

Asian American
Resource and Cultural Center

Strategic Plan
2007

Executive Summary

Statement of strategic intent

The Asian American Resource and Cultural Center began operating in fall of 2004 and officially celebrated its grand opening in April of 2005. AARCC was established through dedicated student efforts to ensure that UIC serve the needs of Asian Americans, who make up 20 percent of the total UIC student body (approximately 24% undergraduate, 7% graduate, and 31% professional). Additionally, 13 percent of faculty and staff is Asian or Asian American. This strategic plan identifies areas vital for AARCC to pursue in order to provide education and resources for and about this diverse community. The strong presence of Asian Americans on campus is a tremendous asset that confers on UIC an important responsibility to educate all campus members about Asian Americans. Knowledge of Asian American history, culture, and contemporary political and social issues is critical for engaging actively and responsibly with the global society of which the university is a part. AARCC provides that expertise to the campus so it can play a leadership role in creating an institutional culture that is knowledgeable about Asian Americans as a racialized ethnic minority group in the U.S. AARCC informs the campus about Asian Americans and Asian American issues in order to work towards the achievement of equity for all racial and ethnic minority groups, a goal AARCC believes should be integral to the policies and practices implemented on campus to support the diversity of UIC, the U.S. and the world.

Mission

AARCC's mission at UIC is to:

- Provide education and resources for and about Asian Americans
- Increase awareness of diverse Asian American issues, cultures, and communities
- Strengthen the Asian American campus community
- Support the growth of Asian American Studies
- Guide Asian American students in reaching their academic, personal, and professional potential

AARCC is open to all members of the UIC campus and the surrounding community who have an interest in issues relevant to Asian Americans. The Center offers social, cultural, and educational programs that promote knowledge of and foster engagement with issues relating to Asian Americans and Asian American studies. Our co-curricular programs enhance the UIC experience and provide opportunities for integrated learning and development. We collaborate and consult with other campus units to ensure that the needs of Asian American students are met. In line with the Great Cities Commitment, AARCC cultivates connections between UIC and Chicago's Asian American communities, serving as a resource for the campus to engage with off-campus Asian American organizations.

Vision

AARCC strengthens the Asian American community by building the capacity of individuals and organizations that engage in the Center's academic, co-curricular, and community involvement initiatives. AARCC's three-pronged vision links academic affairs, student affairs, and community involvement, which are often isolated spheres. In bridging institutional boundaries, AARCC strives to contribute to the holistic educational development of individuals and organizations.

Critical factors determining success

Many sectors of the UIC campus can play a vital role in determining AARCC's ability to carry out our mission to its full potential and achieve our vision. Increased space for the

Center and the development of academic programs and increased student services to further support Asian Americans will be crucial. Additionally, resources for the growth of our programs and staffing will ensure the continued strengthening of the cross-campus collaborations that are already serving the campus community in a number of academic, co-curricular, and community involvement areas. The list of critical factors below reflects how we prioritize the recommendations outlined in the AARCC External Program Review report (Spring 2006):

Critical factors internal to AARCC:

- Larger space
- Increased permanent budget

Critical factors external to AARCC:

- Establishment of Asian American Studies academic program
- Expanded support services for Asian American students (though not necessarily through a dedicated unit)
- Campus infrastructure to support community-based curriculum
- Effectively coordinated implementation of campus diversity policies and practices
- Robust campus resources for cultural and diversity offices/centers
- Stronger group visibility and collaboration among cultural and diversity offices/centers
- Strengthened Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Asian Americans (CCSAA)
- More UIC participation in the University of Illinois Asian American Alumni Network
- Creation of an Asian American faculty/staff association

Strategic goals with brief summary of supporting strategy

Strategic goals:

- I. Institutional Diversity:** AARCC advocates for policies and practices that define UIC's overall commitment to serving the needs of the diverse UIC campus community as a whole. Towards that end, AARCC serves as a resource to the university on issues, policies and practices, as well as educational goals related specifically to Asian Americans. The Center plays a major role in developing knowledge of diversity on campus so that students, staff, and faculty gain a better understanding of Asian Americans as a racialized ethnic minority group in the U.S. AARCC strives to ensure that equity is achieved on campus, not only for Asian Americans but also for all racial and ethnic minority groups, including African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans.
- II. Academic and educational initiatives:** AARCC contributes to UIC's ability to provide an outstanding education to its students at all levels. The Center offers co-curricular programs that promote knowledge of and foster engagement with issues relating to Asian Americans. The Center also collaborates with academic units to provide academic initiatives in Asian American studies, a field that can draw on the significant strength of the Asian American population at UIC and within the Chicago area. AARCC is central to interdisciplinary initiatives focusing on Asian American studies.
- III. Student affairs initiatives:** AARCC's student affairs initiatives provide support, programs, resources, and services aimed at developing Asian American students to their fullest potential. The Center collaborates with and provides consultation to other campus units to ensure that the needs of Asian American students are met. In addition, AARCC serves UIC's diverse student body by offering programs

to develop academic, personal, professional and community involvement skills for every students' continuing success.

