



YEAR 5 FOCUS GROUP REPORT

*Futures Thinking &
Sustaining Legacies*

June 2026



FOCUS GROUP OVERVIEW

The purpose of this report is to present the findings and recommendations from our Year 5 (2026) Focus Group of the AANAPISI grant. This focus group is the last focus group conducted with Asian and Pacific Islander (A&PI) students annually at North Seattle College (NSC or North) from years two to five of the grant. This focus group was conducted on Thursday, May 7th, 2026. These discussions were driven by the need to understand how North can sustain and continue to uplift A&PI voices after the AANAPISI grant and program ends in September 2026. By engaging directly with A&PI students, we gain a deeper understanding of their experiences, perspectives, and needs from the college to inform institutional change.

This report will explore the key themes that emerged from discussions, which reflect the experiences and needs of A&PI students at North. Additionally, recommendations proposed by student participants, and synthesized by staff, will be shared. We hope that these insights and recommendations will be of immense value to the greater community and support the grant's efforts of continuing to build capacity and sustaining services, programs, and best practices at North Seattle College, long after the conclusion of the grant.

GOALS

Goal 1: Explore how A&PI students currently experience belonging & support at North Seattle College, including what institutional practices, spaces, programs, or relationships contribute positively to their experience and what gaps or barriers still exist.

