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Author

Poon, Oiyan A.

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Resource Paper

AAPIs in the College Access Debate:
A Case of Generational and Communication Gaps in the AAPI Education Agenda

Oiyan A. Poon

Abstract

Through the presentation of a case study, this resource article argues for the establishment of a national, comprehensive Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) education organization to facilitate communication among educators, students, and community and institutional leaders in order to develop an education policy agenda based on community interests and research. It presents an analysis of the debate over a new University of California (UC) admissions eligibility policy. After discussing how Asian Americans are framed within admissions debates, the article summarizes the new UC policy and presents an analysis of the policy change, addressing concerns raised by two community leaders. This case study demonstrates the need to connect the diverse intergenerational, ethnic, and gendered voices among AAPIs in education.[1]

> These changes [to the University of California's policy on undergraduate eligibility for admissions] negatively affect [Asian Pacific Islander] API applicants and will likely result in lower percentages of API students being admitted to UC campuses. The Board of Regents unfortunately went ahead with the vote despite little public input and virtually no outreach to the API community. THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE. We intend to hold hearings and bring some sunshine to this unfortunate decision. We will continue to fight this decision.
>
> —E-mail from Assembly Member Ted Lieu (D), Chair of the California Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus, February 10, 2009

This alarming e-mail was sent to Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community leaders in California after the Universi-

ty of California (UC) Board of Regents approved a new admissions eligibility policy. This new Entitled to Review (ETR) policy, which is set to begin with the fall 2012 entering class, will redefine which high school graduates are entitled to have their applications reviewed in the UC admissions process. It is predicted to increase the number of California high school graduates guaranteed to have their applications reviewed by nearly thirty thousand including almost four thousand additional AAPIs.

Despite this predicted increase for AAPI students, AAPI community leaders in California including the API Legislative Caucus were alarmed by figures predicting potential demographic impacts of the new ETR policy on admissions outcomes.[2] Presented by the UC Office of the President (UCOP) in a hard to read table, figures predicting effects on admissions were easily misinterpreted. In a letter dated February 3, 2009, just one day before the UC Regents were set to vote on the proposed policy, the API Legislative Caucus sent a letter to the UC Regents raising several concerns, including an accusation that the UC had not sufficiently reviewed the proposed policy with the public. Without a dedicated AAPI community- and research-based organization to monitor and advocate on behalf of AAPI interests, the API Legislative Caucus and other community leaders were caught off guard by a policy that had been publicly vetted since 2006 through the formal university process.

In this resource article, I argue and call for the establishment of a national, sustained, and comprehensive community- and research-based organization to facilitate inclusive dialogue among students, teachers, researchers, elected officials, and other community organizations in order to identify and advocate for AAPI interests in education policy. The current debate over the new policy in the UC and how it may or may not negatively affect AAPI students is presented as a case study showing the necessity of an organization to connect the diverse intergenerational, ethnic, and gendered voices among AAPIs that advocate on education issues. After discussing the framing of Asian Americans and admissions in public discourse, I will summarize and analyze the policy change, focusing on concerns raised by two Asian American community leaders. This case study demonstrates the need for the establishment of an AAPI education organization to develop networks among growing numbers of AAPI students, teachers, researchers, and political and institutional leaders in order to proactively address education issues.

AAPIs Need to Proactively Assert a
Collective Voice in Education Equity Debates

Framing, College Access, Race, and Asian Americans

Espenshade and Chung (2005, 305) claimed that ending affirmative action would result in Asian Americans occupying "four out of every five seats created by accepting fewer African-American and Hispanic students." Making this statement, the authors did not show a direct correlation between an increase of Asian American students and decrease of black and Latino students in their analysis, and they also marginalized significant research by Asian American studies scholars that differentiates between negative action and affirmative action (Kidder, 2006).[3] Despite its flaws, the article reignited the national debate about Asian Americans, affirmative action, college admissions, and race. It motivated a Yale first-year student to file a civil-rights claim against Princeton, arguing that the university rejected him based on race (Golden, 2006). College counselors, in the fall of 2006, were also talking about the perceived narrow nature of the Asian American college-choice process; some admitted an anti–Asian American bias (Jaschik, 2006).

It is important to understand the controversy over the ETR policy within the context of an ongoing debate regarding racial inequalities in public education. Since the 1980s, as the numbers of Asian American college students increased, educational leaders struggled to understand this population within established frameworks of race in education. Although many East and South Asian Americans are achieving high levels of education, some Southeast AAPI groups are struggling to enter college (Ong and Dela Cruz-Viesca, 2006; Chang et al., 2007). Chang and Kiang (2002, 138) argue that educational institutions continue to "construct and assume monolithic, racialized images about Asian Americans," which ultimately confounds policy-making efforts from accurately accounting for AAPI issues in education.

