Greetings everyone! As always, we hope this update on PAACH finds you and your loved ones well. This past year marked the 10th Anniversary of the Pan-Asian American Community House. Having been at Penn this long, PAACH has established a strong presence on campus with its programming as well as its outreach efforts to the various entities at Penn. In fact, when a doctoral student at Penn queried others about leadership programs on campus, our Asian Pacific American Leadership Initiative (APALI) was named as an exemplar by other administrators. With a strong and stable staff, we have been fortunate to work with students who seek to engage in active discourse about what matters on the Asian American front.

This past year saw continued forward momentum in programming, with APALI going so strong that in the Fall 2011, we will expand the class to almost double its current size. Recognizing the need on students’ end for increased leadership training opportunities, we responded by working with the student facilitators of the program to consider the feasibility of expansion. Students hosted successful events that included bringing speakers to campus—Sigma Psi Zeta brought Phil Yu (the Angry Asian Man himself), the Asian Pacific Student Coalition brought journalist Roxana Saberi as well as Christine Choy (Award winning Director of “Who Killed Vincent Chin”). Asian Pacific American Heritage Week was celebrated with Keynote Speaker Yul Kwon (Winner of “Survivor: Nicaragua”) as well as newly re-vamped events which will be further re-envisioned this Fall 2011. Penn Lions performed for Philadelphia Mayor Nutter as well as at NBC Studios in New York City, and in a competition at Columbia University, won the title of this year’s Ivy League Lion Dance Champs! And, we are proud to say that student organizations worked collaboratively with the Japan Student Association in the wake of the tsunamis to raise over $10,000 for relief efforts. Naming just these handful of the events which happened this past year, you can see the vibrancy of our community and student leaders.

Our 10th Anniversary was celebrated during Fall 2010 Homecoming Weekend. It was wonderful to see all of the past students who have walked through the ARCH Building’s doors, and who were an integral part of moving our programming forward. Our space was celebrated and recognized across campus, and we were honored that President Amy Gutmann was able to join us on such a hectic weekend. Her words spoke of Penn’s commitment to diversity and the role of Asian American students in creating a multicultural community.

And, what better way to recognize multiculturalism – in the Spring semester, President Gutmann joined students leaders and ARCH building staff to announce a 15 million dollar donation to renovate the ARCH Building! Slated to begin construction in Summer 2012, the plans call for increased square footage for all of the cultural centers, a newly designed auditorium that can double as lecture space, and increased visibility for the centers as a whole. Right now, we are in the process of looking for “swing space” that allows us to be located centrally on our campus.

So, again, we are asking all of you to mark your calendars: Spring 2014 we will look for your visit in our newly renovated space! We hope you enjoy reading this summer’s newsletters with all the updates from current students and alumni!

- June Chu, PAACH Director
Demystifying the Fulbright: All It Takes Is a Good Idea!

By Benjamin Alisuag, SAS ‘09

In the fall of 2008, I watched many of my friends walk in and out of the Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships (CURF) office. Some looked more hopeful than others, but very few could hide the signs of stress and anxiety scrolled across their face. No matter how worried, however, they all walked up to the second floor of the ARCH building with a heightened sense of purpose. They would inevitably become the future Rhodes, Fulbright, and Marshall Scholars of the world.

During my senior year of high school, I recall that many of my teachers said “getting in” was the most difficult part of the college process. “Your GPA in college doesn’t matter in the real world,” they confidently affirmed. Ever the impressionable teenager, I followed their guidance blindly and spent more nights making contributions to extracurricular activities and “social events.” Needless to say, my GPA grew to be the one blemish on my resume.

In my last year of college, I received my admissions letter from Teach for America, a national non-profit organization that sends future leaders to teach in low-income communities for two years. After graduation, I moved to New York City and commenced my career as a high school English teacher in the South Bronx. Though I encountered many problems as a teacher—working with difficult administrators, teaching students more than four grade levels behind, and most notably, surviving on a modest income in Manhattan—my class still achieved two years reading growth in just one year of instruction. And though I am leaving education for now, I know that I will return to the classroom in the future.

