

Influx of Asian Pacific Americans/Veterans in American Universities
Steven Bailey
August 17, 2011

Introduction

Asian Pacific Americans (APA's) are one of the fastest growing racial/ethnic groups within the United States and among most of the college student vast population (Escueta & O'Brien, 1995). APA's represented 5.8% of all college students in 1996, an 83.8% gain in population since 1986 (Wilds & Wilson, 1998), and the fastest increase amongst all racial groups over the past 30 years (Suzuki, 1995). This trend is expected to continue, with APAs making up 1.3 million of the projected 16 million undergraduates in 2015, an 86% increase since 1995 (Carnevale & Fry, 2000). The percentage of APAs on a campus varies widely in different geographical locations, with APAs making up over 50% of the student body at some California colleges or universities.

With these Asian Pacific Americans, their countries have in place a rigorous military obligation that needs to be satisfied among their young, healthy men. To accomplish this goal for their countries, many young men have to leave their school to attend to their military duties. So with such a large and getting larger population coming and going, what problems will this have on our students and advisors?

Case Study

One of the South Korean students comes into the adviser's office to explain that he is having problems being in a class with younger, undisciplined students. He explains that when he is sitting in class; he can hear disruptions from his peers and can't understand why they won't listen to the instructor. They seem to be more interested in what they're going to do that evening at one of the Frat Houses, than to listen to the lecture being given.

He is having a hard time understanding the talk given by the instructor and even though he sits up front, he cannot hear what is being explained. But mostly he is upset and perturbed, because of the other students not paying attention and off doing other things on their laptops or PDA's. All he hears is clicking of keyboards and chatting behind him. He has paid his tuition like these other students, but is having a hard time concentrating on the course's lecture.

He is one of the many South Korean students that have just been readmitted back to his American school from the Korean military. He has spent the last three years training, marching, and doing other duties that pertained to his military responsibilities. He has seen gun fire and exploding devices nearly take off his friends' limbs and can only hear their cries and suffering. He and his troop had to be very structured and disciplined while he was in the service and this had matured him in all his 20 years.

Questions

His professional advisor is also a veteran and can feel for his actions, as he has been in the same situation while serving his country. How can we as advisors help this student with what may be some type of PTSD and how can we help him as a foreign student? Is there any way of getting him to work with his class faculty members and have them stress the importance of some in the class as to having problems listening and for the whole class to be calm and listening and not working on their laptops?

Solutions

One of the many benefits an advisor has is to listen to the student and let him explain his thoughts without any disruptions. Most advisers have a common ground with faculty members and may explain to the instructor that keyboard strokes or other noises seem to bother this one student and to not allow such actions in his or her classroom. Korean students hold most of their

problems within themselves and feel inappropriate to explain their feelings to anyone, except their friends and or their family members.

Korean students have great pride in what they expect to be seen from their parents' eyes and will not divulge more than they have to others. Most of the Korean students would also like to work out their problems by themselves, but in an encouraging way, help them by saying that you will stand behind them and maybe offer to go to the professor and explain the situation that they are encompassing. It is good to see that one Korean student will go to an advisor for help and now the word will get around, that if the advisor had done his or her job properly, this will help other Korean students, too.

With the large influx of APA's in our school systems and with the mandatory military service requirements, advisors need to brush up on their listening skills and help these students understand that they are not alone in their endeavors to pursue their college education. More and more APA's will be arriving and schools need to be flexible with this population and let them tell the advisers how they want to be treated, in order to keep the stress level low among both parties.

References

- Carnevale, A. P., & Fry, R. A. (2000). *Crossing the great divide: Can we achieve equity when Generation Y goes to college?* Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Escueta, E., & O'Brien, E. (1995). Asian Americans in higher education: Trends and issues. In D. T. Nakanishi & T. Y. Nishida (Eds.), *The Asian American educational experience: A source book for teachers and students* (pp. 259–272). New York: Routledge.
- Suzuki, B. H. (1995). Education and the socialization of Asian

Americans: A revisionist analysis of the 'model minority' thesis. In D. T. Nakanishi & T. Y. Nishida (Eds.), *The Asian American educational experience: A source book for teachers and students* (pp. 113–132). New York: Routledge.

Wilds, D. J., & Wilson, R. (1998). *Minorities in higher education 1997–98: Sixteenth annual status report*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.

Steven J. Bailey is an Administrative Advisor at Rhode Island School of Design and can be contacted at: sbailey@risd.edu