Mission College
AANAPISI Focus Groups

June 16, 2014
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Introduction
This report contains findings from focus groups conducted in October and November 2013 with students and faculty/counselors at Mission College. In conjunction with its Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) grants, these focus groups were a collaborative effort between Mission College and the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group). The purpose of this study was to: 1) identify the campus climate as perceived by Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) students, and 2) document the instructional and student services experiences among AAPI students. This investigation seeks to increase understanding about how Mission College can better serve and support its AAPI students, which will help facilitate these students' attainment of their educational goals.

Research Framework
This study is framed by two main research questions:

1. In what ways does Mission College provide an environment that AAPI students feel will help accomplish their educational goals?
2. How do Mission College faculty and counselors describe how they promote and facilitate student success among their AAPI students?

Additional sub-questions that shaped this investigation include:
- How do AAPI students describe their interactions with Mission College faculty, counselors and students?
- How do Mission College faculty and counselors describe their understanding of the unique issues and needs facing AAPI population groups?
- What resources or support do Mission College faculty and counselors identify as necessary to promote and facilitate student success among AAPI students?

Focus Group Methodology
Five focus groups, four with students and one with instructional faculty and counselors, were conducted over the course of three visits to Mission College. The student focus groups were grouped by ethnicity: Chinese, Filipino, Pacific Islander and Vietnamese, while the faculty focus group included people from varying ethnicities.
Students, faculty and counselors were invited to participate through email and other solicitation efforts by Ken Songco, Director of Federal Student Services Grants—AANAPISI Programs, and his staff.

All focus groups were conducted in the STEM Learning Center (established by funding from the AANAPISI grant), facilitated by a researcher from the RP Group, and lasted approximately 60 minutes each. The sessions were audiotaped and transcribed for analysis. A semi-structured format was used, where initial questions were developed in collaboration with college representatives, but follow-up questions varied depending on the conversation flow within each focus group (see Appendices 1 and 2 for focus group protocols). Both faculty and student participants were invited to complete a brief questionnaire prior to the focus group that collected demographic information (Appendices 3 and 4). One student elected not to complete this form.

The focus group schedule was as follows:

- October 15, 2013: Vietnamese students (11 a.m. to noon)
- October 15, 2013: Filipino students (1 p.m. to 2 p.m.)
- October 17, 2013: Chinese students (11 a.m. to noon)
- October 17, 2013: Pacific Islander students (1 p.m. to 2 p.m.)
- November 8, 2013: Faculty and counselors (noon to 1 p.m.)

Mission College provided focus group participants with lunch as the sessions occurred between 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Students were provided additional incentives of two $10 Jamba Juice gift cards and were eligible to win a Kindle Fire courtesy of the Office of the President.

**Student Informants**
There were a total of 28 students in the four focus groups. The participants included nine Chinese, eight Filipinos, three Pacific Islanders and seven Vietnamese students.

**Faculty Informants**
There were four instructional faculty members and two counselors who participated in the focus group.

**Findings**
The following summary presents themes and highlights from the focus group sessions. The survey results are presented first, as they provide an overview of the demographics of the student and faculty/counselor informants, and are followed by the focus group discussions. These qualitative findings are organized around themes
emerging from these AAPI student experiences and perspectives, with faculty and
counselor voices providing their own viewpoint on these same themes.

Student Background
The participation level among the four student groups varied by ethnicity; almost
two-thirds identified themselves as Chinese or Filipino (63%). Slightly over half
were female (56%). Almost 60% indicated they were full-time as opposed to part-
time students. While the majority of these students’ parents were not born in the
U.S. (85%), only about half of the students were born in the United States (56%).
Among those students who were immigrants, over half arrived to this country when
they were younger than 18. Not surprisingly, 89% of students indicated speaking
another language in addition to English. Regardless of their immigrant status, less
than one-fourth of the participants identified as first-generation college students
(22%); however, this finding does not indicate where the college experience
occurred, whether in the United States or elsewhere. About three-fourths indicated
that transferring to a four-year institution was their primary educational goal
(74%). The top reasons students felt would prevent them from reaching their goal
were related to finances/financial aid (27%), followed by personal issues (14%) and
course cuts and availability (9%).

While a majority of the students indicated they graduated from high school in 2007
or earlier (66%), most appeared to have first enrolled at Mission College between
2011 and 2013 (63%). These students seemed to have been enrolled for an average
of four semesters. Most appeared to have attempted courses elsewhere, primarily at
other local community colleges, but at least a couple of students had previous four-
year college experiences before enrolling at Mission. The top majors reported by
students included Business/Accounting major (26%), Engineering/Science (26%),
Nursing/Fire Protection (22%) and Liberal Arts/Social Sciences (19%).

These students were engaged with the learning process as 96% indicated they
“often” or “sometimes” have asked a question or contributed to class discussions
and 83% had attended office hours or stayed after class to ask a questions “often” or
“sometimes.” Almost all students (96%) reported using support services, such as
financial aid; library; counseling; admissions and records, while less than half
indicated they had taken a counseling or study skills course (48%). Even though
over half the students indicated they were a full-time student at Mission, 41% had
never been involved with extracurricular activities. However, this result did not
mean students are isolated, as 96% indicated they “often” or “sometimes” had
serious conversations with fellow students who were of a different ethnicity/race
than them, and that, for the most part, Mission College “often” or “sometimes”
encourages this type of contact and interaction among students from different
backgrounds (85%).

An overwhelming majority of the students gave Mission College an overall
“excellent” or “good” rating (96%); only one student would not recommend the
college to others. Almost all students also considered Mission College’s courses (89%), faculty (96%) and staff (82%) to be “excellent” or “good.” However, slightly less than two-thirds of students rated student services (e.g., study skills course, financial aid, library, counseling) as highly (63%). Focus group questions attempted to tease out more specific discussion regarding the students’ experiences in these areas.

**Faculty Background**
All six faculty participants were women and half self-identified as White (50%). The remaining three indicated they were African American (1), Japanese (1) or undeclared (1). Most of these women were not immigrants (83%) and did not currently speak a language other than English at home (83%). However, two-thirds did report being the first person in their family to attend college (67%).

The departments they represented varied, including counseling, chemistry, ESL, math and nutritional science. All reported having experience working with students with basic skills needs and those learning English as a second language. While the majority had been employed at Mission for more than 10 years (67%), half of them also had experience working at other colleges (two-year and four-year institutions).

**Why Mission College?**
To better understand the AAPI student experiences at Mission College, students were first asked why they decided to attend this institution. This question provides some insight into student familiarity with the institution and determines how much research they conducted prior to enrollment.

**It’s the Location**
With the wide range of options in both two-year and four-year colleges and universities in the local Bay Area region, students most often cited location, whether distance from home or work, as the primary reason for their enrollment at Mission College. The close proximity of Mission College also made it a viable choice for students because friends and family were aware of the institution. The comments from the following two students, one Chinese and one Pacific Islander, demonstrated how their college choice process focused specifically on the goal of attending college, and less consideration regarding the institutional culture and how that may affect their own college experiences:

*For me, I don’t know really any college here. Just that my friend said there’s a college called Mission College, and...I think, okay, I need to do that college. And also it’s near my home.*
It’s closest to where I live now...I had no preconceived notion of what Mission was about so I just kind of came here because that was the only thing that my uncle knew of, so I came here, yeah.

