



Lessons from the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
COLLEGE EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

Winners and Finalists

Winners

Santa Fe College, Gainesville, FL (2015)
Santa Barbara City College, Santa Barbara, CA (2013)
Walla Walla Community College, Walla Walla, WA (2013)
Valencia College, Orlando, FL (2011)

Finalists w/Distinction

Lake Area Technical Institute, Watertown, SD (2015, 2013, 2011)
West Kentucky Community & Technical College, Paducah, KY (2015,2011)
Kingsborough Community College, Bronx, NY (2013)
Miami-Dade College (2011)
Walla Walla Community College, Walla Walla, WA (2011)

Rising Star

Kennedy-King College, Chicago, IL (2015)

Finalists

Brazosport College, Lake Jackson, TX (2015, 2013)
Broward College, Ft. Lauderdale, FL (2013)
College of the Ouachitas, Malvern, AR (2013)
El Paso Community College, El Paso, TX (2015)
Hostos Community College, Bronx, NY (2015)
Indian River State College, Fort Pierce, FL (2015)
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Perkinston, MS (2011)
Mott Community College, Flint, MI (2011)
Northeast Iowa Community College, Calmar, IA (2011)
Olympic College, Bremerton, WA (2015)
Renton Technical College, Renton, WA (2015)
Santa Barbara City College, Santa Barbara, CA (2011)
Santa Fe College, Gainesville, FL (2013)
Southeast Kentucky Community & Technical College, Cumberland, KY (2013)
Southwest Texas Junior College, Uvalde, TX (2011)
West Kentucky Community and Technical College, Paducah, WV (2013)



Four Measures of Community College Excellence

**High absolute
performance**

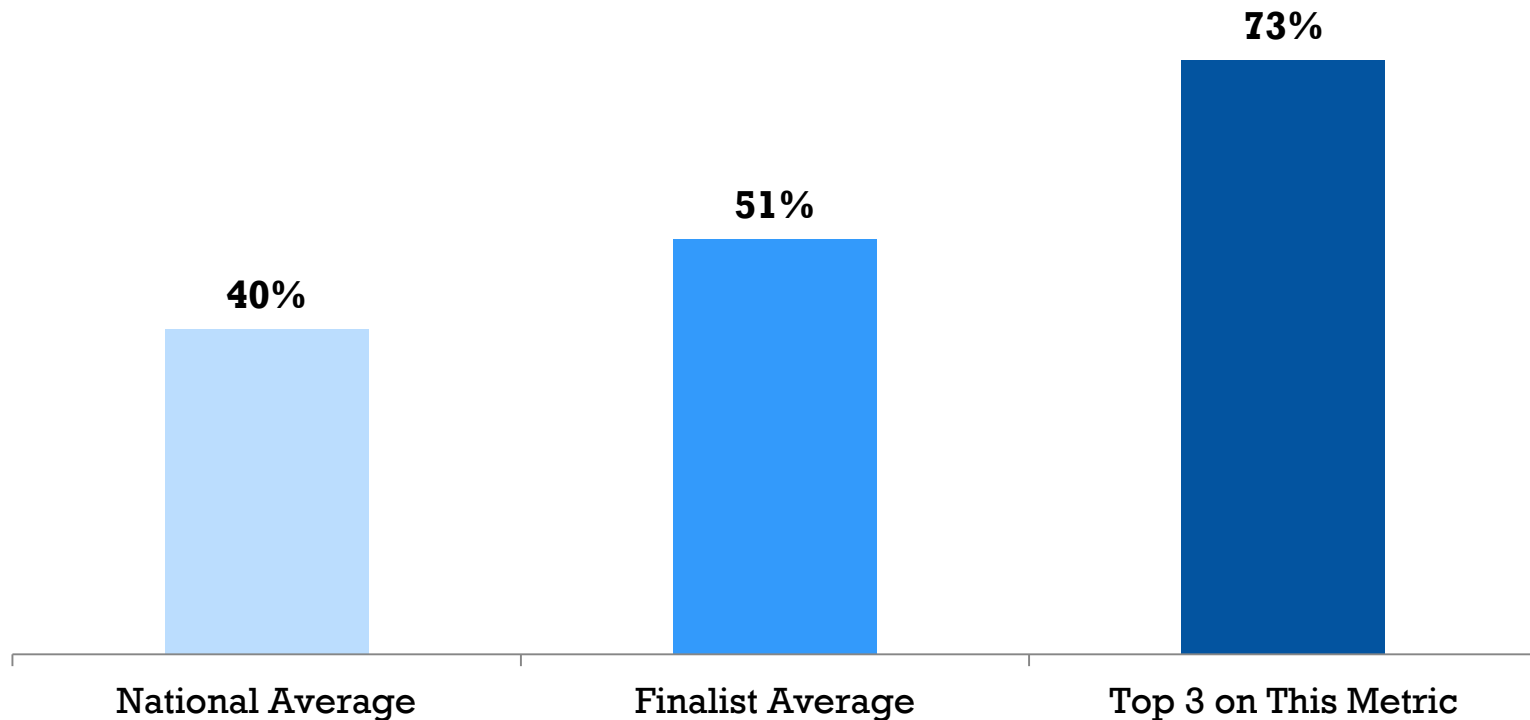
Learning outcomes
Completion outcomes
Labor market outcomes
Equity in outcomes

**Improvement
over time**



Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

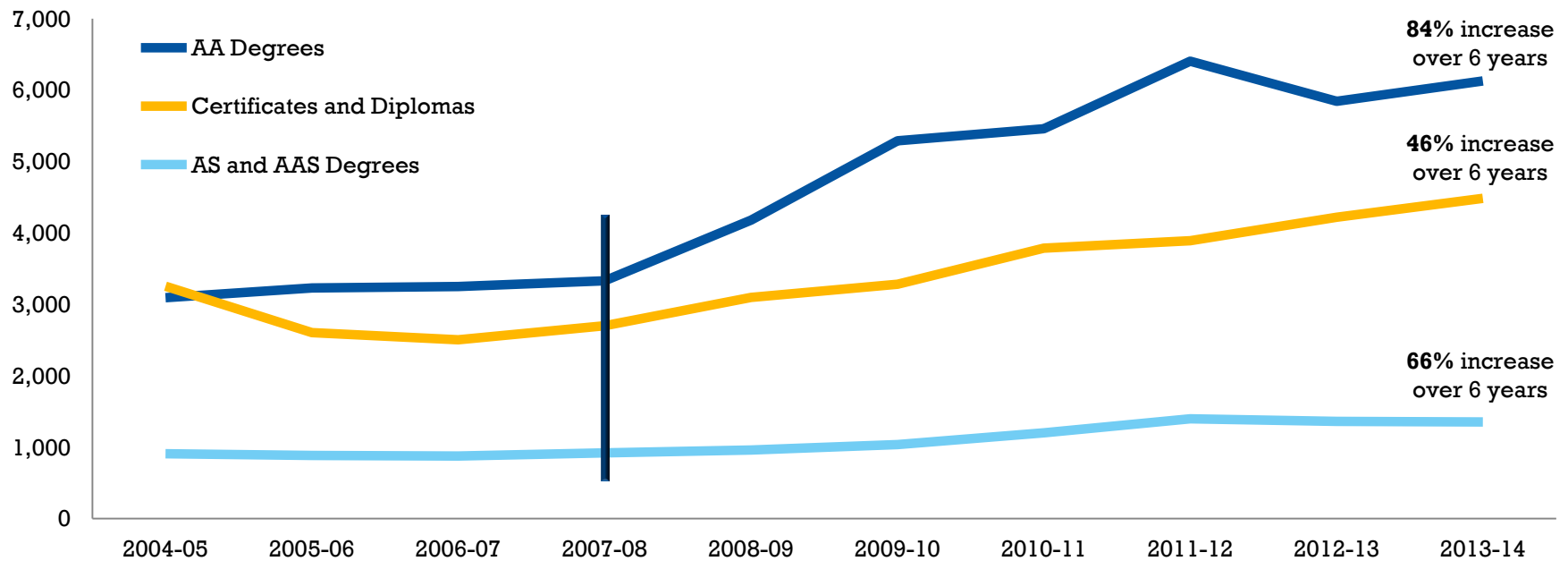
Completion/transfer rates that far surpass the national average



Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

Exceptional improvements over time in completion

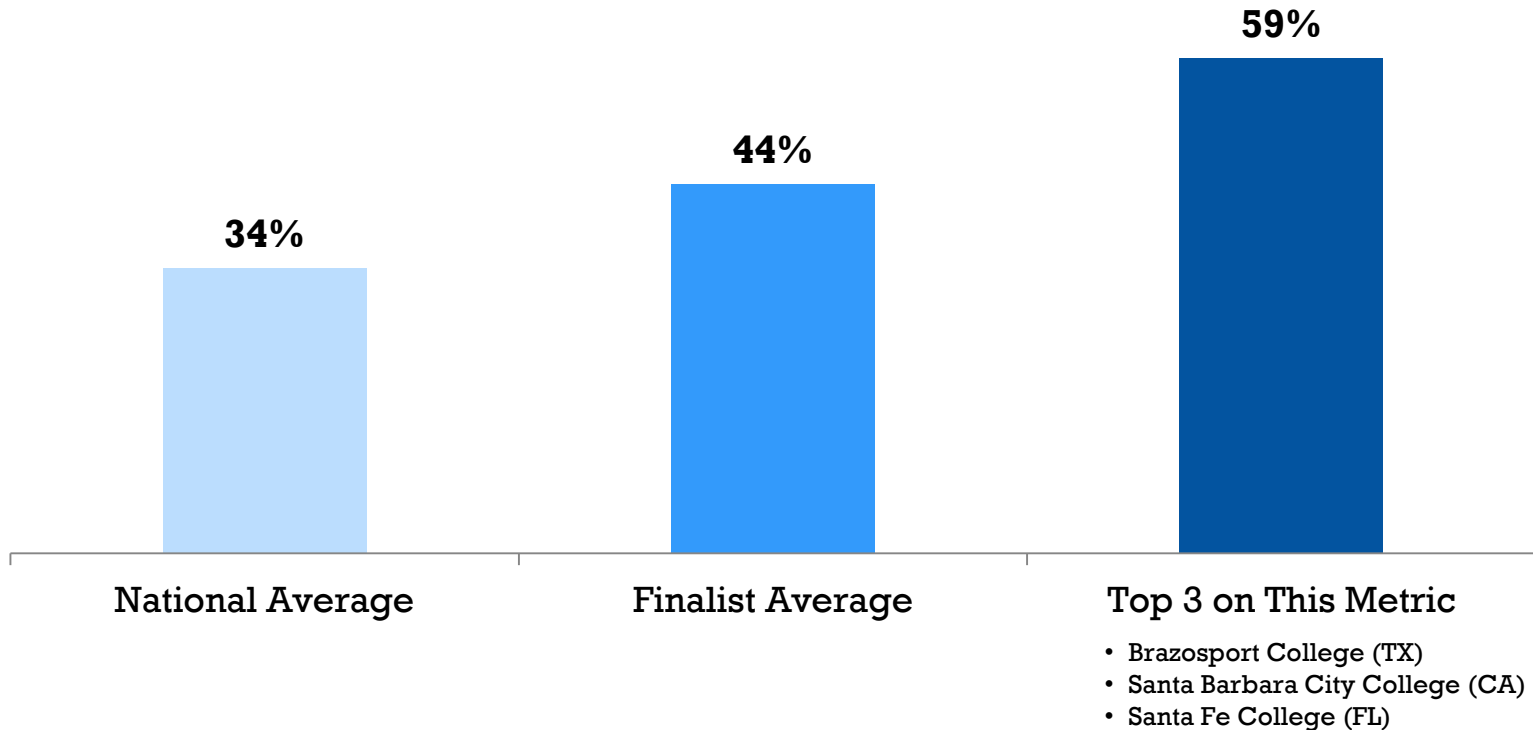
Increase in the number of credentials awarded at Valencia College, 2002-2011
AA, AS/AAS Degrees and Certificates/Diplomas Awarded



Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

Far greater equity in outcomes than the national average

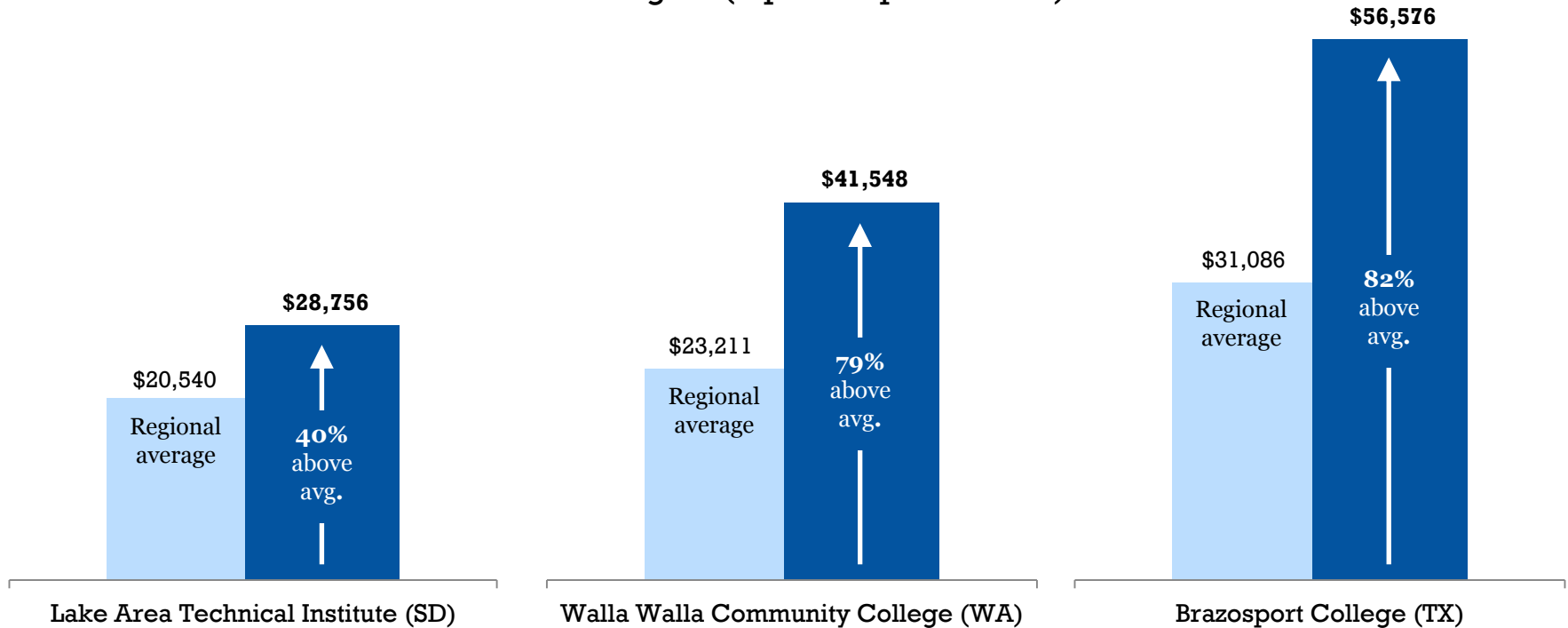
Three-year completion and/or transfer rates for underrepresented minority students compared to the national average



Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

Exceptional short-term labor market outcomes for graduates

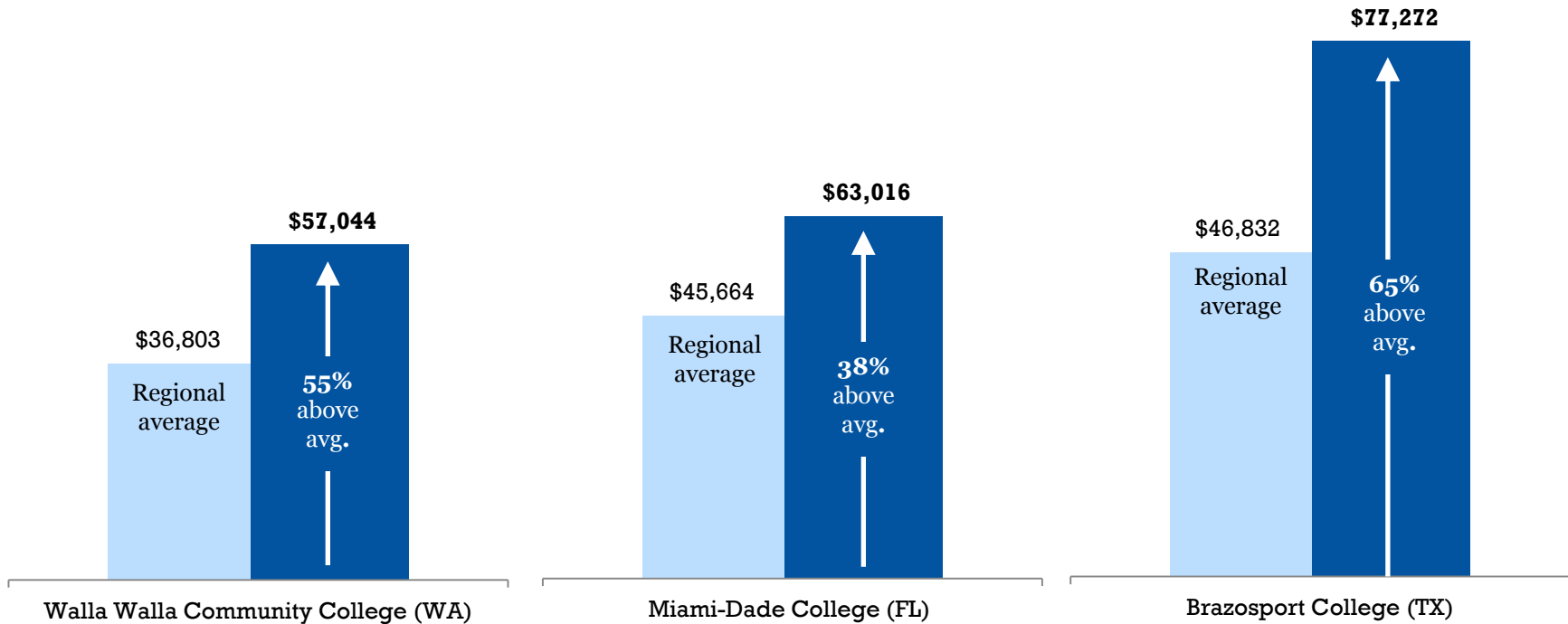
Average salaries of recent graduates compared to the average for all new-hires in the region (top three performers)



Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

Exceptional long-term labor market outcomes

Average salaries of graduates 5 years after graduation compared to the average for all workers in the region (top three performers)

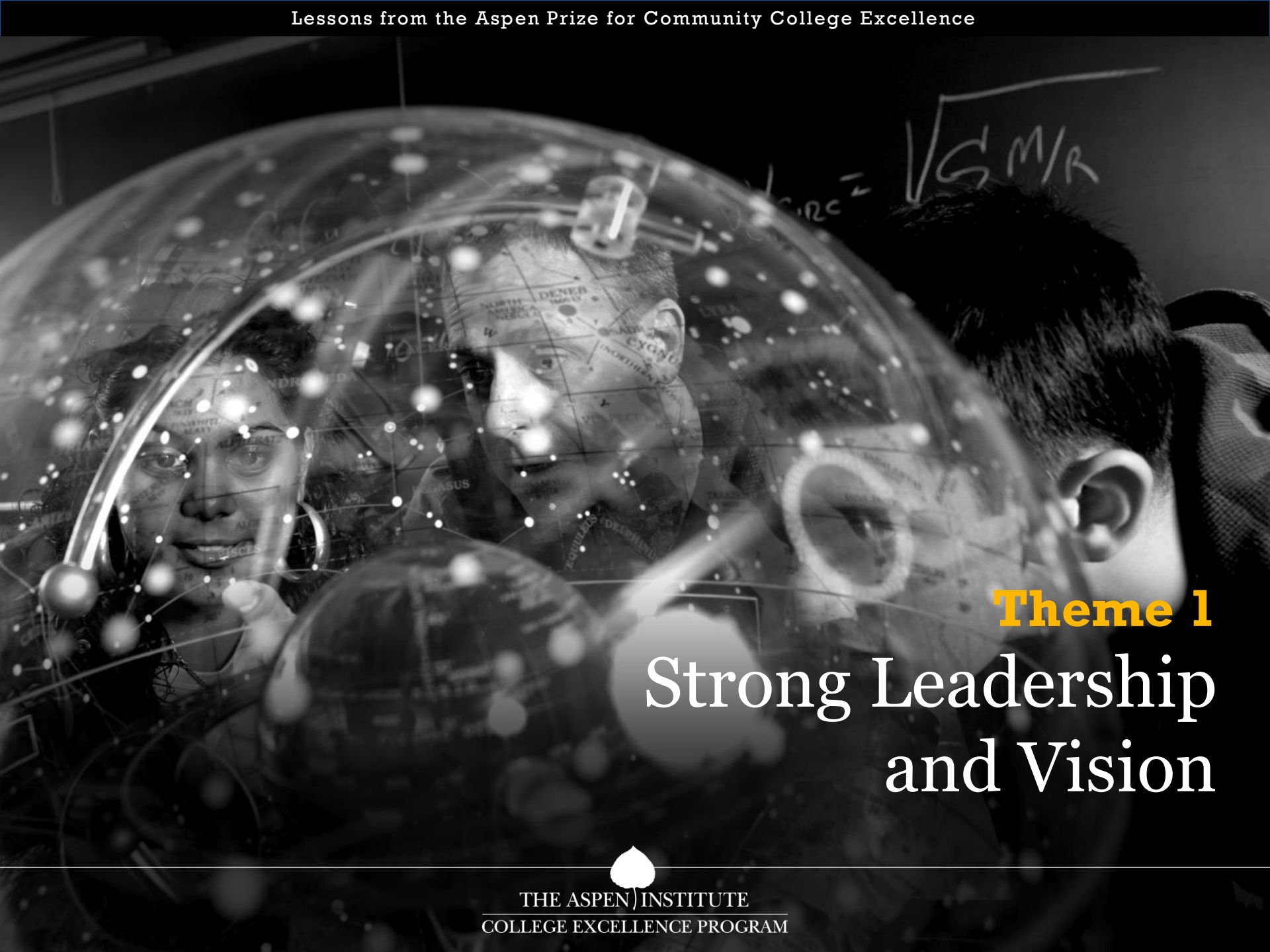


Lessons from the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence



Themes characterizing the institutions that achieve exceptional outcomes for students:

- 1** Strong Leadership and Culture
- 2** Guided Pathways to Continuing Education and Well-Paying Jobs
- 3** Intentional Focus on Improving Teaching and Learning
- 4** Strategic Data Use to Improve Practice and Close Equity Gaps
- 5** Partnerships and Structures Aligned to Defined Student Outcomes



Theme 1

Strong Leadership and Vision



Exceptional colleges have strong executive leaders:

Communicate a clear vision focused explicitly on student success, and ensure that all the institution's work and resources aim towards that goal.



Exceptional colleges have strong executive leaders:

**Inspire and sustain a change
in culture towards **innovation,
data-informed practice, and
shared responsibility** for
student success.**



Exceptional colleges have strong executive leaders:

Consistently act in ways that make clear that their central concern is student success, including by taking risks.



Exceptional colleges have strong executive leaders:

**Develop strong external
partnerships that support
student success.**

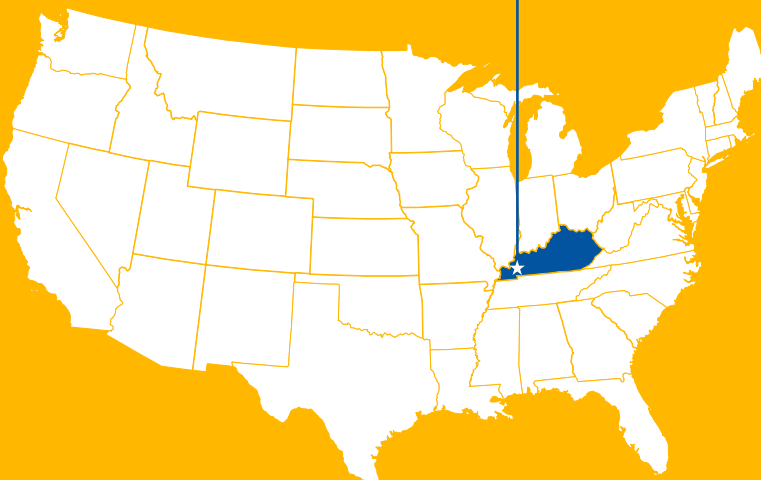


West Kentucky Community and Technical College



President Barbara Veazey and her staff used data about students' limited reading skills to build urgency and engage faculty in a college-wide reading initiative that measurably improved student learning.

Result: Over 40% improvement in reading scores across the college.

