2015 Annual Performance Report

Title III - Part F - Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving Institutions

Project Director Aida Cuenza-Uvas
Reporting Period: 10/1/14 to 9/30/15
Award years: 2011 to 2016

Executive Summary

The purpose of the legislation that established the Title III-A and III-F is to "improve the academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability of eligible institutions, in order to increase their self-sufficiency and strengthen their capacity to make a substantial contribution to the higher education resources of the Nation."

A. This section summarizes how the grant enabled the institution to fulfill the legislative intent of the Title III - Part F program.

1. The impact of the Title III - Part F grant on the institution's capacity to contribute to fulfilling the goals of the legislation.

   In review of year 4 of our Title III-F AANAPISI grant, we are encouraged by the progress we have been making which is intended to fulfill the goals of this legislation in targeting the needs of underrepresented Asian American and Pacific Islander students as well as other low-income students. We continue to sustain services that support students in the areas of instructional support, counseling intervention, student development, professional development, and research and evaluation.

   Impact on Students (Instruction, Counseling Intervention, and Student Development)

   The services that directly impact students include educational advisement, counseling, and student development activities.   As the number of students participating in our program increases, we continue to assist students with an educational plan; currently, 85% of our students now have an online-accessible educational plan.   Project counselors have also led several workshops and trainings for students to further develop their career awareness and build their academic self-esteem through heightened self-awareness.

   To address a gap in basic skills progression we developed, in partnership with our Math Department and Assessment Center, a Math Boot Camp initiative.   In Summer 2015, students participated in this second pilot to refresh their math skills by using an online test preparation tool (ALEKs).   They had support from faculty and peer advisors; as a result, some of the students were able to improve their placement test outcomes.

   As an outcome of our math boot camp, study hall sessions were set up going into year 5.   Math tutoring is held two nights a week.   There are times when the room is at full capacity, and students have had to work in the hallway and in an adjacent meeting room.   Students who never participated in tutoring before are finding strength in studying with students like them and are now able to easily seek assistance when needed – "no shame to ask." This effort will be discussed further in our year 5 APR.

   One of the initiatives we began in year 2, the Fale Fono (Samoan for Community Meeting House), continues to be a cornerstone of the program.   It acts as a safe space for Pacific Islander (and other

participating students) to interact with each other and discuss their academic experiences and challenges.   The discussions often intersect with reflections on cultural references and self-awareness. Students get exposure to community guest speakers and specialized workshops.   Held every two weeks, approximately 20-30 students attend each session.   Toward the end of this budget cycle, the staff discussed adding video reflections in order to capture students' views about their academic and personal development; highlights will be included in next year's report.

Our Summer Leadership retreat has offered students a space to develop leadership skills, participate in team building activities, and reflect on their leadership capabilities.   Students who participated have emerged as student leaders, peer mentors and more fully engaged students.   The culminating activity involves self-reflections shared with the group; it is a pivotal moment for some as they reflect on their histories and experiences, fears and challenges, as well as hopes for their future.   Thirty-two students participated in this 3-day event.   Eighty-eight percent of the students said that as a result of participating in the communication workshop, they felt more confident as a communicator.   One student shared, "I feel I can be a more active listener."   When asked about how the retreat has or can improve their leadership skills, one student shared, "It was unexpected to realize that I have the potential to become a leader someday. I didn't really believe in the idea until I attended the retreat . . . I realized that I can actually become a leader if I know how to attain those qualities."

The AANAPISI grant provided an opportunity for a unique collaboration with two other AANAPISI institutions, University of Massachusetts Boston and Mission College, to engage students in a multi-phase project over the 2014-2015 academic year in order to develop stories that reflect the lives, experiences and challenges of Asian American and Pacific Islander students.   Eight of our Arise Program Students (AANAPISI grant) created and showcased their stories at UMass Boston; each of their stories depict themes of family separation, cultural identity, immigration experiences, individual struggles, and family struggles; they also represent the hopes and aspirations of each.   One storyteller shared, ". . . finding a way to explain aspects of my culture repeatedly surfaces. I have a desire to help others understand the 'why' and not just the 'what' about their cultural orientations . . . I hope that it will enable others who do not know about my history to broaden their understanding of my culture." These stories have been shared during faculty professional development activities, to the campus community, and as part of higher education circles (conferences, senior administrative meetings).