As the first person to attend college in her family, one Pacific Islander female student explained how the location was comforting to her family who were unfamiliar with the college-going culture:

I think for me it was because I was like the first one. My family was very cautious. So they wanted me to go to a very convenient, close by school.

When asked whether she had interest in attending other institutions, she said, “At the time, I just wanted to go to school.” Her response suggests that given her family circumstances, as a first-generation college student who also still maintained responsibility caring for her younger siblings, her college choice options were much more limited compared to other students.

It’s the Programs and Courses
Beyond a general education and transfer focus, students indicated they were also attracted to Mission College by some of its specific programs, which addressed their job skills and career goals. Students from all four focus groups referenced the nursing and fire protection programs and each group included students who were enrolled in or planned to apply to these programs.

Others, especially those who were non-traditionally aged students, cited course availability as being influential in their decision to enroll. One Filipino student explained, “I heard that the school is more supportive of working students because there are more nighttime courses.” A Chinese student commented that the scheduling options allowed him to continue his education, “And the schedule is very flexible for me. And I have a full-time job. I work every day, daytime. So I can take the early class and the evening class. It’s very flexible.” Online course offerings were also mentioned as a reason that students were attracted to the college because they could fit the lectures and study time around their schedules.

In cases where they felt their educational needs were limited or hindered, students were willing to attend another college, even if it meant it was further away. One Vietnamese student discussed how the lack of course availability initially influenced her decision to attend Mission:

I actually lived down the street from [another community college] and I was attending there for about a year or two, but I stopped because it was very difficult to get classes because everyone in the area, it was like four or five different high schools and they were all going there, so I think I decided to just go somewhere a little further like Mission to try it out because they had open classes the week before school started, and I noticed the diversity here is a lot
better and it’s not only easier to get classes, but the faculty actually know what they’re talking about.

It’s the Campus
In addition to feeling supported by either the access to courses or information, students were attracted to Mission College because of its campus size and structure. These elements contributed to their sense of belonging, which facilitated their ability to feel like they were a part of the campus. One Filipino male student commented:

I think also the layout of the campus, it’s pretty easy to know, I mean north, south, east, west was easier to navigate compared to like [Community College X], like a whole bunch of stairs, by the time you climb the stairs, you’re like, where the hell am I? [Community College X] is just a huge campus in itself.

The advantage of being on a smaller campus was especially noted among the Pacific Islander students, who all agreed that this institutional characteristic made Mission College more attractive to them compared to its neighboring community colleges. As one Pacific Islander student noted, “I know some people complain that it’s small, but I like that, the community-type feeling.”

The preference for a more intimate learning environment was a characteristic that faculty and counselors heard expressed by many students. One counselor recounted, “The feedback we get in counseling that I’ve heard from students is that they like Mission College, they like the smallness. They like the friendliness of it.” Another counselor supported this belief:

We have students that have been to bigger places and they come because of the intimidation factor, you know it’s not as intimidating here [or] competitive.”

Many students noted they did not want to spend a lot of time trying to figure out where their classes were located and whether they would be able to find parking before classes started. In fact, parking was an issue discussed in all four student focus groups and was overwhelmingly cited as a secondary reason students continued to attend Mission. None of the students expected parking to be as accessible, but were all pleasantly surprised. As parking at any college typically becomes less congested as the term progresses, the importance placed on parking availability is probably most relevant at the beginning of the semester when students are still determining their course schedules. One Chinese student explained how parking affected his ability to enroll at another college:

The first course you must show up...and not able to find parking [on another college campus]. Then I showed up, teacher said it was too late, someone take your spot already.
Another Chinese student in the same focus group echoed this perspective, "We can find parking [at Mission]; at least you can go to the class (laughs)."

While proximity of the campus did seem to initially drive many of the students’ decision to initially enroll at Mission College, it is worthwhile to note that students who spoke of this process as a more deliberative choice often did so as a result of their experiences at other colleges. If a student had a negative experience at another two-year institution, they sought out other campus options. This decision to change colleges is probably unique to this geographic area, as there are several institutions within a 20-mile radius.

**Students and Faculty**

**The Positives**

Students wanted to engage with faculty who were passionate about their work and who were interested in teaching and forming personal relationships with their students. Among Pacific Islander students, feeling connected to their faculty contributes to their motivation to pursue their education goals at Mission College. As one Pacific Islander student said, “What kept me coming back...I like the environment here, small community as well as the faculty that I’ve started with, we’ve become really close.” Another Pacific Islander student explained why developing such faculty-student relationships facilitates his learning experiences:

> I like to have a relationship with my instructor because it makes the experience education-wise more meaningful to me and more personal, not just like come to school and say hi and bye to your teacher and then just leave.

Other students shared how these connections made them feel like full participants in the learning process. One Vietnamese female student noted:

> I’ve only been here three semesters and two of the best [instructors] I’ve had, both of them were high school dropouts and now they have Ph.Ds....they’re really personable...it’s at the same level, there’s not a looking up to them and they’re not talking down to you, so it’s been a good experience.

When faculty were responsive to and expressed concern for their students, students felt supported and encouraged to continue their educational pursuit. One Vietnamese student explained how he experiences this type of positive connection:

> The faculty here are very good compared to like other schools where it’s like oh, well, that’s your fault, you know? They don’t even take the time to talk to you or ask you if you’re okay whereas here it’s like...they actually pay attention to every student, so it’s like you feel more comfortable here, you know?
Faculty and counselors in the focus group also shared how they attempted to address the needs of their AAPI students and form connections with this population group. One faculty member discussed how she sought to be inclusive in her teaching:

*I try to use a lot of examples in class that are very diverse. Then you have to describe everything that you’re talking about for the other students that don’t know. So that’s a little bit of a challenge, but I think I do my best to try to explain different types and when they hear me say that, they’re like, Oh! Does she eat that too? Or you’ve been to a restaurant like that? I do food record examples and I put all ethnic foods on there so it looks like they have an example of seeing something that’s familiar.*

Some of the faculty’s approaches focused on study skills to help increase course understanding:

*I teach mainly organic chemistry and there’s a lot of vocabulary words that’s hard even for a native speaker. The challenge I find is I try to encourage my students to read the textbook and a lot of them just struggle with it so much they get frustrated. So I implemented a little journal process when they read the chapter and summarize it…I found that a lot of students are actually getting more out of my lecture because they are reading before class.*

Other faculty focused on challenging students to become more vocal and participatory, as one noted, “[AAPI] students work very hard, but they’re really shy.” An example of this approach is to provide positive reinforcement to increase participation:

*I have class participation points…so if they see me putting check marks, they want their check mark…it’s a very small percentage, but it encourages them to talk more, because it looks like I’m taking that initiative to actually take a count for it and I think they feel encouraged…that’s the big thing. I try to do that [to] make them feel [it’s] okay [to talk in class]. They got credit for it and then it starts to get them more comfortable.*

In addition to finding ways to engage students in the classroom, some faculty also sought to broaden their own perspectives about their AAPI students by learning more about their students. One faculty explained her motivation behind this approach:

*I try to understand the cultures better and maybe how to approach them better just to make sure they feel comfortable with me. I do my best to relate to them but they might not find that relationship from others.*

These strategies seem to be primarily self-initiated, driven by faculty interest and concern for student learning rather than supported by a specific institutional
agenda. This heightened level of personal engagement also appeared to promote the awareness level among faculty and counselors about the AAPI students they encounter and how this population group may have changed over time. As one counselor commented, “In counseling...I’m trying to visualize a day, a day that I have mostly appointments and easily I’d say half would be AAPI students.” In some cases, faculty commented on patterns in enrollment based on subject and course level. One faculty noted, “I teach math and in basic skills there are some Asian American students, but not that many. But in transfer level courses a lot...making up 60%.” A second faculty member said:

I teach the nursing and firefighting track...when I teach 30A, it’s a very low population of AAPI students, mostly Caucasian and Latino or African American. And then when I teach the pre-med track, the science majors’ course, I would say it’s pushing 50%, and a lot of Vietnamese students.