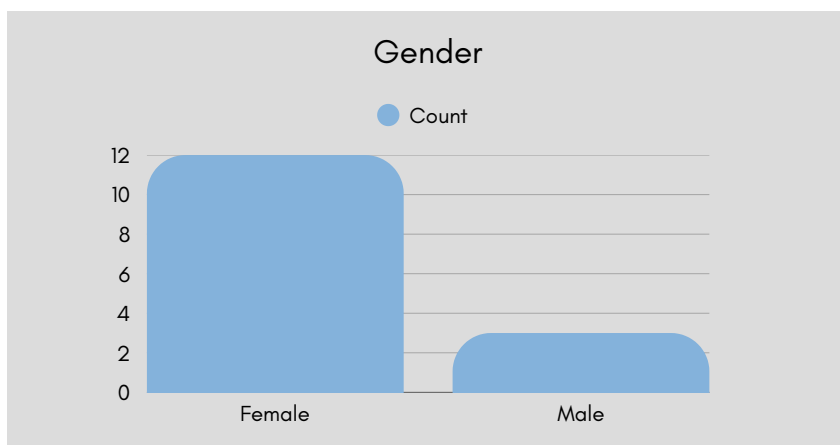
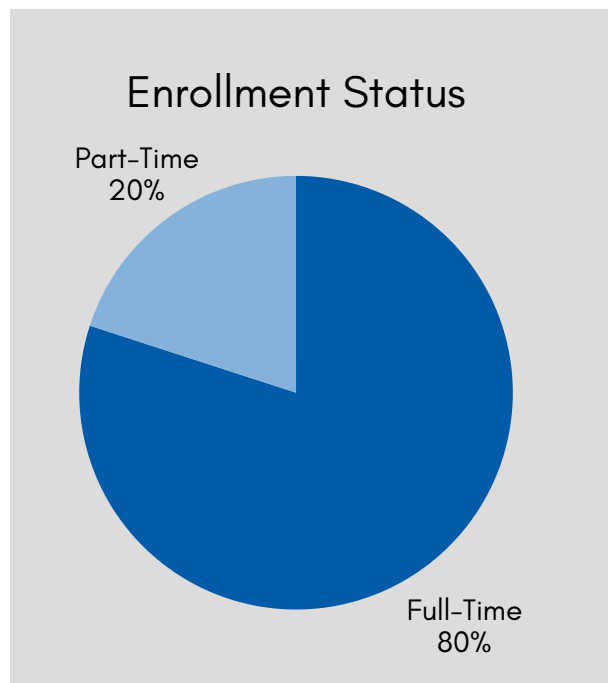
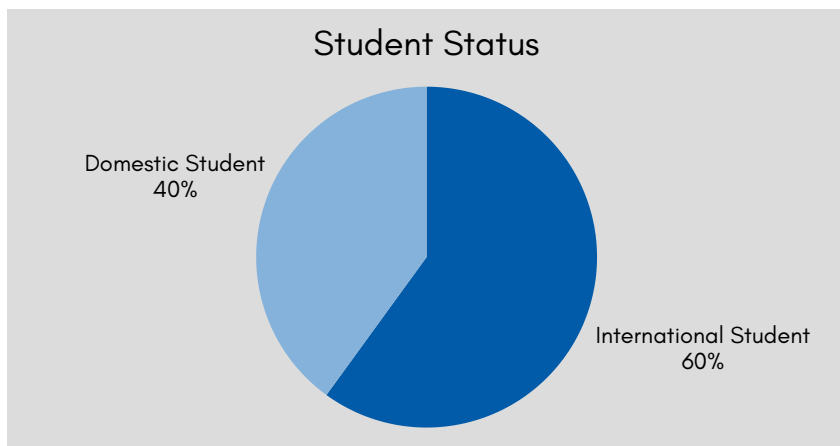
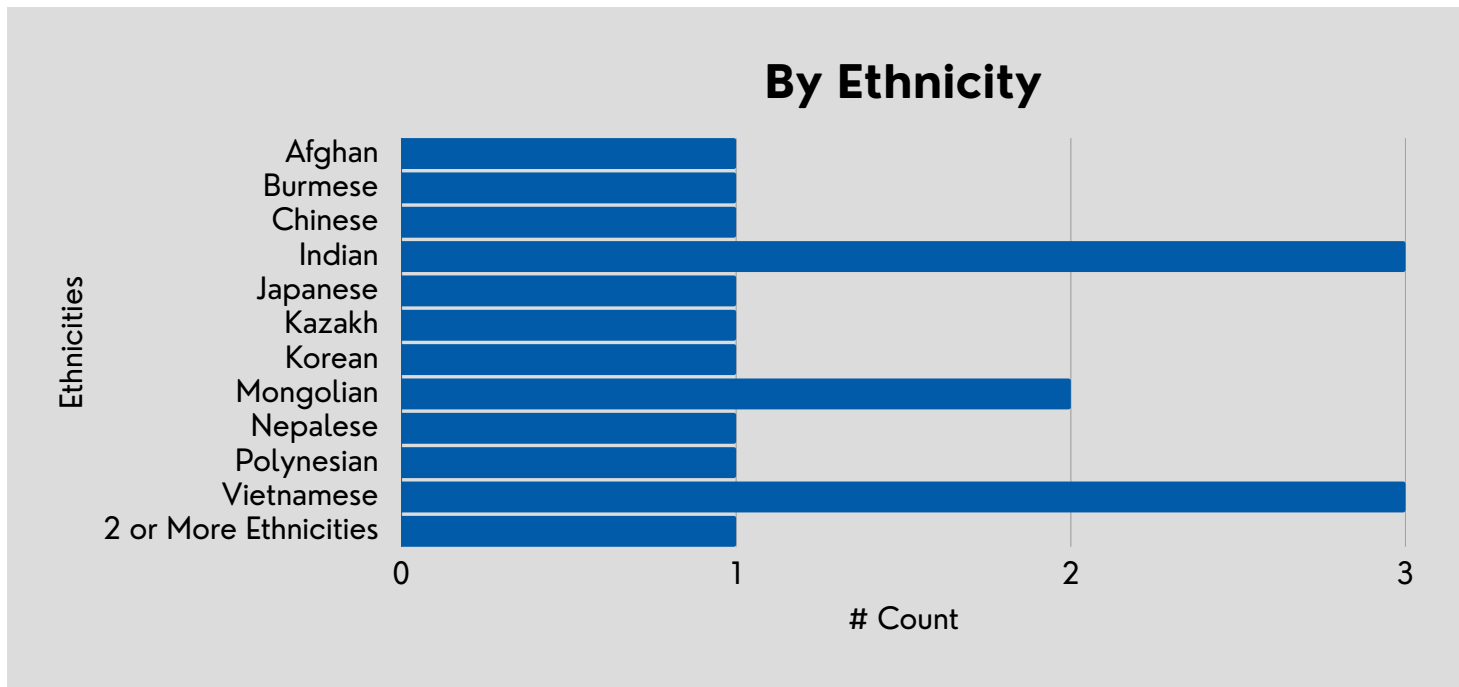
Goal 2: Engage students in collectively imagining what an ideal North Seattle College would look and feel like for A&PI students beyond the AANAPISI grant period, including the programs, spaces, services, and forms of community support they believe should be built, protected, or expanded.