Finally, students who are considered Non-native English Speakers (NNES) continue to have access to English language development support outside of the classroom through a variety of established workshops that focus on grammar (e.g., articles, parts of speech, gerunds and infinitives), boot camps that address verb usage and writing, and conversation circles where participants engage in practicing their speaking skills with students whose primary language is English.   The college is supporting the sustainability of the NNES activities that have been developed initially through the support of the AANAPISI grant. Regular workshop scheduling has been integrated into the campus resources (Writing Center and American Language Department) and staff have been committed to facilitate these offerings.   The tutorial specialist also continues to provide professional development workshops to faculty on working with the NNES population in the classroom.   Students' self-evaluation of their English skills after participating in each of our NNES grant activities shows overall improvement. Data highlights will be shared in the Research and Evaluation section of this report.

Professional Development

Staff participated in various annual conferences to inform their area of competency needs (university transfer information, research, Asian American and Pacific Islander issues).

In addition to participating in professional development, the AANAPISI project staff conducted presentations at several national conferences and meetings: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA 2015- "Student Success: Building 'Bridges' of Trust for Latino and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Students in Community Colleges") and Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE 2015 Plenary, "Student Stories, AANAPISI Power, and Pedagogies of Wholeness").

To address the project goal of enhancing faculty and staff awareness of AAPI students' needs, professional development workshops for faculty were conducted on campus that focused on working with non-native English speaking (NNES) students, understanding the cultural dynamics of AAPI students, developing instructional interventions to increase the success of AAPI students. Participating faculty gained insights to ways in which they would engage in practices to improve their support of students.

Research and Evaluation

A foundation of the project is an ongoing research and evaluation model that not only tracks data about students, but measures the developmental growth of student participants as well. Our researcher collects and provides data to report outcomes for the various activities on an on-going basis. In addition to providing data outcomes, our researcher oversees and guides our data collection methods, using both quantitative and qualitative research to measure our objectives and goals. Qualitative data has enabled project staff to continuously improve the project based on insights gleaned about student participants.

How has the grant helped to carry out the mission of the institution?

The mission of Mt. San Antonio College is to support all students in achieving their full educational potential in an environment of academic excellence. The grant has helped to carry out this mission by enhancing the academic and personal success of under-represented and under-served AAPI students. By engaging in collaborative efforts with other student services and instructional units, the project has enabled the creation of new, positive, and innovative interventions designed to increase the academic success of students, especially in English language acquisition and math. Our grant provides resources to implement pilot efforts that are aimed at addressing the needs of underrepresented students who are disproportionately impacted in their academic and engagement experiences; these resources have included basic skills preparation, student development, and campus engagement interventions. Another institutional goal is to equip students with the necessary tools to complete academic goals. The grant supports these endeavors directly through the educational advisement and counseling efforts, which emphasizes the mandatory development of educational plans for each student. Also recognizing students' remedial education needs, particularly in math, the grant enabled the Arise Program to coordinate the math boot camp held the past two summers to assist participating students with their preparation for the assessment test. The college is investigating institutionalizing and expanding these math efforts.

B. The following information documents the institution's experience with the grant as reported during the current reporting period.

If your institution has experienced any unexpected outcomes as a result of this grant, that affect for better or worse its capacity to fulfill the goals of the legislation, tell us about them here.

In last year's APR, we noted that a challenge was meeting enrollment requirements for English and math courses, so we shifted our focus in a couple of ways. One of the ways in which we addressed this was to redirect our students to existing pathways for basic skills courses, such as the learning communities offered through the Bridge Program. Not only did we discover that students were not completing math courses, they were delaying enrollment and not taking the necessary placement exam. In order to address these math related issues, we offered a second pilot of the boot camp, with an improved structure and an increase in student participation. Ninety-six percent of the students persisted through the four-week boot camp, which offered 32 hours of lab access (8 hours/week). Students spent an average of 13 hours using the online tool, with 57% of the 67 students completing at least 13 hours, including one who clocked in a total of 43 hours. The boot camp is a promising new practice which addresses math confidence issues, math placement, and will hopefully develop a practice of enrollment into math courses early in a student's academic career. We are hopeful this strategy will reduce the number of courses needed to complete our students' math pathway, which saves them time and money. Its collaborative nature creates access to math courses and faculty support via the math department, test administration through the Assessment Center (a key student services department), and the Arise Program who engages in the logistics and identification of students who would benefit from this activity. The outcomes of these efforts are highlighted within this report and are available in our annual campus data report.

