

## Executive Summary

On August 4, 2007, Asian American Institute (AAI) celebrated the graduation of its first class of Impact Fellows. The Impact Fellows Program (IFP) is an intensive, six-week internship program that combines leadership and workplace training to equip young adults to make an impact on the Asian Pacific American (APA) community. IFP Fellows participated in workshops and field visits that focused on Asian Pacific American (APA) issues and leadership development. Program evaluation demonstrates that Fellows reported greater levels of knowledge in APA issues, workplace behavior and etiquette, networking, and leading team at the end of the program. Workshops and field visits were also evaluated by Fellows. Fellows rated workshops and visits on course content, quality of presentation, reading materials, class discussion, instructor's rapport with participants, overall effectiveness of instructor(s), facilities, and overall value of workshop. Findings suggest that Fellows were satisfied with the qualities of the workshops and visits. The most favorable workshops were the leadership, public speaking, legislation, and financial literacy workshops and the legislation visit. In conclusion, IFP has helped the Fellows to learn about their communities and develop their leadership skills through interactive workshops and to practice their skills while interning at various non-profit community and government agencies.

## Program Description

Impact Fellow Program's inaugural class was made up of 17 young adults, ages 17-22. The group included individuals of Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese descent, ranging from first generation to fourth generation immigrants. While ages and ethnicities varied, diversity was also reflected in the fellows' unique backgrounds and eclectic interests: environmentalism, music, education, politics, architecture, social work and medicine.

Fellows were encouraged to develop their interests, and through training, were given the tools to become leaders in their various communities and circles. Workshops were provided by AAI and Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, and followed two general tracks: personal development and APA issues. Fellows learned about leadership, communication, networking, negotiating, career development and team building. A panel of community leaders also shared their thoughts on their experiences in the workplace. A focus was placed on polishing public speaking skills and making presentations; Fellows practiced giving speeches and collaborating on projects that were presented as a group.

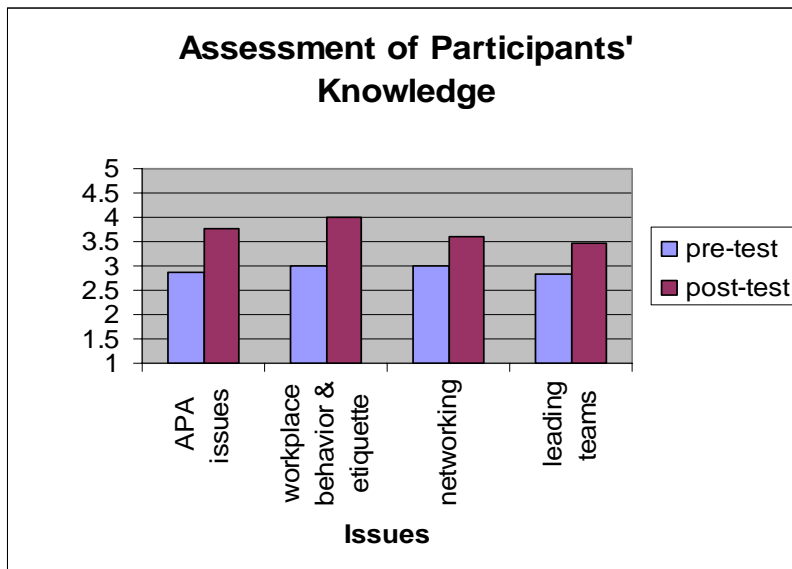
Program participants also explored APA identity and history; they reflected on how their personal and family stories fit into this paradigm, and through guest speakers, were introduced to issues currently affecting the APA community. Participants learned about Comprehensive Immigration Reform, education reform, stereotyping of Asian Americans, and the importance of civic participation. Finally, Fellows were given the opportunity to put their knowledge to practice through a legislative visit. Fellows worked in teams to present cases in support of education reform and family reunification to staff members of Congressman Luis Gutierrez and Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky.