Other faculty discussed the changing demographics within the AAPI community and its impact on the type of students enrolling in their courses. As one counselor explained, “I work with the nursing cohort...and we’re about 65, 70% AAPI students definitely. I think now the Filipino is decreasing, but [now] it’s more Chinese...” Another faculty member explained:

In ESL, I would say about 85% of our students are AAPI...it has changed in dynamic in that there are fewer Vietnamese, maybe more Chinese now, not very many Filipinos (over last 25 years)...”

The Challenges
Faculty who use a more interactive class structure and engage students through discussion and inquiry were generally more highly rated by the student focus groups. However, not all students believed they experience similar teaching and learning experiences. For example, students enrolled in math and science courses were less likely to report high levels of faculty-student interaction. One Vietnamese male student said:

I think it’s important to compare the students to the type of class that she takes because I’m an engineering student and most of my classes are just lecture and just like solo work, there no group work at all whatsoever.

Students felt that developing close faculty-student relationships varied by discipline. As one Pacific Islander student commented, “Different subject, different [instructor] personalities.”

One of the Filipino students remarked:

Okay, I’ll just say social sciences just across the board, I hear some good stuff, then I get into English, like that English teacher is this or that, then math, it
starts to progressively, well, not even progressively, it was actually going exponentially downhill.

Both Filipino and Pacific Islander students specifically cited science and math, especially beginning and intermediate algebra, as challenging courses for students to engage faculty on a more personal level. Students often attributed the subject matter as the primary reason, leading to a more one-sided pedagogical approach. As one Pacific Islander student noted, “The thing about math instructors is the subject itself, it’s a logic class...it’s fact and you don’t want to be wrong so you kind of pull back.” Students’ lack of confidence with unfamiliar course material also led them to comment that faculty in these disciplines were “intimidating.” Another Filipino male student recounted how faculty could contribute to this intimidation:

[My chemistry instructor] says if you don’t understand why don’t you ask, yet again when you ask, she slams it in your face that you’re the dumbest person on earth.

It seemed that many students accepted that this teaching style was necessary given the course material. One Vietnamese male student commented:

I’m fine with it, but you just have to understand we don’t have enough time in class to schedule time to learn all the curriculum and interact with our classmates, so it’s understandable and I can work with it.

Not all students had this type of experience in their math and science courses. One Pacific Islander student referenced the Math Achievement to Pathway Success (MAPS) program, a basic skills math course designed for students who have traditionally had less success in basic skills and college math courses, and the positive experiences he had with the instructor and learning the course material. He attributed this experience to the smaller class size and the embedded counselor, both of which he believed contributes to increased instructor availability. Meanwhile, one of the Vietnamese students noted that he had similar classroom experiences compared to his non-science and math peers:

I’m in computer science...but the instructors, they even remember which group that you’re in and even try to help you through your friends...like they will ask someone, hey, where is your friend today, is she coming, is he coming, and remember to tell them about the updates today. I love the instructors over here, they get personal, they remember each face.

Another discipline where students expressed mixed classroom experiences was in English as a second language (ESL). Such experiences seemed to especially resonate among the Chinese students. Sometimes these experiences were attributed to the course structure; other times students cited the instructor’s attitude. For example, a large class enrollment may limit the opportunity to more actively engage with the English language, as suggested by one Chinese male student:
We have 30 students in class so you barely have time to talk...everybody hopes maybe someone tomorrow, someone talk to them. At the end, some still stay [at] their level of speaking. Even the teacher gives them a pass to the [next class].

While large class size may have a detrimental effect on student-faculty engagement, students noted that individual faculty perceptions and behavior regarding the learning process could also affect the classroom experience. Another Chinese female student shared an experience where the instructor did not appear to promote a culture of learning or inquiry:

*I want to learn, review my grammar. The teacher was so, I'm sorry to say this, but he was terrible...insulting to the students. And he was like; you guys should be at college-level writing. I thought the reason why we took ESL [was] because we're not? And then when he talks, he kind of put us down.*

This particular instructor appeared to have a certain expectation of students' abilities and did not adjust his pedagogical approach when they were not met. Thus, students believed that faculty should be consistently held to high teaching standards and reviewed continuously, as indicated by this Filipino student:

*Not just after a couple of years that you've been here, but at least once per semester so that they know even after they get tenure, they're still keeping up with that practice they've been showing since day one.*

There were ESL instructors who did attempt to engage their class in the learning process. This Chinese student recounted how the instructor used a step-by-step process to make English language more accessible:

*He writes down each problem, each verb, noun for us and he explains to us what it's used for, and then gives us examples. And then how we can write, how the noun and the verb go together. Makes sense for us. So I like him.*

Several of the Chinese students cited specific issues related to their ESL experiences. For some students, even though they completed English language courses in their home country, they experienced a disconnect between their self-perceptions of their English ability and the reactions of the ESL faculty after enrolling at Mission College. Sometimes students are not prepared for this transition, and if they did not encounter supportive faculty, the adjustment can have a negative effect on their own self-esteem. One Chinese student explained how this challenge affected his learning:

*I cannot catch the teacher's idea. I don’t know what she wants...and then I just look at the book and then finish the homework...I don’t know, in China my*
English not so bad. It’s very okay. Here I find my English is very, oh, I don’t know how to say…my opinions are no good.

Other Chinese students reflected that the existing ESL pathway, which includes courses on reading, writing, listening and speaking, did not seem to serve them effectively. For example, this male student noted how the English language acquisition skills could vary by student population:

To Chinese students, we’re very good at [grammar and reading] but our speaking and listening, including the writing is [not] so good. When I’m taking these two [ESL] classes, I’m very frustrated to be with other students, Vietnamese, Pakistan and India. They are all better [speakers] than me. I cannot catch up with them. It’s very, very difficult.

These students believed that some faculty approached ESL students as a monolith and were concerned about how this perception could affect their learning, especially given the number of levels in the ESL sequence. Another Chinese female student recommended:

I think if we not just focus on the grammar, if teacher can give us some introduction of the different thinking in America. Critical thinking and the essay…I think for Chinese and Asian students, it’s hard to understand the thinking path and the different logic, so how to think different.