Goal 3: Gather student recommendations for how North Seattle College can sustain and strengthen A&PI representation and support over the next few years. Including which AANAPISI initiatives that students believe should continue after the grant ends, and what messages college leadership should prioritize moving forward.

DEMOGRAPHICS



The following demographics reflects the self-reported information by 15 participants:



Age

- Median Age: 19
- Age range: 17-72



METHODOLOGY

The focus groups utilized a qualitative research design to gain in-depth insights into the lived experiences of North Seattle College’s A&PI students. Focus groups were chosen as the primary data collection method due to their ability to foster dynamic discussions, allow for the exploration of shared experiences, and to elicit rich, nuanced perspectives on each topic. The focus group specifically explored students’ 1) sense of belonging and representation on campus, 2) visions for an ideal and culturally engaging campus environment for A&PI students, and 3) priorities and recommendations for institutional action to sustain and strengthen support for A&PI students in the future.

Two AANAPISI staff members acted as facilitators, and posed open-ended questions related to students’ experiences of recognition, support, and belonging at North Seattle College, as well as their perceptions of what programs, services, resources, and forms of representation should be continued or developed after the conclusion of the AANAPISI grant. Participants also engaged in a collaborative futures thinking activity where small groups visually mapped or described their ideal campus environment for A&PI students. The focus group then concluded with action-oriented reflection questions that invited students to share recommendations and messages for college leadership regarding the continuation of A&PI support and representation efforts at North Seattle College.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Grounding

- During your time here, in what ways do you feel the college acknowledges or recognizes A&PI students?
- What is missing or could be better for the A&PI student experience?

Futures Thinking

Activity Prompt: We want you to imagine what the ideal North Seattle College campus is for A&PI+ students, and more.

Guiding Questions:

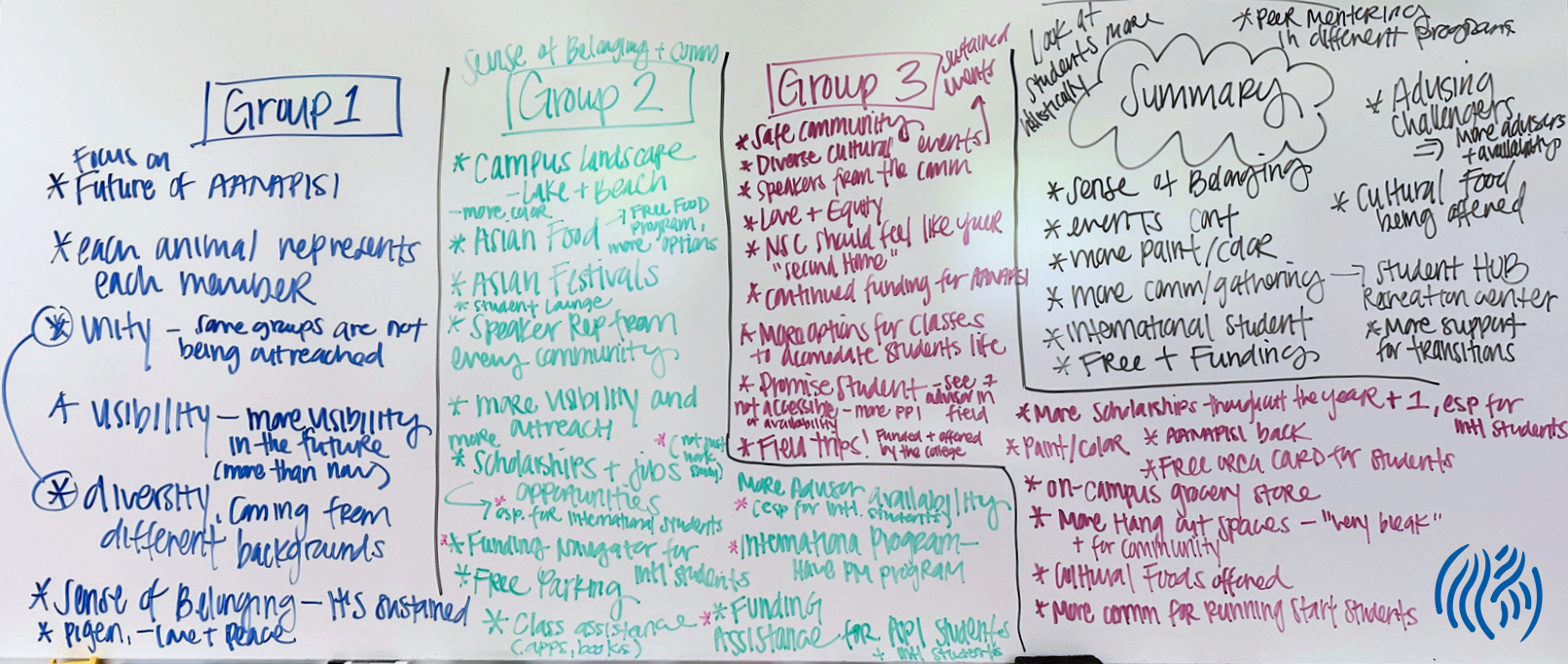
- If there were no limits on resources, what would your ideal North Seattle College campus look like (as an A&PI student)?
- What does (belonging on) this campus:
 - Feel like?
 - Look like?
- What exists on campus?
 - Programs, spaces, people, services
 - What would you build, change, or protect?

