Equity in Action Grant Program

Grant Final Report Form

Principal Investigators (PIs) are required to submit final reports within **60 days** of their EIA grant end date. A delinquent report may jeopardize or delay future Network funding. The information you provide helps us improve and justify the continuation of this grant program. The Network may also contact PIs for longer-term impact reporting and may request permission to use elements of these reports in Network activities (Conference sessions, Academy sessions, etc.) and communication both within the CSU system and to external stake-holders.

Summary Grant Information

Grant Title:	Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander Equity in Action
PI Name:	Theresa Suarez, Ph.D.
PI Campus:	CSU San Marcos
Grant Start Date (month/YYYY):	June 2022
Grant End Date (month/YYYY):	December 2023
Final Report Submission Date:	February 29, 2024 (extended to July 31, 2024)

Major Outcomes

1. Summarize your project's outcomes against the original goals proposed for advancing equitable student learning, engagement, progression, and completion.

The project's outcomes show progression in meeting the proposed goals. First, we have forged community partnerships within our local region with several Pacific Islander cultural organizations in North County San Diego dedicated to community-centered learning in K-16 education: Chamorro Hands in Education Links Unity (Che'lu); Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC); 'Umeke Inc.; Organization of Chinese Americans/ Asian Pacific American Advocates of San Diego; Asian & Pacific Islander Initiative; and Save Our Streets/ Youth Opportunities Network, Inc. Second, we hosted 3 of 4 peer mentoring events on campus in the Spring '23 term (monthly) to help us identify and engage NHPI students that will assist us in institutionalizing a learning community/ student-centered peer mentoring organization. Third, leadership development/ civic engagement for students is organized through meaningful learning opportunities with community partners. As examples: participation in hosting the largest Chamorro Cultural Festival in the region on the CSUSM campus, after four months of bi-weekly/ weekly planning (3-25-2023); youth leadership development sponsored through the non-profit organization Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC) and co-organizing a tailored peer mentoring event #2 on 3-14-2023; co-sponsorship of EPIC's college leadership summer program, the Pacific Islander Leaders of Tomorrow (PILOT) curriculum, held in residence at CSUSM on July 21-27, 2024 at CSUSM); and field learning and training experiences for NHPI students (Fall 2023 - Fall 2024) through inaugural funding for designated staff and space that support the Asian, Pacific Islander, and Desi American (APIDA) Initiative for students in AY '23-'24. In fact, the institutional commitment from within Student Affairs and the Office of Inclusive Excellence for the "APIDA Initiative" resulted partially from achieving the goals set forth with this project to support a related campus APIDA Student Success Workgroup Report that we also completed in Summer 2022.

2. Comment on additional outcomes not directly associated with the project (partnerships formed, additional funding support gained)

We formed an "away team" of NHPI campus leaders in September 2022 for the Middle Leadership Academy team to meet the objectives of the proposed goals - and were selected to represent CSUSM. Building local leadership from the NHPI community on campus was crucial to envisioning sustainable goals of the NHPI Equity in Action grant, and we sent full teams to the MLA in November 2022 and in February 2023. The "away team" of (7) faculty/ staff, as well as a growing number of "home team" faculty/ staff/ students/ alumni, began to meet regularly in February 2023 to expand the vision/ objectives of the NHPI Equity in Action at CSUSM. Select faculty/ staff members of the "home" and "away" teams submitted a new grant application collectively on February 13, 2023 for a CA Stop the Hate funding award from the California Department of Social Services. Our appplication was awarded funding in July 2023 – what we call our Unifying APIDA Communities Together (U-ACT) team.

The application narrative extended goals laid out initially as an exercise through the NHPI Equity in Action team; we received $600K to forge meaningful intervention and prevention service partnerships with three community partners over two years (through 2025) to meet the educational and leadership needs of K-16 Pacific Islander families and communities in our region. Finally, deepening relationships of trust as a CSUSM MLA team encouraged new partnerships with Samoan community-based churches (specifically the Assembly of God) throughout the West Coast region. As such, our campus was untapped to host the "SoCal Pelanga" a 700-attendee multigenerational conference held on July 12-14, 2024 at which 5 states and 22 churches were represented. Since then, additional religious denominations have been willing to connect and allow us to share information about our campus services for NHPI students and all students.