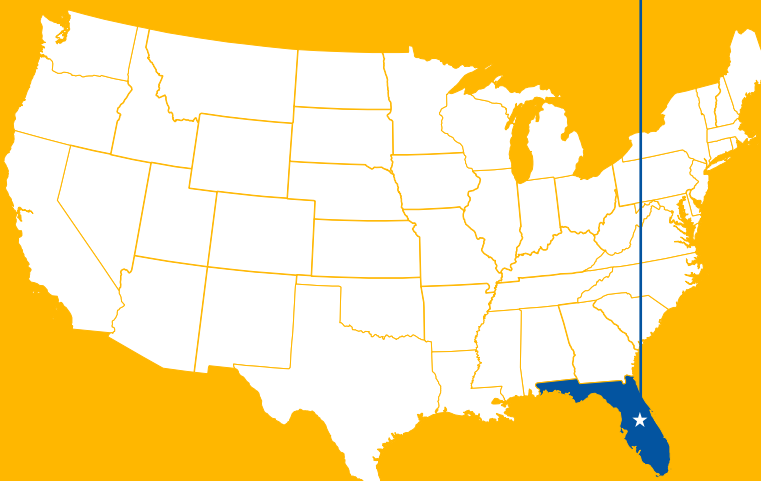


Valencia College

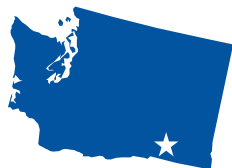


President Sandy Shugart aligns highly effective change management processes to sustainable college-wide focal points – called “Big Ideas” – that reflect shared visions of what most needs to be done to advance student success.

Result: Sustained, dramatic improvements in completion rates.

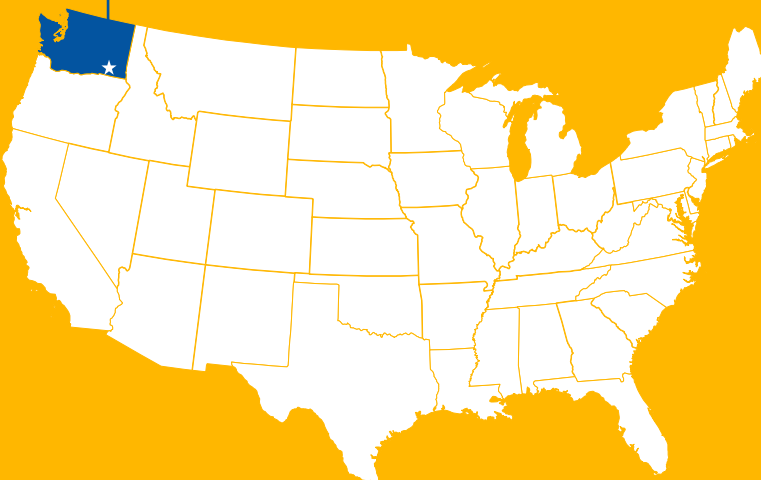


Walla Walla Community College



President Steven VanAusdle developed a comprehensive vision for the region of sustainable economic growth, human capital development, and economic opportunity, then ensured that college programs are tied to new and expanding job-growth areas.

Result: High graduation rates and exceptional labor market outcomes.

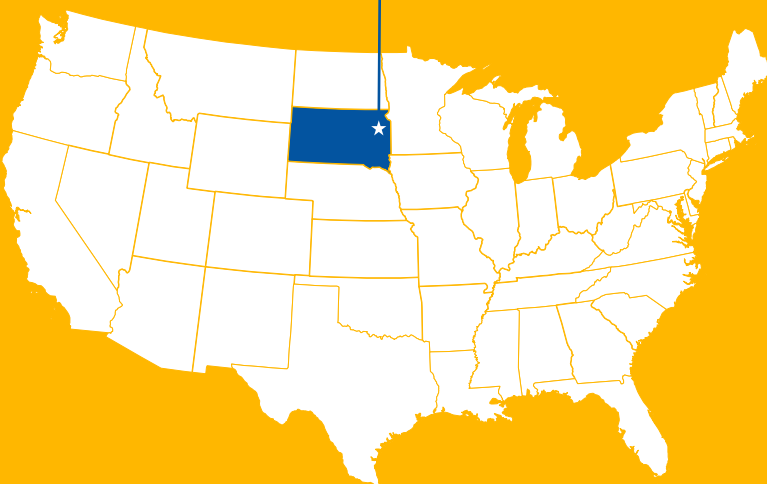


Lake Area Technical Institute



President Deb Shepherd built a culture and processes by which the college designs and consistently updates programs based on industry need and job expectations, always ensuring hands-on instruction that engages students and simulates the work environment.

Result: 76% graduation rate and remarkably strong employment rates for graduates.

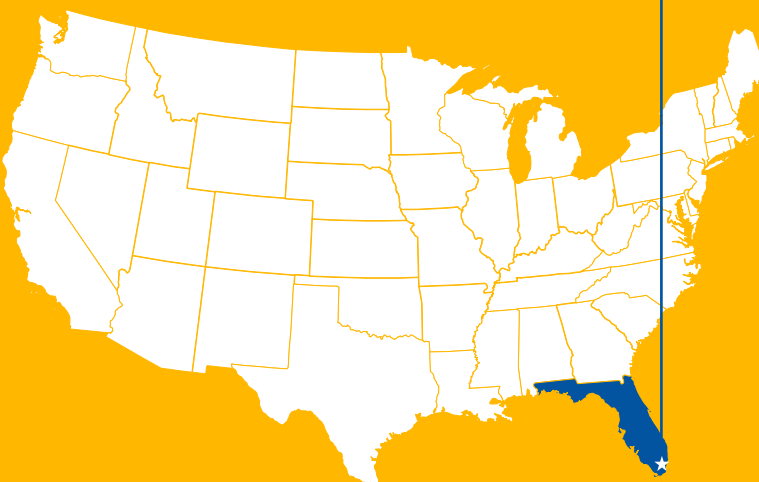


Miami Dade College



President Eduardo Padrón led the college in fundamentally redesigning its programs to create much greater clarity about how students progress toward degrees, and built support structures aligned to those clearer degree pathways.

Result: New default curricula for five degree pathways that, together, serve 60 percent of all new students.



Theme 2

Guided Pathways to
Continuing Education
And Well-Paying Jobs



Exceptional colleges have comprehensive strategies for student success centered on clear pathways:

Build new pathways to success, including narrowly defined course sequences, aligned to what comes next: workforce and four-year transfer.



Exceptional colleges have comprehensive strategies for student success centered on clear pathways:

Focus support services on pathways goals

(e.g. career/major counseling, early alerts, intrusive advising).



Exceptional colleges have comprehensive student support systems that cross historic functional or curricular divisions:

Redesign systems from scratch (one-stop student service centers, new registration centers, etc.) and implement them college-wide rather than in small pilots.



Exceptional colleges have clear pathways with connected student support systems that cross historic functional or curricular divisions:

**Design pathways that start
with the end in mind:
workforce/four-year transfer**

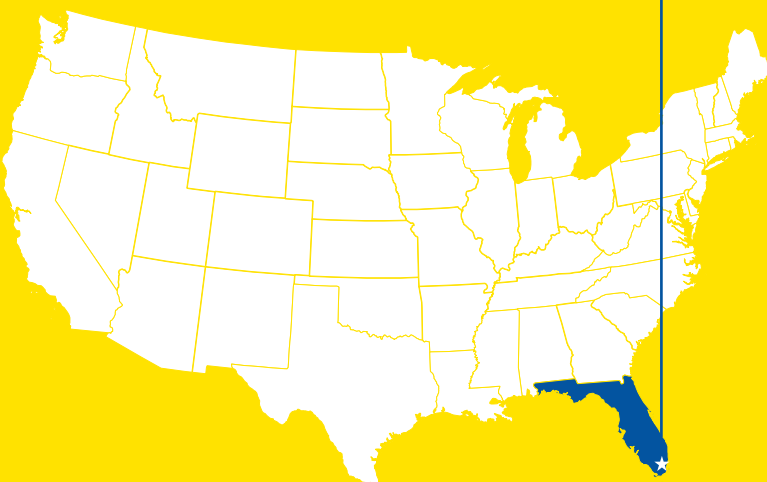


Miami Dade College



Faculty and advisors were engaged to create new simple degree pathways for 60% of incoming students.

Result: New default curricula for five degree pathways that, together, serve 60 percent of all new students.

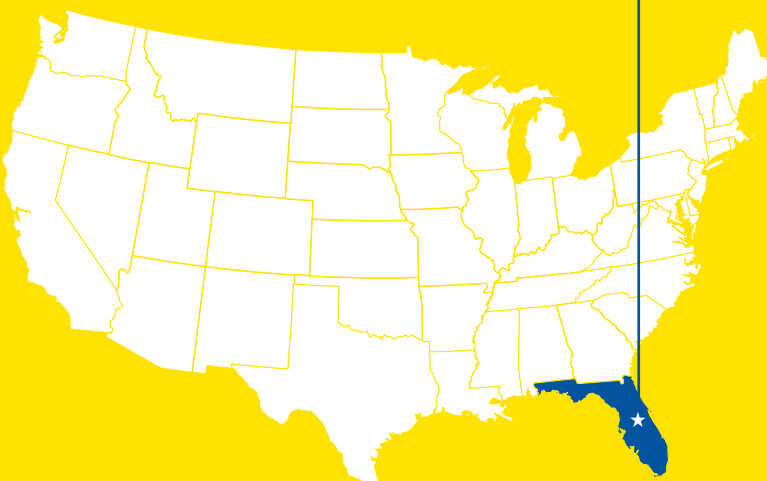


Valencia College



Industry veterans with close ties to the field were placed in specific career-technical programs to work one-on-one with students.

