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**OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates condemns the racist remarks of Purdue Northwest chancellor Thomas Keon**

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OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates (OCA), a leading national civil rights organization devoted to advocating on behalf of the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders, strongly condemns the racist remarks of Purdue Northwest chancellor Thomas Keon that were made during PNW’s commencement ceremony on December 10, 2022.

Chancellor Keon’s remarks were a racist attempt at humor gone wrong. His comments could not have been delivered at a worse time – a moment typically of joy, hope and triumph for so many graduates and their families. Keon’s babble cannot be dismissed as some harmless humor meant to engender some laughs. His statement is a damaging embarrassment to be heard by many in the audience who hear day-by-day anti-Asian slurs and phrases that minimize their place in America. With a dramatic rise in anti-AAPI hate across the country, this hate-fueled rhetoric has no place in our community.

While Keon has issued an apology for his statement that he characterizes as an innocent mistake, such does not go far enough. Keon’s apology is not truly remedial for the psychological damage rendered on the AANHPI community within the PNW family. OCA calls upon Chancellor Keon to apologize by facing the community. He should as a remedial measure meet with his AANHPI constituents, whether students, faculty or community, in the halls of PNW and the Purdue Northwest community in an around Hammond, and issue his apology to the entire community.

As Purdue University welcomes its new President Mung Chiang, a Chinese American, in January, OCA urges Purdue University to review Chancellor Keon’s position in the light of Purdue’s own diversity and inclusion initiatives. Keon’s racist Asian mock statement can be a teaching moment, and a moment that has consequences for Chancellor Keon.

OCA and its Greater Chicago Chapter looks forward to the apology and remedial conversations to come out of this mock Asian episode.