Furthermore, in the discourse over college access, race, and AAPIs, an assertive and sustained AAPI perspective grounded in social justice values has yet to develop. Starting with *Bakke v. Regents of the University of California* (1978) if not earlier, opponents of affirmative action have worked to roll back civil-rights advances. To control the framing within political discourse, demagogues aiming to dismantle affirmative action policies have strategically

used the Asian American as a "racial mascot" — essentially using a manufactured image of successful Asian Americans in order to deflect public attention away from systemic injustices as the cause of racial inequalities (Cho, 1998; Kumashiro, 2008). The success of this framing largely depends on the silencing and exclusion of AAPIs from the public discourse (Kim, 1999). By the 1980s, the increase of Asian American students applying and enrolling at elite colleges threatened the status of white students as the majority (Lee, 2006). In response, the UC and private institutions began to place quotas on the numbers of Asian Americans admitted (Takagi, 1992; Nakanishi, 1995). Even though Asian American leaders in the 1980s protested the increase of white admissions, conservatives appropriated the situation, arguing that affirmative action hurt Asian Americans in favor of "undeserving" black students (Takagi, 1992; Kim, 1999). By defining affirmative action as an unfair policy of racial preferences, former UC Regent Ward Connerly and others were able to successfully pass Proposition 209 (Robles, 2006).

The current protests of the UC Regents' unanimous approval of a new eligibility policy by the California API Legislative Caucus and a handful of Asian American community leaders in San Francisco are also an extension of debates over policies addressing racial equity in higher education. Although some things have stayed the same since the 1980s, other things have changed, thus altering the debate. Since the 1980s, California voters passed Proposition 209; there have been exponentially more Asian Americans elected to public offices; and AAPIs make up nearly 40 percent of the UC undergraduate population with a significant number of them winning elections in student government associations throughout the UC system. The most significant change to the debate has been the passage of Proposition 209 in 1996, which amended the California state constitution to read, "The state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting." Although private institutions can still include race as one factor among many in their admissions processes, Proposition 209 prevents the UC from considering race in its admissions practices and in the awarding of scholarships.

As some things change, two primary matters have stayed the same as they did in the 1980s. First, media continues to ex-

amine how Asian Americans as a racial minority have achieved success, implicitly or explicitly drawing comparisons to other minorities that have not experienced as much success. In the 1980s, there were several articles in the media lauding the educational achievements of Asian Americans, which conveyed the message that "family values, reverence for learning, and hard work—rather than structural changes to an unjust racial system—were the keys to success" (Lee, 2006, 7). Although most media reports no longer advance the model minority thesis as blatantly as they did in the 1980s, they continue to ponder the reasons and repercussions for the high representation of Asian Americans at elite colleges. For example, "Little Asia on the Hill," a *New York Times* article about UC Berkeley, considered the curiosity of life on a campus where the largest racial group was Asian American (Egan, 2007). Under the cover of "satire," a column in the UCLA student newspaper called on the campus community to "Blame the Asians" for the low admissions rates of African Americans and Latinos and even the underrepresentation of whites (Levine, 2006).

The second matter that has not changed is the lack of organizational infrastructure to facilitate the development of an AAPI education agenda based on research and diverse community interests. Although research on Asian Americans in education has increased somewhat in the last two decades, applied policy research on AAPIs and education issues remains limited.[4] The UC AAPI Policy Multicampus Research Program has published two policy briefs about AAPIs and education in the last four years. The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families has published several reports on various Asian American education access issues, focusing on New York City.

Ong (2003, 396) argues that although Asian Americans complicate the debate over racial disparities in public institutions, "resolving these complications can help reformulate a sounder policy." Historically, AAPIs have participated in the discourse regarding education access and policy in a sporadic and reactionary manner, often reacting to the racial "mascotting" of Asian Americans in the debate over college access. One way to effectively disrupt this reactionary pattern of participation in education discourse and the racialized framing of AAPIs in education is to build a sustained AAPI education organization in order to assert a collectively developed education agenda in policy. Lee (2006, 11) argues, "to ad-

equately address real Asian American educational needs, one must be critical and vigilant of these representations and how they intentionally emerge and evolve as racist projects." The most significant cost to AAPIs sustained by the imposed framing is the silencing and distortion of the real challenges faced in education.