Beyond these discipline-specific experiences, students also discussed ways faculty inhibited AAPI student learning because of instructor behaviors or comments. Sometimes it was related to English language ability, where faculty appeared more focused on the course content, leaving the responsibility for understanding and comprehension of English up to the student, as recounted by this Filipino female student:

I had an astronomy class and there were a lot of like English as a second language [students] and a lot of them I noticed had difficulty or the teacher had difficulty [understanding them]…they had difficulty talking to each other about the subject, in answering their questions…[the teacher] was pretty dismissive so it was either you sink or you swim.

In other instances, faculty appeared to make assumptions attributing specific beliefs or behaviors solely to the students’ race and ethnicity. One Vietnamese female student related a specific classroom experience:

We had a psych nurse instructor and there was a [student] group who happened to be all Asian, all of them were Chinese and their answer was very systematic and the instructor said, notice how, not to stereotype or anything…notice how this group is comprised of all Asian and how it was very systematic and it wasn’t about patient centered care.
This student felt it was unnecessary to make such a generalization when the instructor could have just focused on the assignment and discussed the importance of adopting a patient centered care perspective.

These culture gaps left students feeling disengaged from faculty and the learning process. Still, the focus group students were reticent to label these experiences as discriminatory. One Filipino student, however, did discuss such experiences as an example of how some faculty seemed unaware that cultural differences could lead to feelings of exclusion in the classroom. He expanded on why he felt one instructor’s attempt to engage students was not effective:

Like [telling] an in class joke and half the class will get it and half the class won’t and feel left out sometimes. They don’t even know [if] they should take that down as a note or was that a joke...so that corner is laughing and I’m like over here [asking], “What are you saying? Should I take that, should I take that as a compliment or not?” Their joke is not even funny. To me, it seems racist ...like some remarks they say, it’s like my culture does that, but I guess the teacher doesn’t know that he’s talking about my culture.

In general, students felt faculty were engaged with the teaching and learning process, and invested in student outcomes because these instructors cared about students as individuals. As a Filipino student noted, “There’s a lot of good professors here, like I think 80% of them are really, really good...” However, a minority of classroom experiences, primarily in math and ESL, seemed challenged by instructors who engaged in more passive teaching styles or adopted a more traditional one-sided student-faculty dynamic.

The faculty/counselors focus group revealed that these instructional faculty and counselors were concerned with facilitating a learning environment that was dynamic and actively engaged their AAPI students. Sometimes this philosophy meant pushing students beyond their own comfort zones. One faculty member explained why she developed exercises forcing students to cross cultural boundaries, such as having students visit ethnic shopping centers and write reviews of ethnic restaurants.

It’s getting them out of their communities. That’s the biggest problem. Here if you got, most classes with so many Vietnamese students, they gather together and they’re speaking Vietnamese. And you try to break them apart, but if you’re not on them all the time, they just drift back together. It’s really hard.

Other faculty discussed similar classroom experiences, where their AAPI students seemed concerned about standing out and being seen as different.

I teach nutrition so they have to write down a food record...some of them I see the food and then I’m like you don’t eat this...it’s all American. And I see them in
class and they just got here and I’m like you don’t eat this. You eat Vietnamese food. Why did you put that down? And they’re very hesitant. No, no, no, I’ll just kind of put down American food. I said but you’re not helping yourself because you don’t eat American food. I’m not asking you to eat American food. I’m asking you to tell me what you eat. But they’re afraid to.....

When asked why some of her AAPI students expressed such hesitancy, she considered some of the possible generational differences between recent immigrants and the American-born:

I think it’s mostly they’re afraid of thinking other people won’t understand them or other people don’t know where they come from...American-born are much more willing to share that information as a whole, and they eat more of a variety of like American [and] non-American dishes.

While American-born students or those who immigrated to this country as children are perceived as less hesitant to engage in the classroom, faculty sometimes felt it was more challenging to work with this group of AAPI students. A faculty member offered one example:

The Filipinos that come in are very good speakers because they’ve been here and their verbal skills are excellent. Their writing skills and their reading skills are terrible. And so it’s really hard to figure out what it is they’re missing. But they’re native speakers, and they have a hard time realizing that they have these shortcomings in language.

A counselor added:

With the Filipinos...you look at the placement test and you look at the person and there’s such a dichotomy ...They are not happy. They are so mad that they are in ESL but they belong there...[but] it’s a really hard sell...we are wrong and they are right.

Another faculty remarked, “And even in the classroom, they feel as though the teacher is doing something wrong because they know English so well.” It appears the impact this dynamic can have on a student’s learning experience may negatively affect course success. As one faculty explained,

The students that do go through the ESL sequence, they do well, they’re given the skills, but the students that don’t and they refuse to listen to those scores, they still often think that they can do well in my class and it’s hard for me to tell them. It’s hard for me to assess first of all until I get to a point in the semester where they’ve been there half a semester because they are speaking well. And sometimes things come back, and it’s all over the map, so by the time they get halfway through the semester, I feel like oh, they shouldn’t have been here and what do I do with them.
Nuances among the AAPI population, ranging from cultural practices to immigration status, are not always information immediately available to faculty and counselors and the group acknowledged that such context could better prepare them to assist and advise students.

Faculty also referenced the unique pressures they felt some of their AAPI students, regardless of generational status, experienced in attempting to meet the cultural expectations set by their family and among their peers. One counselor noted:

*The big statement is, “I’m not really good at math, but all my peers are”...To go home and to say to your parents you’re not doing well in some of the subjects, science and math, it’s a big deal, and they don’t want that.*

These pressures may contribute to what faculty believe is an increase in cheating, especially on exams. One faculty reflected:

*You have to be much more vigilant today. You used to be able to grade papers while they were taking [an exam], but no, you have to watch them. You have to make sure that those cell phones are deep, are put away.*

Another faculty member related her experience with AAPI students cheating and the strategy she used to address this situation:

*I’ve had students trying to speak Vietnamese while they’re taking an exam and it’s hard because it’s not my language obviously. And I could tell they’re talking and other students are like getting upset about it because they know what’s going on and so I feel frustrated. I know they’re doing it to get that “A” so I end up making note cards. I randomly pass them out. I do it in front of them so they know I’m not separating them out. And that helped out a lot.*

Other strategies faculty use to address cheating included the use of turnitin.org for writing assignments as well as physically separating students to prevent clustering and opportunities to exchange information. The latter includes moving tables around and randomly seating students. One faculty added, “You don’t reach for anything during an exam. If you phone goes off or anything, don’t reach for it because I’m going to think you’re cheating.” Faculty also relied on other students to report instances of cheating, as cited by one faculty’s experience, “It was always that other students would tell after the exam something was going on.”

While these faculty and counselors were quick to acknowledge that such behavior was not unique to the AAPI student population, the use of non-English languages to facilitate cheating may be a more specific approach used by this group that takes advantage of instructors unfamiliar with the language.
Students and Support Services

The Positives
Students want support services staff to be accessible and knowledgeable, and to provide good customer service. Several focus group participants highlighted the support they received from counselors, attributing this department’s integral role to students’ ability to attain their educational goal. One Chinese student noted how counseling was able to help him refocus his goals, “I came here and because I lost my job, I come here to start over again. I feel like the counselor help me...so I’m graduating this Christmas. So that’s why I’m excited.” A Vietnamese female student discussed counselor responsiveness in keeping her on track toward her goal of transferring to a four-year institution:

[The counseling component is] very important. I think we’re all here to transfer and I guess counseling is like your guide...a lot of times they say go to Assist.org, but you know you always need to go back to your counselor and be like, does this course, is it the same as Assist.org...and the counselor emailed me back within that day. So I guess my experience with a counselor here was very effective....he responded right away, which is very, very good. That’s what all the students need, you know, is response.