What has always bothered me, however, is the fact that I let my low GPA prevent me from applying to one of the prestigious scholarships and fellowships. While I taught in the Bronx, I began to miss college, everything from drafting research papers to reading new books daily. I wanted to find a way to return to academia, but at the same time remain an active advocate for education equality.

I came across the Fulbright application and was immediately drawn to its endless opportunities. I learned of one scholar who travelled to Senegal to explore the role of sexism by training with the national women’s basketball team. And another student studying potential cures for a specific tumor disease in Wales. And countless others teaching in Malaysia, Montenegro, and Morocco - to name a few.

Though I considered applying to many other scholarships (namely the Thouron Award), I decided to go with the Fulbright because it allowed me to combine my interests with teaching, research, and travel abroad. In my interview, I was told that the most important factor for selecting Fulbright awards is the originality and feasibility of the applicant’s idea. This is where I feel the Fulbright separates itself from other scholarships; it does not penalize a student who may have a weaker academic background. Instead, the Fulbright offers an equal playing field for any student with a good idea and the determination to complete his/her project. My own idea will bring me to Pretoria, South Africa in January of 2012.

As a guest lecturer at the University of Pretoria, I will study the process of English language acquisition from both the teacher and student perspectives. In addition, I will lead a series of spoken word workshops in which students will use both elements of American rap and South African Kwaito music to create poetry and promote awareness about local issues such as AIDS and violence.
The experience of returning to Penn and walking into PAACH and each time having it feel as if it were my home away from home, exactly as it was 10 years ago, is a feeling difficult to express adequately.

It is sweet, holds a tender place in my heart, and exceptional.

Being a native of Los Angeles, I had not expected that I would return here directly after graduation and so it was tough on my sensitive little soul as it felt like “everyone else” was out east. There was a sense of loneliness to be one amongst the sea of Bruins/Trojans—certainly a lot of yearning to be “over there,” extending for as long as possible, the life and friends from The Penn Years. Oh, how I took for granted so many of us friends being housed within less than 1 square mile!

And despite frequent wishful thinking and wanting to be able to return to Penn’s campus to partake in the various celebrations throughout the almost-10-years-since-graduation, I have only had the opportunity to return less than a handful of times. One of these glorious times was during Alumni Weekend 2011.

Through my involvement with UPAAN, I recently realized that for how often I speak of and/or think about Penn, I did not actually know the current affairs as I used to as a student. I had officially outlived the network of friends of friends of friends that kept me connected to the goings-on at Penn. I was inspired and I committed to my cross-country airfare.

It seems that each year Penn continues to grow, change, and adapt as the student population also morphs with the temperament of each new freshman class.

But regardless, one very visible and active presence that remains is PAACH. Just as PAACH was a hub of student activity during my heyday, the sentiments kept life despite various and significant campus changes that have occurred since I departed. And although each class of graduating students may leave their own unique mark on PAACH, the institutional function continues to serve as the original group had dreamed and demanded for. The late nights at Chats and the lost sleep/study time was well spent in my opinion.

PAACH is such an important institutional mainstay. The ability to engage and support students in navigating Penn as the larger institution remains. My continued participation as an alum and love for all things Penn are also evidence for the impact of Penn’s commitment to diversity.

To most people’s surprise, I am by nature actually quite shy as a person. Under PAACH’s roof, I found the one place on campus that I felt most connected to the larger university. It is also one of the first places I return to when on campus. A decade later, I continue to be forever grateful to Penn for the life lessons learned.

As my friends will laughingly (but seriously) attest, there is a good chance I may be one of the proudest and biggest fans of Penn & Penn alumni.

P.S. This article is dedicated to The Great Kusum Soin. Thank you for the love you share with each of us as we pass through PAACH’s doors.
Anyone who has talked to me a bit has probably heard that in high school, I was part of a small South Asian organization, the members of which had become my family. Leaving behind mentors, mentees, and the best of friends after graduating was difficult—I wondered if I would ever again experience such a profound sense of community.

After wondering for over half a year, I finally stumbled across PAACH. Things were different. I was suddenly a quiet freshman, a new girl. I was surrounded by new people, programs, and activities. New terms, definitions, and concepts of identity. However, despite the novelty, something was familiar: the warmth of a home.

