

Community Action Project: CAPAL x AASAP at UIC

Khue Tran, Justin Wu, Olivia Tong, Austin Huang, JC Feraro

Chicago and AANHPI Community Needs

National census numbers indicate that Chicago city has a population of 2.6 million, about 7% of which are AANHPI citizens.¹ These numbers reflect an Asian population just slightly above the national average, but Asians are also the “fastest growing population ethnic group in Chicago”—witnessing a 31% increase from 2010 to 2020.² In 2010, Asian American Advancing Justice Chicago (AAAJC) reported that 32.8% of South Asian-Americans in Chicago were non-citizens, and demonstrated limited english proficiency (LEP) rates from 22-33%.³ All Asians, in 2010, were 33% LEP.⁴ This number is shockingly high in comparison to the 10% LEP reflected in Illinois’ aggregate population.⁵ While today’s Chicago may not reflect the same disparities in linguistic ability, previous research suggests that the immigrant origins of Asian Americans place them at a structural disadvantage to native english populations.

University of Illinois Chicago: Demographics and Resources

Located in the heart of Chicago, Illinois, University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) is home to 22,000 undergraduate students.⁶ As of 2018, 38% of UIC’s student body is first-generation, and 36% of freshmen report a first language other than English.⁷ 70% of UIC undergraduates receive financial aid, and 60% of them are also Pell grant eligible.⁸ UIC’s Asian American Resource and Cultural Center (AARCC) also claims that “as of Fall 2021, AAPIs make up 21% of undergraduates, 18% of the total student body, and 14% (Fall 2020) of faculty and staff at UIC.”⁹ In a survey of UIC Asian-American students in 2017, 37% of respondents identified as first generation, 28% indicated a household income of \$29,999 a year or less, and 48% stated that the primary language spoken by those who raised them is not English.¹⁰

Recognized as a diverse research-intensive university, UIC is a federally-designated Minority-Serving Institution (MSI); Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI); and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI)—with AANAPISI so far receiving four grants totaling 7.1 million dollars.¹¹

The UIC AANAPISI Initiative has made notable work in developing its Asian American Studies Program and Global Asian Department—receiving Part A (programs, policies) and Part F (administrative, logistics) grants at the federal level. Along with UIC’s Asian American Resource and Cultural Center (AARCC), the AANAPISI Initiative has made strides in developing UIC’s Asian American Mentor Program (AAMP)—a six week program that takes place in the summer to “help [AANHPI] students successfully transition to college life at UIC.”¹² AAMP’s Fall component pairs students with peer mentors in a 1-credit GLAS course, which focuses on “media stereotypes, college life, study tips,” and other topics “related to Asian American culture and Identity.”¹³ Other AANAPISI-funded projects include UIC’s Asian and

Asian American Health Disparities Project, research for disaggregation of campus student data, and development of the Queer Asian American Archive collection. Yet, UIC's acquisition of AANAPISI funding trades off institutional support—where less annual funding is portioned to the AARCC as a result of administrative complacency, believing that the AANAPISI grants are “enough”.

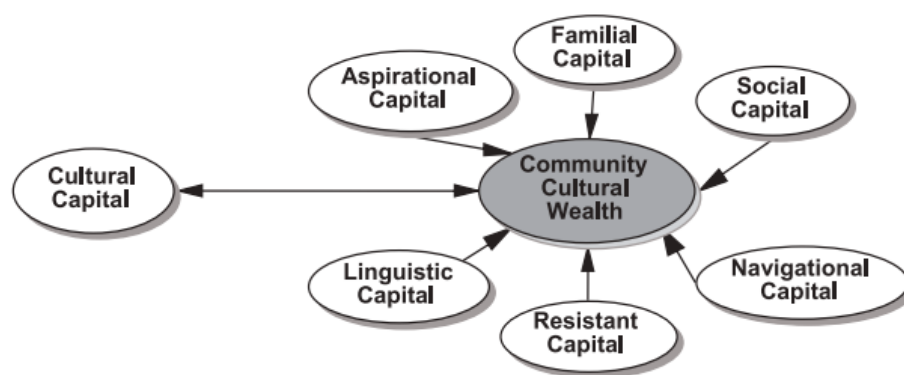
Notwithstanding administrative challenges, UIC's AARCC was first founded in 2005 as a result of grassroots AANHPI student activism at the university. It has since established the Asian American Mentor Program (AAMP), a peer mentorship initiative “designed to ease the transition of new [AANHPI] students to UIC during their first semester.”¹⁴ AAMP programming includes peer mentor assignments for personal support and automatic enrollment into Global Asian Studies—a 1-credit course that introduces AANHPI students to “other students, student organizations, and campus resources.” Furthermore the AAMP hosts a variety of on-campus events driven by student interest. This includes engaging with AANHPI communities through workshops, film screenings, and discussions surrounding Asian popular culture.

