



**The Aspen Institute Names Top 150 U.S. Community Colleges Eligible for 2021 Aspen Prize**  
*\$1 Million Prize Recognizes Excellence in Equitable Outcomes for Students in and After College*

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**WASHINGTON, D.C., November 5, 2019** — 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. Based on strong and improving student outcomes—including in learning, completion rates, employment rates and earnings, and equity—15 percent of community colleges nationwide have been invited to apply for the Aspen Prize.

Data show that over the last two years, student retention, graduation rates, and degree completion have improved at the top tier of 150 Aspen Prize-eligible colleges.

“Community colleges play a vital role in developing talent and enabling social mobility across the country, and it’s critical for them to get better at what they do,” said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. “We’re pleased to see evidence that these institutions are improving, that more are delivering on their promise. We’re also pleased to play a role in honoring outstanding community colleges and sharing what works to ensure great outcomes for students—through graduation and beyond.”

The 150 community colleges named today as eligible to compete for the 2021 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 500 students and as many as 75,000 students, these colleges represent the diversity and depth of the community college sector.

The top ten finalists for the 2021 Aspen Prize will be named in May 2020. 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 jury will make award decisions in spring 2021.

Previous winners of the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence are: Miami Dade College (FL) and Indian River State College (FL), 2019; Lake Area Technical College (SD), 2017; Santa Fe College (FL), 2015; Santa Barbara City College (CA) and Walla Walla Community College (WA), 2013; Valencia College (FL), 2011.

For a full list of the top 150 eligible institutions and to read more on the selection process, visit [www.highered.aspeninstitute.org/aspens-prize](http://www.highered.aspeninstitute.org/aspens-prize).

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

**The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program** aims to advance higher education practices, policies, and leadership that significantly improve student outcomes, especially for the growing population of low-income students and students of color on American campuses. For more information, visit

[www.highered.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.highered.aspeninstitute.org) and [www.linkedin.com/showcase/aspenshigher](http://www.linkedin.com/showcase/aspenshigher), and follow @AspenHigherEd on Twitter. The Aspen Prize hashtag is #AspenPrize.

**The Aspen Institute** is a community-serving organization with global reach whose vision is a free, just, and equitable society. For 70 years, the Institute has driven change through dialogue, leadership, and action to help solve the world's greatest challenges. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the Institute has offices in Aspen, Colorado, and New York City, and an international network of partners. For more information, visit [www.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.aspeninstitute.org).