I found this quality easy to notice. I picked up on it when I spent my first few weeks in PAACH as a shy, casual observer. Full of upper-termers who wanted to give back to a place they had grown to love and lower-termers who strived to become involved in a vibrant community, PAACH had an atmosphere that was inspiring.

Nowadays, I practically feed off of the positive energy and support available to me in PAACH. The impact that it has had on me in one year alone—in particular through seniors, mentors, and friends—makes me wonder about the next three years. What sort of mark will PAACH leave on me? And what kind of mark will I (hopefully) leave on PAACH? I eagerly anticipate the large role that the Asian American community at Penn will play in my college career.
Notes from the Asian Pacific Student Coalition

The other day, I grabbed lunch with a friend who had recently graduated from Penn. He told me that by focusing so strongly on political issues affecting Asian Americans, he felt that as a member of the “real world,” he was now hyperaware of his cultural and ethnic differences - an adverse effect of his involvement.

Reflecting over this, it seems true that gaining a stronger understanding of your APA identity and spending time advocating for APA issues can make you oversensitive. What, though, is on the opposite side of this spectrum? As a student stepping onto a big campus and an even bigger city for the first time, I immediately felt lost. It was PAACH programs and the care that APSC showed that made me finally feel like I was at home. A lack of such programs that enrich your identity would impede this sense of belonging.

Yet just as important as strengthening identity is advocating for progress on campus. Again, what’s on the other side of the spectrum? A cut in ASAM funding, a lack of PAACH, a loss of funding for increasing cultural awareness on campus, among other things. As we students are only on campus for four years, it’s easy to become frustrated by how slow things progress and wonder, “What’s the point?” It’s important, then, to take a step back and see how far we’ve come from the days when being Asian on campus meant that you were one of a handful and from the days when APA organizations had little access to administration should an issue arise.

Take this hypersensitivity, then, and use it, whether it’s for advocating for Asian American issues, youth issues, women’s rights issues, or anything of the sort. Even the smallest of steps, like helping Asian Americans in your area register and get out to vote in order to increase the APA turnout, can make the greatest of differences. Yes, maybe we’re a lot more aware of the issues than we otherwise would be, but I wouldn’t have it any other way.

Nick Singh, APSC Chair

This year, APSC worked extensively with Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and various student organizations to expand Mental Health Camp to a full Mental Wellness Week. We screened the documentary The House of Suh, held workshops with CAPS focusing on stress in the Penn environment, and filmed a short video highlighting the advantages of going to CAPS. I thought that having various groups involved would make the process less stressful, but at times I felt that organizing this week of events just made my own mental health worse. It was stressful, unnecessarily difficult at times, and it seemed that nothing was going right.

But throughout the week itself, I felt more and more proud. The rest of APSC board, other APSC constituent groups, and even my friends who had no idea what it meant to discuss mental health all supported me. I met students who were genuinely interested in discussing mental health at Penn and were looking for a forum like this. Although it may not have been the most well-attended event APSC helped organize this past year, it definitely has been one of the most memorable for me. When I talk to older students and alumni who went through the same ordeals as me, I find it comforting because it must mean I’m doing something right at Penn: making the most of my time by becoming involved in groups and causes I genuinely care for and believe in. There’s no better time than now.

Michelle Leong, Vice Chair of Political Affairs

The consolidation of APSC’s liaison system into a single position, the Vice Chair of Constituent Affairs, has shown that our constituents are a priority. A single person whose sole job is to interact with and serve as the voice of the constituency can and has provided more consistent and focused attention to all 19 active groups. Through one-on-one meetings at the beginning of the semester, we were able to hear each group’s thoughts, needs, and expectations of APSC, thereby molding the events, meetings, and initiatives in the future to what the constituency wants.

However, a greater voice is not the only thing that is important to give to groups, but also a greater sense of community and unity. This was accomplished with events such as APSC Survivor and APSC Olympics, as well as board mixers. Community, though, requires effort from all ends; thus, APSC board members showed support for our groups by taking part in a total of five cultural shows and attending various events.