Other students explained how the counseling experience could contribute to a sense of community and belonging as these two Vietnamese students shared:

They [counselors] keep you on track whereas other schools it’s kind of like they keep you to yourself in a sense. They don’t communicate with you, you don’t know anything, so when you’re walking around going to class, it’s kind of like uncomfortable.

They’re really good at following through and this has been like the fifth school I’ve been to as far as being to counseling and everybody that you touch in the counseling department cares.

In comparison to instructional faculty, counselors are generally not able to spend as much time with students and may not develop individual relationships with the students they encounter. One counselor noted the limitations of a counseling appointment to be able to understand the nuanced needs among AAPI students, such as possible differences between immigrant and generational status:

I think it’s hard for me to assess, we see the AAPI student for thirty minutes. We don’t really know if they’re American-born...it’s a small window of time. And our goal is to get their goal achieved in that window.

Hence, the quality rather than the quantity of attention paid to each student is especially important. When students feel valued in these interactions (reflected through response times, depth of information provided, concern about student’s
academic and personal life), they feel supported and encouraged to continue with their educational goals.

**The Challenges**

When asked to describe some challenging experiences with Mission College’s support services, students focused on instances where they felt the counselors or staff seemed uninformed, unaware or unconcerned. One Chinese student shared a counseling appointment that did not resolve her questions:

> For me, my situation is really complicated because I dropped out of art school and then the credits are different...so when I went to the counselor, since I didn’t have any idea [what I wanted to do] I think they were a little bit frustrated with me. When the counselor tried to make my plan for transferring, I think she got confused...she assigned me the wrong classes...I kind of felt like the counselor was expecting me to know.

Students can also become frustrated due to the difficulty encountered when trying to make a counseling appointment. As a Pacific Islander student explained, “[Students] can be impatient because sometimes the wait for a counselor is pretty long, like a month.”

For some focus group students, especially those who are more recent immigrants, the challenge with interacting with counselors is that these students may be unfamiliar with this support service. This Chinese female student noted, “Whoever grows up in [the] United States, they know the counselor system since middle [school], from junior high, but students from China...we don’t have counselor system.” Another Chinese student said he only found out about counseling after asking his peers for academic advice, “I only know we have counselor after one year and my classmates said we have a counselor and you can ask her.” It is unclear whether these students participated in orientation, where counseling would have been presented and discussed. Regardless, it is important to note that not all AAPI students have experience or familiarity with academic counseling.

When counselors and staff are perceived not to care about students’ needs and concerns, students feel isolated and left to their own limited resources. Such experiences serve as an unnecessary distraction from students’ ability to attain their educational goals in a timely manner. Below are two experiences that required students to spend additional time to resolve, as shared by a Pacific Islander and Filipino student respectfully:

> With Admissions and Records, I have some problems with them because I would drop off an official transcript from my other college and then I don’t see it online where it should be entered. I go back to them and they are like, oh, it must have been put in a drawer or basket. Okay, well, it was kind of hard for me
to get that document from where I was getting it from and you guys lose it, kind of careless.

Two semesters ago, they had some kind of glitch so a lot of people that were expecting their financial aid on the disbursement day didn't get it...I went to the financial aid office and told them about my situation and they're like, oh, you were one of the unlucky ones...other than that we don't know who it affected and who it didn’t, so we just kind of have to wait for people to come in...if there was a problem with the system, they could have at least emailed people saying, hey, we don’t know if this will affect you, but maybe you should come to the financial aid office and get that checked out...

At times, students seemed to feel their issues were not being heard and, as a result, they felt unsupported. When one Chinese student tried to explain to a counselor an issue he was having in one of his classes, the student felt no resolution was achieved and the experience left him frustrated and feeling alone:

After I leave the counselor office I don’t think I get any help from them. I just know I want to finish that class by myself. And they cannot help me, and I don’t get any help from them.

A Pacific Islander student echoed a similar sentiment:

We have to conform to Mission College. It’s not Mission College ever conforming to us, like we have to adjust. It’s never really specified towards us that they’re going to help us.

In these instances, students discuss having to navigate the Mission College process without any guides. Thus, the college “hidden curriculum” remains opaque and difficult to access. Another Pacific Islander student reflected on the negative effects of encountering such obstacles:

The thing is too about these bad experiences about A&R, it’s initially the first responders. They’re on the frontlines and if they’re making bad impressions to any type of students or parents of students, it just goes down from there.

These students agree that encountering support services obstacles can distract them from their coursework and prevent them from attaining their educational goals. However, it appears they may be less aware of the goal of academic counseling services, to provide students with information and options about how to reach an intended educational goal. Part of this perspective may stem from the type of relationships students typically develop with instructional faculty, one focused on learning from an “expert,” someone in a position of authority with the “answers.” As one counselor explained her approach to promoting self-discovery and empowerment:
I try not to give them the answer to start off with. Here are the options. Here are the choices. Here are the directions. You can go and ultimately the choice is yours...you have to guide them...Many come in asking, “Tell me what to do and what to take to reach this goal, whether it’s my goal or my parent’s goal. What do I have to do?” So that’s part of the process, just try and help them explore it, ask themselves the questions. It’s ongoing.

From this counselor’s perspective,

*The bottom line is it’s their decision...I might give them suggestions...more information about their options, but the decision is theirs. We try to encourage that.*

Counselors recognize this approach may challenge some cultural dynamics within AAPI communities. One counselor explained how she tries to balance the tension between personal and family goals:

*Sometimes it’s not easy for students [to] identify their true goals, [because] their goal was based on what their parents want. But it’s very difficult. You don’t want to encourage a child to be rebellious. At the same time, you want to work with them and try to figure out what it is they want to do. So one thing I’ve done is make a follow-up appointment so we can do an ed plan...to explore what the ed plan could look like based on what [they] truly have an interest in...then I encourage them to just take the book home and talk to their parents, but I don’t always get the follow-up to that.*

It is unclear whether students themselves are aware of this dynamic, where the goal of academic counseling can also require a level of critical thinking that students are familiar with in their instructional experiences. Such an awareness gap may lead to a difference in expectations among students about the role and support provided by counselors.

**Student-Student Interaction**

While this study’s main focus was on exploring the interactions and relationships between AAPI students and their faculty and counselors, student-student interaction is another important component to understanding how students develop connections to their college campus, which can also facilitate student success. In the context of this study, the students were asked how being AAPI affected the level of connection formed with other students. While students agree on the value of developing friendships with other students, they expressed different opinions about whether Mission College could help facilitate increased student interaction, and whether it was even the institution’s responsibility. One Vietnamese female student said:
It's more like a student thing though, it's not really a college thing that the college can really improve on. It's totally up to you and how you really want to interact with other people.

