RACE AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY (REM):
College Value at Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions
RACE AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY (REM): College Value at Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions

Current assessments of college value in the United States fall short of centering race in their measurements if they do not account for the unique economic conditions of racially marginalized students before, during, and after they leave college. Commonly used economic indicators, such as earnings and debt, are incomplete measures of college value for communities of color. Wider societal issues like structural racism cascade into inequities in college affordability and outcomes but are often left out of college value discussions.

In January 2023, The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) introduced a new metric, Race and Economic Mobility (REM), capturing economic outcomes by colleges’ compositions (or shares) of racially marginalized students. Using data from the College Scorecard, TICAS found that students who attended colleges serving greater shares of racially marginalized students earned less income 10 years after graduation than their peers from colleges with smaller shares of students of color. Even more alarmingly, at colleges serving the largest shares of Black students, borrowers owed more in student loans a decade after starting repayment than they originally borrowed. The REM metric is specifically designed to show how economic mobility differs by race and offers a more accurate assessment of the true value of a college education.

In our initial REM analysis, we noted that future iterations of the metric would examine college value by sector, minority-serving institution (MSI) designation, and region. In this fact sheet, we dive deeply into variations of college value at Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs). While rarely reflected in federal data collection, the Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AANHPI) population represents about 50 ethnic groups. We acknowledge the importance of disaggregating data by race/ethnicity, especially given the systemic educational inequities that Southeast Asian populations — including, but not limited to, Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans — encounter when compared to aggregated Asian populations. We combine these student groups in our analysis due to federal data limitations. Additional information about the methodology can be found in the technical documentation.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In this fact sheet, we compared median earnings, the percentage of debt owed, and the share of completers with an earnings premium at AANAPISIs versus non-AANAPISIs. The findings reported here are strictly correlational, highlighting patterns of race and economic mobility. We find:

- Students from two-year AANAPISIs earned approximately $4,400 more than their peers who attended non-AANAPISIs, and students from four-year AANAPISIs earned approximately $8,700 more than their peers who attended non-AANAPISIs.

- Borrowers from AANAPISIs owed similar shares of their original loan balances a decade after entering repayment to borrowers who attended non-AANAPISIs.

- Both two-year and four-year AANAPISIs had higher shares of completers with an earnings premium.
In order to be designated as an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI), colleges must have a full-time equivalent undergraduate enrollment that is at least 10 percent Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) students. Colleges that meet additional requirements can apply for federal AANAPISI grants, which aim to improve and expand institutional capacity to better serve their students. While AANAPISIs represent only 6 percent of all U.S. colleges, AANAPISIs grant more than 40 percent of all bachelor’s degrees earned by AANHPI students. AANHPI students from AANAPISIs reported having a better sense of belonging and a welcoming environment to engage with peers — factors associated with a greater likelihood of student success.

Unfortunately, the full potential of AANAPISIs has not been realized due to systemic underfunding. Compared to non-AANAPISIs, AANAPISIs have substantially lower endowments and still need millions of dollars to adequately support their students. Furthermore, AANAPISI grant funding is limited, competitive, and not guaranteed. Despite being the second largest MSI-eligible group, AANAPISIs are the least likely to be funded compared to their MSI peers; only 15 percent of eligible colleges receive ANAPISI grants. Funding disparities at AANAPISIs cascade down to students, with varying impacts among AANHPI subgroups themselves. Given the differences in economic status, immigration, and resettlement history, grouping AANHPI communities as a monolith makes it challenging to identify educational and earning disparities across ethnic groups. For example, while 54 percent of all Asian adults have a bachelor’s degree or higher, degree attainment varies by subgroup, from Indian (74 percent) to Bhutanese (10 percent). Disparate equity gaps are also prevalent in median income and wealth, where Indian households have nearly three times more in annual median income of their Burmese peers ($100,000 versus $36,000, respectively).

Regional disparities in wealth exist, too. In Los Angeles, Japanese households hold nearly 10 times more wealth than Vietnamese households ($592,000 versus $61,500, respectively). Variations in income and wealth across AANHPI ethnic groups are also reflected in inequitable student debt outcomes. While Asian bachelor’s degree recipients represent the lowest percent of graduates with student debt (59 percent), Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander borrowers are much more likely to have student loans (90 percent). Aggregating over 50 ethnic groups into one category thus perpetuates the harmful misconception that all AANHPI communities have universal college access and do not experience financial challenges when accessing higher education.

Despite being underfunded, we found that AANAPISIs are still providing greater or similar wages and earning premiums compared to non-AANAPISIs. Policymakers can use our findings to shift how the value of a degree is assessed and help close disparities in economic outcomes among students from AANAPISI versus non-AANAPISI, with a specific commitment to equitably invest in AANAPISIs and fund colleges serving the largest shares of AANHPI students.