One of the unique coast-to-coast collaboration that we took part in during this cycle was a Digital Stories (DS) Project, which included two AANAPISI institutions (University of Massachusetts Boston and Mission College). This project led to the creation of eight of our students' stories, which depicted the diversity of our Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students. This project provided a voice for these students to courageously share how their lives impact their educational experiences or motivate their educational aspirations. It became a platform for engaging in professional development, cultural awareness, understanding, and sensitivity for the campus communities and the public who participated in the Summit at UMass Boston in June 2015. The stories were also integrated into our campus' Faculty Flex Day (professional development) as a workshop session in August 2015, wherein four of the stories were shared and faculty had an opportunity to engage with the students whose work was showcased. Part of the legislation is to help our higher education professionals understand the history and background of our AAPI students. Rather than telling their story for them, this project enables students to develop their own voices, to tell their own stories, that serve to educate the entire campus community. It is a provocative medium that helps the campus community understand the challenges our students may face and how it may impact their decisions while on campus, which in turn affects their success and engagement.

How would you improve or change the Program (e.g., customer service, allowable activities, regulations, statute)?

Continue to advocate for appropriate legislation that enables institutions that are both Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) and AANAPISIs to utilize both Title V and Title III resources. Each of these populations have diverse and specific needs that require unique solutions. It is unfortunate that some campuses are forced to choose between one student population over another. This creates a mutually exclusive limitation which presents an equity and inclusion (or exclusion) dilemma. The AANAPISI grant has enabled institutions to explore the unique needs of a heterogeneous Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) student community; the nature of the work calls for specific interventions to target the needs of the diverse population within the AAPI community. As more

AANAPISI-eligible institutions apply for designation and compete for awards, an increase in funding is necessary, which does not exclude others, in order to adequately fund institutions with demonstrated need.

Another recommendation concerns the APR reporting format. The report form can benefit from improvement that enables programs to better connect their outcomes data to the activities proposed in their grant.   Section 3 is primarily where quantitative data is shared; the context of that data; however, may be necessary to better understand its relevance or importance.   This might be resolved by enabling a feature that allows the attachment of report documents.

Additional Information

Provide any other appropriate information about the status of your project including any unanticipated outcomes or benefits from your project in the space below;

The promising work we have been able to do through the grant has inspired the college to support our pilot programs as well as challenge the campus to expand college-wide efforts.   The college has institutionalized the tutorial specialist to continue working with Non-native English Speakers (NNES) and faculty by facilitating student workshops and professional development.   Another unexpected benefit of the project has been the "Fale Fono".   Through this effort, a safe space is created where our Pacific Islanders develop their voice, lean on a familiar community to increase their aspirations and accountability, and connect students to the campus and its resources.   The College is currently under construction to have an Equity Center built that will house the program.

Additionally, the grant staff are learning that our students arrive to our campus, each semester, with different developmental needs and with varying degrees of readiness.   This grant has enabled us to listen to our AAPI students, observe them as they engage or struggle to engage, and help the institution to consider how we, too, must also adapt in our engagement with students.   We are confronted with questions on how me may need to rethink how we help them access resources (for which some may be apprehensive), commit to their academic endeavors (for which some require persistent coaching), or how we create a welcoming environment (for which some may hold negative self-perceptions about their sense of belonging).   We still have much work to be done in the areas of basic skills progression, academic responsibility, goal direction and student development.   Despite these challenges, the greatest benefit we have experienced thus far is the reward of students' willingness to share their insights, participate in the grant activities, and call the Arise Program, funded by the grant, their "home" on campus.   Program students are making an impact across the campus and have led to a cultural shift in help-seeking behaviors in similar students.   This is an institutional phenomenon that will continue to grow as more and more students are encouraged to seek out and use instructional and counseling support services to enable them to reach academic success. The work of the grant project has been a stimulus for other initiatives on campus, like the new Minority Male Initiative.