Synthesizing Questions:

- What feels most important to protect after our grant ends?
- Ranking what they feel is most important to prioritize in making this ideal campus happen

Action Oriented

- Thinking back to your activity on the ideal campus community, what do you want NSC to incorporate over the next two years to maintain A&PI representation?
- If you could send one message to college leadership about the A&PI experience, what would it be?



FINDINGS

Students Were Not Aware of Resources for A&PI Students When They First Arrived to Campus

- One participant noted that it took six months to learn what AANAPISI was, and explained that when the AANAPISI program was first implemented, it was mainly spread through word of mouth
- A few participants learned about AANAPISI through outreach events and the peer mentorship program

"Since I just went through orientation, they good a job of mentioning it [AANAPISI] but I feel like they mention it more in international orientations rather than out-of-state or even in-state, because for me, I only found it through networking and I had to do my own little research to find this community, so it took me a minute. But one of my classmates, she is an international student and for her, as a part of her orientation, she said 'Oh yeah, I was notified of this organization, they did explain to us we had this resource.' So, I think highlighting this resource is definitely there, but they can do a better job."

Representation & Support Primarily Facilitated Through AANAPISI

- AANAPISI's culturally relevant events such as the Lunar New Year celebration, helped students feel less lonely and represented

"After I met AANAPISI, that's where I felt like I found my community and felt represented...before that, I felt like A&PI students weren't represented at all from the campus side, it is not much..."

- Participants who enrolled in AANAPISI's peer mentoring program noted feeling a sense of belonging after connecting with the mentors
- Participants utilized mentor guidance and support to learn about resources they otherwise would have not known

"So, my experience was like, I feel like I did not realize until starting AANAPISI, I did not feel any belonging to the campus. Back then, I was very straightforward, take classes... it wasn't a community for me. I did not feel any belonging... I don't recall any introduction to AANAPISI by our orientation leaders or anybody... so, I was introduced to AANAPISI through previous peer mentors because they used to work there..."

- Students emphasized the importance of physical spaces where A&PI students can gather, like AANAPISI's Asian & Pacific Islander Center (APIC) as integral to building community

"In my college life, even though it's my third quarter, not a big deal, [APIC] it is kind of is a really important place to me. AANAPISI is best actually."

Resource Navigation Challenges

- Many participants described difficulty in accessing timely advising, funding information, and overall support
- Participants attributed their learnings about resources from their network such as peers or classmates
- Job opportunities and funding were limited, especially as it related to their student status (e.g. part-time student, international student, etc.)

IDEAL CAMPUS ACTIVITY

Participants were asked to draw or write down what their ideal North Seattle College campus looked like for A&PI students and more. Below are summarized insights from participant groups:

Group 1

Participants expressed wanting a safe community where they can openly talk about their needs and experiences. This also looked like providing culturally relevant and community building programming like events, outings, and speaker representation.