Result: Strong employment and earnings outcomes for recent graduates.

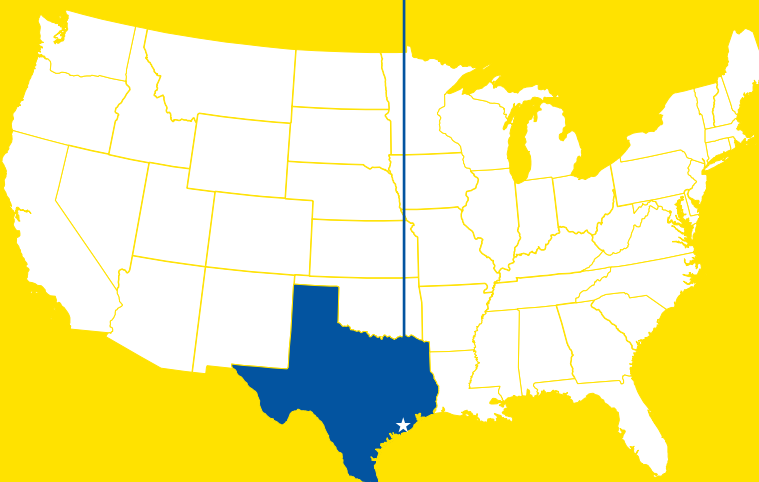


Brazosport College



Student success courses are mandatory and integrated into the academic core—most taught by FT faculty dedicated only to these courses.

Result: Rapidly improving rates of student retention and completion, including for minority students.

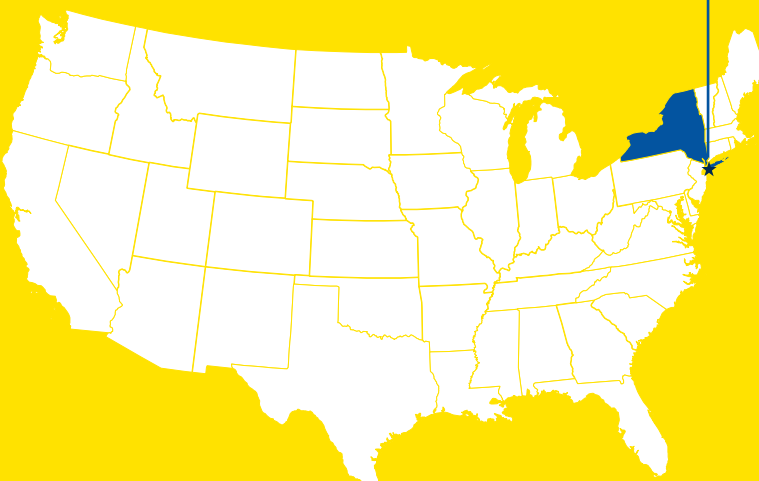


Kingsborough Community College



Small groups of students progress together in “learning communities,” which integrate student affairs, academic content, and advising.

Result: Student success for participating students improved significantly while cost per degree decreased.

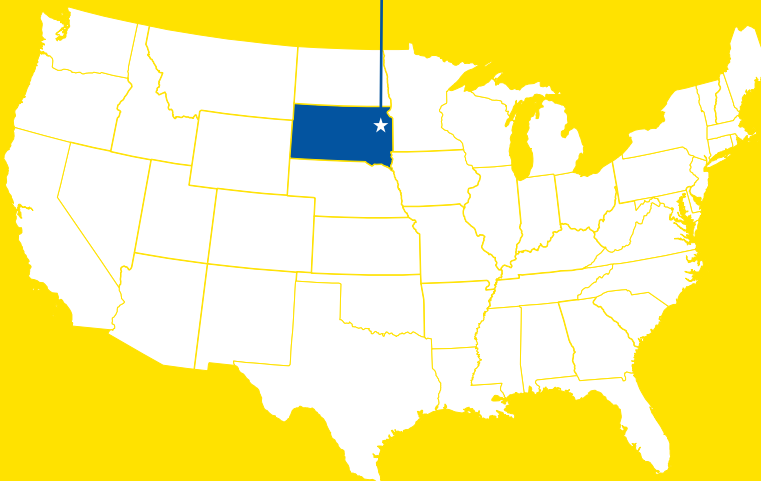


Lake Area Technical Institute



Structured, cohort-based, block-schedule programs ensure students stay on track.

Result: 76 percent graduation rate is among the nation's highest.

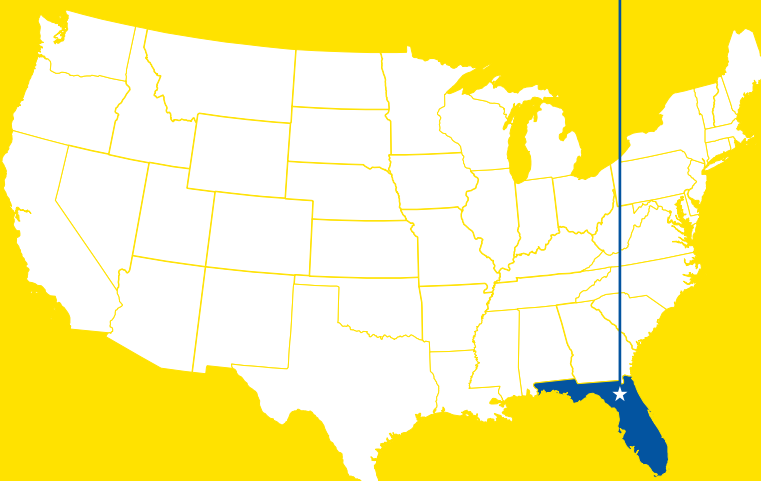


Santa Fe College



“My Academic Plan” online program builds guided course selection pathways for students based on their goals and lives, and creates alerts when students get off-track.

Result: Very high rates of four-year transfer and bachelor’s degree attainment.

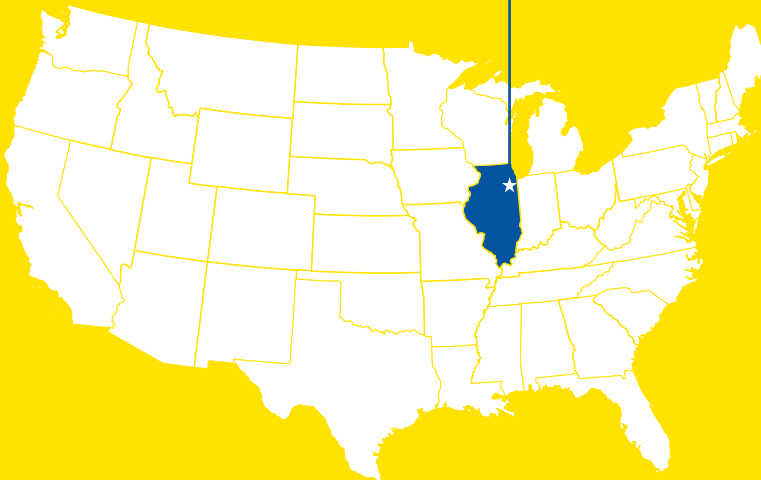


Kennedy-King College



New pathways built for all students (including those in developmental education) and reflected in new college catalogue.

Result: Doubling of graduation rates over five years.





Theme 3

Intentional Focus on Improving Teaching and Learning



Exceptional colleges set the expectation that faculty and staff will continually improve their own practices:

Faculty engaged in self-assessment and eager to improve their instruction to better serve students.



Exceptional colleges set the expectation that faculty and staff will continually improve their own practices:

Explicit connections between individual student learning and larger measures of course, program, and institution success.



Exceptional colleges set the expectation that faculty and staff will continually improve their own practices:

A systematic use of evidence of students' learning outcomes to drive improvements in instruction.



Exceptional colleges set the expectation that faculty and staff will continually improve their own practices:

Hiring, tenure and promotion models supported by shared definitions of teaching excellence and systematic use of student learning outcome data.



Valencia College



Culture where faculty consistently invent new approaches to teaching and measure whether they improve student learning—part of the exceptional Teaching and Learning Academy and a new process of tenure and promotion.

Result: Graduation rates nearly double those of peer institutions; strong transfer and bachelor's completion rates.



West Kentucky Community and Technical College



Widespread development and use of assessments to improve instruction, driven by leaders engaging in multiple strategies to create urgency around the need to improve student learning.

