

# North Seattle College - AANAPISI Focus Group Report



## AANAPISI

Asian American and Native American  
Pacific Islander Serving Institution

### About North Seattle College AANAPISI Program

#### What is AANAPISI?

Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) is a 5-year federally funded program that seeks to increase student success outcomes and create a stronger sense of belonging by implementing culturally responsive-sustaining programming and providing holistic student support services.

AANAPISI programs are committed to combatting dominant narratives and stereotypes surrounding our Asian and Pacific Islander communities. We create spaces of empathy, of strength, and of belonging for our A&PI community members. The care for our students, faculty, and staff of Asian and Oceanian descent are regional, specific, and interconnected. We seek to uplift the diverse and unique lived experiences of our students and create space for all A&PI stories and futures towards a safe and thriving campus climate and greater community.

#### Why AANAPISI at North Seattle College?

North Seattle College (NSC), located in Licton Springs and surrounded by zip codes with high A&PI populations (98105, 98125, 98133), gained greater access to these communities with the 2021 opening of the Northgate light rail station. To expand its capacity to serve A&PI students and the broader community, NSC secured its first AANAPISI grant in September 2021, running through September 2026.

#### AANAPISI at NSC was shaped around the following goals:

1. Ensure that research informs service approaches, curriculum, and overall campus operations to more effectively serve A&PI students.
2. Ensure that North Seattle College is a welcoming campus for A&PI and low-income students.
3. Improve key academic outcomes indicators for A&PI and low-income students at North Seattle College.

### Our Core Functions



#### Community Building

AANAPISI hosts events that build community & foster a sense of belonging among not only A&PI students, staff, and faculty, but the greater campus community. These gatherings promote networking, cultural exchange, and collaboration, strengthening connections on campus.



#### Student Success

A dedicated AANAPISI Navigator provides culturally appropriate navigation and advising for AANAPISI students. This role helps connect students to resources and college planning, setting them up for success, and retention.



#### Peer Mentorship

The Peer Mentor program pairs first year students with NSC peers who understand their backgrounds and challenges. These mentors provide guidance, share resources, and foster a sense of belonging, helping mentees navigate college life with confidence.



#### Data Justice

A&PI voices are often underrepresented in data. By conducting focus groups and disaggregating data by ethnicity, we highlight the diverse experiences within the expansive identities of the community.



#### A&PI Representation

A&PI representation is facilitated through educational workshops, trainings, and cultural events that highlight A&PI identity & experiences. These events foster visibility, cultural understanding, and belonging, strengthening A&PI presence at NSC.



#### Capacity Building

AANAPISI is working on sustaining its efforts by providing an institutionalization plan that focuses on culturally responsive training for faculty and staff and student training to ensure best practices endure beyond the grant period.

# Focus Group Overview

The purpose of this report is to present the findings & recommendations from a series of 5 focus groups conducted with 47 Asian and Pacific Islander students at North Seattle College during Years 2, 3, & 4 of the grant. These focus groups expand on the work done over three years, 2024-2025 (Year 4), 2023-2024 (Year 3), and 2022-2023 (Year 2). These discussions were driven by the need to gain valuable insights, voice concerns, and identify strategies for enhancing the AANAPISI programs' effectiveness in supporting North Seattle Colleges' A&PI student community. By engaging directly with A&PI students, we gain a deeper understanding of their experiences, perspectives, and aspirations within the college environment, and inform institutional efforts to address their specific needs.

This report will explore the key themes that emerged from the 5 focus group discussions, reflecting the experiences of A&PI students at North Seattle College. Also, highlighting the recommendations and solutions proposed by student participants to improve A&PI student experiences relating to academic and personal growth. The report will also highlight 3 key ways we have implemented recommendations during the duration of the grant. 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 grant sunsets in September 2026.

## Focus Group Goals

**Goal 1:** To better understand how students define "sense of belonging," discover the ways they feel and do not feel like they belong at NSC, and their ideas to increase belongingness on campus.

**Goal 2:** To better understand and indicate which student services that A&PI students find most helpful or confusing at NSC, the barriers they face, and their ideas on how services can be improved.

**Goal 3:** To better understand A&PI students' experience as first-year students, the challenges they encountered, and ideas on resources/solutions they have that could improve their experience.