- IV. Community involvement initiatives:** In support of UIC's Great Cities Commitment, AARCC engages with the people, communities and institutions of Chicago with a commitment to transform lives. The Center strives to develop ties with community partners to collaborate on programs and initiatives to benefit both the campus and greater off-campus community.
- V. Research:** AARCC seeks to facilitate research related to developing Asian American students, Asian American communities, and/or Asian American studies. AARCC contributes to UIC's excellence as an internationally recognized center for research and creativity by playing a primary role on campus to advance and disseminate knowledge of Asian Americans and Asian American studies across disciplinary boundaries. AARCC serves as one site that supports the application of that knowledge on and off campus.

Supporting strategy:

1. Secure a larger space so that all meetings for our regular committees, programs, and small-medium events can take place within AARCC. A larger space would enhance AARCC's institutional identity and strengthen community-building capacity.
2. Seek increased permanent funding to cover current student staffing structure and maintain programming. AARCC has used start-up funds to cover our student staff positions and to implement some of our programs. We seek to increase our permanent funding to maintain the budget with which we have been operating.
3. Conduct outreach to raise awareness of AARCC's presence on campus and to assess needs that guide the Center's mainstay of programs, services, and resources offered.
4. Continue defining and developing AARCC's staffing and governance infrastructure.

Purpose of the plan and expected outcome (potentially resource-related)

The purpose of this plan is to identify AARCC's most immediate needs for a larger space and increased permanent budget for staff and programming. Specifically, the plan articulates the importance of these needs within the context of the Center's long-term vision. More broadly, the plan offers a comprehensive outline of AARCC's purpose and provides an understanding of what is at stake in the Center's work.

Call to readers and/or stakeholders for participation

Readers should gain an understanding that helps to guide campus community members toward developing UIC capacity in areas significant to AARCC both externally and internally. This strategic plan identifies for administrators and campus colleagues the institutional areas deemed vital for enhancing AARCC's full realization. The plan provides AARCC staff and Advisory Board members a sense of purpose for their work and involvement in AARCC. It also offers all participants in AARCC's numerous initiatives a broad understanding of how their activities are connected to a larger vision of community transformation.

Mission Statement

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AARCC's mission at UIC is to:

- Provide education and resources for and about Asian Americans
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Vision Statement

AARCC strengthens the Asian American community by building the capacity of individuals and organizations that engage in the Center's academic, co-curricular, and community involvement initiatives. AARCC's three-pronged vision links academic affairs, student affairs, and community involvement:

- The Center's academic initiatives and educational programming stimulate knowledge of Asian Americans and Asian American studies through cultivating learning opportunities and cross-campus partnerships for interdisciplinary knowledge. Academic knowledge gained through formal coursework provides intellectual breadth and analytic perspectives. Co-curricular programs offer informal learning opportunities to complement academically based knowledge.
- AARCC's student affairs initiatives disseminate knowledge for and about Asian Americans and Asian American students in order to foster effective practices in serving this diverse population. The Center collaborates with and provides consultation to other campus units to ensure that the needs of Asian American students are met. Student affairs initiatives offer support to students so they can reach their full potential in their educational experiences on campus. Students (and the faculty and staff who work with them) engage in activities and skill building important for personal, professional, and leadership development.
- The Center's community initiatives strive to connect UIC with Asian American communities. Community involvement develops an individual to contribute to the

civic strength of off-campus communities and to build society's capacity to better serve its people. In this case, we want to be a resource in developing socially aware and responsible individuals who can strengthen Asian American communities.

University structures often separate academic, student, and community affairs into isolated spheres, so in bridging institutional boundaries, AARCC strives to contribute to the holistic development of individuals and organizations. In essence, involvement with any single area is valuable but greatly enhanced when combined with the synergies of the other two areas.

Strategic Goals and Initiatives

I. Institutional Diversity: AARCC serves as a resource to the university on issues, policies and practices, as well as educational goals related to diversity, with specific regard to Asian Americans within UIC's institutional diversity. The Center plays a major role in developing knowledge of diversity on campus so that students, staff, and faculty gain a better understanding of Asian Americans as a racialized ethnic minority in the U.S. Such an understanding is key for the increasingly diverse environment at UIC and beyond.

