

The Aspen Institute Names Top 150 U.S. Community Colleges Eligible For 2019 Aspen Prize



\$1 Million Prize Recognizes Excellence in Community College Student Success Outcomes

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 11, 2017 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program today named the nation's top 150 community colleges eligible to compete for the \$1 million **Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence**, the nation's signature recognition of high achievement and performance among America's community colleges. With a singular focus on student success, the Aspen Prize recognizes institutions with outstanding achievements in four areas: learning; certificate and degree completion; employment and earnings; and high levels of access and success for minority and low-income students.

Higher education attainment has never been more important. Estimates from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce suggest that out of the 11.6 million jobs created in the post-recession economy, 11.5 million require at least some college education. The vast majority of students who enroll in community colleges do so because they believe that postsecondary education will provide them a path to rewarding work, stable employment, and family-sustaining wages.

"Especially in the current social and economic climate, it is exceptionally important that our nation's community colleges develop the diverse talent needed to fuel democratic engagement, social mobility, and economic opportunity and growth," said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. "Through this competition we're working to inspire other institutions across our country to ensure more students succeed in college and their lives beyond those campuses."

The 150 community colleges named today as eligible to compete for the 2019 Prize were selected from a pool of nearly 1,000 public two-year colleges nationwide using publicly available data on student outcomes. Located in 39 states in urban, rural, and suburban areas, serving as few as 300 students and as many as 95,000 students, these colleges represent the diversity and depth of the community college sector. This year, there are nearly 60 institutions eligible to compete for the Prize that were not eligible for the 2017 Aspen Prize. For a full list of the top 150 eligible institutions, visit: www.highered.aspeninstitute.org/aspen-prize.

The top ten finalists for the 2019 Aspen Prize will be named in May 2018. The Aspen Institute will then conduct site visits to each of the finalists and collect additional quantitative data, including employment and earnings data. A distinguished Prize Jury will select a grand prize winner, finalist(s) with distinction, and rising star(s) in spring 2019. To read more on the selection process, visit: www.highered.aspeninstitute.org/aspen-prize.

Previous winners of the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence include: Lake Area Technical College in Watertown, South Dakota (2017); Santa Fe College in Gainesville, Florida (2015); co-winners Santa Barbara City College in Santa Barbara, California and Walla Walla Community College in Walla Walla, Washington (2013); Valencia College in Orlando, Florida (2011 inaugural Prize winner). According to the Prize rules, former winners are not eligible to reapply this cycle.

The 2019 Aspen Prize is funded by the Joyce Foundation and the Siemens Foundation.

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 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.

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