**Ethnicity/Ancestry Expansion Proposal**

Contacts: Linda Wah, Trustee Pasadena City College, Chair of the API Trustee Caucus; Craig Hayward, Bakersfield College Dean of Institutional Effectiveness; Erik Cooper, Sierra College Dean of Planning, Research and Resource Development

Issue:

Proposal to expand the number of ethnicity categories collected on incoming students

Background

The Student Equity Planning work of the past several years has resulted in a system-wide focus on closing equity gaps. The current Student Equity Plan (SEP) guidelines, however, do not include all ethnic groups that are relevant for distinct and diverse local communities served by the 114 colleges. For example, State Center College has a sizeable Hmong population in its service area. However, their ability to conduct research, identify equity gaps, and direct resources in ways that will effectively close those gaps has been impeded because “Hmong” is not an ethnicity category that is collected on the standard application. Educational attainment rates in Hmong American communities are extremely low: only 14% have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher.[[1]](#footnote-1) In comparison, 49% of Asian Americans, when construed as a broad group, have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Situations like this, which are common across the state, led a diverse set of community college stakeholders to convene a workgroup focused on the development of a proposal to expand the ethnicity group data collected via the standard CCC application (CCCApply) and make that data available via the statewide MIS. This proposal is the result of nearly two years of dialogue and research by an array of stakeholders, including equity directors, Chancellor’s Office staff, researchers, counselors, trustees, and faculty members. The proposal would expand the number of ethnicity or ancestry categories to include those with populations over 10,000 in the state (e.g., Fijian, Hmong, Persian). It would also provide for a greatly expanded collection of data on specific Native American tribes, including all those that are recognized by the state of California.

Currently, the CCC system collects information on 21 distinct ethnicity or ancestry categories. For comparison purposes, consider that the CSU system collects data on 113 categories while the UC system collects data on 73 categories. CCCApply collects ethnicity information by first asking applicants if they are Hispanic or Latino. Respondents who select “Yes” then see an expanded set of more specific options to choose from. This the same mechanism that the proposed expansion will use to ensure that the collection of the additional, more specific ethnic groups is minimally disruptive to the application process. It would first ask about identification with seven broad ethnic groups (African-American or Black; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian (including Filipino); Hispanic or Latino; Middle Eastern or North African; Pacific Islander; and White). Only applicants who select one of the broad groups would then see the set of more detailed ethnic groups contained under that broad category. Multiethnic applicants are able to select as many groups and subgroups as needed. For comparison purposes the level of detail in the current and proposed ethnicity groupings are shown in table 1 on the next page.

Table 1. Comparison of level of detail in current and proposed ethnicity collection

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Broad group** | **Current no. of groups** | **Proposed no. of groups** |
| African American or Black | 1 | 11 |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 1 | 118 |
| Asian (including Filipino) | 10 | 18 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 4 | 19 |
| Middle Eastern or North African | 0 | 13 |
| Pacific Islander | 4 | 6 |
| White | 1 | 9 |
| **Total** | 21 | 194 |

The majority of the expanded categories are subgroups that fall under the broad “American Indian or Alaska Native” group. There are 76 non-Native American subgroups while the Native American category comprises 118 subgroups. There are several reasons for this. The rule that in order to be included groups must have a population of at least 10,000 in California did not work well for Native Americans. This is in part because information on the populations sizes of most Native American tribes is not generally available. Additionally, Native American populations in California are often highly localized, making some groups relevant in certain service areas even though their overall numbers may be low. Finally, Native Americans generally tend to have the largest equity gaps and are therefore any information that would allow for more effective equity planning and services would be very helpful.[[2]](#footnote-2) Finally, the decision to expand collection of Native American subgroup information was essentially a binary one: either include all California-recognized tribal groups or none of them. Therefore, this proposal recommends including all California tribal groups as well as the largest national tribes. Even though this adds a large number of groups to the proposal, only those applicants who select the broader category of “American Indian” would see that larger list.

This proposal was reviewed by the Chancellor’s Office Data, Evaluation and Research (CODER) group, which includes representatives from the Chancellor’s Office MIS and research units as well as other stakeholders from the Research and Planning Group, Education Results Partnership, and the Workforce and Economic Development Division of the Chancellor’s Office. The proposal was favorably reviewed and recommended to be advance for adoption. One area of particular focus was the discussion of how students feel a sense of belonging when they see their ethnic background represented as an option. In particular, the discussion focused on whether to include all Native American tribes that are recognized by the state of California and if not, where to draw the line. Additionally, the proposal has been reviewed by CCCApply staff at the Butte Technology Center and they have indicated that it would be a straightforward task to implement the proposal and include the expanded ethnicity and ancestry groups in the application.

The information gathered from the expanded categories will allow colleges to better target resources and services in ways that will first identify and then close equity gaps. Providing ethnicity information will continue to be optional for applicants and the increase in the number of categories will be a minimal disruptive as the detail subgroups will only be seen if a larger group is selected first. Finally, this proposal is completely compliant with federal reporting requirements as all subgroups can be easily rolled up into the required federal ethnicity and race reporting categories.

1. Center for American Progress. (2015). *Who are Asian Americans?* Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2015/04/28/111694/who-are-asian-americans> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Education Trust. (2013, August 13). *The state of education for Native students.* Retrieved from <https://edtrust.org/resource/the-state-of-education-for-native-students> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)