1Colleges must satisfy an additional enrollment criterion by ensuring that at least 50 percent of students receive federal need-based assistance or that the institution caters to a significant proportion of Pell Grant recipients with low educational and general expenditures. Institutions failing to meet the criteria for low-income students or expenditures may apply for a waiver.
## REM AND TWO-YEAR AANAPISIs

### Median Annual Earnings

Overall, at two-year colleges, students from AANAPISIs earned ($43,715) an average of approximately $4,400 more than their peers who attended non-AANAPISIs ($39,343).

### Percentage of Debt Owed

The percentage of debt owed was the same (86 percent) for borrowers from AANAPISIs and non-AANAPISI colleges.

### Share of Completers with an Earnings Premium

As conceptualized in the Department of Education’s Gainful Employment regulation, an earnings premium compares what typical career preparation program completers earn to the median earnings for early-career working adults in their state. On average, two-year AANAPISIs had higher shares of completers with an earnings premium (64 percent) than non-AANAPISIs (60 percent). Unfortunately, this outcome translates to approximately one in three completers from AANAPISIs earning less than a high school graduate.

### FIGURE 1. Race and Economic Mobility at Two-Year Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) and Non-AANAPISI Two-Year Colleges

Students from two-year AANAPISIs earned more on average than their peers who attended non-AANAPISIs. AANAPISIs had higher shares of students with an earnings premium than non-AANAPISIs, and both AANAPISIs and non-AANAPISIs had comparable repayment outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Median Annual Earnings</th>
<th>Percent of Debt Owed</th>
<th>Share of Completers with an Earnings Premium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AANAPISIs</td>
<td>$43,715</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-AANAPISIs</td>
<td>$39,343</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Colleges</th>
<th>67</th>
<th>639</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


---

2This analysis includes only institutions with reported earnings data in College Scorecard. Some institutions may be excluded due to privacy suppression or unreported data.
REM AND FOUR-YEAR AANAPISIs

**Median Annual Earnings**
Overall, at four-year colleges, students from AANAPISIs earned ($61,797) approximately $8,700 more than their peers who attended non-AANAPISIs ($53,102).

**Percentage of Debt Owed**
The percentage of debt owed was similar for borrowers from AANAPISIs (70 percent) and non-AANAPISIs (71 percent).

**Share of Completers with an Earnings Premium**
On average, four-year AANAPISIs had higher shares of completers with an earnings premium (79 percent) as non-AANAPISIs (74 percent), translating to nearly one in five college completers not earning more than a high school graduate.

---

**FIGURE 2. Race and Economic Mobility at Four-Year Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) and Non-AANAPISI Four-Year Colleges**
Students from four-year AANAPISIs earned more on average than their peers who attended non-AANAPISIs. AANAPISIs had higher shares of students with an earnings premium than non-AANAPISIs, and both AANAPISIs and non-AANAPISIs had comparable repayment outcomes.

---

IMPLICATIONS

Our findings provide evidence that AANAPISIs offer students increased economic mobility potential; students earned more than their peers who attended non-AANAPISIs. Despite the earnings premium associated with AANAPISIs, AANAPISIs continue to receive significantly less funding and smaller grants compared to other MSIs. Despite recent strides to increase federal funding for AANAPISIs, APIA Scholars estimates that $100 million annually is needed to equitably fund AANAPISIs.

In June 2023, the Supreme Court struck down race-conscious college admissions — a key mechanism to close racial equity gaps in college enrollment. As a result of the Court’s’ decision overturning race-conscious admissions, investing in minority-serving institutions like AANAPISIs is more critical than ever. It is also imperative that federal data collection expands to include disaggregated college and economic outcomes by race and ethnicity so colleges can better address disparities within AANHPIs communities.

To ameliorate longstanding racial inequities in higher education and to advance a system that provides equitable opportunities for students from all walks of life to thrive before, during, and after college, federal and state-level policymakers must invest in both AANHPI students and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) is a trusted source of research, design, and advocacy for student-centered public policies that promote affordability, accountability, and equity in higher education. To learn more about TICAS, visit ticas.org and follow us on X/Twitter and Instagram: @TICAS_org.

Casey Khánh Nguyên, Mayra Nuñez Martinez, Jaime Ramirez-Mendoza, Ellie Bruecker, Ph.D., and Marshall Anthony Jr., Ph.D. are the primary authors of this fact sheet.

TICAS would like to express appreciation to Florie Mendiola and Jo Ann Paanio at Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) Scholars as well as Anna Byon and Natalie Truong at the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC). The authors also thank various internal staff for their content and copy reviews. All mistakes are our own.

The views expressed in this paper are solely those of TICAS and do not necessarily reflect the views of our funders or reviewers.