A. Articulate and advocate for policies and practices that define UIC's commitment to serving the needs of the diverse UIC campus community as a whole. AARCC devotes particular attention to enhancing the quality of the UIC experience for Asian American students, staff, and faculty, while striving to ensure that equity is achieved on campus as a whole, not only for Asian Americans, but for other ethnic and racial minority groups, including African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans.

B. Implement community-building initiatives focused on connecting students, but also faculty, staff and alumni to enhance the UIC experience and increase retention.

C. Serve as a clearinghouse of information and provide resources for and about the Asian American community.

II. Academic and educational initiatives: AARCC contributes to UIC's ability to provide an outstanding education to its students at all levels. The Center offers co-curricular programs that promote knowledge of and foster engagement with issues relating to Asian Americans. The Center also collaborates with academic units to provide academic initiatives in Asian American studies, a field that can draw on the significant strength of the Asian American population at UIC and within the Chicago area. AARCC is central to interdisciplinary initiatives focusing on Asian American studies.

A. Offer educational and cultural programming to increase awareness of and build knowledge about social, cultural and historical topics of relevance to Asian Americans for the campus and general public.

B. Develop co-curricular programs that provide opportunities for integrated learning and development.

C. Play a primary role in providing support for the development of Asian American studies curriculum and toward building an academic program.

D. Provide unique graduate assistantship opportunities in Asian American studies-related academic initiatives and programming, as well as student services and research.

E. Create opportunities for new clusters of learning by bringing together students, faculty and staff to explore and promote knowledge of Asian American studies and research.

III. Student affairs initiatives: The Center's student affairs initiatives provide support, programs, resources, and services aimed at developing Asian American students to their fullest potential. In addition, AARCC serves UIC's diverse student body by offering programs to develop academic, personal, professional and community involvement skills for every students' continuing success.

A. Offer social, cultural, personal and professional activities and programs that support Asian American students' development and enhance their UIC educational experiences.

B. Provide resources to develop and strengthen Asian American student organizations and their activities as well as Asian American student leadership.

C. Disseminate knowledge for and about Asian Americans and Asian American students for the purpose of fostering effective practices in serving this diverse population.

D. Collaborate with and provide consultation to other campus units to ensure that the needs of Asian American students are met.

IV. Community involvement initiatives: In support of UIC's Great Cities Commitment, AARCC engages with the people, communities and institutions of Chicago with a commitment to transform lives. The Center strives to develop ties with community partners to collaborate on programs and initiatives to benefit both the campus and greater off-campus community.

A. Cultivate connections between UIC and Chicago's Asian American communities in order to serve as a resource for the general campus to engage with off-campus Asian American organizations and communities.

B. Provide opportunities for students to become involved with Asian American communities off-campus.

C. Develop ties between UIC educational programs and community-based curriculum initiatives to Chicago's Asian American communities.

V. Research: AARCC seeks to facilitate research related to developing Asian American students, Asian American communities, and/or Asian American studies. AARCC contributes to UIC's excellence as an internationally recognized center for research and creativity by playing a primary role on campus to advance and disseminate knowledge of Asian Americans and Asian American studies across disciplinary boundaries. AARCC serves as one site that supports the application of that knowledge on and off campus.

A. Conduct relevant research on Asian American students at UIC in order to define Center services and programs.

B. Disseminate research on Asian Americans as a resource beyond UIC.

C. Attract and retain scholars and practitioners with an interest in Asian American issues, research, and student development. The Center works closely with faculty engaged in mentoring students and/or fostering community-based research as vital elements of academic excellence.

Support for Actions

I. Facilities:

- A. Secure a larger space so that all meetings for our regular committees, programs, and small-medium events can take place within AARCC.
- B. Locate space that would solidify AARCC's institutional identity.
- C. Use a space that can strengthen community-building activities.

II. Resources:

- A. Seek increased permanent funding to cover current level of student staffing and maintain programming. AARCC has used start-up funds to cover our student staff positions and some of our programs. We seek to increase our permanent funding to the level that would enable us to maintain the budget with which we have been operating.
- B. Work with the University of Illinois Foundation to develop fundraising and development opportunities for AARCC space needs, as well as relevant initiatives, activities, and programs that benefit the campus.
- C. Explore funding sources and grant opportunities for appropriate initiatives.

III. Outreach and needs assessment:

- A. Conduct outreach to raise awareness of AARCC's presence on campus and explore potential collaborations.
- B. Assess campus needs that will guide the Center's mainstay of programs, services, and resources offered.