3. Specify any unanticipated project developments (i.e. unanticipated barriers or unexpected wins)

Unanticipated project developments are varied, all of which took time. First, and foremost, not having assigned time or course buy-outs as the faculty lead took a toll on the proposed timeframe, as I needed to identify and apply for opportunities for these right away (and during my heavy teaching term of Fall 2022 for the following term). I was able to apply for and obtain two arrangements for assigned time: one from the Office of Student Affairs, and the other from the Provost Office. These are typically for 3-unit WTUs, yet my senior-level classes are 4-unit WTUs; so, I had to work with my Department Chair on ways to fill-in the difference. Notably, advising graduate students are not part of any assigned time/ course buy-out arrangement, and I do teach overload for one of our fully online department programs. Second, the details involved in establishing the workflow for NHPI Equity in Action, and for the APIDA Initiative as a whole, overlap and require additional assistance, in part because my everyday purview as faculty means I have had little practical experiences with the processes for engaging administrative culture/ hierarchy on student equity issues. In fact, the VP of Student Affairs gave the APIDA Initiative an emergency hire for an APIDA Coordinator at the start of Spring 2023. Unfortunately, the pathway through hiring that person met with time-consuming obstacles (including the provost hiring our candidate for another position) and has yet to be filled because it currently remains in review by the AVP of Student Life. Furthermore, hiring from the NHPI Equity in Action grant of a recent NHPI alum (December 2022) to assist with the development of the NHPI peer mentoring programs was essential because there were few to no available or interested NHPI students that we could hire to assist us. With time, that should change as NHPI students on campus get to know and trust the Equity in Action team, vision, and objectives. Also, hiring the NHPI alum has moved slowly; at first, the alum was not yet separated from previous campus employment (and didn't realize that), and then was out of country for three weeks, near the start of the term. Eventually, we were able to hire two recent NHPI alumni as "helper/aids" or casual workers. Still, reaching out to NHPI students on campus (about 223 self-identified in all, although identity is subjective and can be complex) has resulted in less than 25 students at each mentoring event; with a handful more in touch by email exclusively due to scheduling conflicts. Hopefully, hiring support will assist me as team lead with improving relatively low participation.

4. If applicable comment on any longer-term outcomes, you anticipate from your Equity in Action Grant funded project. Also, please estimate anticipated achievement dates (month and year.)

The aim to double the number of active student participants through Fall 2023 on campus was met with less than ten (and in a few cases, to less than 5 people) at each bi-weekly meeting. New APIDA staff and frequent scheduling appeared in part to cause the downswing; we underestimated the importance of establishing and retaining student rapport with familiar faces and scheduling).   In partnership with the Arts and Lectures series with the College of Humanities, Behavioral, and Social Sciences (CHABSS), we co-hosted the largest concert event in the history of the series on the weekend of Oct. 23rd. One of our MLA faculty is also a musician and part of the trio "Faiva" which performed music in Samoan and with acoustic instruments. We hosted parking costs for a local NHPI community college "Mana" and key NHPI community figures and families from our region. We also co-hosted a campus "United in Servingness" event on Nov. 9th, 2023 with the CSUSM Latinx Center - a fellow recipient of the Equity in Action Grant – to introduce and broaden the notion of "servingness" as minority-serving institutions (whether or not deemed officially as such by federal standards). Indeed, there are varying notions and experiences of this concept from within NHPI communities, too. Our goal is to demonstrate a partnership that engages all students at CSUSM on holistic meanings of student success grounded in cultural wealth. Ultimately, the hope is that our partnership (Latinx and APIDA) may further align our collective efforts at navigating federal minority institution funding opportunities in the future.

