



**TEXAS' ODESSA COLLEGE RECOGNIZED BY THE ASPEN INSTITUTE AS ONE OF THE TOP COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN THE NATION**

*\$100,000 Award Recognizes Rapid Improvement in Student Outcomes*

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**WASHINGTON, D.C., April 2, 2019** — Odessa College in Odessa, Texas, a finalist for the 2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, was recognized today by Aspen with a Rising Star award for dramatic improvement, accompanied by a \$100,000 cash award. During a ceremony at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., Odessa College was honored for its remarkable efforts to engage students and faculty, resulting in a record-low course withdrawal rate of 1.8 percent and an increase in the graduation and transfer rate over five years from 15 percent to 36 percent.

“In a community where a college education has historically not been needed for a good job in the oil fields, Odessa understands that the world of work is changing and will demand increasing levels of educational attainment,” said Joshua Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program. “That is why Odessa is singularly focused on finding innovative strategies to help students connect to and stay at the college to complete a credential, proving how fast student success rates can be improved.”

The \$1 million Aspen Prize, awarded every two years since 2011, recognizes outstanding institutions selected from an original pool of more than 1,000 community colleges nationwide. With a singular focus on student success, the Aspen Prize assesses institutional performance in four areas: student learning, certificate and degree completion, success after graduation in the labor market and transfer to four-year institutions, and equity in access and success for students of color and low-income students.

The 2019 Aspen Prize winners, **Indian River State College** (Fort Pierce, Florida) and **Miami Dade College** (Miami) will receive \$350,000 each. Aspen awarded three colleges with the “Rising Star” award for their strong record of improvement: **Odessa, Palo Alto College** (San Antonio, Texas), and **Pierce College at Fort Steilacoom** (Lakewood, Washington). Each will receive \$100,000.

The Prize winners, Rising Stars, and finalists were announced by Aspen Prize jury co-chairs Ángel Cabrera, president of George Mason University, and Kathy Warden, chief executive

officer and president of Northrop Grumman. Cabrera and Warden led a distinguished Prize jury of education, business, and civil rights experts to select the top colleges, part of a rigorous review process that included the examination of extensive data on performance and improvements in learning, graduation, workforce, and equitable outcomes, along with multiday site visits to each finalist school.

For more information on Odessa College and a national press release, visit:  
<https://bit.ly/2FK6HkM>.

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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. The program is part of The Aspen Institute, which has a mission of fostering leadership based on enduring values and providing a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. For more information, visit <http://highered.aspeninstitute.org/> and [www.linkedin.com/showcase/aspenhighered](http://www.linkedin.com/showcase/aspenhighered) and follow [@AspenHigherEd](https://twitter.com/AspenHigherEd) on Twitter.

**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).