Result: Strong graduation rates and dramatically improved reading scores.

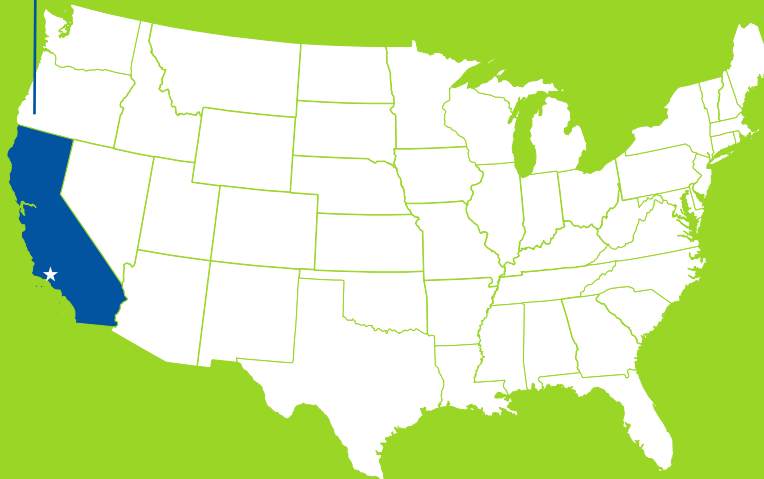


Santa Barbara City College



Driven by a strong, shared focus on transfer preparation and equitable outcomes, the college established strong hiring practices and tutoring centers aimed at delivering the rigorous education students need to succeed at the college and later in bachelor's programs.

Result: Very strong transfer and bachelors' degree attainment rates, including for Hispanic students.

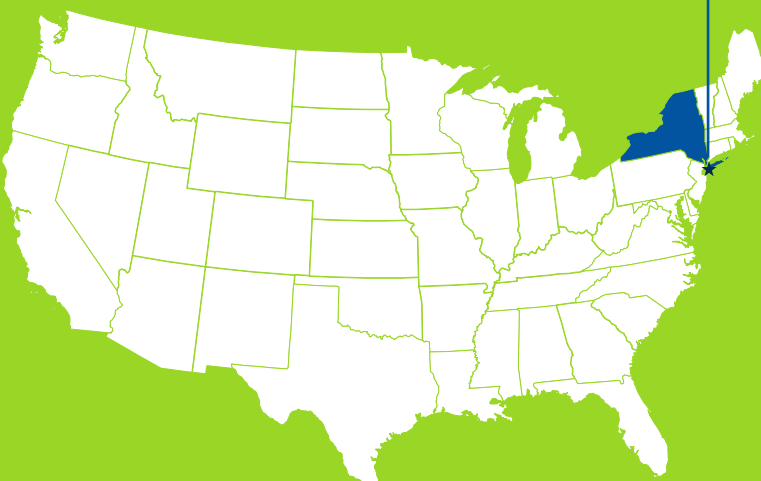


Kingsborough Community College



Strong culture of continuous improvement in learning created through a professional development program for faculty teaching in learning communities and active faculty inquiry groups.

Result: Strong completion rates and very high rates of transfer.

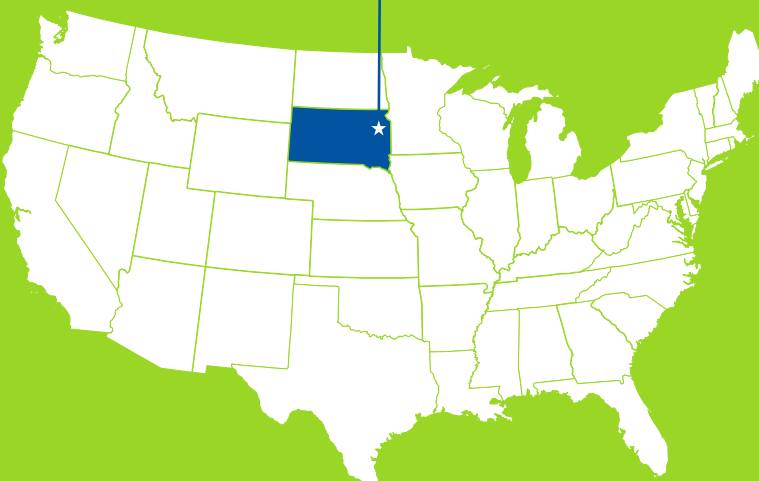


Lake Area Technical Institute



Comprehensive course in teaching pedagogy required for new instructors, driven by the recognition that many instructors come from industry.

Results: Very strong employment and earnings rates, reflecting strong employer satisfaction with graduates' skills.





Theme 4

Strategic Data Use to Improve Practice and Close Equity Gaps



Exceptional colleges strategically use student data:

Data are distributed consistently throughout the institution that reflect the focus on student success.



Exceptional colleges strategically use student data:

Data help everyone understand students' longer-term success—such as labor market outcomes and post-transfer academic success.



Exceptional colleges strategically use student data:

Faculty and staff are given structured time and space to meet, analyze, and discuss data on student outcomes.



Exceptional colleges strategically use student data:

Evaluation, scale, and sustainability are considered when programs are designed and revised



Valencia College



Data are consistently used to focus everyone on common student success challenges that drive reform plans and to answer questions about which interventions work.

Result: Dramatic improvements in student graduation rates.

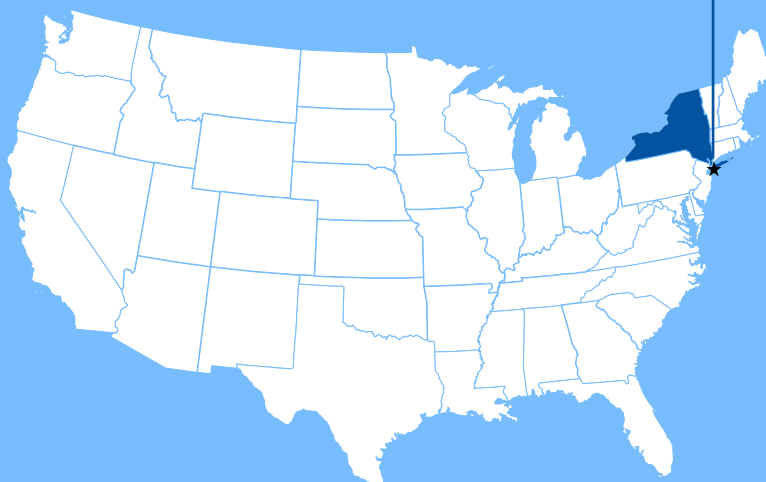


Kingsborough Community College



Data are used to assess everything from the efficacy of learning communities to the student experience in registration to whether students are receiving the financial resources they need to succeed.

Result: Leaders, faculty, and staff regularly discuss outcomes and change programs accordingly.

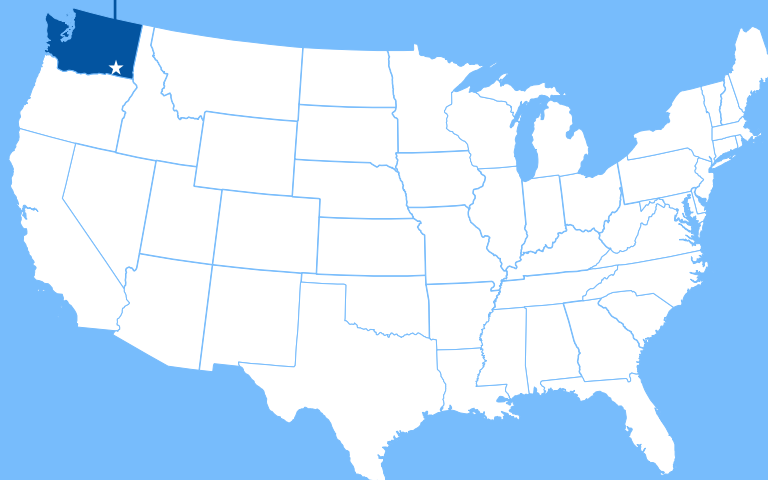


Walla Walla Community College



Data on labor market trends and completion drive consistent, iterative changes in programs and communications with students.

Result: Student outcomes are used to decide which program to open, expand, and close (even when fully enrolled).



West Kentucky Community and Technical College



Learning outcomes data drive changes in teaching college-wide, as well as faculty inquiry and improvement efforts at the program and course level.

Result: Faculty regularly make improvements based on common assessment questions and data analysis, and reading skills improved significantly.



Broward Community College



Administrators used data showing poor results in remedial courses to shift toward an equity focus and to create new structures (such as data ambassadors) to ensure the use of data to improve practice.