AAPIs Need to Organize across Intergenerational, Gender, and Ethnic Lines

The ETR Case and Conflicting AAPI Perspectives

> Stuart Varney: "Do you think the new policy is designed to get the proportion of Asians down?"
>
> Oiyan Poon: "Actually with the new policy, about 4,000 more Asian American students can apply to the University of California, who can currently not apply."
>
> Stuart Varney: "Asian American leaders in California say the exact opposite. They say, 'We do well on these tests. . . . It's a meritocracy. Let us in.' They say this policy change is deliberately designed to lower the number of Asians."
>
> Oiyan Poon: "I can't speak for them. However, a lot of Asian American college student [leaders], since about 2006 . . . have been fighting for this update in policy to be on par with places like Stanford."
>
> —From the *Stuart Varney Show* on
> Fox Business Network (June 19, 2009)

This excerpt illustrates the complex nature of the current debate and the lack of communication among AAPI student leaders, researchers, and other Asian American leaders. The lack of communication between the increasing numbers of politically active AAPI college students and publicly legitimized AAPI community leaders is yet another reason for a comprehensive and sustained AAPI education organization. As mentioned earlier, one thing that has changed since the 1980s is the increase of Asian American students active in student leadership. During the 2007/2008 academic year, seven of nine UC undergraduate student associations had Asian Americans representing their respective student-body interests at the regential and state level. At the annual congress meeting of the UC Student Association (UCSA) in 2007, with more than four hundred student leaders in attendance, many of whom were AAPI, students voted to adopt a campaign for the UC to update its eligibility

policy by dropping the SAT II-Subject test requirements.[5] Many student leaders at the 2007 congress were aware of the proposed policy from reports by the two UCSA-appointed student representatives to the UC Academic Senate Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS), which is the committee that developed and promoted the policy change. The two student representatives, Tina Park and Arshad Ali, were also Asian American students active in AAPI and other community activities with social justice missions.

AAPI student leaders active in educational equity work generally fell on one side of the debate, while other Asian American community leaders and the API Legislative Caucus fell on the other side of the debate. Using data from the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) and the UCOP, I examined the following six concerns raised about the new policy, which are outlined by Ling-Chi Wang[6] and Henry Der[7] in a letter dated April 20, 2009, sent to the UCOP:

1. New UC Freshman Eligibility Policy Violates the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education and Abandons Guaranteed Admission for the Top 12 ½ Percent of California High School Graduates.

2. New Policy Creates Ambiguity and Uncertainty for UC Eligible High School Graduates, and Is Fundamentally Unfair.

3. UC Adopts New Policy Without Adequate Public Input, Feedback or Consultation with All Segments of Higher Learning in California.

4. New Policy Creates a Less Diverse UC Student Body.

5. New Policy Embraces Eligibility Criteria That Are Known to Discriminate Against Students of Color, Poor Students and Immigrant Students.

6. New Policy Contradicts K–12 Efforts to Bolster Student Achievement and University Preparedness through Standards-Based Education.

Concern 1: Does the new policy violate the 1960 Master Plan?

Originally adopted by the California legislature in 1960, the "California Master Plan" is the public document that guides the development and management of the state's three-tier public higher education system. Since 1960, the Master Plan has been reviewed and amended several times to ensure that it adapts to the

changing educational needs of the state's population. The state has already begun reviewing the Master Plan for the 2010 update of the document.

One item in the Master Plan that has remained stable has been its guidelines for undergraduate admissions. The Master Plan mandates that the UC and the California State University (CSU) accept first-year undergraduate students from the top 12.5 percent and one-third of the state's high school graduates, respectively. The 2002 Master Plan states that, "Each system has respective authority to determine how the top one-third and one-eighth are defined for purposes of admission" (Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education, 2002, 40). Therefore, the UC and the CSU must determine and define the processes by which to select the top 12.5 percent and top one-third through their respective governance systems.

In order to evaluate each university system's ability to meet the admissions guidelines set, CPEC is charged with regularly estimating the numbers of California high school graduates meeting standards set for admissions eligibility by each university. In 2003, CPEC found that 14.4 percent of the state's high school graduates were eligible for UC admissions. In the current UC policy, to be eligible for admissions also means that a student is guaranteed entrance to at least one of the nine UC undergraduate campuses but not the campus or academic major of her or his choice. Given the results of the CPEC (2004) study, which showed an eligibility rate higher than the prescribed 12.5 percent, the UC was compelled to amend its eligibility policy.

Concerns 2 and 3:
Does the new policy increase ambiguity and uncertainty?
Was the new policy adopted without adequate public input?

Under current UC policy, there are three primary pathways for UC eligibility. High school graduates with a minimum 3.0 weighted GPA, who have completed eleven of fifteen prescribed college preparatory classes by the end of eleventh grade, and who have taken the ACT-writing test *or* the SAT I-reasoning test *and* two SAT II-subject tests of their choice can become UC eligible through local or state context. Students are UC eligible in local context (ELC) if they are in the top 4 percent of their graduating high school classes. They are UC eligible in state context if they are in the top 12.5 percent of the state's graduating high school seniors by an index