Fellows were also assigned to community based organizations for four-week internships. They learned about regional issues and assisted in projects at AAI, **Chinese American Service League, Chinese Mutual Aid Association, Illinois Department of Human Services, Indo-American Center, and Pui Tak Center.**

## Evaluation

### *Overall Impact of IFP*

The goal of IFP is to develop a pipeline of young leaders who will make an impact in the Asian Pacific American community by becoming aware of social issues, and engaged in civic participation. To assess the impact of IFP, Fellows were asked to evaluate their levels of skills or knowledge in the following areas: Asian Pacific American issues, workplace behavior and etiquette, networking, and leading team. Fellows rated their levels of knowledge in these areas on a 5 point scale at the beginning and at the end of the program. The higher score indicates a higher level of knowledge. By the end of the program, Fellows on average reported higher levels of knowledge in all four areas (an average of 0.8 unit increase on a 1 to 5 scale). The greatest increases in knowledge were seen in the areas of Asian Pacific American issues and workplace behavior and etiquette. On the final assessment, one Fellow wrote, “IFP has taught me leadership skills and has introduced me to a lot of the issues that are relevant to the APA community. It has opened my eyes to the work of nonprofits in the community and given me the opportunities to develop my skills in real life situations.” Another participant echoed his fellow participant’s experience; “IFP was able to open my eyes to not only the issues facing the AA community but also the means by which I can get involved to help create change”. IFP not only helped to increase awareness and knowledge of APA issues and leadership skills, it helped the participants’ personal development as well. Many participants expressed that IFP had helped them to become more confident individuals.



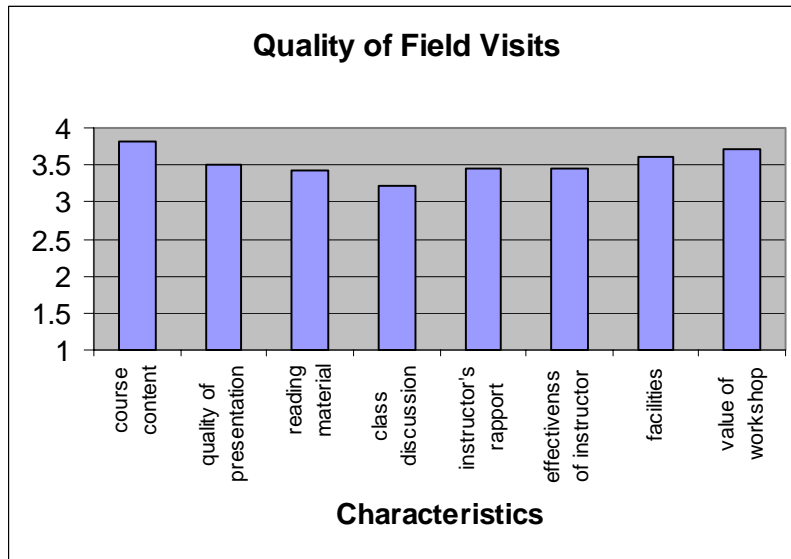
### *Workshops and Field Visits*

The Impact Fellows Program (IFP) focused on leadership development and workforce readiness. Fellows attended a variety of workshops, including leadership, risk assessment, public speaking, discrimination/racism, immigration, legislation, career panel, financial literacy and self-branding. By the end of the training, Fellows were placed in 4-week internships with local non-profit and government agencies to learn about regional issues and practice the skills they had learned from the workshops. In addition, Fellows visited non-profit institutions and the State Legislation in Springfield. They visited the Japanese American Service Committee of Chicago (JASC), Cambodian Association of Illinois, and Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and had a meeting with staff members of Congressman Luis Gutierrez and Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky to present cases in support of education reform and family reunification.

