



WASHINGTON'S PIERCE 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 —Pierce College Fort Steilacoom in Lakewood, Washington, 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 an award ceremony at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., Pierce College was honored for improved student retention and completion over time, a commitment to equitable outcomes for students, and a dedicated focus on helping them overcome obstacles. The school's completion rate of 59 percent is nearly 20 percentage points above the national average.

"At every turn, Pierce College identifies and lifts barriers that stand in students' way," said Joshua Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program. "By enacting comprehensive reforms – and measuring impact every step of the way – Pierce has improved student success at a remarkable rate."

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: **Pierce**, **Palo Alto College** (San Antonio, Texas), and **Odessa College** (Odessa, Texas). 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 Pierce College at Fort Steilacoom and the 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 and minority students 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 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.