



# NAAPAE Newsletter

National Association for Asian and Pacific American Education

June 1989

## University Admission Under Fire

by *Monica Friedlander*

In an attempt to address continuous criticism of its admission policies, U.C. Berkeley has recently announced a number of changes in its admission criteria, some of which could directly or indirectly affect Asian students. But even this action does little to mute the new wave of criticism in the local and national media directed against admission policies nation-wide that discriminate against overachievers (Asian Americans included), and which often pit racial and ethnic groups against each other.

At the core of the controversy lies the conflict between the concepts of "equal proportions" and "equal standards." U.C. Berkeley, for example, has been striving since 1984 to raise its proportion of certain minority groups — such as Blacks and Hispanics — to bring them to parity with the proportion of those groups in the state's high school graduation class. The result has been an increase in the weight given to the race factor vis a vis "objective factors," such as SAT scores and GPA's.

In a nationally syndicated column, journalist Paul Greenberg recently attacked such policies, because of which, he wrote, "group entitlement replaces individual merit in American education, and therefore in American society." According to him, only 40 percent of the freshmen class at Berkeley is chosen on straight academic qualifications, while 38 percent is decided solely on the basis of race or ethnic group.

"All minorities are equal under the law," wrote Greenberg, "but some minorities turn out to be a good deal more equal than others." While Blacks have

gone from 5.6 percent of the class in 1983 to 10.8 percent in 1988, and Hispanics from 6.6 to 18.7 percent, the Asian percentage has decreased by 2 percent (28 to 26 percent) and Whites by almost 20 percent (56.3 to 37 percent).

U.C. has based its recent admission policies on its interpretation of a 1984 state resolution that called for an improvement in the college preparation of minority students that would bring the ethnic composition of students eligible for college admission to parity with that of the high school graduation class. But, as admission policy expert Arthur Hu stated in a recent column in *Asian Week*, "nowhere in the document is equality of enrollment mandated." The quota system that has been implemented is, if anything, contrary to the intent of the resolution, since a lowering of standards has been substituted for an improvement of qualifications.

While U.C. Berkeley's newly-announced policies (to go into effect the fall of 1991) are meant to deal with some of these issues, they are unlikely to have any drastic effect.

Some moderate increase in the percentage of Asians admitted will be achieved, since Asians will now be included among minorities to be accepted under the Economic Opportunity Program (EOP).

But the question of how to deal with the problem of high achievers has not been addressed. Some Asian advocacy groups would like to see all subjective

## NAAPAE Past Vice President Don Nakanishi Wins Tenure

Backed by intense community support, UCLA Asian American Studies professor Don Nakanishi won a three-year legal battle with university officials to become the first Asian American permanent faculty member at UCLA's Graduate School of Education.

To many people, Nakanishi's case had become a symbol for the obstacles faced by Asian Americans in this society, which makes his ultimate victory particularly meaningful to the Asian community.

"Don is the best we have," said Dale Minami, Nakanishi's attorney. "His case had become a sign that [Asians] were not going to be treated fairly."

A 1985 recipient of NAAPAE's National Scholar Award, Nakanishi has served on the faculty of UCLA for seven years. After being denied tenure in 1986, he filed two grievances in 1987, charging the university with racial bias.

The American Asian community has rallied behind his cause with an intense lobbying effort on his behalf, directed both at legislators and UCLA officials.

According to his supporters, university officials gave Nakanishi a negative review (on which the tenure denial was based) because of his research in the less traditional area of Asian American studies. His research on these topics was originally found to be "not relevant."

Nakanishi said he was pleased with the Chancellor's decision, and thanked his supporters for their efforts and long-term commitment to his struggle.

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## Hawaii Chapter Founded

Hawaii has formed its own organizational chapter — HAAPAE — with the goal of focusing on issues relevant to language and cultural minority groups in the island state.

Twenty-three charter members attended the initial organizational meeting, including administrators, professors from the University of Hawaii, and other members of the education field.