Ultimately, nothing binds a community together more than fundamental commonalities. We experienced that this year when many of our groups showed a genuine concern after the tragic earthquake that hit Japan. There was an outpouring of support from all groups, committing portions of their revenues from events to Japan relief funds. Such support has shown us how unified we can be. We are working to see this kind of community-wide togetherness in the near future, in times without such tragedy, now more than ever, especially with the upcoming renovations to ARCH.

Brian Lee, Vice Chair of Constituent Affairs
This past spring, the Asian Pacific Student Coalition engaged in a variety of programming. APSC collaborated with a variety of groups to bring in four speakers during the past few months: journalist Roxana Saberi, actor Perry Shen, comedian Eliot Chang, and documentarian Christine Choi to share their experiences as Asian Americans in non-traditional career paths.

This past semester also included an increase in collaborative programming with other coalitions. In addition to organizing the third annual MOSAIC ball this past spring, APSC also co-hosted the “Touch the Sky” discussion with UMOJA during UMOJA Week. With the constituency, APSC hosted another successful CATAPULT, taught a design forum with Wharton Asia Exchange, collaborated with Sigma Psi Zeta’s signature “Visions of Chocolate” event, and worked to help organize Sangam’s first Chai House. In response to the Tohoku earthquake, APSC also worked with Penn’s Japan Student Association on various awareness and fundraising campaigns that culminated in the Japanese Earthquake Relief Banquet that rallied students to fill Houston Hall.

This was a fantastically fruitful semester, but the momentum hasn’t dissipated yet! Look forward to hearing the buzz about this upcoming fall!

Andrew Lum, Vice Chair

My answer to the “Why Penn?” question grows drastically year after year. On my Penn application essay, I answered confidently that it was because of the “amazing breadth of resources available and caliber of my fellow peers”. Fast forward four years and my answer to that same question could probably fill a book. Perhaps the most significant addition to that question is one that I never truly appreciated until recently: our amazing alumni network.

We as Penn students often like to stay within our own Penn bubble. As a result, there is often a disconnect between “our world” and the “real world” and the best way to bridge this chasm is with the help of alumni. I am always amazed as to how willing alumni are to go out of their way to help. We can gain a lot by connecting to alumni, whether it’s simply getting advice from someone who’s gone through the same things, gaining perspective on how Penn has changed (or, more often than not, how Penn hasn’t changed), or even determining the best course of action for pertinent issues.

Nevertheless, the hardest step when building a bridge is setting the foundation at the very beginning. With ARCH renovations approaching, it’s important now, more than ever, that alumni reach out to current students and voice their support. Simple actions like stopping by PAACH or playing an active part in UPAAN can go a long way in maintaining student-alumni interaction. There’s never been a more exciting time to get involved, and we’re just as eager to hear from you as you are from us.

Charley Ma, Vice Chair of Finance

One of APSC’s initiatives this year is the start of a new organization that would fill a gap at Penn: a general APA-interest organization that’s easily accessible by the community and could cater to community service, multicultural events, and political activism.

The visions and hopes for this new organization varied amongst many which worked to settle into a flexible structure for the new group. With APSC constituents focusing on individual cultures, there currently isn’t an action-orientated organization at Penn that represents the general APA community. We envisioned a group that doesn’t necessarily identify as one of the cultural groups. Thus, Asians Achieving Action (AAA) was formed.

The group will be headed by two co-moderators, Mili Mehta and Amanda Young, who will work with committee overseers heading three different branches of the organization: Activism, Community Service, and Programming. Programming will be community driven, with projects coming out of these three standing committees as well as others that will be created for specific events. AAA will begin recruitment and programming this fall.

Shawn Chen, Vice Chair of Communications

This past year, one of my biggest goals on APSC board has been to connect Penn and other college campuses in the greater Philadelphia region. My goal was to make it easier to share programming, resources, and unite to face common issues. In the wake of events such as the South Philly high school incident, I thought that it would be great to reach out to other schools so that if something like that ever happened again, we could mobilize and act as a unified force. I thought the best way of attracting interest would be to hold a summit on our campus and invite local leaders of APA groups to discuss what they hoped the group would become, so I set out to plan the Intercollegiate Philadelphia Asian American Consortium (iPAAC) Summit. I promptly invited everyone.