## Methodology

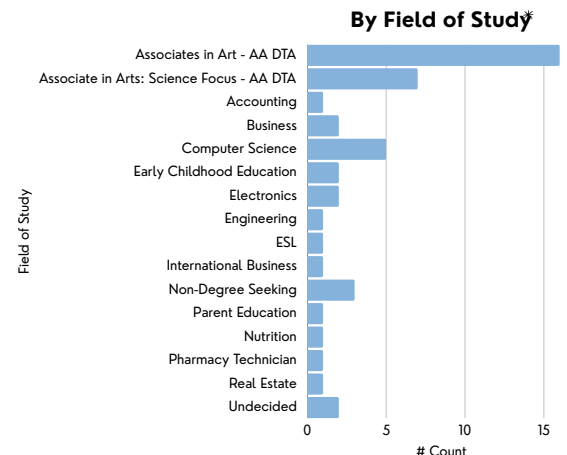
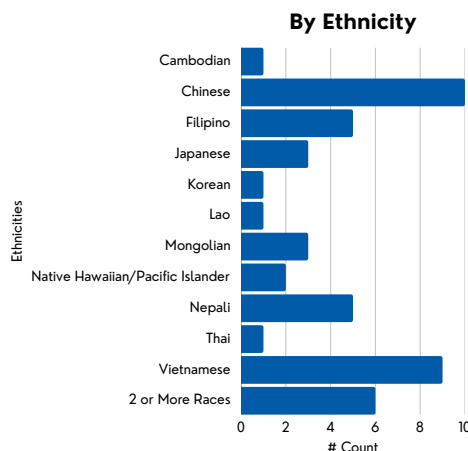
The focus groups utilized a qualitative research design, to gain in-depth insights into the lived experiences of North Seattle College's Asian and Pacific Islander students regarding their 1) Sense of belonging and 2) Perceptions of support for success at North Seattle College. Focus groups were chosen 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. Each focus group had one main facilitator with one co-facilitator guiding the discussion.

A semi-structured discussion guide was utilized to ensure consistency across both groups while allowing flexibility for emergent themes and in-depth explorations. The facilitators posed open-ended questions designed to elicit participants' perceptions and experiences related to their sense of belonging within the North Seattle College campus environment, and the types of support they found beneficial to their academic and personal success.

## Participant Profiles

### 47 Total Participants

- **Age**
  - Median Age: 21
  - Age range: 17-71
- **Gender**
  - Female: 34
  - Male: 13
- **Student Status**
  - Domestic Students: 32
  - International Students: 15
  - Full-Time: 30
  - Part-Time: 17



\*Field of Study was self-reported by participants

# Findings

\* Individuals pictured are not focus group participants



## Guiding Questions\*

### Sense of Belonging

On a scale of 1-5, do you feel like you belong at NSC?

- 1- You don't feel like you belong at all
- 2- You feel like you belong a little
- 3- You feel like you somewhat belong
- 4- You feel like you belong
- 5- You feel a very strong sense of belonging

What are the ways you feel you like you belong at North? Please provide some examples.

What are the ways you don't feel like you belong at North? Please provide some examples.

What are ideas or thoughts you have that could make NSC a more welcoming place where you can see yourself belong?

\*Guiding questions reflect the ones used for Year 3 and 4. Similar but slightly different guiding questions were asked for Year 2.

### Student Services

Which 3 Student Services do you find the most helpful to your success as an API student?

Which 3 Student Services do you find the most confusing that causes barriers to your success as an API student?

If you could change or improve anything about our student services, what would you change?

### First-Year Experience

On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your first-year experience at North Seattle College?

- 1- Your first-year experience was really challenging & you received no support
- 2- Your first-year experience was challenging & you received little support
- 3- Your first-year experience was okay & you received some support
- 4- Your first-year experience was good & you received support
- 5- Your first-year experience was really good & you received a lot of support

Reflecting on your first-year experience at North Seattle College, what were the challenges that you encountered?

What resources or ideas do you have that you think would have helped your first-year experience be better?

## Emerging Themes

### Most Useful Student Services\*



- AANAPISI Program
- Advising
- Library
- Tutoring
- Student Leadership

\*In no particular order

### Most Confusing Student Services\*



- Financial Aid
- International Programs
- Advising
- Opportunity Center
- Career Services

\*In no particular order

### First-Year Experience



- Institutional navigation & wayfinding difficulties
- Not being aware or knowing where/who to go to find info
- Desire for more pre-arrival support for Running Start & International Students

### Sense of Belonging



- Need for relationship and community building
- Feelings of exclusion
- Want for more A&PI representation on campus
- Increased sense of belonging if students worked or were involved in other leadership capacities on campus

### Communication Challenges



- Overload of communication through too many communication streams
- Need for centralized communication channel
- Feelings of being "tossed around" when trying to find help and resources

### Student Success



- Find services & resources most helpful when they are consistent
- Benefit from supportive staff & faculty who support their (holistic) growth
- Appreciate student dedicated services such as the AANAPISI student lounge and peer mentoring services

# Recommendations

While many of the recommendations above have been implemented or are currently in progress, the AANAPISI grant will conclude at the end of 2026 and we hope that North Seattle College will continue to sustain the capacity the AANAPISI grant has built. Below are additional recommendations that have emerged directly from our focus groups, where we prioritized centering student voices in the decision-making process.

