ECAASU Announces Restructuring of National Board, Board of Directors

WASHINGTON, DC- Over the past few years, the East Coast Asian American Student Union (ECAASU) National Board has expanded its size and scope. To some extent, we have experienced programmatic success - such as the Artists in Residence program, High School Program, and Community Echos podcast - and improved mobilization efforts - such as the PGH Rally for Solidarity and the #FreeNancy Campaign. However, we have also seen rapid burnout and disconnect between members because of our National Board size and our current role- and team-based structure. For ECAASU to continue advancing our mission and shifting towards grassroots mobilizations, we have found a need to adapt the structure of the National Board and the functions of its members.

In January 2021, the current leadership began serious, intentional, and strategic conversations about changing how the National Board and Board of Directors operate. We obtained vital feedback from current and former members of ECAASU leadership through individual conversations, group discussions, and survey responses. With these responses and recommendations, we have developed a new framework for the 2021-2022 ECAASU National Board and Board of Directors.

At the forefront of the new framework is a reorientation to the goals, stances, and mission of ECAASU, as an organization. We aim to prioritize sustainability, wellness, and transparency amongst members of our leadership team. We believe that people work best when they have agency over their own work and are accountable to one another as peers. Therefore, the new leadership structure aims to reduce hierarchical positions and vertical leadership within ECAASU.

We will pilot a project-based model in 2021-2022. In this model, there will be no formal positions. People will work together in “pods,” focusing on a specific issue or project and deepening trust amongst members. Some pods will be year-long pods continuing ongoing programs, while others will form and dissolve as needed for mobilization purposes. External community members not part of the National Board will be encouraged to join these pods to increase collective capacity, build community, and to engage with ECAASU meaningfully as they are able.

Some of the previous expectations for ECAASU leadership will remain. National Board members are expected to serve a year-long (June-May) term, attend biweekly meetings, provide support during conference, and take on operational and administrative tasks that arise. Members of the Board of Directors are expected to serve a two-year term, manage behind-the-scenes operations,
and share institutional memory. They will also specialize in supporting the Conference Team or managing external partnerships.

We are hopeful that this shift in ECAASU’s internal structure will positively impact our practices and enable us to create more sustainable and impactful programs and efforts in line with our organizational stances, goals, and mission.

National Board applications are now available and will be accepted until May 31, 2021.

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Run solely by volunteers, The East Coast Asian American Student Union (ECAASU) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose mission is to inspire, educate, and empower those interested in Asian and Pacific Islander American (API/A) issues.