Group 2

A few notable things that participants envisioned was a more responsive campus in terms of their intersecting identities (e.g. student status and ethnic background). For them, this looked like have culturally relevant food options, as well as holistic support throughout their college experience, such as through mentorship and financial assistance.

Group 3

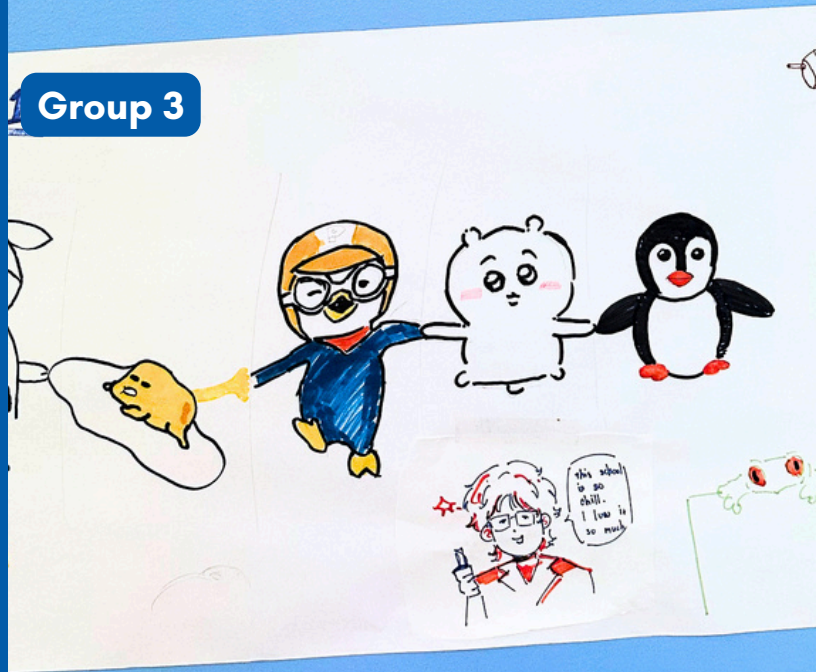
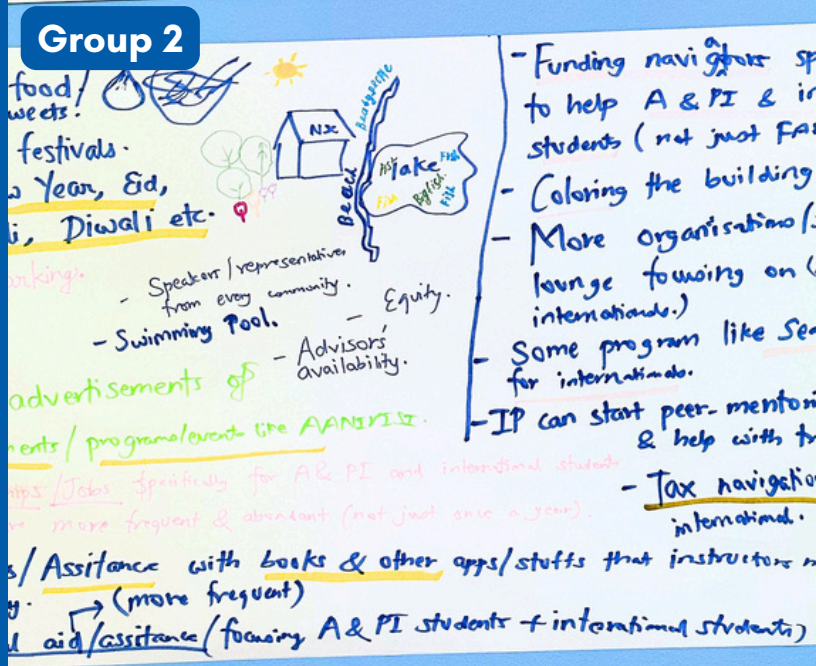
Participants envisioned a North Seattle College that highlighted diversity and unity amongst the varying communities at the college. The drawing represents this want, as well as a need for visibility of the understanding of their varying identities.