Within the AARCC, Asian American Student Academic Program (AASAP) is a novel UIC program that hopes to provide tutoring services, academic advising, career development support, and financial literacy learning to AANHPI communities at the university. Given our observations of community needs and other general trends of issues surrounding AANHPI communities, we posit that AANHPI students face three structural barriers to academic success: (1) access to financial aid resources due to linguistic divisions and household financial pressures (2) familial academic expectations and demands for increased tutoring as a result of the “tiger parenting” mentality commonly found in Asian households (3) lack of support systems, as a result of students' immigrant backgrounds and parents who may be unfamiliar with the U.S. college education system. Thus, AANHPI communities at UIC are in dire need of (1) language access via advisors and faculty who can serve as translators, or creating dual language and ESL programs that streamline access to minority students; (2) more culturally sensitive mental health services through the hiring of additional BIPOC and AANHPI counselors; (3) additional space and resources for AARCC programming; (4) more space and facilities for commuter students to utilize in between classes.

Community Action Project

Our Community Action Project was inspired by the empirical problems surrounding AANHPI communities in the urban Chicago area, but also in conceptualizing community cultural wealth as a “critical race theory (CRT) challenge to traditional interpretations of cultural capital”—a research conducted by University of California Riverside Professor Tara J. Yosso on how acknowledging the strengths of Communities of Color serves “a larger purpose of struggle toward social and racial justice.”¹⁶ Specifically, Yosso's framework shifts away from a “deficit view of Communities of Color as places full of cultural poverty disadvantages,” instead focusing on “the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by socially

marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged.”¹⁷ To do this, Yosso developed a model for community cultural wealth that demonstrates the acquisition of capital as an “array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contract possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression.”¹⁸ These various forms of capital include aspirational capital, the “ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers”; linguistic capital, the “intellectual and social skills” attained through bilingual education and learning under a “racialized cultural history and language”; familial capital, cultural knowledge nurtured among family that “carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition”; social capital, referring to networks of people and community support; navigational capital, “skills of maneuvering through social institutions,” and specifically those not created with BIPOC individuals in mind; and resistant capital, the “knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality.”¹⁹



The following modes of capital question the extent to which AANHPI history should be viewed through a pessimistic lens—suggesting that AANHPI empowerment comes from a lens of leveraging learned skills, as opposed to one of disprivilege.

We propose an AASAP-directed workshop series for AANHPI students at UIC that provides financial planning resources and advice, with each session featuring different topics. Each topic will be centered around a cultural perspective of AANHPI needs and experiences to provide a more tailored approach to traditional financial aid advising. The seminars will be held monthly throughout the school years, with a total of eight sessions, and can be accessed either on the UIC campus or virtual live stream. The thesis of this project is to support the academic success of AANHPI students by providing them with much-needed resources for independent financial planning—working around the aforementioned issues that AANHPI students disproportionately face in planning and appeals processes. By cultivating students who possess a deeper understanding of wealth management, financial aid communication, and viable job searching strategies, we hope to not only help AANHPI communities maintain faith in the college education system, but also alleviate exogenous obstacles to academic success. The table below outlines our respective workshops, their purpose, and logistics in facilitating them.