HAAPAE's next meeting is scheduled for September or October of this year, at which time members plan to examine the Hawaii Plan for Educational Excellence for the Pacific Era. The report focuses on structural changes in Hawaii's education system in response to the needs of language minority students.

For more information, please contact Virgie Chattergy at (808) 948-7856.

## APA Resource Guide

NAAPAE has just compiled a *Resource Guide for Asian and Pacific American Students, K-12*, to be used both by students and educators in their research and documentation.

The document includes information on a large collection of publications

that deal with linguistic, historical, and cultural topics concerning the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Pacific Islanders, and Southeast Asians. Also included are a section on children's literature and information on professional journals and newsletters, library and classroom materials, and community agencies.

To order this publication, please call Janet Lu at NAAPAE, (415) 834-9458.

## NAAPAE Member in Parenting Magazine

Former NAAPAE vice-president and long-time member Gay Yuen Wong was featured in the June/July 1989 issue of *Parenting* magazine. The well-written and informative article gives a detailed account of her family's bicultural lifestyle, and applies their experiences to those of the Asian American community.

## Multicultural Conference

NAAPAE's President-elect Trong Hai Tran was the keynote speaker at a multicultural conference held March 3 and 4 in Oklahoma. Regional Representative Vinh Tran helped organize the event, which was attended by 300 participants.

## Presenters a Hit at NAAPAE Conference

While most conference participants gave very good general ratings to the NAAPAE conference as a whole, they reserved their highest praise for the excellent panel of speakers assembled for the event. "I wish I could clone Mako Nakagawa," said one enthusiastic participant. "Bring her back next year."

Held on April 27-29, 1989 in Rockville, Maryland, the 11th Annual NAAPAE Conference featured 57 experts on Asian and Pacific American education. The event offered a wide variety of workshops and panel discussions, which were organized in five major strands: Asian and Pacific American Studies, Business and Career Education, Educational Equity Issues, Policy Development, and Instructional Practices and Resources. The latter one had the most workshop presentations (13), and covered topics such as: Amerasians, language acquisition, high technology literacy, and refugee training, among others.

One of the most popular workshops was a panel discussion on the status of Asian and Pacific Americans, which included experts from three universities and the U.S. Department of Education.

NAAPAE is already planning for next year's conference, to be held April 26-28 in San Francisco. We hope to see all of you there.

criteria removed, but such a move is hardly to be expected — if at all desirable.

Berkeley's new statement of policy bans racial quotas outright, and states that the school has an obligation to admit students with exceptionally distinguished academic records. These terms are still too vague, however. Since 40 percent of the class are being admitted on merit anyway, the new policy doesn't necessarily mandate a change, as long as the subjective element is still allowed in the decision-making process.

The problem is hardly unique to Berkeley, however. One study, for example, found that at Harvard Asian Americans need to score an average of 112 points higher on the SAT than Caucasians in order to be admitted. And according to Arthur Hu, Blacks and Hispanics are twice as likely as Whites to enter U.C.L.A., even though they only make up 3 percent of U.C.-eligible high school graduates.

Hu was right on the mark when he concluded that quotas are a simple political solution only "if we're willing to settle for a numeric definition of racial equality." True equality can only be achieved when all minorities become equally *qualified* for college admission, not equally admitted.

Clearly, the issue will not be put to rest by policy changes like those adopted by U.C. Berkeley. As long as all racial and ethnic groups cannot perform equally well in school and on standardized tests, equal proportions will be incompatible with equal standards.

It is thus the responsibility of national, state and local education authorities to see that education institutions offer all students the right preparation to come as close as possible to the ideal of equal performance.

Offering continuous preferential treatment to some students based on nothing but race, however, is short-changing not only the overachievers, but all students, including those whom the system attempts to assist in the first place.

## New OBEMLA Director

Starting July 1, 1989, the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) of the U.S. Department of Education will have a new director. Rita Esquivel, now assistant superintendent of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, has been appointed to succeed Alicia Coro in this position.