Result: Rising completion rates and low student default rates.





Theme 5
Partnerships and
Structures Aligned to
Defined Student Outcomes



Exceptional colleges build new structures to link the college to its community:

Build strong ties with regional industries to design curricula for the jobs that exist to anticipate growing industries and help students get good jobs.



Exceptional colleges build new structures to link the college to its community:

Work with K-12 districts
to align academic requirements
and implement early-warning
and college-prep systems
to reduce the need for
remedial education.



Exceptional colleges build new structures to link the college to its community:

Work with four-year colleges to develop collaborative programs, guaranteed transfer, and aligned academic requirements for transfer.



Exceptional colleges build new structures to link the college to its community:

Make the college a vital community asset, building brand recognition and attracting new resources that benefit students.



Exceptional colleges build new structures to link the college to its community:

Partner with community based organizations to expand access and deliver new resources that benefit students.

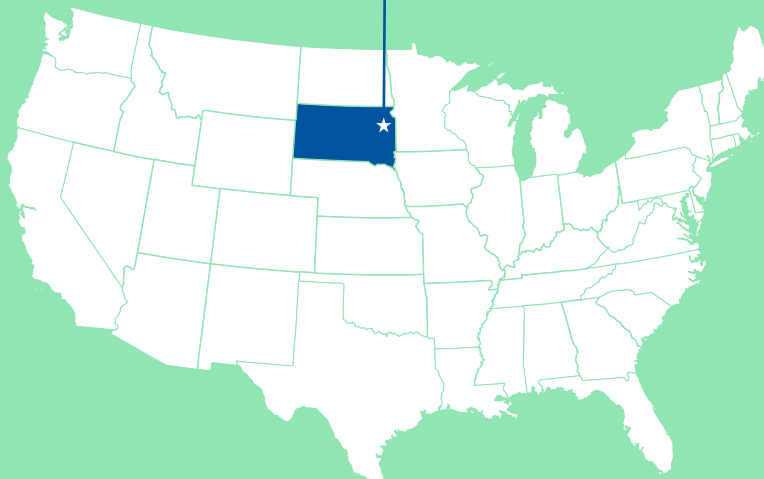


Lake Area Technical Institute



The college brings industry representatives into the classroom to advise students and instructors. The college has also built structural linkages to area businesses, which help develop curriculum, fund programs and scholarships, and help recruit students to the college.

Result: Strong employment and earnings outcomes for graduates; 76 percent graduation rate.

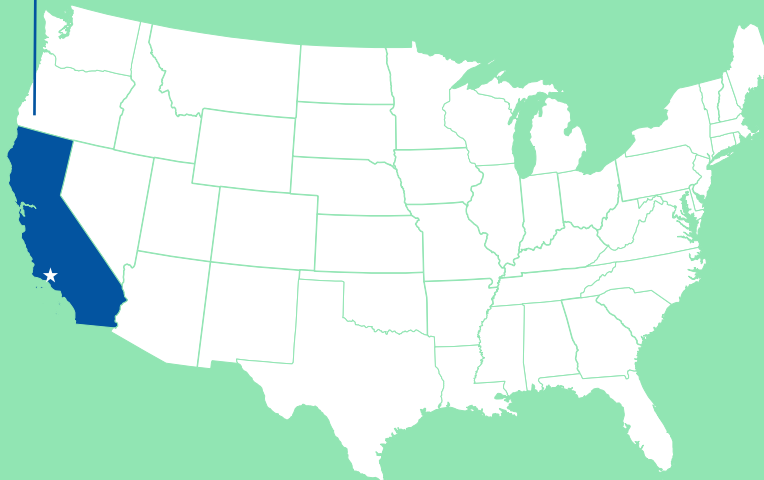


Santa Barbara City College



A formal relationship between the college and the local school district has yielded a mandatory college-preparatory curriculum for high school students designed together by high school teachers and college faculty.

Result: Very strong student success rates, including for the large number of Hispanic students it enrolls from the local K-12 system.

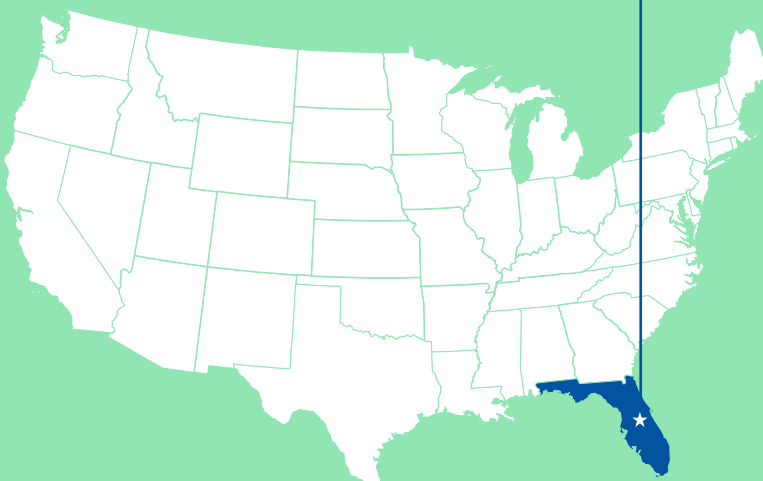


Valencia College



Leaders worked with the University of Central Florida to develop a program that guarantees university admission to Valencia graduates, locate a facility on Valencia's main campus, and ensure that transfer is seamless for students.

Result: UCF enrolls thousands of Valencia transfers who earn grades and bachelor's degrees at rates nearly identical to the students who started at UCF.

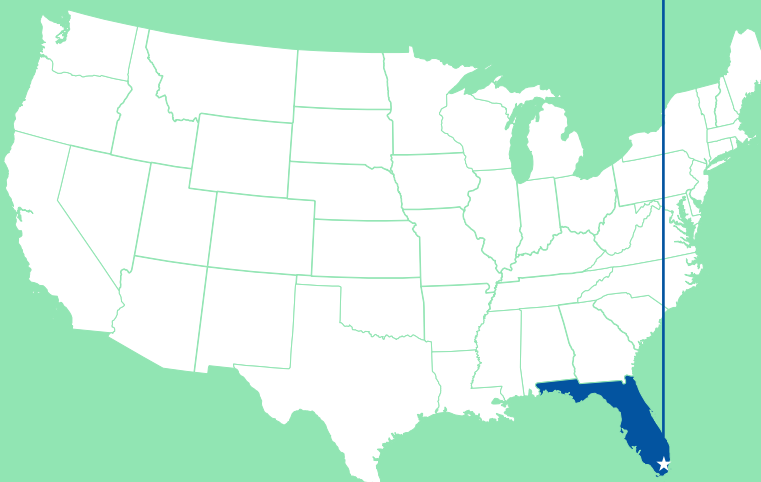


Miami Dade College



The college has intentionally established itself as a hub for a very diverse community, partnering in the community to ensure strong student access to quality programs and financial assistance.

Result: The college is viewed not just as a center of opportunity but an important urban institution with deep connections to community leaders and community events.

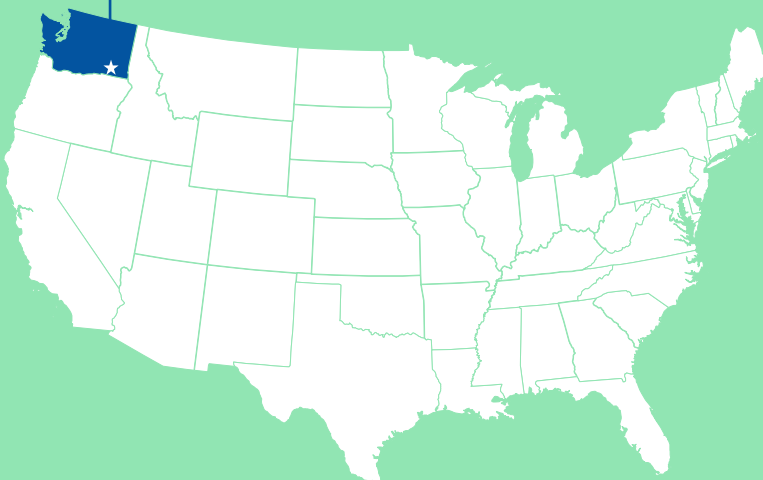


Walla Walla Community College



Walla Walla ties its workforce credentials, general education degrees, and its assets to specific community needs, building programs that ensure that the college effectively serves multiple elements of the community.

Result: Deep community support and ever-expanding opportunity for a diverse student population and the region at large.

