount of service hours they dedicate.

“The Full Circle Project program has helped me find my home at Sacramento State and the true pride of being a Hornet,” Vue said. “I have grown so much passion for this program because I feel like without the endless opportunities they have provided me, I would not be where I am at today.”

The project has also given members an opportunity to attend several conferences such as the Hmong National Development Conference, that help students gain great learning experiences while networking professionally.

Economics major and Full Circle Project member Ivan Tiet said he attended the Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education conference in San Francisco earlier this month.

In the conference, he learned about the grant process for different programs, struggles and challenges undocumented students face and about disaggregated data, which is placing statistics of all Asian groups into one.

“I found the aggregation of data the most interesting topic,” Tiet said. “This is why people think all Asians do well in college.”