ACTIVITY FINDINGS

Participants expressed wanting holistic support in all aspects of their student experience. This included support in their social, emotional, occupational, and financial wellbeing.

Students ranked the following as the top areas they want continued or more support in:

1. Funding and Financial Navigation
2. Institutional Navigation
3. Academic Support
4. Job Opportunities
5. Sense of Belonging





THEMES

Limited Awareness & Outreach

Many participants described that **upon their arrival to North Seattle College, they were left without knowing what AANAPISI was**, often learning about it months later through peers, rather than formal communication. While the program was sometimes mentioned as a resource during orientations, it was often inconsistent, as students either heard about or did not hear about the program at all. Many students were left to rely on their own research or network to discover and understand the program.

Representation & Belonging Built Through AANAPISI

Once connected to AANAPISI, many participants described how AANAPISI was their primary source of representation and belonging. Students attributed programming efforts such as culturally relevant events, the peer mentoring program, physical spaces like APIC, and dedicated navigation services as sources of representation and belonging. Many noted that they did not feel a sense of community until finding AANAPISI. With this discovery, they also unveiled the resources from AANAPISI that helped them feel seen and supported.

Persistent Challenges Navigating Campus Resources

Despite the varying identities of the focus group participants, one thing that was shared amongst the group was **difficulty accessing support, such as advising, funding information, and job opportunities**, especially when their student status limited their eligibility. They **often learned about resources through informal communication streams like through their networks, rather than institutional channels.**

RECOMENDATIONS



Based off student voice and feedback from the focus group, three overarching recommendations are suggested for NSC:

Sustain Culturally Relevant Programming Through Campus-Wide Partnerships

Participants expressed a desire for more culturally relevant programming and activities on-campus that are sustained beyond the conclusion of the AANAPISI program. When elaborating, students emphasized a need for the continuation of cultural events, as they expressed its importance in how it facilitated belonging, connection, and identity representation on campus. Additionally, students mentioned how their points of connection to AANAPISI Peer Mentors helped them learn about and access culturally relevant student support services. Lastly, students identified a lack of culturally relevant food options on campus, and expressed a desire to see greater cultural representation reflected in food offerings.

To sustain and expand these experiences after the conclusion of the program, the college can leverage campus-wider partnerships to enact and institutionalize culturally relevant programming, services, and resources. Through using student suggestion, these campus units were identified by AANAPISI staff as units that can support in sustaining culturally relevant experiences:

- 1. Student Leadership & Engagement:** The Student Leadership and Engagement department works to make North an inclusive, innovative, caring, and responsive community for its students. In alignment with the goals of Student Leadership, the unit can sustain signature cultural events such as the Day of Remembrance and a Lunar New Year Celebration. Additionally, student leadership could work more in collaboration with the Division of Access, Community, and Organizations (ACO) at North to execute these culturally responsive events.
- 2. First Year Experience:** First Year Experience (FYE) could work with the ACO to continue to provide affinity-based programming, specifically in the context of the first year experience. Through affinity-based programming, such as offering identity-based orientations or integration into the First Year Experience Course: HDC 101 - Orientation to College Success, this can help connect students to culturally relevant resources on campus and serve as a community-building space for students of similar backgrounds.
 - a. This additionally tackles how students have expressed wanting more outreach and visibility of programs, services, and resources on campus. Students noted that it was often difficult to learn about what NSC offered because of information overload or because navigating institutional channels of communication were difficult. By centering and embedding culturally relevant programming into FYE structures, this can help ensure students receive both relevant and accessible support.*
- 3. Food Pantry & the Micromarket:** The Food Services unit which operates the Micromarket, a micro-grocery store of prepared foods and snacks, can play an integral role in providing culturally relevant foods on campus. Currently, the unit is partnered with Harried & Hungry to bring prepared foods on campus. Building on this foundation, the unit could collaborate with additional vendors to expand its offerings of cultural foods, ensuring that the campus offerings reflects the identities and backgrounds of its community. Additionally, the student Food Pantry can provide more culturally responsive groceries for students to choose from.