of GPA and test scores. They qualify for the third pathway, UC eligible by exam alone, if their standardized test scores are in the very top percentile of test takers. This third option does not require that a student meet the basic requirements of minimum GPA or coursework. Students who qualify for one of these pathways are deemed UC eligible, meaning they are guaranteed UC admissions, but not to the campus or academic major of their choice. Applications from UC-eligible students are forwarded to the campuses to which they apply and reviewed by those campuses' comprehensive review processes. Each campus independently operationalizes, weights, and evaluates the fourteen comprehensive review criteria (Johnson et al., 2008). Acceptance to a given UC campus depends on how an applicant fares in the comprehensive review processes at the campuses to which she or he applied. If all campuses applied to reject a student, she or he is still admitted to the UC by referral to a campus with space to accommodate the student. A UC-eligible student, for example, who applies to UC Santa Barbara, Berkeley, and UCLA and is rejected by all three campuses, is still guaranteed admissions to the UC. Currently, students are offered UC admissions by referral to UC Riverside or Merced. Unfortunately under the current policy, applications from students who do not meet the UC eligibility requirements may not be reviewed in the admissions process, even if the student has an extremely high GPA and outstanding achievements.

Public deliberations about ideas for a new policy began in 2006. At the Warren Institute Symposium at UC Berkeley in October of that year, a discussion paper by Brown et al. (2006) received considerable media attention. In the paper, the group of notable education scholars and leaders called for an overhaul of the UC eligibility policy. They criticized the current UC policy for its excessive dependence on standardized tests and high school GPA. Although high school GPA remains the best predictor of first-year college performance, standardized tests only explain about 5 percent of the variance in freshmen college GPA (Atkinson and Geiser, 2009). Therefore, Brown et al. (2006) contended that students who meet minimum GPA standards and apply to the UC should have their applications comprehensively reviewed for admissions.

Following the Warren Institute Symposium, in July 2007 the UC Regents also published its comprehensive "Diversity Study," which also received significant media attention. One of the find-

ings from the study was that since 1983, there have been significant racial disparities in the UC eligibility rates, raising concerns that the current policy will bear an adverse impact and violate Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Regents' "Diversity Study" recommended that student eligibility "should be determined on the basis of the broad set of students' achievements," student "achievements should be evaluated against the context of his or her educational opportunities," and that the "justification for requiring SAT Subject Tests in UC eligibility should be re-evaluated" (Undergraduate Work Team of the Study Group on University Diversity, 2007, 4).

Accordingly, the BOARS committee of the UC Academic Senate proposed and reviewed a new policy throughout the 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 academic years. In 2007/2008, the UCSA also worked to support the new eligibility policy.[8] In vetting the new policy, Academic Senate leaders followed UC regulations. Some may argue that UC deliberations in general are not transparent and may wish to change the institutional governance guidelines, but in this case there were no irregularities in the vetting of the policy. After the rigorous and formal ten-campus deliberation process, the proposed ETR policy in its amended form reached the Board of Regents for discussion and vote. During the public discussion process at each campus, student leaders, many of whom were AAPI, were also invited to review and discuss the policy.

The resulting new ETR policy, which replaces UC eligibility in the fall of 2012, simplifies requirements students must meet in order to be assured of an application review. Anecdotally, some UC undergraduates have shared with the author that their high school counselors and teachers, given the current policy, discouraged them from applying to the UC based on assumptions that the students could not possibly be in the "top 12.5 percent" of the state. To be guaranteed that their applications to the UC will be reviewed for admissions, high school graduates must maintain a minimum weighted GPA of 3.0 and complete eleven of fifteen college preparatory classes by the end of the eleventh grade. They must also complete the ACT-writing test *or* the SAT-I Reasoning test (SAT-R). Students will no longer be required to complete two SAT-II Subject (SAT-S) tests. By meeting these streamlined and more transparent requirements, high school graduates become ETR. They are guaranteed to have their applications read and considered in the UC admissions process. Another benefit of the new ETR policy is that

students and their families will also save money on testing fees and test preparation expenses for those who pay for such services.

The new policy also modifies the admissions guarantee. Students who are eligible in state and local contexts will continue to be offered the guarantee. ELC will be increased to 9 percent of each high school graduating class, and in state context it is decreased to 9 percent of the state, which will still be determined by an index of high school GPA and test scores. This "9 by 9" plan is predicted to extend a UC admissions guarantee to about 10.1 percent of the state's high school graduates. As in the current policy, these students will be guaranteed UC admissions but not admissions to the campus of their choice.

The new ETR policy also does not affect the actual comprehensive review admissions criteria and procedures at the nine undergraduate campuses, which are subject to change before the new policy begins in 2012. Because the "9 by 9" plan is expected to offer a UC admissions guarantee to about 10.1 percent of the state's high school graduates, the remaining 2.4 percent is expected to come from the ETR students who are not guaranteed admissions. In total, it is predicted that 21.7 percent of the state's high school graduates will meet ETR requirements. The top 12.5 percent would be determined based on comprehensive review of applications, with a mix of admitted students from an "ETR-guaranteed" pool and an "ETR-not guaranteed" pool. Therefore, the new policy casts a wider net and will, potentially, encourage a broader array of California high school students to apply to the UC, making the admissions process at the nine campuses more competitive.

