



**Federal Asian Pacific American Council**

**FAPAC**

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## **FAPAC Distinguished Public Service Scholarship Award Essay**

By Alex T. Pham, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

The story of Secretary Norman Y. Mineta is one of the most inspiring tales for upcoming Asian American students looking to make a change within their community. He served nearly 30 years as a representative for San Jose, California, always seeking ways to make transportation changes for the United States. He proposed a bill called the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 that projected major changes to how the United States was interconnected. He managed to suggest an act that would kick-start the connectivity of the states using the National Highway System. His program not only started a connection using highways, but railways too. He proposed that those railways connect longer distances and provide faster transport of goods and people. Secretary Norman Y. Mineta made changes to how we see the United States now, collectively bringing together people who were otherwise unconnected. His legacy that he left behind will always be remembered as one that benefitted all people.

I hope to achieve something similar to Secretary Norman Y. Mineta in terms of connecting people as a part of the Chinese American Society (CAS). During my sophomore year of college, I seized the opportunity to become an events coordinator in CAS. In CAS, I would educate others about the Chinese culture, and in turn, I would be educated about an unfamiliar culture. At the start of each CAS meeting, I am tasked with teaching the general body members about Chinese words and the meaning behind the reason for the meeting - such as a Lunar New Year event or the Dragon Boat Festival. At these meetings there are freshmen with Vietnamese backgrounds, to seniors with Indian backgrounds, to sophomores with Ethiopian backgrounds. By teaching others about the culture and the meaning behind each word, I'm connecting independent people through the language of culture. I strive to forge bonds between strangers and hope they leave the meetings as newfound friends. However, my goals do not stop at creating new friendships in a classroom building in Blacksburg.

I plan to spread the Chinese culture across the entirety of the Blacksburg population and even further, the entire population of Virginia. I've begun my journey towards my goal by joining the Asian American Student Union (AASU) council at Virginia Tech. There, we plan events that involve Blacksburg and the surrounding cities, not just CAS. We host fundraisers for raising awareness of Asian countries in need and campus wide events such as AASU culture show.

Using honorable Secretary Norman Y. Mineta's transportation act of 1991 as my example, I will continue to connect people of different backgrounds worldwide to spread awareness and knowledge of culture. By sharing my own experiences of culture, hopefully I will inspire people to collaborate on their knowledge of different cultures, bringing the world closer piece by piece.