

Asian American Pacific Islander Faculty Community Networking Group Report July 1, 2019

Introduction

In the Fall of 2018, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Professor Herbert Lee, made a call for individuals to lead group gatherings and discussions in the newly formed UCSC Faculty Community Networking Program. The goal was “to identify meaningful strategies or initiatives the institution should consider to increase individual or collective faculty well-being and success and to improve faculty retention for members of underrepresented groups. Groups will provide the CP/EVC with a white paper at the end of the year summarizing their insights.” This document is the Report from the Asian American Pacific Islander Faculty Group. It is accompanied by the Conveners’ Joint Statement.

The participation in the Asian American Pacific Islander Faculty Community Networking Group has been strong. Attendance ranged from a dozen to twenty people at the monthly meetings, with additional faculty members keeping in correspondence; the email invitation list includes approximately 85 names and counting, and spans across all academic divisions. Ladder-rank professors (ranging from recent appointments to decades-long campus members) as well as lecturers have joined the discussions, and our last meeting of the year was enriched by the presence of AAPI staff members who are committed to the welfare of Asian American students, staff, and faculty at UC Santa Cruz.

Among the ideas generated and exchanged, we highlight one key concern: it is crucial that there be a direct line of communication between Asian American Pacific Islander faculty and the Administration. Formal recognition and support on the part of the University of underrepresented faculty groups will enable specific changes to be addressed and initiatives to be enacted.

Background and Historical Context

In the 1990s, there was an Asian American coalition comprising faculty and staff members at UC Santa Cruz. Gatherings were informal but effective in community-building, specifically with regard to exchanging ideas and solidifying shared experiences as minority members of the larger campus. The composition shifted and eventually faded, as long-standing faculty and staff retired and new people came to campus without a way to connect with them or with each other. A contextual/political shift also occurred with the disfavoring of race-based attentiveness and the dismantling of affirmative action programs. UCSC’s Faculty Community Networking Program is a welcome (re)start.

Building Community

While the number of AAPI faculty, and students, has grown significantly on this campus in the last two decades, the university has yet to harness the power of their presence or to foster avenues of communication that would enable AAPI issues to be articulated and addressed. By

contrast, other UC campuses have AAPI coalitions. Several are faculty-staff-student associations, and a couple – at UC Berkeley and UC Davis – belong to an umbrella organization, Asian Pacific American Systemwide Alliance (APASA); the focus of APASA is professional development, advocacy, and inclusivity.

The social interactions among minority faculty draw out evaluation and analysis of both ephemeral cultural orientations and structural imperfections – such as under-compensation for labor or diversity-service – that affect Asian American and Pacific Islanders in terms of their professional welfare and advancement. Historical concerns remain: about representation and having a voice – an influence – in decision-making, and about cultivating productive, equitable work environments.

On this campus, there are AAPI faculty working in a myriad of disciplines and departments, some focus on Asian American studies, Asian area studies, or Critical Asian studies but many do not. There accordingly are differing frames for identifying as an Asian American Pacific Islander member of the UCSC community.

What remains consistent is the interest in knowing about other Asian American faculty, the need to be treated with collegial regard, the necessity to have not only representation in decision-making bodies but to be in leadership roles, and the wish to build community with students and staff and to bridge to other communities as well.

Issues and Concerns

Following are the issues and ideas that have been generated through the AAPI FCN discussions this year, collated by thematic concern.

Retention and Recruitment

UCSC has lost faculty and staff who represent “diversity” hires and is at risk of having more personnel leave. The challenge is wide, as well as AAPI-specific.

- Housing is limited
- Childcare for faculty and staff was cut in 2009; eldercare is another obligation
- Need to design a recruitment plan/objective for Asian American/Pacific Islander faculty
- Need for coordinating efforts in connecting and recruiting graduate students (e.g., funding Chancellor’s Postdoctoral Fellowships, which are part of the hiring incentive program)
- Setting up mentoring relationships, for example, in relation to the personnel review process in which self-promotion is rewarded though it is not necessary instinctual or a cultural value for some Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders
- Advising for associate and assistant professors in terms of Senate Committee and other service
- Need for a hire in Critical Filipino studies
- Need for a hire in the area of Southeast Asian studies, specifically Vietnamese studies
- Need for a hire in the area of indigenous Pacific Island studies
- Need to replace Asian Americanists who have retired from UC Santa Cruz

Leadership – Training and Selection

There is a lack of diverse perspectives in the central leadership at UCSC, and the leadership at UCSC does not reflect the composition of its faculty body or its student body.

- Need more minority representation in central leadership
- Develop ways to have more AAPI political/administrative impact and influence
- Develop leadership training
- Provide more transparency and opportunities to participate in leadership recruitments such as the Chancellor's search, Dean searches, and interim appointments

Work Culture/Campus Climate

Protections and resources vis-à-vis race/minority status are not clear or readily known.