IV. Infrastructure:

- A. Recruit, develop, and guide professional, student, and volunteer staff to carry out the Center mission and goals.
- B. Develop an appropriate oversight structure and gain constituency input for the Center.

Environment Analysis

There is no national accrediting agency or set of professional standards for Asian American-targeted programs in higher education. However, there are Asian American professional networks through organizations such as the Association for Asian American Studies, American College Personnel Association, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education, and the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education. We regularly communicate with student affairs as well as Asian American studies colleagues at UIUC, Northwestern, DePaul, U of Chicago, and Northern Illinois University. This network is developing a more formalized meeting ground through the recent formation of a CIC Asian American Studies Consortium.

Articulated below are the major campus climate issues and prevailing attitudes that pose environmental challenges when serving the Asian American population. While we highlight details

specific to UIC, it is important to note that many of these challenges reflect the climate for Asian Americans in higher education nationally.

1. **There is not a sense of an Asian American community.** Because there has not been a history of attention to Asian American issues, there is a lack of understanding and vision for the potential of Asian American services, programs, courses, and policies on this campus. Existing services and courses are few and relatively recent; therefore many students, staff, and faculty are not used to coming together as a community nor do they have expectations for how CCSAA, Asian American studies faculty and courses, or AARCC can serve them. Lack of common knowledge regarding Asian American issues and identity, combined with a strong ethnic-specific identification and weak pan-ethnic identification as Asian Americans, further present a challenge for outreach and programming.
2. **The Model Minority Myth is alive and well.** There is a prevailing view at UIC that most Asian American students are in the Honors College and are not in need of special services. This leads to a lack of attention to the actual needs and concerns of Asian Americans (either individually or as a group) and contributes to Asian American students being underserved. Furthermore, it causes extreme stress among students who feel pressured to meet a certain standard by faculty, staff, and even peers. CCSAA's 2004 UIC Asian American Undergraduate Survey vitally showed that 39% of respondents were first-generation college students and 29% indicated a household income of less than \$25,000 per year.
3. **Many perceive Asian Americans as foreigners.** Another common stereotype of Asian Americans is that they are "foreign" and do not belong in the U.S. We encounter many Asian American students who have been referred to the Office of International Students due to this lack of understanding, and AARCC itself receives many requests relating to Asian or international issues and topics. There needs to be greater recognition that international students are not AARCC's primary constituency though they are welcome to participate in our programs. Xenophobic attitudes towards Asians extend to Asian Americans and the fact that both groups face insensitivity and racism needs to be more acknowledged.
4. **Data on Asian Americans is not disaggregated by ethnic group.** There is significant census data and research literature revealing great differences between Asian ethnic groups that are obscured by lumping them into one "Asian American" category. For example, the 2004 UIC Asian American Undergraduate Survey shows ethnic differences on parental education, high school location (city vs. suburbs), reasons for attending UIC, financial aid, type of campus involvement, all of which have implications for different interventions and programs. Without disaggregated data, we cannot fully understand the varying needs and issues of Asian Americans at UIC to appropriately serve Asian Americans from different ethnic backgrounds.
5. **Asian American faculty and staff are not distributed evenly across campus.** Currently, the actual number of Asian American faculty and staff is unclear, as data is not disaggregated for Asian and Asian American faculty and staff by U.S. citizenship, permanent resident, or Asian national status. The participation of Asian Americans as faculty, staff, and administrators remains low and depends greatly on academic discipline. At UIC, there is a good number of Asian American faculty in engineering, the sciences, and business, but very few in the social sciences and humanities. In general, there are very few Asian American academic advisors or staff in Student Affairs, those who are often the front-line staff most visible to students.

This exacerbates the problem of a lack of role models on campus for Asian American students, and a lack of faculty/staff awareness and ability to provide culturally appropriate services.

S.W.O.T. Analysis

Conducted by full-time staff: K. Su, C. Kodama, and E. Chan (December 2005)

Strengths (internal to AARCC)

- Core professional staff:
 - self-directed
 - respond quickly
 - each have good basic skill sets in crucial areas of Center
 - current on Asian American issues
 - connected to others nationally through various networks
 - committed to pan-ethnic Asian diversity
 - committed to links with other communities of color
- E. Chan: community connections, community development, interest in organizational development, background technology, background in higher ed student leadership
- C. Kodama: background in student affairs and published research on Asian American students, links to student affairs, both as a generalist and specifically multicultural focus on Asian Americans
- K. Su: faculty background, teaching experience, but not narrowly academic, links to Asian American Studies
- Strong connections to a number of student organizations
- AARCC is new: opportunity to define the Center, room to grow
- Ethnic mix of staff diverse (with inclusion of student staff)
- Student staff provide strong input and opportunity to develop relationships with constituencies
- Advisory Board members offer valuable perspectives

