The Aspen Rising Presidents Fellowship is developing a cadre of exceptional leaders who can transform community colleges to achieve higher levels of student success while maintaining broad access. Each year, Aspen engages a select group of up to 40 fellows for this intensive, ten-month applied executive leadership program, delivered in collaboration with the Stanford Educational Leadership Initiative.
The Aspen Rising Presidents Fellowship provides a perspective and skillset that equips Fellows to become innovative and highly effective leaders of community colleges that achieve exceptional results for students and communities. Fellows will:

- Work with national leaders who are shaping and implementing, at scale, best practices for community college success
- Build a network of forward-thinking peers to support and challenge one another in the pursuit of broad change
- Apply grounded and innovative strategies to meet student success challenges in their home colleges
- Be recognized and promoted as highly promising candidates for future presidencies

The ten-month Fellowship includes:

Three residential seminars led by Aspen Institute and Stanford University faculty, as well as some of the nation’s top community college professionals and higher education experts. Each of the three four-day sessions includes presentations of groundbreaking research, extensive hands-on time working in small groups with peers and mentors, and the opportunity to learn from veteran college leaders.

A capstone project that offers participants a structured process, with feedback from peers and mentors, for crafting and extending their own distinct presidential perspective on community college student success. Culminating in a presentation to peers and mentors at the conclusion of the Fellowship, the capstone project leads participants through rigorous analysis of data and inquiry into the student experience, the development and refinement of a vision for community college excellence, and the advancement of their ability to communicate and build urgency around a vision for transformational change.

Mentorship by an exceptional, nationally recognized current or former community college president who engages participants in a dynamic exchange of ideas and helps to draw connections across the seminars, capstone project, and participants’ own professional experiences. Through both formal and informal mechanisms, mentors offer support and guidance to fellows throughout the year, including through a series of interactive webinars on topics related to leading change to improve student success.
Applicants should aspire to enter a presidency within five years of completing the fellowship*. Ideal candidates are motivated by the potential of community colleges to impact the lives of students and to grow the health and vitality of communities. Aspen Fellows aspire to be transformational community college presidents—those who will lead their institutions to achieve significant improvements in student outcomes and greater equity in educational access and success. They are willing to take risks to lead transformational change and are strategic, reform-minded thinkers and innovators.

The Aspen Rising Presidents Fellowship is committed to identifying and developing talented leaders who reflect the diversity of the communities and students that the nations’ community colleges serve. We strongly encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds and from all groups representative of varying race and ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, culture, religion, and physical abilities. We also encourage applicants from a variety of professional backgrounds, including:

- Campus presidents, provosts, or vice presidents at a community college
- Senior administrators in other higher education institutions or K-12 systems
- Executives from outside of education with deep commitment to ensuring students’ success

* Applicants who have been sitting presidents for five years or less may apply for the Aspen New Presidents Fellowship.

FELLOWS VS. SITTING COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

[Diagram showing the percentage of male, female, and non-binary Fellows and Sitting CC Presidents.]

<NOTE: THE 2015 AACC CEO SURVEY DID NOT INCLUDE DATA ON NON-BINARY GENDER IDENTITY

I cannot find the words to appropriately express what this experience meant to me. It was truly transformational and without a doubt has prepared me to be a transformational Community College President. I feel deeply connected to my fellow Fellows, my mentor and the Aspen team. I also feel extremely well prepared to share the urgency around why it is imperative for community colleges to focus on advancing equity of success, learning, completion, and labor market outcomes.

“Aspen gave me a deep and lasting connection to a group of leaders who are fiercely committed to equity, believe our students can achieve remarkable outcomes, and believe community colleges represent tremendous opportunity and import for this country. Every day I approach my work with the Aspen teachings embedded in my thinking and my practice.”

—Meghan Hughes, president, Community College of Rhode Island

To learn more, visit highered.aspeninstitute.org or contact us at risingpresidents@aspeninstitute.org.