

PISI week highlights federal grant for low- - Sacramento Bee, The (CA) - September 28, 2019 - page 3A

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Friday is the last day of AANAPISI week.

"AANAPISI" stands for Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving institutions, which are colleges with an enrollment of at least 10 percent Asian American or Native American Pacific Islander students, and at least 50 percent of the student body must be eligible for federal need-based financial aid. AANAPISIs qualify for federal grants from the U.S. Department of Education to fund support and retention programs for low-income AAPIs and other groups.

Sacramento State was awarded two five-year AANAPISI Title III Part F Grants, in 2011 and 2016, respectively, to support the Full Circle Project, the school's initiative to address the needs of Sacramento's AAPI students and other students and improve their retention and graduation rates. With 20 percent Asian American and 1 percent Pacific Islander students, the university is the fourth most diverse in the U.S.

According to a Sacramento State report, the rate of growth in the Asian American and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander population was greater than that of the overall population of Sacramento from 2011 to 2015.

During AANAPISI week, students are sharing photos holding signs that read #AANAPISI and a reason why they love it. They are encouraged to tweet and call their representatives to ask for AANAPISI funding.

The AANAPISI program is a part of the H.R. 2486 FUTURE Act, a bipartisan proposal to protect funding for historically black colleges and universities, tribal colleges or universities and other minority-serving institutions. The mandatory funding provides jobs, programs and financial support for students. The FUTURE Act ensures that AANAPISIs continue to receive \$15 million per year for fiscal 2020 and 2021, but the funding they are receiving is significantly lower than that of other minority serving institutions. The House of Representatives passed the bill on Sept. 17.

Hnou Lee, who joined the Full Circle Project in 2012 as a freshman, said the program gave her attention and resources she needed to succeed as a first generation low-income person. Lee's parents are Hmong refugees from the Vietnam War who raised their six daughters in Sacramento. The staff and students at the Full Circle Project gave her resources, such as scholarships and developing skills to write personal statements, as well as a wealth of community to "back her up," Lee said. She recalled a staff sitting down with her to help her plan how to study abroad and apply to graduate school.

Lee recently finished a master's degree in higher education at California State University, Fullerton, and is now working at the Intercultural Resource Center of Coastline Community College in Garden

Grove. Her experience working with students in the Full Circle Project made her want to continue her work after graduation.

"Being a Southeast Asian and knowing there are first generation low-income college students often overlooked by society as being high-achieving, I can also give back to society who wants to do big things but don't know how because they are first in their family to go to college," Lee said.

Ivan Tiet, another graduate of Sacramento State in 2016, said the scholarship workshop and mentorship program was most impactful to him during his college career, as the encouragement he got from his adviser and peers was uplifting.

"The Full Circle Project makes you believe in yourself more," Tiet said.

Tiet recalled his high school had one counselor for 800 students due to limited resources and capacity, so he cherished the resources at the Full Circle Project. He recently completed a master's degree in education at UC Berkeley and has returned to Sacramento State as a full time employee.

"I knew how uplifting education has been for me, so I wanted to contribute and be a part of it to propel folks forward," he added.

Timothy Fong, Director of the Full Circle Project, said most first-generation and low-income students "lack role models, resources and mentors" and came from public schools that did not prepare them as well as more affluent schools. They therefore need support navigating through the complex higher education system.

"For Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, there are often strong family and financial responsibilities," **Fong** said. "The cost of higher education is much more intimidating for our students compared with students of upper-middle-class backgrounds. This makes it difficult for these students to engage in extracurricular activities that enhance the college experience as much as other students who have fewer outside responsibilities."

Marybeth Gasman, executive director of the Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institution, said the model minority myth makes it very difficult for some Asian American and Pacific Islander students to navigate the ins and outs of college.

"They are often overlooked due to stereotypes about the AAPI population, which is assumed to be middle class, to always perform well in school, and to not need assistance and support. We need to see AAPI students as having the same needs as other students," Gasman said.

"The ANNAPISI program didn't just give equity in higher education, but equity in life," Lee said. "I now have a place in society where I can support my family now and my future family one day. It wouldn't be something I would be able to do if I haven't come across the program."

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