Strengthen Resource Navigation and Advising Access

Additionally, participants consistently identified challenges in accessing immediate support such as support in funding and advising, often not being able to reach the appropriate point of contact or facing long wait or response times. To address these challenges, NSC can better leverage Navigators, who were designed to provide holistic support for students, by expanding their capacity through collaboration, and possibly services such as drop-in hours. Many students have expressed being passed back and forth between services, and in order to streamline this process, Navigators and Advisors can explore collaborating more in order to identify early interventions and to create coordinated plans of support.

Maintain Community Spaces as Permanent Campus Infrastructure

Lastly, many participants attributed the Asian & Pacific Islander Center (APIC) as a vital source of community, connection, and belonging. Through the belonging they experienced in APIC, students expressed a desire to see more spaces on campus (ex. Student Hub) that foster similar opportunities for connection and community building. While students recognized The Grove as a centralized location that they can connect with others, they noted that the presence of the Micromarket, classrooms, and offices within the building made it feel less student-centered. Students expressed valuing the intimacy of spaces like APIC, that are solely for students to gather. Understanding student wants, there should be permanent community spaces like APIC on campus that exist to facilitate community, especially in a centralized, accessible area.

MESSAGE TO LEADERSHIP



If you could send one message to college leadership, about the A&PI experience, what would it be?

*“Jordan (Navigator)–because I feel like every time I switch my major and I talk that to Jordan on the day I thought about it, so I feel like–and also my advisor was unavailable–like, Jordan was always there, you can just walk around just asking if he has a couple of minutes to talk to. I feel like he was always supportive and **we need more people like that, who can just support at any time.** I know we all have time commitments but as a student, **sometimes things happen... and you just need immediate attention or solutions.**”*

*“On this campus, **I think the teachers should be more supportive of you.** There is a lack of support from teachers or encouragement. I don’t see that from most of my teachers. I would like to see that in the future. Especially leadership, college leadership, **encouraging the teachers to give international students support, and the A&PI students support.**”*

*“This was my first year move to the U.S. to study. **Back in Vietnam, we have a really big festival, Lunar New Year, so, when I move here, I think I spend time alone** in here during the big festival back in my country, **I’m really sad, but then we have AANAPISI to celebrate that festival, so I feel so much happy.** I can spend all day at the college instead of going back home alone. So, **I wish that in the future, they have more festivals like that** maybe organize in our college so I can spend time in that and not feel alone anymore”*

*“One message that I would like to send to college leadership, would be that **I hope in the future, they try to find more ways to reach out to students about different programs, orientations, events,** because for some reason, **some students who are new to the country or system, they are trying to navigate a lot of stuff they are not used to,** so, it is already a lot on their plate. So, if there are other ways that they know about this thing that is happening at the college, maybe they will find time to also be in those programs or events. I am saying this because when I came here, everything was new for me and I was trying to find my way, and it was already hard enough for me, so trying to go after all these programs and events, to do fun stuff, would just add an extra thing on my plate, so I wouldn’t go after but if for some reason if I saw it in my email or Canvas, maybe I would think about it and make some time for it.”*

CONCLUSION

The focus group report reveals the experiences of A&PI students on campus and that is, while the college expresses support for A&PI students through AANAPISI, students do not experience meaningful or visible acknowledgement of their lived experiences and identities outside of the program. For many, AANAPISI serves as the primary, and often the only, pathway to belonging and representation on campus. **Students desire greater visibility, representation in campus spaces, and expanded resources that reflect the diverse needs of the community.** We ask- how can this work belong in all the services at North rather than just one program? Or, how can departments and programs collaborate more effectively to sustain these services and programs? The A&PI experience is not a monolithic one, as one’s A&PI identity is also intersecting with other salient identities such as being an international, first-generation, or low-income student. These intersections introduce an additional layer of complexity that has influenced the experiences of focus group participants and how they navigate campus and how it influences their sense of belonging.

Even when students did not explicitly name systemic barriers, their experiences reflect a deeper structural reality, and that is that higher education institutions need to be designed with students of color in mind. AANAPISI has worked to build more capacity by offering students culturally relevant support to navigate and thrive in this system, contributing to better student success outcomes. Focus group findings further highlight the need for the colleges to extend its level of care beyond a single program–especially as the AANAPISI grant concludes–to ensure that A&PI students continue to be supported through their educational journeys.