To assess the effectiveness of workshops, we administered evaluation after each workshop. Fellows rated on the course content, quality of presentation, reading materials, class discussion, instructor's rapport with participants, overall effectiveness of instructor(s), facilities, and overall value of workshop on a 4 point scale (1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, and 4 = excellence). The higher score indicates better quality. A total of nine workshops were evaluated. Overall, Fellows expressed satisfaction with the workshops; on average, Fellows rated the quality of workshops between good and excellence. More specifically, course content has a rating of 3.72; quality of presentation has a rating of 3.52; reading materials has a rating of 3.37; class discussion has a rating of 3.19; instructor's rapport with participants has a rating of 3.50; overall effectiveness of instructor has a rating of 3.55; facilities has a rating of 3.40; and overall value of workshop has a rating of 3.59. The most favorable workshops were the leadership, public speaking, legislation, and financial literacy workshops. The career panel, immigration, and racism workshops on the other hand received the lowest ratings. On their written evaluations, participants commented that the interactive discussion and personal relevance were important strengths of the workshops. One Fellow wrote, "Discussion with class made the workshop interesting". Another participant expressed that small group activities and discussion enhanced the quality of the risk assessment workshop. In addition to active participation, Fellows valued the link between the workshop's content and their personal experiences. When evaluating the immigration workshop, one participant wrote that "I liked how she (the instructor) asked us personal questions". Fellows also liked the fact that the workshops connected one's cultural background to the specific topics. Many Fellows also suggested that they would like the instructors to share their personal experiences.



In addition to the 9 workshops, Fellows went on field trips to several non-profit and government agencies as part of IFP. They visited the Japanese American Service Committee of Chicago (JASC), Cambodian Association of Illinois, and Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and met with staff members of Congressman Luis Gutierrez and Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky in Springfield. These field visits were also evaluated on the same criteria used for the workshops. Overall, participants were satisfied with the visits. They rated the four visits between good and excellence on all eight qualities. On average, the ratings were 3.81, 3.52, 3.44, 3.21, 3.45, 3.45, 3.61, and 3.7 for course content, quality of presentation, reading materials, class discussion, instructor's rapport with participants, overall effectiveness of instructor(s), facilities, and overall value of workshop respectively. For the visits to JASC and Cambodian Association of Illinois, Fellows enjoyed learning about the history of Japanese Americans and Cambodian Americans from the staff. The photos and stories were particularly meaningful to the participants. "Seeing an exhibit like the one we saw (at JASC) touched me deeply and (the exhibit) informed me more about Japanese Interment," a Fellow wrote on an evaluation. Similarly, Fellows found the photo and personal story exhibits at the Cambodian Association of Illinois very interesting. Participants could "relate to others' personal stories" and "learned about a culture (Cambodian) that (they were) not very familiar with". All but one participant would recommend the field trips to others. For the visits to IDHS and Springfield, Fellows commented that the visits were very informative. They also found the meeting with the staff members of Congressman Luis Gutierrez and Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky rewarding because they were able to practice the leadership and negotiation skills they had learned previously. They worked in teams to present cases in support of education reform and family reunification to staff members during their legislative visit. For example, one Fellow wrote, "we got to apply what we have learned about public speaking and negotiation (during our visit)". Another participant commented that the staff members were very knowledgeable and felt that his/her group was well prepared for the meeting. The legislation visit was rated the highest amongst the four field visits.



### Conclusion

Impact Fellows Program (IFP) was designed to develop emerging leaders by providing young adults with practical leadership skills and the opportunity to gain hands-on experience working in Asian American and Pacific Islander community-based organizations. The program took learning beyond the classroom, giving students opportunities to gain real-life experience working with prominent members of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. Seventeen young Asian Americans from various backgrounds completed the program. From IFP's workshops and their internships with local non-profit and government agencies, Fellows have learned important leadership skills and increased their knowledge in Asian Pacific American issues. The following comments from some of our Fellows capture the success and spirit of IFP.

IFP was a fruitful experience in which I was able to learn new skills and tips on how to become a more effective leader and individual.

I have had one of the best experiences in my life by joining the IFP program. I gained more confidence.

The internship program was a great way for me to experience the real world and to put what I have learned to good use.

Asian American Institute's mission is to educate, advocate, and empower Asian Americans. The Impact Fellows Program combines all three aspects, by developing a pipeline of young leaders who will make an impact in the Asian Pacific American community by becoming aware of social issues and engaged in civic participation.