Topic	Purpose	Logistics
<p><u>Workshop 1</u> Capital and Culture: The Values of Money</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage diverse perspectives of “money,” “wealth,” and “capital” within AANHPI communities ● How money is viewed, valued, and managed ● Many students have experienced poverty, unemployment, etc ● Provide students within a safe space to process and understand social dynamics around finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-person and virtual space with facilitator ● Discuss historical contexts of wealth and socioeconomic status among AANHPI communities, as well as cultural definitions of money
<p><u>Workshop 2</u> Financial Goal-Setting as a Commuter Student</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide financial planning resources for AANHPI students who live off-campus and commute ● Learn how to budget for present and future needs ● Navigate new financial independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-person and virtual space with facilitator ● Worksheets, guides, templates to map out financial goals
<p><u>Workshop 3</u> Applying for Scholarships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teach skills, strategies, and tips for applying to scholarships ● Learn about AANHPI-directed scholarship programs ● Learn how AANHPI identities can empower their ambitions and make them stand out as applicants ● Address the model minority myth & cultural schema around scholarship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-person and virtual space with facilitator ● Online/physical list of AANHPI-focused scholarships ● Walk through the application process, provide examples, Q&A
<p><u>Workshop 4</u> Internship Workshop for AANHPI Undergraduate Students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide AANHPI undergraduates with general strategies and resources to search and apply for internships in their fields ● How AANHPI identities can strengthen candidate application ● Address the model minority myth & cultural schema around professional careers ● Support students in self-advocacy for equitable treatment in professional spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-person and virtual space with facilitator ● Online/physical list of AANHPI-focused internships ● Walk through the application process, provide examples, Q&A
<p><u>Workshop 5</u> Resume and Cover Letter Workshop: Strategies for AANHPI Applicants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equip AANHPI students with strategies that will make them a strong job applicant ● Show how culture can be relevant & an asset in job search processes ● Instill students with confidence in their skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-person and virtual space with facilitator ● Resumes for first half, CLs for second half ● Review of resumes/CLs by peers and speakers ● Comparison of strategies and taking polls
<p><u>Workshop 6</u> Financial Literacy Workshop</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Showcase necessary skills needed to be responsible with one’s budget, investments, and money pool ● Discuss how culture/upbringing has affected their financial literacy ● Teach strategies for investing, saving, and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-person and virtual space with facilitator ● Discussion: AANHPI experiences with finances, effects of financial policy ● Talk about their own/family’s

	budgeting	experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage critical thinking and working with other attendees
Workshop 7 FAFSA Workshop with Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give clear instructions on how to accurately represent oneself and one's experiences on the FAFSA Facilitate productive and progressive conversation between generations to work on the application together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open to students and their parents/guardians Address language barriers & define the U.S.'s financial terms Screen share/project FAFSA questions for families to follow along
Workshop 8 Linguistic Capital and Code Switching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To teach students how to identify the kind and quantity of linguistic capital they possess in specific professional situations. Students will be taught how to utilize their linguistic capital to improve job opportunities, presentation of their own thoughts and ideas, and general communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-person and virtual space with facilitator Brief history on why Asian Americans seem to find code switching and the acknowledgement of linguistic capital a necessity Networking exercise with different languages/speaking styles

Areas for Further Development

While this project addresses the core needs for AANHPI financial support at UIC, more work/research could be done on the development of “linguistic capital.” A problem identified in urban Chicago community is the AANHPI demographic’s comparatively high LEP rates, which can be attributed to the immigrant backgrounds of AANHPI households. While second and third-generation AANHPI students are likely to be fluent in English, issues could arise in familial communication, especially when it comes to students’ understandings of their financial circumstances. This is a crucial step in self-advocacy, as a complete picture of one’s personal financial needs is a prerequisite to knowing “what to ask for.” We thought it impractical to provide translation services for the AANHPI community at UIC, especially when considering the plethora of languages that arise from students/parents of varying ethnic backgrounds. Alternative methods to strengthen students’ acquisition of linguistic capital include: (1) the development of ESL classes for first-generation immigrant AANHPI students (2) a research-oriented breakdown of common language/ethnicities within UIC’s AANHPI bubble.

Endnotes

1. *U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Chicago City, Illinois*, www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/chicagocityillinois/PST045222. Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.

