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**Florida’s Indian River State College Named One of Top Three Community Colleges in America by Aspen Institute**

*Indian River State College recognized as one of two Finalists-with-Distinction and awarded \$100,000 prize for achieving outstanding outcomes in: learning, degree completion, minority and low-income student success, and employment and earnings*

**Washington, DC, March 14, 2017** – The Aspen Institute announced today that **Indian River State College in Fort Pierce, Florida is a Finalist-with-Distinction of the [2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence](#)**, the nation’s preeminent recognition of high achievement and performance in America’s community colleges and a benchmark for community college reform.

Awarded every two years since 2011, the \$1 million Aspen Prize recognizes institutions for their outstanding outcomes in four areas: student learning; certificate and degree completion; employment and earnings; and high levels of access and success for minority and low-income students.

Selected from more than 1,000 public community colleges nationwide, **2017 Aspen Prize winner Lake Area Technical Institute will receive \$600,000 in prize funds**. Two Florida colleges, **Broward College (Fort Lauderdale) and Indian River State College (Fort Pierce) were named Finalists-with-Distinction**. Aspen also recognized **two top ten finalists with the “Rising Star” award for rapid improvement in student completion: Odessa College (Odessa, TX) and San Jacinto College (Pasadena, TX)**. All four will receive \$100,000 prizes. (*See full list of Top Ten Prize Finalists below and read more information about them at <http://as.pn/1kr>.)*

“Indian River State College excels at providing a top-notch education for its students that is deeply aligned to the needs of employers in its region,” said Joshua Wyner, Executive Director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program and author of *What Excellent Community Colleges Do*. “The college has an exceptionally culture of student success which in recent years has enabled incredibly quick progress in building clear pathways for its students, both those who aim to transfer to a four-year university and those aiming to enter the workforce right after graduation.”

Indian River State College may be the only higher educational option for 60 miles on a remote stretch of Florida’s east coast, but it has become one of the best college options in the area, serving 24,000 students at multiple campuses. With the goal of continuing to increase student completion rates, Indian River is deeply focused on what students need to complete classes, graduate and transfer

to a four-year school or head directly into the workforce. With world class training facilities, Indian River offers bachelor's degrees on campus and programs -- from laser and nuclear technology to public safety and emergency response training -- that deliver the skills regional employers demand.

Indian River State College stands out as one of the nation's top community colleges for many reasons, including:

- Strong three-year graduation/transfer rates for all students (49%, compared to 39% nationally) and underrepresented minorities (43%, compared to 34% nationally)
- Ranked third most affordable college in the nation by US Department of Education
- Exemplary work developing guided pathways to degrees and jobs

The Prize winner and finalists were announced at an event at the Newseum in Washington, DC, by Aspen Prize Jury co-chairs Mitch Daniels, president of Purdue University and former Governor of Indiana, and former Representative George Miller (D-CA).

Community colleges today enroll more than 40 percent of all US undergraduates – 6 million students – working toward degrees and certificates. These include growing numbers of lower-income and minority students. While nationwide, under 40% of all community college students graduate, Aspen Prize finalist institutions demonstrate that community colleges can help students achieve higher levels of success while in college and in completing a degree that leads to well-paying jobs and careers after college.

For more information about the 2017 Aspen Prize Winner, Finalists-with-Distinction, Rising Stars as well as information and lessons learned from the all of the Prize Finalists listed below, please visit: <http://as.pn/1kr>

### **2017 Aspen Prize Winner - Lake Area Technical Institute (Watertown, SD)**

#### **Finalists-with-Distinction**

***Broward College (Fort Lauderdale, FL)***

***Indian River State College (Fort Pierce, FL)***

#### **Rising Star Award**

***Odessa College (Odessa, TX)***

***San Jacinto College (Pasadena, TX)***

#### **Finalists**

***Anoka-Ramsey Community College (Coon Rapids, MN)***

***Chaffey College (Rancho Cucamonga, CA)***

***Northeast Community College (Norfolk, NE)***

***Pasadena City College (Pasadena, CA)***

***West Kentucky Community and Technical College (Paducah, KY)***

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**The Aspen Prize** is funded by the Joyce Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, the Siemens Foundation, and Pearson.

**The Aspen College Excellence Program** aims to advance higher education practices, policies, and leadership that significantly improve student outcomes. Through the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the Siemens Technical Scholars Program, and other initiatives, the College Excellence Program works to improve colleges'

understanding and capacity to teach and graduate students, especially the growing population of low-income and minority students on American campuses. For more information, visit <http://highered.aspeninstitute.org/>.

**The Aspen Institute** is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. The Institute is based in Washington, DC; Aspen, Colorado; and on the Wye River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. It also has offices in New York City and an international network of partners. For more information, visit [www.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.aspeninstitute.org).