Weaknesses (internal to AARCC)

- Still new and building ties to students at-large, student organizations, and campus community
- Lack of space within the center for community building functions
- Staff/volunteer structure (especially at student level) still to be defined
- Advisory structure to be better defined
- Budget constraints (GA and undergraduate student staff positions covered by start-up funding, not permanent budget/TA portion of the GA-ship covered by LAS as a one-time only commitment)
- Director not tenured faculty

Opportunities (external to AARCC)

- UIC strategic planning
- UIC development campaign
- Strong student organizations
- Focus on AARCC as "newest" center
- Undergraduate push for Asian American Studies
- Seems to be a strong intellectual culture in faculty/graduate student base
- Growing numbers of graduate students involved in Asian American research
- Strength of current ethnic studies and gender studies programs
- Being in Academic Affairs – lack of explicit mandate = independence

- CCSAA as group to work with on campus
- Key staff, faculty, and administrator allies with strong campus experience
- Potential of Chicago community
- Asian American Awareness Month has an established tradition/history
- Resources and services already started by students
- Large student and community events as potential place to collaborate
- Commuter campus: students' base to home (family, community)
- Asian American Alumni Network beginning to do outreach to UIC Asian American alumni
- Focus on academic and student affairs bridge may be way to forge innovative practices

Threats (external to AARCC)

- Being the only professionally staffed office with an Asian American focus
- Ethnic-specific vs. pan-Asian American ties present challenge to building constituent base
- Politics of space on campus
- Very low number of aware and involved faculty and staff (e.g. weak capacity of CCSAA)
- Low level of campus knowledge regarding Asian Americans
- Lack of clarity regarding how Asian Americans fit into UIC's definition of "diversity"
- Fragmentation of campus in terms of overall institutional structure and interaction
- Weak position of cultural and diversity offices/centers at UIC
- Weak development of explicit practices/policies to support the diversity of campus
- Lack of Asian American Studies Program
- Asian American Alumni Network being very new
- Weak resources and infrastructure on campus for community-based curriculum development
- Institutional culture around professional development is relatively low
- Academic affairs and emphasis on academic legitimacy for center may be threat for student affairs focus
- Lack of institutional peers for Asian American centers that bridge academic and student affairs components

Peer Analysis

One of AARCC's greatest challenges as the only professional unit at UIC devoted to working with the Asian American community and issues is to meet the campus needs across the broad sectors of student affairs, student services, as well as academic affairs (both formal classroom instruction as well as co-curricular programs). The below table of peer campuses in the Chicago area and Midwest reflect how our stronger peer campuses have Asian American cultural centers or student services in combination with an Asian American Studies Program and/or academic support services. They represent our aspiration peers in terms of overall campus support for Asian Americans. Most programs and centers are housed in Student Affairs, with a few in Academic Affairs. The table does not note campus committees, faculty/staff associations, alumni organizations, and/or student organizations, which are also well established on many campuses.

In addition, the table reflects Asian American cultural centers that serve as aspiration peers in terms of space. Peer Asian American cultural centers each have multi-level buildings that house staff offices and a combination of multi-purpose rooms, conference rooms, computer and resource areas, library and/or kitchen. UIUC's center is the largest and is a newly constructed building attached to the Asian American Studies Program building.

Institution	Cultural Center	Academic Support	Asian American Studies
U of Chicago	No - Office of Minority Student Affairs		A few courses through Center for Race, Politics, and Culture
Indiana	Yes - Asian American Center 2 FTE Space: building		Starting a program, conducting search for 2 faculty
Michigan	No - Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs		APIA Program in American Cultures, BA minor in APIA, graduate degree in American Cultures with APIA concentration
Michigan State	No - Multicultural Center	Office of Supportive Services, part of 1 FTE serves as APIA liaison	Program, Minor
Minnesota		Multicultural Academic Services	Program, Minor
Northern Illinois	Yes - Asian American Center 2 FTE Space: building		A few courses
Northwestern	No - Asian American Services within Multicultural Center 1 FTE		Program, Minor
Ohio State	No - Asian American Services within Multicultural Center 1 FTE	Minority Advising Program (includes services for Asian Americans)	Program, Minor, developing Graduate concentration
UI Urbana Champaign	Yes - Asian American Center 3 FTE Space: building		2nd largest program in country, Minor
Wisconsin	No - Multicultural Student Center	Southeast Asian American Academic Services	Certificate (equivalent to Minor), 1st program in the Midwest