Unfortunately, the iPAAC Summit wasn’t exactly the smashing success I set out to achieve. Weeks passed with dozens of follow-up emails but no RSVPs. In the middle of UC seat nominations and a busy schedule of spring programming, we decided to postpone the iPAAC Summit until the fall.

I learned a lot of valuable lessons from my unsuccessful endeavor in the spring. Along the way, a common refrain I heard was that coalition building is difficult, especially when there isn’t a pressing issue to react to – but I learned how hard it can really be. It was tough last spring, but with a new perspective on what we can accomplish, a fresh sense of energy, and an open calendar, I’m ready to try again this fall.

Jay Yang, Vice Chair of External Affairs
**Staying Engaged**  
_by Rohan Grover, WH’11_  

Over Homecoming, dozens of alumni returned to celebrate PAACH’s 10 year anniversary. After a night of speeches, food, and dancing, many of us engaged in a dialogue among a decade of PAACHies. Students heard first-hand testimonials of rallying on College Green, creating APALI and PEER to groom rising leaders, and forming the Student Movement for Change to advocate for ethnic studies and minority representation.

On one hand, this wasn’t new information. We’d heard about these things before, but speaking directly with the people who created our environment strengthened our appreciation for this history.

We also encountered some, well, diversity of opinion. There were concerns that we had grown complacent after being handed so many resources from our predecessors. It wasn’t easy to hear, but it was true. Although the dialogue was tense, it ultimately proved fruitful in that it motivated us to reconnect with and appreciate PAACH’s history. This was pivotal to my senior year experience. It fundamentally changed how I thought about PAACH and left me thirsty for more.

It became clear just how much alumni care. You traveled across the country for an anniversary and dedicated hours of your time speaking with a couple giddy college students, and we benefited tremendously. Since then, alumni have acted as much-needed sounding boards, advisors, and mentors – personally, extracurricularly, and professionally. Alumni responses were also incredibly positive. We felt connected through the same space, resources, acronyms, and samosa vendors – separated by just a few years.

Students have so, so much to learn from alumni. However, our archives are far from complete. Alumni need to stay engaged, even in the most casual ways. After all, none of this would have happened if we hadn’t met alumni at the 10-year celebration.

As PAACH prepares for a 2-year renovation process, this is an especially important time to reconnect with its alumni. The more students hear from us, the more we can preserve our community’s purpose and authenticity and ensure a strong future for PAACH. So let’s stay engaged.

---

**Staying Involved**  
_by Bonny Tsang, SAS’11_  

Another year, another PAACH summer newsletter. Thinking about this past year, a question I often got was “How did you get involved?” And I usually answer in the same way: “I kind of just fell into it.” I can write a long story about how it all happened—my path from Wellesley, to Penn, to PAACH, ASAM, APSC, and finally APALI. But I think a better question is why I stayed involved in the APA community.

I can’t say that being involved in the APA community at Penn has yielded the most productive results. I’ve been to countless meetings with administrators, talked to a variety of people, read numerous books, written papers and blog posts and yet, nothing seems to change. Asian Americans still have the same issues—model minority myth, intergenerational communication, lack of mental health awareness, political apathy, language barriers—the list goes on. Needless to say, there were times when I was frustrated, angry, and ready to give up. As much as I seemed to “raise awareness” about Asian American issues, I would run into 10 more people who just did not get it. So why did I keep doing it, and why do I, even after I’ve left Penn, still seek to remain involved?

Simply put, I strongly believed in what I was doing. No one ever said that advocacy was an easy job and while sometimes (oftentimes) it gets frustrating, I still believe that Asian Americans need a louder, stronger voice and that it can come with time and hard work. My passion for the APA community and my belief for everything I did on Penn’s campus propelled me into new opportunities, from jobs and internships to new friends. Some of the people that I’ve met on my journey have become my mentors, best friends and trusted companions. The APA community, at Penn and beyond, gave me a home. Furthermore, being a part of this community has become a part of my identity. I stayed involved because I never stopped believing in providing Asian Americans a voice. My advocacy work, which initially deepened my knowledge of my heritage, has ultimately become ingrained in who I am.
As far as I know, it’s been a while since there were tears at the PAACH senior luncheon. Since freshman year, I had gone to this celebratory event and watched as the seniors proudly accepted tokens of recognition for their contributions to the APA community. There was always an abundance of good food, the company of good friends, and a light air of accomplishment and congratulations.