Concern 4: Will the new ETR policy lead to a less diverse undergraduate population?

The fact that actual admissions criteria and the implementation of comprehensive review processes at each of the nine undergraduate campuses may change before the new policy is implemented makes it very challenging, if not impossible, to predict the demographic outcomes of the admissions process starting in 2012. Despite this challenge to predicting admissions outcomes, the UCOP published data predicting the potential impacts of the new ETR policy on UC admissions.

These UCOP projections, showing an increase in admissions of white students, a decrease of AAPIs, and the numbers of other

students of color remaining about the same, assumed that all students, regardless of race, apply to the UC at equal rates.[9] However, the college choice process varies significantly across different racial groups and, therefore, affects admissions outcomes. According to a CPEC (2005) study, 63 percent of AAPIs who are UC eligible choose to apply by submitting their application. UC-eligible white students have been the least likely to apply to the UC when eligible, with only 35 percent of them choosing to apply, although African Americans apply at a 55 percent rate and Latinos apply at a 51 percent rate.

Moreover, all predictive models are based on CPEC data about the high school class of 2007. These students' behaviors were undoubtedly shaped by the current UC policy. The high school graduating class of 2012 is expected to adapt to the new policy. It will be the responsibility of the UC to conduct widespread public outreach to educate students, families, and schools about the changes in policy. Although there has been public outcry over the potential impacts of the new policy on admissions demographics outcomes, admissions is largely unaffected by the ETR policy. Therefore, projections of admissions outcomes are highly speculative.

Next, we turn to predictions of the demographics of ETR students. Table 1, presented by UCOP at the February 2009 Regents meeting regarding the demographic shares of the ETR projections, seemingly predicts that AAPI students will decrease from 33 percent to 25 percent in the ETR numbers.[10] However, it is important to remember that the denominator of total students who are entitled to review has increased substantially. Table 1 compares the numbers of students currently eligible to the projected number of ETR students. Overall, a 62.7 percent increase (column E—total) in the number of students entitled to have their applications reviewed is predicted, from 46,795 (column B—total) currently UC-eligible students to 76,141 (column F2—total) students projected to be ETR in 2012. Although Asian Americans are expected to have the smallest increase (18.3%—column E) in students entitled to have their applications reviewed, 47.8 percent (column D) of all Asian American high school graduates are expected to be ETR, increasing from the 40.4 percent (column C) who are currently eligible. Filipino Americans are projected to experience a 66 percent increase (column E), from a 14.6 percent (column C) eligibility rate to a 24.3 percent (column D) ETR rate. Pacific Islanders, a population that experi-

Table 1: Comparison of Current UC-Eligible students to Projected ETR

	UC Eligible—2007 (Current Policy)			ETR Projections										
	(A) % of Total Eligible	(B) # Eligible	(C) Eligibility rate (% of CA HS grads)	(D) ETR Rate (% of HS grads)	(E) ETR-UC eligible % increase	TOTAL Number of ETR =		ETR with Guarantee			+	ETR without Guarantee	
						(F1) % of ETR	(F2) # of ETR	(G1) % of ETR-G	(G2) # ETR-G	(G3) % of Group Total ETR	(H1) % of ETR-No G	(H2) # ETR-No G	(H3) % of Group Total ETR
Total		46,795	13.4%		62.7%		76,141		35,475			40,666	
AAPI	32.6%	15,266	29.4%	37.0%	25.5%	25.2%	19,163	30.5%	10,808	56.4%	20.5%	8,355	43.6%
Asian American	27.7%	12,942	40.4%	47.8%	18.3%	20.1%	15,310	26.0%	9,217	60.2%	15.0%	6,093	39.8%
Filipino	3.5%	1,652	14.6%	24.3%	66.0%	3.6%	2,742	3.1%	1,116	40.7%	4.0%	1,626	59.3%
Pacific Islander	1.4%	672	7.9%	13.0%	65.3%	1.5%	1,111	1.4%	480	43.2%	1.6%	631	56.8%
Black	3.3%	1,560	6.3%	13.4%	114.6%	4.4%	3,347	2.8%	993	29.7%	5.8%	2,357	70.4%
Latino/Chicano	18.7%	8,731	6.9%	12.9%	86.6%	21.4%	16,294	17.5%	6,208	38.1%	24.8%	10,086	61.9%
American Indian	1.0%	88	6.3%	7.4%	210.2%	0.4%	273	0.3%	106	38.8%	0.5%	199	72.9%
White	42.7%	19,996	14.6%	25.9%	77.1%	46.5%	35,406	46.9%	16,638	47.0%	46.2%	18,768	53.0%

Sources: CPEC; UC Office of the President
Tabulated by Author

ences significant educational disparities, are predicted to increase by 65.3 percent (column E), from a current 7.9 percent (column C) eligibility rate to about a 13 percent (column D) ETR. Thus, the new ETR policy is expected to increase the eligibility rates of some of the most underserved AAPI ethnic subgroups.