## Increasing Sense of Belonging



- **Continue to Provide Culturally Responsive Trainings to Faculty, Staff & Students:** Provide consistent trainings for faculty and staff on cultural humility and culturally responsive practices to best support the varying communities and identities of students on campus.
- **Increase On-Campus Student Job Opportunities:** Student worker jobs were identified as one of the main ways that help integrate students into the college campus and environment. Students cited that these opportunities built confidence of students' knowledge of resources and services on-campus.
- **Identity-Based Events:** Lunar New Year has been an integral annual event for the AANAPISI program that helps instill a sense of belonging not just for A&PI students, but also the greater NSC community. With similar and more identity-based events, it can increase students' sense of belonging at NSC by seeing their identity and cultures celebrated.

## Strengthening Student Services and Information Access



- **Improving Navigation from Staff & Faculty:** Participants voiced feelings of being "tossed around" when seeking support and resources at NSC, which impacted their experience with certain student services. Participants suggested that there be better utilization of roles like Navigators and ensuring that staff and faculty are more aware of services, updates, resources to help with timely and accurate navigation.
- **Centralize where NSC Events and Resources are communicated:** Participants in all 5 focus groups have raised the challenges they have experienced in finding out where and when events are taking place on campus. Many have suggested that NSC have a centralized platform where all events and information is posted to decrease confusion and increase awareness.

## Expanding First-Year Experiences



- **Creation of Asian & Pacific Islander (A&PI) First-Year Learning Community:** Drawing inspiration from Seattle Central College, NSC could greatly benefit from creating a Learning Community (LC) designed to support the A&PI community as well as students interested in exploring the A&PI experience. This initiative would allow participants to enroll in a cohort-model program where students take classes together, fostering a strong sense of belonging and providing a supportive network as they transition into college life.
- **Creating and Sustaining an Asian & Pacific Islander (A&PI) Student Group Collective:** Having an established student group collective can help students find a "home" when they first come to NSC where they can be in community and look for peer support.

# Implemented Recommendations

## Dedicated Student Space

AANAPISI opened a dedicated student center to the NSC community on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Through student voice, this space was named the Asian & Pacific Islander Center (APIC), which has seen success in its use with over **1,400+ visits** since its opening. The student center is open to all NSC community members and is primarily a place to build community and receive or use resources. The student center offers amenities such as a free printing, a computer lab, kitchenette, private study spaces, and much more.

Student Quote: "It's been nice to make friends (at APIC) who have similar culture and background and it's easier for me to like blend between them and then really talk to them."

## Place-Based Tutoring

In collaboration with the Student Learning Center, **a place-based tutoring program was piloted in Spring 2025**, where students could receive tutoring in places they may feel more comfortable in, such as APIC, BE-STEM Lounge, and formerly, the TRIO Center. As of the 2025-2026 academic year, the program is in its initial launch, with tutors being directly placed into student lounges such as APIC. As the program is new, it is still in the process of data collection and examination of best practices for place-based tutoring.

## Programming for Peer Mentoring Program

AANAPISI offers peer mentoring services as a strategic intervention for first-year college students facilitating their transition into higher education through peer-to-peer engagement. By pairing incoming students with AANAPISI Peer Mentors, the program fosters academic persistence and a sense of cultural belonging. This structure, which has been evolved and changed through focus group participant feedback, has created a sustainable leadership pipeline, establishing a cycle where successful mentees eventually transition into mentor roles, and into the next generation of campus leaders. From grant years 3-5 (2023-2026), AANAPISI has had **63 mentees** served by **12 Peer Mentors!**

Student Quote: "When I first got here, I really don't know what to do, but they (AANAPISI Peer Mentors) have a clear path or they at least know what to do, like on school and they connect me with a lot more resources, which is very, very helpful."

# Conclusion

The focus group report provides valuable insights into the lived experiences of Asian and Pacific islander students at North Seattle College, shedding light on the critical factors that influence their sense of belonging, accessing necessary services, and first-year experience. While North Seattle College continues to make commendable strides towards fostering a supportive campus climate and provide targeted support, the discussions also reveal areas where A&PI students seek further development to meet the needs of their Asian and Pacific Islander student body. The hope for this report is that it gives the institution ideas, based in A&PI student voices, of how to continue building relationships, spaces, and programs that are inclusive, responsive, and foster a strong sense of belonging that will in turn improve student retention, completion and graduation/transfer.