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**FLORIDA'S BROWARD COLLEGE, INDIAN RIVER STATE COLLEGE, AND MIAMI DADE COLLEGE NAMED AMONG TEN FINALISTS FOR 2019 ASPEN PRIZE FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE EXCELLENCE**

*Florida One of Only Two States in US with Multiple Finalists*

*\$1 Million Prize Recognizes Excellence in Community College Student Success Outcomes;  
Winner to be Announced in April 2019*

**Washington, D.C., May 15, 2018** – Three Florida community colleges – Broward, Indian River, and Miami Dade – were today announced as being among the 10 finalists for the [2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence](#), the nation's signature recognition of high achievement and performance in America's community colleges. (*See complete list of finalists below.*)

Florida community colleges have always done well in the Aspen Prize process: two of the five winners have come from Florida (Valencia in 2011 and Santa Fe in 2015). However, while Florida has every year captured two of 10 finalist spots for the Aspen Prize, this is the first time any single state has seen three of its colleges in the finalist pool.

Awarded every two years since 2011, the Prize recognizes institutions that achieve high and improving student outcomes, selected from over 1,000 community colleges nationwide. Focused solely on student access and success, the Aspen Prize recognizes community colleges with exceptional achievements in four areas:

- Student learning;
- Certificate and degree completion while in community college and after transferring to a four-year institution;
- Employment and earnings rates after graduation; and
- Access for and success of minority and low-income students.

In April 2019, the \$1 million Prize purse will be awarded at an event in Washington, D.C. to the winner, two or three finalists-with-distinction, and a “Rising Star” that has achieved exceptional levels of improvement. Between now and then, Aspen will work with a team of national experts to collect extensive, additional data and conduct multi-day site visits to the 10 finalist colleges.

“I am consistently impressed by Florida’s community colleges,” said Joshua Wyner, Executive Director of the Aspen College Excellence Program and author of [\*What Excellent Community Colleges Do: Preparing All Students for Success\*](#). “These three community colleges demonstrate that it is possible to achieve high and improving levels of student success in every measure Aspen weighs, dispelling the myth that community colleges must choose between high levels of student learning and degree completion, or between excellent workforce development and transfer preparation, or between open access and equitable outcomes.”

Here is a brief summary of some of the factors used by Aspen to select each of the three Florida finalists:

### **Broward College – Fort Lauderdale, FL (63,389 Students)**

Broward College, a 2017 Aspen Prize Finalist-with-Distinction, stands out as one of the nation’s top community colleges for many reasons, including:

- Broward’s graduation/transfer rate of 48 percent is eight percentage points above the national average. Impressively, Broward’s 46 percent graduation/transfer rate for students of color is a full 12 percentage points above the national average; there is virtually no gap in three-year graduation/transfer rates between all Broward students and students of color.
- With strong relationships to four-year partner universities and tailored advising services, Broward achieves rates of student transfer to four-year schools that are significantly higher than the national average.
- Broward has developed clear course sequences for all of its programs – each aligned to one of eight “career clusters” and supported by strong advising systems – so that students understand the connection of their studies to their careers and can efficiently complete degrees with minimal excess credits.

### **Indian River State College – Fort Pierce, FL (24, 297 Students)**

Indian River State College, also named a 2017 Aspen Prize Finalist-with-Distinction and a 2015 Aspen Prize Finalist, stands out as one of the nation’s top community colleges for many reasons, including:

- Impressive three-year graduation/transfer rates for all students (49 percent as compared to 40 percent nationally).
- IRSC offers 17 bachelor’s degrees in its world-class facilities, all aligned to high-demand jobs in the region.
- Exemplary work in developing clear programs of study that help students successfully complete classes and graduate, strengthened by intensive advising, progress tracking, and early interventions that keep students on track all the way to graduation.

### **Miami Dade College – Miami, FL (more than 165,000 Students)**

Miami Dade College, also a 2011 Aspen Prize Finalist-with-Distinction, stands out as one of the nation's top community colleges for many reasons, including:

- A partnership with Florida International University (FIU) that helps students seamlessly transfer from MDC to FIU, including guaranteed admission to FIU upon completion of the associates of arts degree. This deep relationship has led to transfer outcomes well above the national average.
- Through its Student Achievement Initiative and Guided Pathways work, MDC has aligned institutional practices and policies to student success, leading to an impressive overall three-year graduation/transfer rate above the national average, with no attainment gap for students of color (who make up the majority of the student body).
- Robust support services to help students address non-academic needs – such as housing, transportation, and food insecurity – that would otherwise create roadblocks to graduation.

Community colleges today enroll about 40 percent of all U.S. undergraduates – six million students – who are working toward earning degrees and certificates. Improving student success across the more than 1,000 community colleges in the U.S. is critical to national efforts to develop talent and enable individual social mobility, because:

- Community colleges disproportionately enroll low-income and minority students enrolled in college today.
- Community college graduation rates remain flat, with fewer than 40 percent of all entering students earning a degree and/or transferring to a four-year college or university.
- A college degree is today more important than ever before: [Recent research](#) shows that out of the 11.6 million jobs created in the post-recession economy, 11.5 million require a college education.

The 10 Aspen Prize Finalists have achieved strong and improving student success rates in very different contexts – they are from rural and urban areas, serve demographically different student bodies, and offer a varied mix of technical workforce and academic transfer programs. These 10 institutions offer proof that every community college can achieve higher levels of success for students while in college and after they graduate.

#### **The 2019 Aspen Prize Finalists (listed in alphabetical order):**

- **Alamo Colleges District - Palo Alto College – San Antonio, TX**
  - *First time Finalist*
- **Broward College – Fort Lauderdale, FL**
  - *2017 Finalist-with-Distinction*
  - *2013 Finalist*
- **CUNY Kingsborough Community College – Brooklyn, NY**
  - *2013 Finalist-with-Distinction*
- **Indian River State College – Fort Pierce, FL**
  - *2017 Finalist-with-Distinction*

- 2015 Finalist
- **Miami Dade College – Miami, FL**
  - 2011 Finalist-with-Distinction
- **Mitchell Technical Institute – Mitchell, SD**
  - First time Finalist
- **Odessa College – Odessa, TX**
  - 2017 Rising Star Award (for rapid improvement)
- **Pasadena City College – Pasadena, CA**
  - 2017 Finalist
- **Pierce College at Fort Steilacoom – Lakewood, WA**
  - First time Finalist
- **San Jacinto College – Pasadena, TX**
  - 2017 Rising Star Award (for rapid improvement)

During the remainder of 2018, the Aspen Institute will complete a rigorous review process that includes examination of data on learning, graduation, workforce, and equitable outcomes for all students as well as multi-day site visits to each of the 10 finalist institutions. In early 2019, a distinguished Prize Jury will select a grand prize winner, finalists-with-distinction, and a Rising Star.

The 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence was awarded to Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown, South Dakota. Previous Prize winners also include: Santa Fe College, Gainesville, Florida (2015); Santa Barbara City College, Santa Barbara, California and Walla Walla Community College, Walla Walla, Washington (co-winners 2013); Valencia College, Orlando, Florida (2011). Former Prize winners are not eligible to reapply.

**The 2019 Aspen Prize** is generously funded by the Joyce Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, and the Siemens Foundation.

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**The Aspen Institute 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-Aspen Community College STEM Award, 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).