

March and May 2004: Two letters to the Dean of the Faculty regarding Asian American Studies
Dartmouth College Open Letter

Date: March 1, 2004

To: Michael Gazzaniga, Dean of the Faculty

From: Members of the Pan Asian Council

Re: Asian American Studies at Dartmouth College, an Open Letter

Dear Dean Gazzaniga:

Over the past seven years, Asian and Asian American students have been working toward the development of Asian American Studies (AAS) at Dartmouth College. Recently, members of the Pan Asian Council (PAC) have been meeting with faculty and administrators to discuss Dartmouth's commitment to AAS and its viability. PAC is a representative umbrella organization that includes about 20 Asian and Asian American-related student groups. As a community, we believe that the development of an AAS minor is a viable possibility and can become a reality with a firm commitment by the College.

The time is right for the College to act on this issue: AAS as an academic field has experienced tremendous growth in the past few decades and will add to Dartmouth's illustrious curriculum. Furthermore, the number of Asian and Asian American students has been on the rise yet their representation in the curriculum is lacking: the 2002 Race Matters Conference Report specifically calls for equal status for ethnic studies. Finally, an AAS minor promotes interdisciplinary work, and would only require adding a few more courses to the AAS-related courses that already exist.

Given these trends, we students recommend the following:

- The Deans and administrators must provide leadership in the pursuit of AAS at Dartmouth. We encourage the Deanery and administration to provide a formal policy statement on how AAS fits in to Dartmouth's academic goals.
- Within the next two years, the College should conduct an open search and hire a tenured senior faculty member suited to overseeing the development of an AAS minor at Dartmouth.
- Immediately, the College should actively recruit and retain other tenure-tracked AAS professors. The Deans and administrators should work closely with departments, programs, and campus resources to ensure that these scholars reside in strong intellectual communities.

Dartmouth has built a reputation upon being a "diverse" community. However, these recommendations are but a stepping-stone to achieving true diversity – one that extends beyond statistical numbers. A commitment to AAS is a commitment to achieving diversity in intellectual thought, diversity within the leaders of academia, and diversity in institutional

representation of Asian and Asian Americans. Moreover, the incorporation of the continuously expanding field of AAS into the academic curriculum is a valuable opportunity for Dartmouth College to enhance its reputation as a leader in liberal arts education. We hope Dartmouth College will continue to adhere to these principles of academic excellence and institutional diversity by making Asian American Studies a priority to the community at large.

We would like to follow up on the contents of this letter as soon as possible. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact "PAC" at PAC@dartmouth.edu with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Pan Asian Council

-student- and -student-

Asian American Studies Initiative Coordinators

CC:

James Wright, President; Barry Scherr, Provost; Ozzie Harris, Special Assistant to President for Institutional Diversity and Equity; Michael Mastanduno, Associate Dean for the Social Sciences; Lenore Grenoble, Associate Dean for the Humanities