As OBEMLA director, Ms. Esquivel will oversee federal programs for limited English proficient students and will help local education agencies meet the special needs of immigrant and refugee children.

Ms. Esquivel has served for over 30 years in Texas and California public schools and has been assistant superintendent of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District since 1987.

## New Push for Foreign Language Instruction

The California State Department of Education has launched a state-wide public awareness campaign to promote the study of foreign languages in California schools. Known as the "Foreign Language Initiative", this effort is expected to place heavy emphasis on the study of Asian languages, an area that has traditionally received limited attention in the past.

As part of its news strategy, the Education Department has formed a Chinese Language Teaching Advisory Committee to assist the state in promoting Asian languages. The committee held its first meeting last March.

The initiative aims to teach languages in a cultural context; develop fluency, rather than just ability to communicate; convey a more positive image to the study of foreign languages; educate counselors to promote the value of Asian languages; and give students and counselors exposure to a variety of languages.

To promote this effort, the Educa-

tion Department plans to advertise in the media, encourage corporate involvement in education, involve schools and communities, and eventually offer packets of resource materials targeted for specific Asian languages.

In a related effort to increase incentives for foreign language study, the Education Department has amended its college entrance requirements for the U.C. and C.S.U. systems to offer public school credit for private language instruction, contingent on passing a proficiency test.

## U.S. English Sponsors Open Conference

Bilingual education was, surprisingly, the topic of an April conference funded by U.S. English, an advocacy group that supports the English-as-official-language position, and which often argues against bilingual education. Entitled *Public Policy Issues in Bilingual Education*, the open Washington D.C. conference drew a number of *pro* bilingual education advocates, who argued that parents should have the right to choose the language in

which their children are taught. At the same time, however, they emphasized that such practices should be designed in a way that promotes the learning of English.

U.S. English stressed that its conference was open and that it did not invite the conference participants. Under the circumstances, the group had no control over discussion topics. A key point that emerged was that both sides lack solid research on the effectiveness of bilingual education, and that studies can always be found to support either position.

Christine Rossell from Boston University recommended that schools offer voluntary bilingual education, and if necessary, extend school days such that LEP students can receive the same amount of English instruction as their native English-speaking counterparts.

James Banks, from the University of Washington, cited the contribution of bilingual education to the promotion of positive relations among people, and called on the nation to adopt a policy of teaching all students in both English and Spanish.

## Place your ad in this space!

Up to one page of advertising space will be made available starting with the next issue.

The space will be sold on a first come-first serve basis. If you would like other NAAPAE members to read your message, call Janet Lu at NAAPAE, (415) 834-9455, for advertising rates and other information.

## Announcements

### Opening for Asian American Program Director

The Asian American Studies department of the University of California at Davis seeks a program director at the associate or full professor level to provide leadership in developing an undergraduate program and major.

Requirements include: intimate knowledge of one or more Asian American communities currently within the scope of Asian American studies and the ability to provide fair and equitable leadership relative to these groups. Excellence in teaching Asian American Studies and a distinguished record in research are also essential.

Historians are especially encouraged to apply, but candidates with strong social science backgrounds will also be considered. Salary is commensurate with experience, and duties will begin in the fall of 1990.

Please submit your resume, a letter outlining research plans and courses

you plan to teach, and the names and addresses of at least three references by September 15, 1989, to: George Kagiwada, Chair, Search Committee, Asian American Studies Program, University of California, Davis, CA 94616.

### Minority Health Office

In order to deal with the disproportionately high rate of illness and premature deaths among minority populations, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has established the *Office of Minority Health Resource Center*, which will promote awareness of health problems and serve as an information resource for the public and health care professionals.

The center provides information services, a computerized database on minority health priorities, written materials, and a hotline toll free number (1-800-444-6472) to respond to requests.

For further information about OMH, please call Karen W. Payne at (301) 587-1938.

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Unless otherwise stated, the views expressed or implied in this publication should not be interpreted as official positions of the Association.

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