Another Vietnamese student commented on barriers she believes limited student interaction, such as cultural and linguistic differences that were beyond the control of the institution:

*I've had classmates that just came from Vietnam and have a very, very heavy accent to people that were born here...it's not the faculty that I've seen or the school that's done anything different. If anything it would be how the students interact with each other.*

In this student's experience, she reported that she and her friends could easily establish rapport with other students in the classroom, regardless of background. However, from her perspective as an immigrant, there was always a sense of social distance between different ethnicities. She explained:

*Even the White American students, they are super nice, they are so kind and nice to all of us, but they never be [our] friends...they are the nicest people but they don't get along with us so well. They focus too much on their own life and we, we are more comfortable with people of the same country.*

On the other hand, one of the Pacific Islander students who was born in the United States, noted that the institution needed to be more proactive about promoting the importance of student interaction. He said:

*The hard part is ... that some cultures or backgrounds, it's just not feasible or it's just not something that's normally advocated. But I think the school should definitely find a way to put more emphasis on more student interaction.*

In some instances, students have encountered faculty who structured their courses to actively promote student interaction and friendships. As another Vietnamese student explained:

*I'm taking an intercultural communication class...and he is always putting you in groups. He wants you to mingle around and get to know everybody and exchange numbers on the first day...so I think it is very important to have friends on campus and classmate friends...*

Even when faculty used these strategies, they were not always perceived to be successful. This Vietnamese student recounted her experience in a lab class:

*Last semester I was taking a biology class and the majority of students were Vietnamese and Mexican, but there were three very blond, blue-eyed White people and they were extremely nice and funny to talk to, but the problem was*
that when it came to hanging out or doing projects, they did not want to be with you.

Even after faculty randomly assigned students to work on group projects, this student noted that the three White students would yell across the room to stay connected with each other. Such experiences are also confirmed by faculty experiences. One faculty reflected:

*I think very few friendships are made across ethnic groups here. And it’s a shame because you could put them in small groups and partner them up and they enjoy each other during the semester and maybe they do activities together, but I don’t think it goes beyond the classroom ever.*

An exception to this dynamic appears to be in the cohort programs (such as nursing), where patterns of friendships often developed across ethnic boundaries. One counselor explained:

*They’re a real exception because they have so much time together...they come back [to see me] with different people...I think it’s because of the time and a clinical experience. When you are only a few students...and they always divide them up so that they get to know each other.*

As this message of intercultural interaction and student friendships does not seem to be consistently promoted across campus, students sensed that it may not be valued or prioritized by the College. Consequently, responsibility for this type of student engagement relies on the student’s perception of its importance and value to their educational experience. This Pacific Islander student recounted:

*I think it’s very important. I’ve not only seen studies but I’ve seen it myself where the more involved somebody is, it’s greatly improved not only their grades but attendance and their overall experience. I think it’s almost something that should be advocated more. That’s one thing I was thinking about earlier when we were talking about counselors. In all of the counselors I’ve dealt with, I’ve never once heard anything about trying to get more involved with the school itself.*

Part of a more active approach that may be taken by the College could involve increasing opportunities for involvement among those non-traditionally aged students and/or those with significant family and work responsibilities, regardless of student ethnicity. For example, pedagogical approaches that utilize discussion or group projects may be one strategy that may be more appropriate for this population group. As one Vietnamese student explained:

*Being older, [conversations in class] actually make a big difference. It’s like you have so much responsibilities and sometimes you get tired. It’s like I’m at school for four classes, I think I’m just going to home now.*
Additional efforts that would acknowledge unique AAPI student issues could unpack various cultural stereotypes and assumptions. Several students recounted experiences where other students (not their friends) would openly make references about AAPI characteristics, similar to those related to the model minority myth. One of the Vietnamese students shared one of her experiences as an example:

*I actually had some instances where I was new to a class and let’s say the table I’m sitting at was empty and then people start sitting down next to me and I actually hear friends talking among each other, saying, “Oh, the Asian looks pretty smart, let’s sit next to her for the rest of the semester,” and I was like, “I can hear you, you know?”*

**Model Minority Myth**

When students were asked directly about whether they felt the model minority myth affected their educational experiences, no student recognized this term, but immediately understood the concept once it was defined. As indicated by some of the narratives from earlier in this report, some students recounted instances where non-Asians made assumptions about the academic ability among AAPIs (e.g., AAPIs should excel in math and science) or regarding their educational goals (e.g., Filipinos and nursing), most did not feel they were negatively affected by this paradigm. As one Filipino male student noted:

*One of my professors when he was going through my resume said, “If you can speak another language, put that down as a skill because that’s key for hiring sometimes,” and I guess I never paid much attention until then that knowing another language or being familiar with another culture was that important because in my heart I’m American.*

Even though some students felt they had not been personally affected by this stereotype, they all recognized its existence and influence on the AAPI population. While the Pacific Islander students felt this term didn’t directly apply to them because as one student said, “If you ask another ethnicity what do they think of Samoans, they’re like, oh, they just jam on the uke...they think of us as big giants, kind giants,” they acknowledged there are perceptions about AAPIs that continue to affect other people’s perceptions and their interactions with this population group. The larger question continues to be how to form better connections between AAPI students and others. Another Pacific Islander student expanded on this concept:

*There’s a big gap...there’s no bridge to connect our culture with what goes on in modern society and schools...if you look at it from the instructors’ point if*

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1 The model minority myth is a stereotype that suggests that AAPIs are more successful than other racial minority groups due to their supposedly unique cultural values emphasizing hard work, strong family values and/or belief in the American meritocracy.
view, they don’t understand the student and like who’s going to be there to bridge that gap?

Consequently, many of these AAPI students recognized the need for diversity and the importance of being part of a campus with many different groups represented. One Filipino student reflected:

[The AAPI student population] doesn’t factor into whether I should go to this college, whether there’s more Filipinos or not, I don’t take that into account...but that’s what I liked from Mission College, it’s very diverse, so that the main thing I like about it.

These students viewed increased representation as an opportunity to engage with others not like themselves as well as being able to have a broader representation of AAPIs. At the same time, institutions can provide additional scaffolding to promote student integration and success, to help support those AAPI students who are caught between the pressures to do well in school from their families and finding themselves struggling in areas where the expectation would be for AAPI students to perform well. One Pacific Islander student explained how this dynamic could occur among the Polynesian population:

If you think back to your culture, like my culture, we’re very family oriented. They want us to go to school and get an A, but what I’ve noticed in my parents and my aunts and uncles; they don’t know what it takes to get there. They just kind of say, get there. They’re not there in the midst of us struggling. They see it when we get the grade...but then it’s too late. At the same time, because they’re not honest about when we’re in the middle of struggling, we kind of just fall off into it. I think that’s why you don’t really see too many Polynesians in schools or whatever. I think if you go down to the source of it, it could be within our culture that you don’t see many of us in here. We make up like one of the smallest populations in school...it’s a sad statistic, but it’s something I would want to change.

The faculty and counselors were more readily able to discuss the impact they perceived the model minority myth have on the AAPI student population. Much of this discussion centered on how this stereotype could have negative effects on AAPI student success, leading to self-doubt and lowered course success when these students do not excel or have interest in topics and disciplines that are perceived to be dominated by AAPIs. One faculty noted:

Students talk to me where they would say that there’s a lot of peer pressure and they were supposed to do well in math...but not all of them are. And they just don’t know what to do. So it’s actually an issue for them. I don’t know what to do. I don’t know how to help them.
This faculty’s experience and discomfort with how to help these AAPI students suggest a lack of institutional support and resources in this area, making it challenging for faculty and counselors to reach out and proactively address these issues. Consequently, faculty and counselors acknowledge that AAPI students struggling with the tension between societal expectations and their own expectations may not even seek assistance. As one counselor said, “They don’t always come to us.” Another faculty surmised, “They’re afraid. They’re so shy, but they do talk to me quite often maybe because English is not my first language either.” In the case of the second faculty member, a common immigration experience may have led some AAPI students to feel that she was more approachable and could relate to their academic and personal challenges.