With regards to the impacts of the "9 by 9" plan for the admissions guarantee under the new policy, a table distributed by UCOP summarizing the UC projections seems to convey that the Asian American eligibility will decrease from 32.6 percent to 25.5 percent ETR and to 30.5 percent ETR-guaranteed under the ETR policy in 2012. However, as we have already discussed, upon more careful reading of the figures, we see that the difference in the representation of AAPI in the total number of currently UC-eligible students (32.6% — column A) compared to the AAPI share of the total number of projected ETR students (25.2% — column F1) does not necessarily represent a numerical decrease of AAPI students entitled to admissions review. With the new ETR policy, nearly four thousand more AAPI students become entitled to have their applications reviewed for admissions—increasing from 15,266 (column B—current policy) to 19,163 (column F2). Additionally, the percentage of all AAPI high school graduates who are entitled to have their applications reviewed increases from 32.6 percent (column A) to 37 percent (column D) under the new policy. For Asian Americans (not including Filipinos and Pacific Islanders), the percentage of high school graduates predicted to be entitled to UC admissions review under the new policy increases from 27.7 percent (column A) to 47.8 percent (column D), which is the highest rate of ETR of all racial groups, meaning that nearly half of all Asian American high school graduates are predicted to have their applications reviewed under the new ETR policy. Although the numbers of AAPI students entitled to admissions review increases, the percentage share of AAPI students in the total ETR pool decreases because the increase of students entitled to review for other racial groups increases more than for AAPIs.

AAPI students, under the new policy, are predicted to represent 30.5 percent (Table 1, column G1) of the high school graduates predicted to be ETR and guaranteed UC admissions if they apply. Some have mistakenly compared the predicted 30.5 percent figure to the current percentage of AAPI students who are UC eligible (32.6%, Table 1, column A), and have asserted that the difference

between these figures indicates an anti-Asian bias in the policy change. Under the current eligibility policy, UC-eligible students are also guaranteed admissions to the UC. With the new policy, not all students entitled to UC admissions review will be guaranteed admissions. For all racial groups, the predicted ETR-guaranteed numbers (column G2) are smaller than their current UC- eligible numbers (column B) because the "guarantee" becomes more competitive in the new policy. For example, under the current policy, there are 19,996 white students (column B) who are entitled to admissions review in the UC. Under the new ETR policy, the number of white students who are both entitled to review and guaranteed UC admissions drops to 16,294 (column G2). Table 1 also shows that Asian Americans and AAPIs as an aggregate are predicted to have the highest rates of guarantee at 60.2 percent and 56.4 percent, respectively (column G3).

Additionally, analysis summarized in Figure 1 shows that the predicted population of ETR students in California will more closely resemble the state's population of high school students by high school quality, as measured by California Academic Performance Index (API) deciles. The lowest performing high schools are rated in API deciles 1 through 3. Highest performing schools are rated in API deciles 8 through 10. In Figure 1, the bar on the far left, CA HS Grads, illustrates the distribution of high school graduates by API decile categories. The second bar, Current UC Eligible, shows the distribution of high school origin by API decile group among the state's high school graduates. Graduates from the highest performing high schools in the state are overrepresented among currently UC-eligible students. In the third column (ETR), we see that the predicted high school graduates who will be entitled to admissions review more closely resembles the state. Finally, the column on the right (ETR-Previously Not Eligible) represents high school graduates who are currently ineligible for UC admissions review, but who will be entitled to have their applications reviewed in 2012. This group of students even more closely resembles the state in the type of high schools attended. Like many states, California continues to struggle with inequalities in the K–12 system, which privileges wealthier students in college admissions. The new ETR policy increases opportunity to students who do not attend the highest performing high schools, allowing more of them to at least have their applications reviewed in the UC admissions process.

The distribution of high school origins of ETR students who were not previously eligible most closely resembles the spread of students statewide.

Figure 1. Distribution of High School Students
by High School Quality

Source: CPEC; UC Office of the President
Tabulated by Author
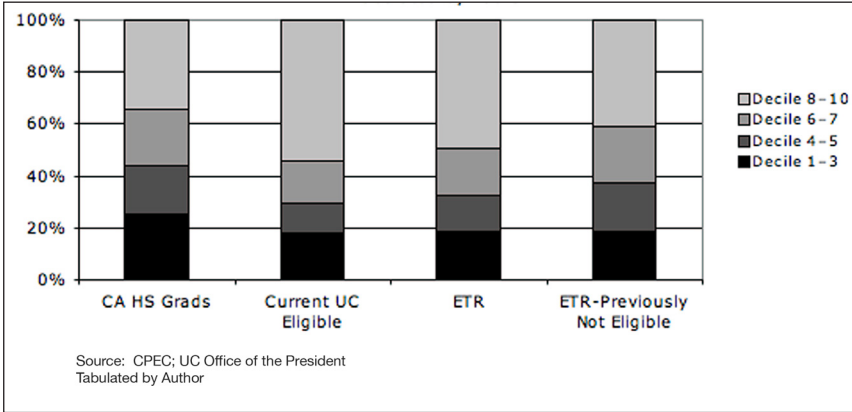
Concerns 5 and 6:
Does the new policy embrace eligibility criteria known to discriminate against students of color, poor students, and immigrant students?
By eliminating the SAT-S requirement, is the UC contradicting principles of standards-based education?