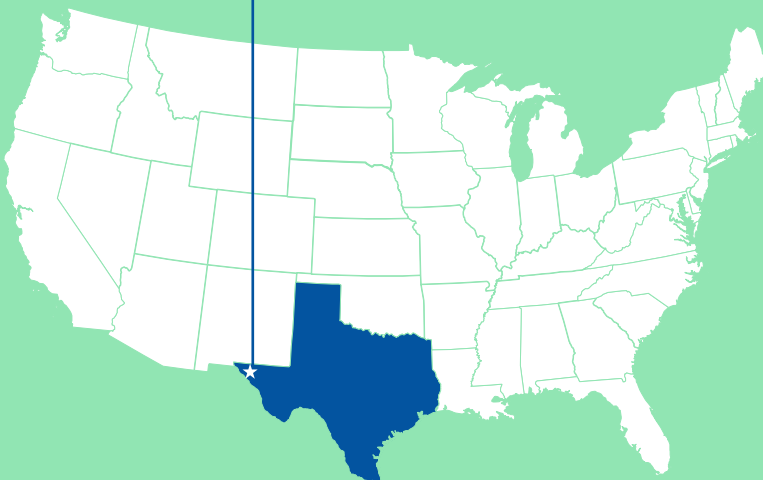


El Paso Community College



The college partners deeply with K-12 systems to deliver early awareness, dual enrollment, and early college high school programs to thousands of kids.

Result: Over 700 associate's degrees and many UTEP credits earned by high school students.



Other Common Denominators

- Student success is the college's core business.
- Faculty are engaged in students' success within and beyond the classroom.
- Output measures are used as the paradigm of assessing success.
- Students are not blamed for gaps in success.
- Equity is a core value in every aspect of the college's work.
- The college is perceived not as a destination but as an educational pathway and a community that must thrive and be engaged for students to succeed.
- College leaders share an understanding of the college's best and highest purpose—as well as its weaknesses.



Selection Process

Round 1 1,000+ public community colleges —————> 150 semifinalists

Round 2 150 semifinalists —————> 10 finalists

Round 3 10 finalists —————> Prize winner(s) and finalists with distinction



Selection Process

Round 1

1,000+ public
community colleges



150 semifinalists


1. Student success in persistence, degrees/certificates awarded, completion, and transfer
2. Consistent improvement in these areas over time
3. Equitable outcomes for students of all racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds



Selection Process

Round 1 Data/Metrics Advisory Panel (2013)

Measures for Round One Selection of Institutions

 Active Cells

| Category | Measure | Weighting Value |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Performance | First-Year Retention Rate | 11.1% |
| | Three-Year Graduation Rate | 11.1% |
| | Credentials Awarded per 100 FTE Students | 11.1% |
| Change Over Time | Credentials Awarded per 100 FTE Students | 33.3% |
| Equity: Rates for Minorities | Three-Year Graduation Rate | 13.3% |
| | Credentials Awarded per 100 FTE Students | 13.3% |
| Family Income | Median Family Income of Institution Location | 6.7% |
| Total (Must Equal 100%) | | 100.0% |



Selection Process

Round 1 Data/Metrics Advisory Panel (2015)

Dr. Keith Bird, Senior Fellow, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce

Dr. Randall W. Eberts, President, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research

Dr. Rob Johnstone, Founder & President, National Center for Inquiry & Improvement

Dr. Patrick Kelly, Senior Associate, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)

Jon O’Bergh, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Under Secretary U.S. Department of Education

Kent Phillippe, Senior Research Associate, American Association of Community Colleges

Richard Reeves, Program Director, Administrative Data Division: Postsecondary Branch, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education

Jeff Strohl, Director of Research, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

Dr. William E. Trueheart, President and CEO & Director, Achieving the Dream, Inc.

Affiliations of Data/Metrics Advisory Panel members listed solely for purposes of identification, and do not reflect organizational endorsement of the Aspen Prize.



Selection Process

Round 2

150 semifinalists



10 finalists

1. 150 Semifinalists invited to submit applications describing outcomes and efforts to improve success for students. *Over the first two years, 86 percent of eligible colleges applied.*
2. Leadership teams at approximately half of applicant colleges are interviewed for clarification and quality assessment.
3. The Finalist Selection Committee of community college presidents, researchers, and policy experts choose 10 institutions that deliver exceptional outcomes in four student success areas: completion, labor market, learning, and equitable outcomes.



Selection Process

Round 2 Finalist Selection Committee (2015)

Elaine DeLott Baker, Colorado Online Energy Training Consortia, Colorado Community College System

Dr. Keith Bird, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce

Dr. Kathy Booth, WestEd

Vickie Choitz, Economic Opportunities Program, The Aspen Institute

Marc Herzog, Connecticut Community College System

Dr. Robert Johnstone, National Center for Inquiry & Improvement

Amy Laitinen, New America Foundation

Dr. Nancy Poppe, Portland Community College

Dr. LaShawn Richburg-Hayes, MDRC

Deborah Santiago, Excelencia in Education

Robert Shireman, California Competes

Dr. Nicole Smith, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

Dr. Shanna Smith Jaggars, Community College Research Center, Columbia University

Dr. Heather Wathington, Maya Angelou Schools and the See Forever Foundation

Jane Wellman, Delta Cost Project

Affiliations of Finalist Selection Committee members listed solely for purposes of identification, and do not reflect organizational endorsement of the Aspen Prize.



Selection Process

Round 3

10 finalists



Prize winner(s)
and finalists with
distinction

1. Teams of experts conduct two-day site visits to 10 finalists.
2. Independent analysts collect and synthesize additional data and information from the finalist institutions on:
 - Labor market outcomes (employment and earnings)
 - Learning outcomes assessment
 - Four-year transfer and completion outcomes
 - Systematic use of outcomes data to drive improvement
 - Context in which each college operates (demographics, labor market, etc.)
3. Assessments and data from three rounds are presented to a distinguished Prize Jury of prominent former elected officials, national business and civic leaders, and education experts.
4. Majority of \$1 million awarded to winner; remainder divided among finalists-with-distinction.



Selection Process

Round 3 Prize Jury

OUTCOMES

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Well Below Average | Below Average | Average | Above Average | Well Above Average |
|--------------------|---------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|

CHALLENGE INDEX

| | | | | |
|------------------|-----|---------|------|-------------------|
| Lowest Challenge | Low | Average | High | Highest Challenge |
|------------------|-----|---------|------|-------------------|

COMPLETION

% of FT students who earn a credential or transfer to a four-year college/university within 6 years

| | | | |
|---------------|--|--|--|
| Below Average | | | |
|---------------|--|--|--|

% of FT students who earn a credential or transfer to a 2 or 4-year college/university within 3 years

| | | | |
|--|---------|--|--|
| | Average | | |
|--|---------|--|--|

Ratio of credentials awarded in the most recent year per 100 full-time-equivalent enrollment

| | | | |
|--|--|---------------|--|
| | | Above Average | |
|--|--|---------------|--|

Of the students who transfer to a 4-year college/univ., % who complete a bachelor's degree

| | | | |
|--|---------|--|--|
| | Average | | |
|--|---------|--|--|

STUDENT & PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

% of students attending part-time

| | | | |
|--|--|------|--|
| | | High | |
|--|--|------|--|

% of students in academic/transfer programs (vs. vocational/technical programs)

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---------|
| | | | Highest |
|--|--|--|---------|



Selection Process

Round 3 Prize Jury (2015)

President Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr. (Co-chair), President, Purdue University; former Governor of Indiana

The Honorable George Miller (Co-chair), former U.S. Representative, State of California

Dr. Anthony P. Carnevale, Research Professor and Director, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

Dr. Martha Kanter, Distinguished Visiting Professor, New York University; former Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education

Dr. William Kirwan, former Chancellor, University System of Maryland

David Leonhardt, Managing Editor, The Upshot, The New York Times

Dr. Michael L. Lomax, President and Chief Executive Officer, United Negro College Fund

Valerie Mosley, Chairwoman, Valmo Ventures; Founder, Heartbeings.com

Delia Pompa, Senior Vice President, Programs, National Council of La Raza

Jon Schnur, Executive Chairman, America Achieves

Juan Sepúlveda, Senior Vice President, Station Services, PBS

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More information:

Prize publications:

- *Lessons from the Aspen Prize*
- *Using Comparative Information to Improve Student Success*
- *What Excellent Community Colleges Do (Harvard Ed Press, 2014)*
- *Building a Faculty Culture of Student Success*
- *Using Labor Market Data to Improve Student Success*
- *From College to Jobs: Making Sense of Labor Market Return to Higher Education*

Leadership publications:

- *Crisis & Opportunity: Aligning the Community College Presidency with Student Success*
(executive summary and full report)
- *Hiring Exceptional Community College Presidents: Tools for Hiring Leaders Who Advance Student Access and Success*

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