Yet, for some reason, this year the nostalgic tears started in the line to get food, maybe twenty minutes before opening remarks were made (you know who you are!). And it just went downhill from there, with tears interrupting speeches, contagiously flooding the room; even Shiella fell victim (that was from me!). The very idea that this could be our last big family gathering was simply overwhelming. Even through the games and jokes, there was no denying the difficulty that the Class of 2011 had in saying goodbye. And playing Vitamin C’s “Graduation (Friends Forever)” repeatedly didn’t help either.

I had definitely found a home at PAACH. I made some of my first (and best) friendships during PEER Retreat as a freshman. I depended on PAACH for a place to hang out when I felt like escaping from classes and work. And as a senior, PAACH allowed me the opportunities to test myself as a leader, challenging what I knew I was capable of and learning about the real world in an unparalleled way. The level of passion I saw dedicated to the APA community by my peers was dazzling, and I’m so happy to have been a part of it, even if it was only for four short years.

Now, it’s the Class of 2012’s turn to take the reins and experience one of the best years of their lives. And here’s betting that they will be an even bigger mess at next year’s luncheon than we were!

---

**Sweet Emotion**
*By Joanna Wu, SAS’11*

Oracle Class of 2011 and alumni

---

**Consider giving to PAACH—ask us how!**
[http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/PAACH](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/PAACH)
Greetings from UPAAN!
Laura Lin, SEAS’02 & Calvin Chen, WH’97

We warmly congratulate the Class of 2011 on all of their remarkable achievements! This past year for UPAAN has been an exciting one, with many national and regional events that engaged a diverse pool of alumni, including networking/happy hours, picnics, speakers, and community service events. During Homecoming Weekend, UPAAN held its 6th Annual Mentoring Exchange as part of our continuing commitment to strengthen the ties between the alumni network and current students. Fall of 2010 also saw the first-ever event series: Penn Spectrum. Penn Spectrum Weekend featured an on-campus, weekend-long schedule of events celebrating ethnic diversity at Penn, and was hosted by the various cultural alumni organizations, including UPAAN. During Alumni Weekend, we honored our Class of 2011 UPAAN Student Award winner, Rohan Grover, WH‘11, and we wish him continued success in all future pursuits.

The upcoming year will bring celebration of diversity to an even higher level. As UPAAN itself approaches its 10 year mark, we understand the amount of effort and hard work it takes to keep an institution as successful as PAACH running. We invite all students and alumni to come celebrate PAACH’s achievements and contributions to the APA community during Homecoming at our official 10th Year Anniversary Celebration. As part of this weekend, UPAAN will be hosting our 7th Annual Mentoring Program, which we hope will provide current students with exciting opportunities to expand their professional network and employment horizons. The Mentoring Exchange is an excellent opportunity for students to get expert advice on various careers and life after Penn, and a wonderful opportunity to hone your own networking skills. Contact us at mentoring@upaan.org if you would like to get involved or want to help plan this great annual event.

Are you looking to get more involved with UPAAN? We encourage both alumni of any age and current students to become involved! Our regional chapters in New York, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Boston, San Francisco/Bay Area, and Los Angeles have held many interesting social, cultural, educational, and community service events. UPAAN is always looking for energetic and enthusiastic alumni to help guide these chapters and create exciting events for all alumni to enjoy.

Please contact us at upaan@upaan.org, visit our website to subscribe for email updates, or join one of our chapters on Facebook!

[ PAACH STAFF ]

Dr. June Y. Chu, Director
jychu@upenn.edu

Shiella Cervantes, Associate Director
shiella@upenn.edu

Kusum Soin, Office Coordinator
kusums@upenn.edu