In the original BOARS proposal, the minimum required GPA was an unweighted 2.8, but through the university process each of the campuses' Academic Senates vetted the proposal, and this change was rejected. Thus, the final proposal that was approved maintained the required weighted 3.0 GPA. Given the great inequalities in the state's high schools, especially in the numbers of Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered, the use of a weighted GPA has been shown to unfairly penalize students of color, students from low-income families, and immigrant students who disproportionately attend high schools with lower quality curriculum (Johnson et al., 2008).

The final and most contentious issue raised by Wang and Der is the concern over the elimination of the SAT-S requirement. They claim that this change is particularly harmful to students of color, arguing that students who do well in their high school classes will

do well in subject tests. However, this is highly dependent on the assumption that all students attend high-quality K–12 schools with dedicated teachers and the same college preparatory curriculum. It assumes a level playing field in the K–12 system, but as research has shown this could not be further from the truth. Stark inequalities continue to plague the K–12 system in California and across the nation (UCLA/IDEA and UC/ACCORD, 2007). Also in support of their concern over the elimination of the SAT-S, Wang and Der cite evaluations of the SAT-R prior to changes made to the test in 2005, when the College Board made significant modifications to the test. Most notably, the new SAT-R included a writing portion, which provides an assessment of a student's ability to write an essay, perhaps the most important skill needed for academic success in college (Atkinson and Geiser, 2009). This change was found to make SAT-S scores nearly redundant to SAT-R scores, adding almost no predictive value to the overall prediction of a student's first-year college GPA (Rashid et al., 2008; Atkinson and Geiser, 2009).

Table 2 summarizes the effects of the SAT-S on UC eligibility, providing a comparison of the number of students who could benefit from the elimination of the SAT-S to those who would benefit from the maintenance of the SAT-S requirement. The number of currently UC-eligible students is listed in column A. Column B shows the number of students who would be UC eligible if they

Table 2: SAT-S Effects on UC Eligibility/ETR

	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
	# Current UC Eligible	Missing SAT-S, otherwise UC eligible	Net Effect– Eliminating SAT-S (%)	UC Eligible based on SAT-S scores	Students UC eligible based on SAT-S (%)
AAPI	15,266	2,488	16.3%	82	0.5%
White	19,996	12,582	62.9%	19	0.1%
African American	1,560	1,112	71.3%	32	2.1%
Chicano/ Latino	8,731	5,401	61.9%	535	6.1%
Native American	88	149	169.3%	—	0.0%

Data Source: UCOP; CPEC

Tabulated by Author

had not neglected to submit the required number of SAT-S scores, and column C shows the percent of each group that would benefit from the elimination of the SAT-S. Column D shows the number of students who are currently UC eligible based on their performance on the SAT-S.

Relatively few benefit from the maintenance of the SAT-S requirement in comparison to students who would benefit from the elimination of the SAT-S requirement. Although this change substantially increases the number of ETR white students by 62.9 percent, other populations are also predicted to increase significantly with African Americans and Chicanos/Latinos increasing by 71.3 percent and 61.9 percent in ETR, respectively, as seen in column C of Table 2. The net effect of eliminating the SAT-S requirement on AAPIs is a modest increase of 16.3 percent compared to other racial groups. However, nearly insignificant numbers of students benefit from the SAT-S. Only 82 AAPI students, or 0.5 percent, benefit from keeping the SAT-S, whereas 2,488, or 16.3 percent, benefit from the elimination of the requirement. Although 535 Latinos and 32 African Americans benefited from the SAT-S, 5,401 Latinos and 1,112 African Americans would benefit from the elimination.

Overall, the preceding discussions suggest that most of the concerns raised by Wang and Der are tenuous. The UC publicly vetted the new policy through formal university procedures, which do not require feedback from nonuniversity organizations. However, many AAPI student leaders participated and led efforts to support the new policy because they viewed it as an effort to increase opportunity for all students in the application and admissions process. The impact on actual admissions outcomes remains to be seen and must be monitored closely for any unintended disparate impact as 2012 approaches.