- Identify resources and avenues of recourse for experiences of racism, who can this be reported to? What kind of legal or security protections are there?
- Request for training in regard to racial interaction/s in the workplace
- Recognition of racial dynamics within departments; how to deal with "white fragility"?
- Recognition of the fear that immigrant or Asian international students feel in light of the xenophobia and accusations that are generated in a larger political/economic context
- Recognition and consideration of the extra labor that professors of color take on and perform – it is often “invisible” or conversely, presumed; either way, it is not fairly credited

Diversity Discourse

“Diversity” can be a muddy and misused term; there is a vague attachment to minority faculty that does not necessarily benefit them, yet when applied to a majority/white faculty member, it elevates their profile.

- For example, the Contributions to Diversity Statement as it is utilized in personnel reviews often ends up adding value to non-faculty of color for efforts deemed valiant while the work of faculty of color is taken for granted (not praised and evaluated in the same manner)
- The diversity paragraph in personnel self-statements does not adequately capture or enable a sufficient institutional response to the disproportionate labor burden when it comes to "diversity"-related service work. We must ask: to what degree is disproportionate service at least one contributing factor to patterns in compensation/pay when faculty of color are the lowest paid, for example, in the Arts?
- Diversity discourse does not attentively measure the contributions of a professor or lecturer of color; there is an additional standard of proof for minority faculty because of an already expected baseline
- There can be an added burden to increase legibility – and credibility – of research areas when race-related. Furthermore, the word, “diversity,” can trigger unconscious bias or disinterest.

Outreach Beyond the University

- AAPI faculty members are willing to build bridges to donors, and to grow relationships that already exist; we are particularly interested in collaborating with donors and the University in launching AAPI-connected initiatives

Community Development

- Engendering conversations with AAPI graduate students and undergraduates, and staff
- Bridging lecturers and tenure-rank faculty members

Continuation of this Group/Support for an Asian American Pacific Islander Coalition

- The idea of specific, underrepresented faculty groups needs to be longer-lasting and incorporate a way to establish clout/power for minority members of the University
- Dedicate time, space, and support for AAPI faculty organizing, to harness a critical mass among faculty-staff-students and to create ways to be heard
- Develop ways to turn some of the identified concerns into action items, perhaps by organizing into smaller work groups, sponsored by the Faculty Community Networking Program
- Commitment from the institution that this group will be continued and sustained; thinking about how to promote the visibility and influence of this group

Finally, because Asian American and Pacific Islander faculty and student numbers are increasing, and because of the misconception – stereotype – that Asian Americans are “model minorities” who do not require as much attention as others, AAPI faculty and students are not treated as underrepresented; in fact, we are. Not seeing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as a minority population in the context of academe is a kind of political silencing; a key goal of an AAPI coalition is to inform the University about the perspectives of Asian American Pacific Islanders on its campus, and to advocate for specific AAPI concerns to be ameliorated.

Some Potential Solutions and Suggested Initiatives

Here are six recommendations for UC Santa Cruz to consider in order to improve retention of Asian American Pacific Islander faculty and to support success in their academic careers.

Short-Term Goals

- 1) A commitment to continue this group through: sponsoring meetings, mixers, smaller working groups, an incentive for a leader/leaders to facilitate, and the creation and maintenance of a website.
- 2) A forum with the new Chancellor and other new or transitional campus leaders: to relay struggles and concerns of Asian American Pacific Islander faculty, staff, and students which will be formally registered by the Administration.

Medium-Term Goals

- 1) While more involved than the Short-Term initiatives this is nonetheless urgent: Retaining faculty of color/Asian American Pacific Islander faculty through dedicated discretionary funds for retention, i.e., for outside/counter offers, and by making possible a housing/rent subsidy.
- 2) Setting up a mentoring program among AAPI faculty (eventually expanding to graduate and undergraduate students): to advise about service, teaching load, and the review process; this would be a culturally-sensitive, and a unique kind of cross-mentoring to supplement other campus or department mentoring that may be available.

Long-Term Goals

1) Leadership Training and Placement: Develop an invitational pathway for AAPI faculty to advance to upper administrative/leadership roles. Also, while we have a Diversity Officer for Faculty and a Diversity Officer for Students and Staff, it seems that Santa Cruz is the only UC campus that does not have an Associate or Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; establishing someone in this position for our campus would help to mobilize efforts and to instigate and oversee improvements in recruitment, retention, and recognition of Asian American Pacific Islander faculty.

2) Designing a recruitment plan for faculty of color/Asian American Pacific Islander faculty: One strategy is to directly fund PFP/UC President's Postdoctoral Scholars at UCSC, as other campuses do, creating a hiring pipeline and engendering confidence in potential new colleagues that their work and presence would be valued and supported (through retention and mentoring programs) at Santa Cruz.

Plus

Data gathering and research, for example: consolidate exit surveys, examine declinations from candidates of color, re-analyze the campus wide diversity study from 2005, and develop additional studies and surveys pertaining to Asian American Pacific Islander faculty, staff, and student well-being.

Closing

The AAPI Faculty Group is important because we have perspectives and experiences to inform the University about; ideally, there can be joint efforts to improve equity and to enhance how AAPI faculty, staff, and students are recognized as having a contributing presence on campus. An immediate outcome would be for the Administration to open up and sustain a line of communication between Asian American faculty and the central leadership.

Thank you for the invitation to broach this possibility, through the Faculty Community Networking Program this year.

Sincerely, L.S.KIM
Associate Professor
Department of Film and Digital Media