While students acknowledge that it was more important to have faculty who operated with an “ethic of caring,” and were open to learning about and forming genuine connections with their students regardless of ethnicity, there was value to having faculty, counselors and staff who are reflective of the student population. One Pacific Islander student commented on how having an increased number of AAPI faculty was more than just symbolic:

> What I learned from [my diversity in business course] is that Mission College is not that diverse in faculty...what I mean by that is we do not have any Pacific Islander faculty members...I think a small step would be to find somebody of like mind and like culture...just a small step in having one person, but you’re starting that bridge.

**Student Responsibility**

Ultimately, students acknowledge their role and responsibility to be engaged with the learning process. Students discuss how they developed their own strategies to form relationships with faculty and staff. One Pacific Islander student described this process:

> Typically the way I’d start the relationship would be an email at first about a simple questions. And then from there it would progress, email, and then if I needed more help for instance in a math class, then I’d go on to office hours and certain things like that.

A Vietnamese student reported on the positive feedback he received from faculty each time he made an effort to engage with them:

> I’ve been here for like two semesters, I don’t mind interacting with the instructors, going up to the instructor asking him questions...and a lot of my instructors actually respond to that.

However, some students believed faculty could play a more proactive role with engaging students, helping draw out those who may be shy and less comfortable
taking the initiative. As another Pacific Islander student reflected on her own experiences, she noted that it seemed faculty responded more to those students who approached faculty first:

Me, as a person, have grown as someone who was quiet to someone who came out of the shell and started talking more. When I was quiet, I didn’t take any initiative. Neither did the instructor. And what I’ve noticed is usually it’s the student that takes the initiative to go talk to the teacher…but I think them engaging the student is something that I would want to see more.

When asked how important it was to have students connect with faculty or staff from similar ethnic backgrounds, she reflected:

So I don’t really think [faculty or staff’s] background matters, but as long as they make that connection and kind of get the attention of us [Pacific Islanders], it could really open a door for more of us to get motivated and get into school and do what we have to do to get a higher education...our culture, it’s very straightforward. To make a connection with a teacher especially, I think it really does depend on the instructor to make that step.

In addition to engaging their instructors, students focused on the importance of conducting their own research as it relates to instructor quality and course planning. Interestingly, other than asking their classmates and peers for recommendations, all four student focus groups cited ratemyprofessors.com as a primary resource. One Chinese student explained how she uses this website,

Before I take any class I will go see the reviews on the teacher and it will say like the hardness and they’ll rate and how nice they are...yeah, it’s kind of a like a Yelp for teachers.

One of the Pacific Islander students explained why he relies on this resource:

The first couple of semesters taken here, I wasn’t doing too well...and then I heard of ratemyprofessors...I started out in looking up different types of professors teaching a certain type of class...I’d go to ratemyprofessors.com and I’d find who has the best ratings. From there I’ve noticed a huge jump in not only my grade point average, but my understanding in the courses... because [what was] important was not how easy the class was, but how personable they [the instructors] were with students.

While he attributes his academic success to this website, it is important to note that these reviews are subjective and not set to any rigorous teaching standards. Certainly, this student’s adjustment and increasing familiarity with Mission College, its courses and instructors could have also attributed to his increasing academic success. Still, online resources such as ratemyprofessors.com continue to play a key role in how students navigate their academic experiences and Mission College will
have to be aware of how such sites may direct students' course planning and selection.

Some students realized they had to process the information they receive and make the determination of what would be best for them. This cognitive development demonstrates a shift from relying solely on an authority figure's perspective to making a personal judgment based on the available information. This Pacific Islander student reflected:

*I went to a counselor and they helped me with my ed plan...but in my head I wondered would another counselor say anything different. So I went to another one and they were just as good. I compared the two [ed plans] and I'm like it's different, but then they're both good. But then I had to do research on my own to see who was right...I didn't mention it to either of them that I saw another counselor...I learned that you can't always rely on just what the counselor says.*

In all of the focus groups, the AAPI students demonstrated their resilience and commitment to attaining their educational goals. These two students, one Filipino, the other Vietnamese, summarized these perspectives—the first focusing on students’ own initiative, the second on Mission College’s role in this process:

*I'm okay with whatever is thrown at me. I'm just going to take it and I'm going to make it worthwhile. Like I don't care if my teacher is mean or whatever, if I'm going to pay you for something, I'm going to get the information I want, I'm not going to waste my time...just the hope that I'm going to get the education I deserve.*

*I feel like they're helping me succeed, they're pushing me forward, they're always giving you that extra help if you need it...so it's like they're helping to the point until you don't need the help. They're not leaving you out in the dark or anything.*

**Institutional Support**

The faculty and counselors acknowledged there are limited coordinated campus efforts to increase awareness about AAPI student needs or to address issues that could limit or hinder the success rates among this population group. As one faculty noted, “I think there’s conversations going on, but nothing formal and nothing like trying to get a program or a solution.”

Some of the instructional faculty and counselors surmised that the lack of institutional initiative was influenced by the significant presence of AAPI students on campus, as they have consistently enrolled in high numbers over time. One faculty explained:
I think there is this blindness to the AAPI students. They're here in great numbers, but it's always been, well, they're here. We've got so many of them. At first it was they're doing fine...and there's never been special programs for them, the focus has never been on them. Even if you mentioned AANAPISI, it was like well, we got so many of those students. What do we need to do now?

Additionally, this faculty member cited a possible historical context to the current perceived culture of inactivity and resistance regarding AAPI student initiatives:

Historically we had a few people on campus who really fought to keep ethnic studies off campus and that kind of set the tone. Then there was this big push about this campus is too ESL. I interpret that as too many Asians on campus...So my take is that it's been hostile on campus for Asians. If you've noticed, we don't have that many Asian faculty on campus, and they're very rarely in a leadership position.

One of the counselors also theorized that a lack of consistent leadership at the senior staff level might have also contributed to the current dynamic and approach toward the AAPI student population. She reflected:

People come and they build their resume...and whatever their particular bend is at that time is what we're doing. So then they have you running around doing whatever it is that they want. Now they've gone in two or three years because they built their resume and gone on someplace else. That's just continual and I've been here a very long time and it just never stopped.

However, it was apparent to these faculty and counselors that there is an existing need to recognize and understand AAPI student issues in order to better facilitate increased student success. One faculty member said, “We never thought that they need some help or we have to do something for them... now it's a bigger, different population.” Another commented:

I've definitely seen a change in the students we're serving. I know a lot of it is simply that we first got the “boat people” coming in and they're highly motivated, came in with a history of education. And now the ones we're getting come with a very bad history of education, very bad training, very poor study skills, not quite as motivated. Their communities have grown and they're comfortable just staying in their communities. So there's no incentive to really learning well and get out....there’s a lot of resentment among the teachers because they haven’t made the transition to deal with this new student that we’re getting.