Toward a National, Sustained, Comprehensive, Community- and Research-based AAPI Education Organization

There is currently no sustained organizational infrastructure to develop an AAPI education policy agenda based on collective community dialogue and empirical research in order to actively monitor policy developments in any segment of education. The UC ETR case was presented to highlight the lack of communication between different generations of AAPIs working on educational equity issues, as well as the lack of proactive applied-research

analysis to inform an effective and representative AAPI communi-
ty position. Connections between research and communities must
be facilitated. Additionally, there is a need to bridge intergenera-
tional, gender, and ethnic gaps in the field of AAPI education. The
most publicly legitimized representatives of AAPIs in the ETR case
were East Asian American men, who were entitled to being widely
recognized as "Asian American leaders," although AAPI students
actively supporting the ETR policy were a younger generation of
women and men. Moreover, Pacific Islanders and Filipinos more
so than other Asian Americans are predicted to see significantly
increased numbers of students who can have their applications
reviewed for admissions under the new policy, representing a po-
tential divergence of interests.

In this case, AAPIs could have benefited from the facilitation
of communication among the API Legislative Caucus, actively con-
cerned community leaders, and AAPI student leaders in the UC
who have supported the policy change since 2006, bridging gener-
ational and communication gaps among various AAPIs concerned
with education policy. Unfortunately without such dialogue, the
views of a small group of privileged, more established AAPI lead-
ers ultimately contributed to the silencing of a younger generation
of AAPI leaders and pitted an older generation of AAPIs against
a younger generation in the ETR policy discourse. More impor-
tantly, better communication could have provided the API Legis-
lative Caucus and other AAPI leaders such as Wang and Der with
better data and analysis on which to form their opinions about
the new ETR policy. By facilitating inclusive dialogue among stu-
dents, teachers, researchers, elected officials, and other community
organizations, a new organization could facilitate the community-
based development of education policy agendas and positions.
Although Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE)
continues to organize an annual California conference, the organi-
zation focuses on higher education and does not address the vast
amount of issues in the pre-K through high school segments of
education. Within continuing debates on K–12 reform, there is no
AAPI agenda articulating these communities' concerns.

Chang and Kiang (2002, 155) call on Asian Americans to
"take greater collective responsibility for transforming the nation's
higher educational system, including its systemic engagement
with K–12 education and with Asian American communities." The

formation of a national AAPI education organization could serve to educate, connect, and empower AAPIs with interests in all segments of education to collectively engage in articulating a community-based agenda for education informed by empirical research. In the words of Yen Ling Shek, AAPIs need "communication, coordination, collaboration, and community" in order to advocate effectively in the field of education policy.[11] Although there are significant socioeconomic differences among this diverse population and potentially conflicting interests between groups, AAPIs must work through and take advantage of diversities within the panethnic community to articulate a collective agenda based on shared values of social justice in order to confront inequalities and privileges.

Notes

1. The author would like to especially acknowledge and thank Yen Ling Shek for critical and supportive feedback.
2. The API Legislative Caucus, formed in 2001, consists of elected members of the California state legislature—Senate and Assembly—who identify as AAPI. Its mission is to "represent and advocate for the interests of the diverse API communities throughout California. It seeks to increase Asian Pacific Islander participation and representation in all levels of government" (http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/apilegcaucus/default.htm [accessed 14 May 2009]).
3. Kang (1996, 3) defines *negative action* as the denial of "admission to an Asian American who would have been admitted had that person been White."
4. The amount of research on Pacific Islanders remains negligible.
5. The UCSA is the official collective organization that represents the interests of all UC students.
6. Wang is a professor emeritus of ethnic studies at UC Berkeley.
7. Henry Der was the executive director of Chinese for Affirmative Action for 25 years and former chair of the CPEC.
8. The author of this article was the elected president of the UCSA in 2007.
9. See Table 2 in www.universityofcalifornia.edu/regents/regmeet/feb09/e2.pdf (accessed 3 February 2009).
10. www.universityofcalifornia.edu/regents/regmeet/feb09/e2.pdf (accessed 3 February 2009).
11. Shek is a social justice educator and a PhD student in education at UCLA.

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OIYAN A. POON is a postdoctoral research associate for the Institute for Asian American Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston. She earned her PhD in education with a graduate concentration in Asian American studies from UCLA. Her research interests include Asian Americans in education, education access and equity, and racial inequalities and public policy. In 2007, Oiyan served as the president of the UC Student Association, which advocates for UC affordability and access, representing all UC students. As a coauthor of *Beyond Myths: The Growth and Diversity of Asian American College Freshmen, 1971–2005*, Poon and the other authors were recognized by the American College Personnel Association for research on Asian Pacific Islander and Desi Americans. Prior to beginning her doctorate at UCLA, Oiyan was the first Student Affairs Officer in Asian American studies at UC Davis and the first APA Student Affairs Director at George Mason University.

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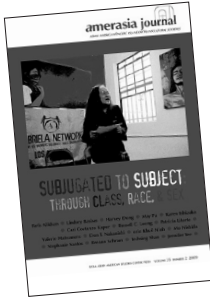
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