



Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California: How Higher Education Diversity Benefits Our Communities

As a coalition of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) civil rights and higher education groups, we present this statement and policy report to dispel public misconceptions that have recently surfaced around diversify efforts.

- Election results from California and recent national opinion surveys show that a solid majority of AAPIs support affirmative action.
- Historically, affirmative action has been important in opening job opportunities for AAPIs and affirmative action serves important interests for AAPIs in higher education as well.

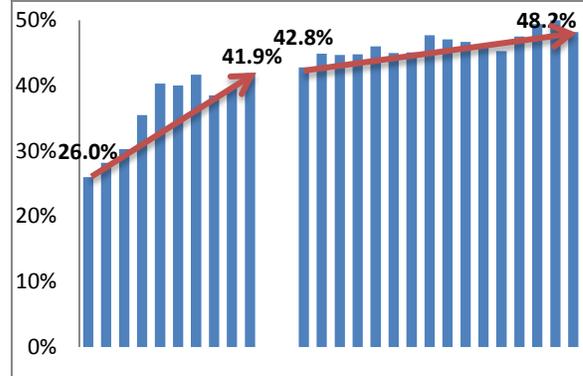
"It would be a tragedy if our nation's colleges and universities slipped backward now, denying access to talented but disadvantaged youth and eroding the diversity that helps to prepare leaders."

-- **Chang-Lin Tien**, former UC Berkeley Chancellor and the first AAPI to head a leading U.S. university

- Contrary to the "model minority" myth, many AAPI groups have low rates of access and attainment in higher education. For example, in UC Berkeley's applicant pool there was low representation for Pacific Islanders (Samoans, Guamanians, Tongans, and Native Hawaiians), Southeast Asians (Laotians, Cambodians, Hmong, and Vietnamese), and Filipinos.
- Media reports can exaggerate the impact of California's Proposition 209 on AAPI enrollments. For example, at UC Berkeley the percentage of AAPIs in the freshmen

class was rising at a much faster rate before Proposition 209 banned affirmative action.

Pre-209 (1988-97) & Post-209 (1998-2013): AAPI % of UC Berkeley Domestic Freshmen



- SAT scores cannot serve as the sole measure of "merit." Recent claims that consideration of diversity favors or disfavors different groups by hundreds of points on the SAT are misleading to parents, and cause unnecessary divisiveness.
- College diversity experiences are positively related to cognitive skills, and students with more exposure to those from other backgrounds end up with lower levels of prejudice. College friendships across racial lines are associated with having more positive attitudes about other groups. Affirmative action can improve the quality of students' education and benefit our society.
- Research shows that AAPI professional students highly value diversity because it helps them learn greater skills relevant to success as physicians and lawyers.
- Disinvestment in public higher education, not affirmative action, is what is limiting opportunities for AAPIs in California. We must refocus our energy and make the wise investment of expanding enrollment capacity at our public universities so that young people, including AAPIs, can have a bright educational and economic future.