One suggestion from faculty included having Mission College formally support opportunities for increased dialogue among faculty and staff, “Just having the faculty have more professional development of understanding different cultures...” Another noted the value of promoting a more immersive experience:
I've done it with faculty to get them out into the community too, and talk about a group that’s afraid to go into ethnic communities. And the fact that so many of them haven’t a clue of where their students come from...that’s where we need to start. That’s one of the things we need to really push.

This discussion among the faculty and counselors represents their belief that Mission College needs to be more responsive to AAPI student needs and concerns, and that these efforts would change over time as the student population evolves. Otherwise, it would be difficult to conclude that the campus had adopted institutionalized efforts aimed at promoting AAPI student success.

**Summary**

Overall, AAPI students report positive experiences at Mission College and almost all the focus group participants would recommend the College to others. While there were some nuanced differences among the different AAPI ethnicities, the focus is on the critical role faculty, counselors, staff and other students have in engaging AAPIs and creating a sense of community and belonging for this population group. Forging these connections, whether on an academic, service or personal level, were cited as key motivators for students to accomplish their educational goals. The challenge will be establishing more systematic efforts, based on increased awareness about the AAPI communities, and developing more formalized practices that will be consistently encouraged and applied both in the instructional and student services settings. Given Mission College’s large diverse AAPI student population, it may be worthwhile to conduct additional studies focusing on the subgroups, such as the perspectives and needs by generational status, gender, immigration history, family college-going history, income level, academic major and ESL vs. native English speaker.
Appendix 1: Student Focus Group Themes and Questions

College Perceptions
- Defining student success
  - Why did you choose to attend Mission College?
- Identifying if there are issues or challenges that may affect ability to achieve educational goals
  - Describe a challenge, whether academic or social, that you've encountered as a student at Mission. What did you do?

College Experiences
- Engagement inside the classroom (e.g., instructors)
  - Describe the type of interactions you have had with your instructors at Mission.
  - Does being AAPI affect your classroom experiences differently compared to your non-AAPI classmates? Why or why not?
- Engagement outside the classroom (e.g., student support services [counseling, admissions/records/financial aid, overall customer service], instructional/library/learning services, extracurricular activities)
  - Have you used any support services at Mission College (e.g., study skills course, financial aid, counseling)?
  - How would you describe your experiences with the process? With the staff?
- Engagement with peers
  - Do you have any friends at Mission College? Do you think it is hard to make friends at Mission?
  - Explain whether you do anything/participate in any activities at Mission College outside of taking classes.

Institutional Climate
- How institution currently promotes/supports student success
  - Explain whether you feel all students have similar academic experiences at Mission?
  - Does having a different ethnic or racial background, such as being AAPI, make a difference?
- Possible efforts and actions to promote/support student success (suggestions)
  - Discuss whether Mission College should do anything differently to support their AAPI students and in helping them make progress toward their educational goals.

To add:
- Have you heard of the Model Minority Myth? What is it?
  If not, this is a stereotype that is often applied to AAPIs, based on the assumption that this population group has achieved a higher level of success, such as grades earned, educational attainment, income, etc., compared to other groups.
- Do you think this stereotype affects your experiences as a student at this college?
Appendix 2: Faculty/Counselor Focus Group Themes and Questions

**Defining Student Success**
- Identify needs and issues that may face AAPI student populations
  - What percentage of your courses or counseling sessions is composed of AAPI students?
  - Has this changed over the years? If so, what kind of impact has it had (how has your teaching or counseling changed)?
  - Do you think that this population faces any challenges or issues unique to this group (when compared with students from other backgrounds)? If so, provide an example.
- Potential impact on pedagogy and curriculum
  - Describe whether you feel the presence of AAPI students in your classroom affects the approach you take to teach and convey information. Should it?

**Faculty-Student Interaction**
- Strategies to engage and connect with AAPI students
  - How do you try to engage students (with all students, with specific student populations)? What strategies to you use?

**Institutional Climate**
- Whether institution currently promotes/supports AAPI student success
  - Describe whether you feel supported by Mission College in your efforts to increase AAPI student success.
- Possible efforts and actions to promote/support increased AAPI student success (suggestions)
  - Any suggestions on how Mission College can continue to promote student success among all students, but specifically AAPI students?
Appendix 3: Student Questionnaire

Mission College
Student Focus Group Questionnaire

1. Gender:

2. Ethnicity:

3. Year of birth:

4. High school graduation year:

5. Were your parents born in the U.S.? Yes/No

6. Did you immigrate to the U.S.? Yes/No
   If yes, at what age?

7. Do you speak a language other than English at home? Yes/No
   If yes, what language?

8. Are you the first person in your family to attend college? Yes/No

9. What is your primary educational goal (circle one):
   Transfer w/AA or AS degree
   Transfer w/o AA or AS degree
   Earn AA or AS degree
   Earn vocational degree/certificate
   Gain job skills
   Improve basic skills
   Undecided/Unknown
   Other (explain):

10. When was the first time you took a class at Mission College (year):

11. How many semesters have you attended Mission College:

12. Have you attended other colleges other than Mission College: Yes/No

13. Are you a full-time or part-time student at Mission College? Full-time/Part-time

14. What is your major or what do you think your major will be:

15. Would you recommend Mission College to others? Yes/No
16. Describe an issue or circumstance that would likely affect your ability to achieve your educational goal at Mission.

17. Please indicate how often you've had the following experiences while as a student at Mission College. (Check one box for each question)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often have you asked a question or contributed to classroom discussion?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often have you attended office hours or stayed after class to ask a question?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often have you used any support services at Mission College (e.g., study skills course, financial aid, library, counseling)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often have you attended a counseling/study skills course while attending this college?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How often do you participate in extracurricular activities at Mission College (e.g., student clubs)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How often have you had a serious conversation with a fellow student who was of a different ethnicity or race from you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much does Mission encourage contact/interaction among students from different backgrounds?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. Please indicate your satisfaction with the following experiences while as a student at Mission College. (*Check one box for each question*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate your overall experiences with faculty at Mission College.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rate the quality of course instruction at Mission College.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate your overall experiences with the Mission College staff.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate the quality of the student support services at this college.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate your overall experience at Mission College.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. What do you like about Mission College (especially as it relates to helping you achieve your educational goals)?

20. What would you change about Mission College (especially as it relates to helping you achieve your educational goals)?
Appendix 4: Faculty Questionnaire

Mission College
Faculty Focus Group Questionnaire

1. Gender:

2. Ethnicity:

3. Years at Mission:

4. Discipline:

5. Have you worked at another college other than Mission? Yes/No
   If yes, for how many years?
   If yes, what type of institution(s)? Two-year/Four-year/Both

6. Did you immigrate to the U.S.? Yes/No
   If yes, at what age?

7. Do you speak a language other than English at home? Yes/No
   If yes, what language?

8. Are you the first person in your family to attend college? Yes/No

9. Have you worked with students at Mission who have basic skills needs (either as a counselor or in your classes)? Yes/No

10. Have you worked with students at Mission who are learning English as a second language (either as a counselor or in your classes)? Yes/No

11. Are you familiar with Mission College’s AANAPISI grant? Yes/No/Not Sure