2. Ramos, Manny. "Chicago's Asian Population, Fastest Growing in City, Is Booming South of Chinatown - Especially in Former Daley Stronghold." *Times*, 9 Nov. 2021, chicago.suntimes.com/2021/11/9/22751188/asian-american-population-bridgeport-archer-avenue-chinatown-2020-census-mckinley-park-armour-square.
3. "South Asian Americans in Illinois: Making Data Count." *Advancing Justice-Chicago*, July 2013.
4. "Technical Report for the State and Regional Profiles on the Asian American Population and Asset-Building Trends." University of California Los Angeles, May 2013.
5. *Ibid.*,
6. *University of Illinois Chicago - Profile, Rankings and Data | US News*, www.usnews.com/best-colleges/university-of-illinois-chicago-1776. Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.
7. *Data | Office of Diversity, Equity & Engagement | University of Illinois Chicago* diversity.uic.edu/diversity-education/data/#:~:text=80%20%25%20of%20students%20are%20commuters,come%20from%20CPS%20high%20schools. Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.
8. *Ibid.*,
9. *Asian Americans at UIC | University of Illinois Chicago* <https://aarcc.uic.edu/about/asian-americans-at-uic/>. Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.
10. *Asian American Students Find Academic, Cultural Support at UIC | Office of Diversity, Equity & Engagement | University of Illinois Chicago* <https://diversity.uic.edu/news-stories/asian-american-students-find-academic-cultural-support-at-uic/>. Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.
11. *Office of the Chancellor | University of Illinois Chicago* <https://chancellor.uic.edu/minority-serving-designations/>. Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.
12. *Asian American Mentor Program | Asian American Resource Center | University of Illinois Chicago* <https://aarcc.uic.edu/programs/asian-american-mentor-program/>. Accessed 1 Aug. 2023
13. *Asian American Students Find Academic, Cultural Support at UIC.*,
14. *Asian American Mentor Program.*,
15. *Ibid.*,
16. Yosso, Tara J. *Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth*, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 2005. DOI: 10.1080/1361332052000341006
17. *Ibid.*,
18. *Ibid.*,
19. *Ibid.*,

Bibliography

- Asian Americans at UIC | University of Illinois Chicago*
<https://aarcc.uic.edu/about/asian-americans-at-uic/>. Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.
- Asian American Mentor Program | Asian American Resource Center | University of Illinois Chicago* <https://aarcc.uic.edu/programs/asian-american-mentor-program/>.
Accessed 1 Aug. 2023
- Asian American Students Find Academic, Cultural Support at UIC | Office of Diversity, Equity & Engagement | University of Illinois Chicago*
<https://diversity.uic.edu/news-stories/asian-american-students-find-academic-cultural-support-at-uic/>. Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.

Data | *Office of Diversity, Equity & Engagement | University of Illinois Chicago*
diversity.uic.edu/diversity-education/data/#:~:text=80%20%25%20of%20students%20are%20commuters,come%20from%20CPS%20high%20schools. Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.

Office of the Chancellor | University of Illinois Chicago
<https://chancellor.uic.edu/minority-serving-designations/>. Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.

Ramos, Manny. “Chicago’s Asian Population, Fastest Growing in City, Is Booming South of Chinatown - Especially in Former Daley Stronghold.” *Times*, 9 Nov. 2021, chicago.suntimes.com/2021/11/9/22751188/asian-american-population-bridgeport-archer-avenue-chinatown-2020-census-mckinley-park-armour-square.

“South Asian Americans in Illinois: Making Data Count.”
Advancing Justice-Chicago, July 2013.

“Technical Report for the State and Regional Profiles on the Asian American Population and Asset-Building Trends.” University of California Los Angeles , May 2013.

U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Chicago City, Illinois,
www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/chicagocityillinois/PST045222.
Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.

University of Illinois Chicago - Profile, Rankings and Data | US News ,
www.usnews.com/best-colleges/university-of-illinois-chicago-1776. Accessed 1 Aug. 2023.

Yosso, Tara J. *Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth, Race Ethnicity and Education*, 2005. DOI:
10.1080/1361332052000341006