Assessment and Communication

5. Describe efforts to communicate and disseminate project outcomes with your campus.

First, several of us developed and delivered a pitch to the President and Cabinet in October 2023, based on a campus report we completed in the previous summer on APIDA Student Success Recommendations. None of us had experience with that, but we received feedback that it was informative, concise, and clear. Within that recommendation report were prominent sections dedicated to addressing equity gaps among NHPI students within aggregated institutional APIDA data. Second, we were invited to create a campus website of the APIDA Initiative. We have been developing the sections of the website; despite hiring delays of a Coordinator, we are hopeful about accelerating the pace to completion by the end of the term. Third, upon advice received from our pitch at MLA II Sacramento to call our work an APIDA "Initiative" we have assembled the APIDA Initiative Steering Committee of approximately 20 members representing offices from across the university to invite insight on meeting the objectives of the APIDA Initiative, which include addressing NHPI equity gaps. We met by Zoom on March 27th for 1.5 hours, with three breakout sessions organized thematically by roles on campus and with forms completed by each one with response feedback. Incidentally, the online event was fortuitous because I tested positive for Covid (first time) just a few days prior! One of the Steering Committee members is an enthusiastic student hire provided by the Office of Student Affairs and represents the second largest APIDA group on campus - Vietnamese students. I meet with the student weekly about building stronger in-roads with Vietnamese students and communities, and we're developing plans for a meeting with students by the end of the term.

6. Provide a summary of your assessment activities and results, where available.

To summarize our assessment activities thus far. First, attendance records and written/ artistic feedback by students at all mentoring events to gauge levels of belongingness and cultural validation without being intrusive, ineffective, and superficial (i.e., survey fatigue). Second, a video in development that captures our student-centered activities and community engagements as an APIDA Initiative (an undergraduate student was provided by the Office of Student Affairs, and represents the largest APIDA group on campus - Filipinx students), with eventual placement on our new campus website at www.csusm.edu/apida. A handful of alumni interviews provide a retrospective look at NHPI student resilience and how to identify areas for meaningful institutional improvements for the future. Finally, analysis of daily survey data from the PILOT summer leadership program with college students (n=14) is underway.

Lesson Learned

7. As you reflect on the strategies and activities implemented during this grant, which were successful?

The strategy of spending even modest amounts of funding for off-campus catering ($250) to solidify community partnerships and to entice students missing traditional fare was the wisest by far. Sharing food as nourishment and gift demonstrates the value of reciprocity so commonplace among indigenous communities; yet, institutions widely restrict this basic expression of human care and concern for well-being. Next, supporting community partnerships allowed us to learn from and bring in expert youth leadership curriculum from community-centered perspectives – at campus meetings and over time in co-hosting a residential program. Finally, covering parking costs for community engagement at CSUSM allowed students and stakeholders to get to know our campus through NHPI Equity in Action sponsored events.

8. By comparison, what strategies did you find were unsuccessful?

Identifying available NHPI students to hire and assist with the development a peer mentoring program hasn't been easy. We provided an honorarium to a community partner (EPIC) to assist us with developing and delivering a model for culturally sustaining peer mentoring and leadership development that can impact more students.

9. Given your experience with the Equity in Action Grant Program, what changes would you recommend to better support you toward your goals?

I would suggest organizing the MLA Convening (March 2023) before MLA Session I to better prepare teams - or even just the team leads. Attending the Convening for the first time (and after MLA II) really widened my imagination about the skill-building and team-building I am engaging in. As a team lead, I have a deeper appreciation for the roles of assessment and logic models within this context for institutional change after attending the MLA Convening – more so than from MLA Session I.

10. What can the CSU Student Success Network do to help our campus in its efforts to identify, understand and disrupt inequities in our system?

I believe it would help to name aloud the equity challenges among faculty roles in confronting racial, gender, economic privileges (and more) from among fellow faculty, administrators, and staff. That the "locus of power" of faculty is deemed "prestige" is not equitably experienced at all, and can compromise middle leadership development. As well, to better communicate the CSU Student Success Network as a resource is administered separately from the CSU Chancellor's Office. I initially found the disconnection confusing yet compelling!