



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

COLLEGE EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

Texas Student Success Center
Board of Trustees Institute
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The Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence

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Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence: Goals

Goals of the Aspen Prize

1. Elevate the community college sector
2. Promote a comprehensive definition of excellence
3. Facilitate the replication of effective practice



Goals of the Aspen Prize: (1) Elevate the Sector



President Obama gave the commencement address at Lake Area Technical Institute in 2015.

- Over 950 press mentions over the course of five Prize cycles, including CNN Money, TIME magazine, Forbes, NY Times, the Chronicle of Higher Education, and the PBS News Hour.
- Described as “the Oscars for great community colleges” by President Obama at Lake Area Technical Institute’s commencement ceremony in 2015.
- Presentations by Aspen Prize-winning presidents and students at the Republican and Democratic national conventions.

Goals of the Aspen Prize: (2) Promote a Comprehensive Definition of Excellence



- Aspen Prize performance metrics used in benchmarking by community colleges nationwide
- Use of metrics by national researchers and publications
- Interest from Senate HELP committee in Prize assessment metrics and data sources

Goals of the Aspen Prize: (2) Promote a Comprehensive Definition of Excellence

**High absolute
performance**

Learning outcomes
Completion outcomes
Transfer outcomes
Labor market outcomes
Equity in outcomes

**Improvement
over time**

Goals of the Aspen Prize: (3) Facilitate the Replication of Effective Practice



- Aspen Presidential Fellowships for Community College Excellence
- Transfer Playbook on improving student outcomes (with CCRC)
- Inclusion in doctoral programs and professional development for sitting presidents
- Finalist colleges hosting conferences and serving as advisors within states and regions
- National efforts for higher education reform regularly including Aspen Prize examples and panelists in their work and presentations

Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence: Selection Process

Aspen Prize Selection Process

- Three rounds over 20 months, each decided by independent expert panels

- Extensive Quantitative Data
 - Federal IPEDs data on completion and equity
 - Institutional data on completion and equity
 - State & institutional data on employment/earnings
 - National Student Clearinghouse data on transfer

- Deep Qualitative Investigation
 - Extensive written applications (with data submissions)
 - Leadership calls
 - Multi-day site visits

Aspen Prize Selection Process

ROUND 1 **1,000+ public community colleges** **→** **150 semifinalists**

Formula: IPEDS & Census

ROUND 2 **150 semifinalists** **→** **10 finalists**

Application: Institutional cohorts & NSC Transfer data

ROUND 3 **10 finalists** **→**

- **Prize winner**
- **Finalists with distinction**
- **Rising star**

Deep Dive: Transfer Data, Site Visits, Learning Assessments, Labor Market (UI match)

**Data are disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and income wherever possible*

Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence: Outcomes

Winners and Other Top Finalists

Winners

San Antonio, Alamo District, *San Antonio, TX (2021)*
Indian River State College, *Fort Pierce, FL (2019)*
Miami-Dade College, *Miami, FL (2019)*
Lake Area Technical Institute, *Watertown, SD (2017)*
Santa Fe College, *Gainesville, FL (2015)*
Santa Barbara City College, *Santa Barbara, CA (2013)*
Walla Walla Community College, *Walla Walla, WA (2013)*
Valencia College, *Orlando, FL (2011)*

Finalists w/Distinction

Broward College, *Ft. Lauderdale, FL (2013, 2021)*
Kingsborough Community College, *Bronx, NY (2013)*
San Jacinto College, *Houston, TX (2021)*
West Kentucky Community & Technical College, *Paducah, KY (2015, 2021)*

Rising Stars

Amarillo College, *Amarillo, TX (2021)*
Kennedy-King College, *Chicago, IL (2015)*
Odessa College, *Odessa, Texas (2017, 2019)*
Palo Alto, Alamo District, *San Antonio, TX (2019)*
Pierce College at Fort Steilacoom, *Lakewood, WA (2019)*

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Winners

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Rising Stars

Amarillo College, Amarillo, TX (2021)

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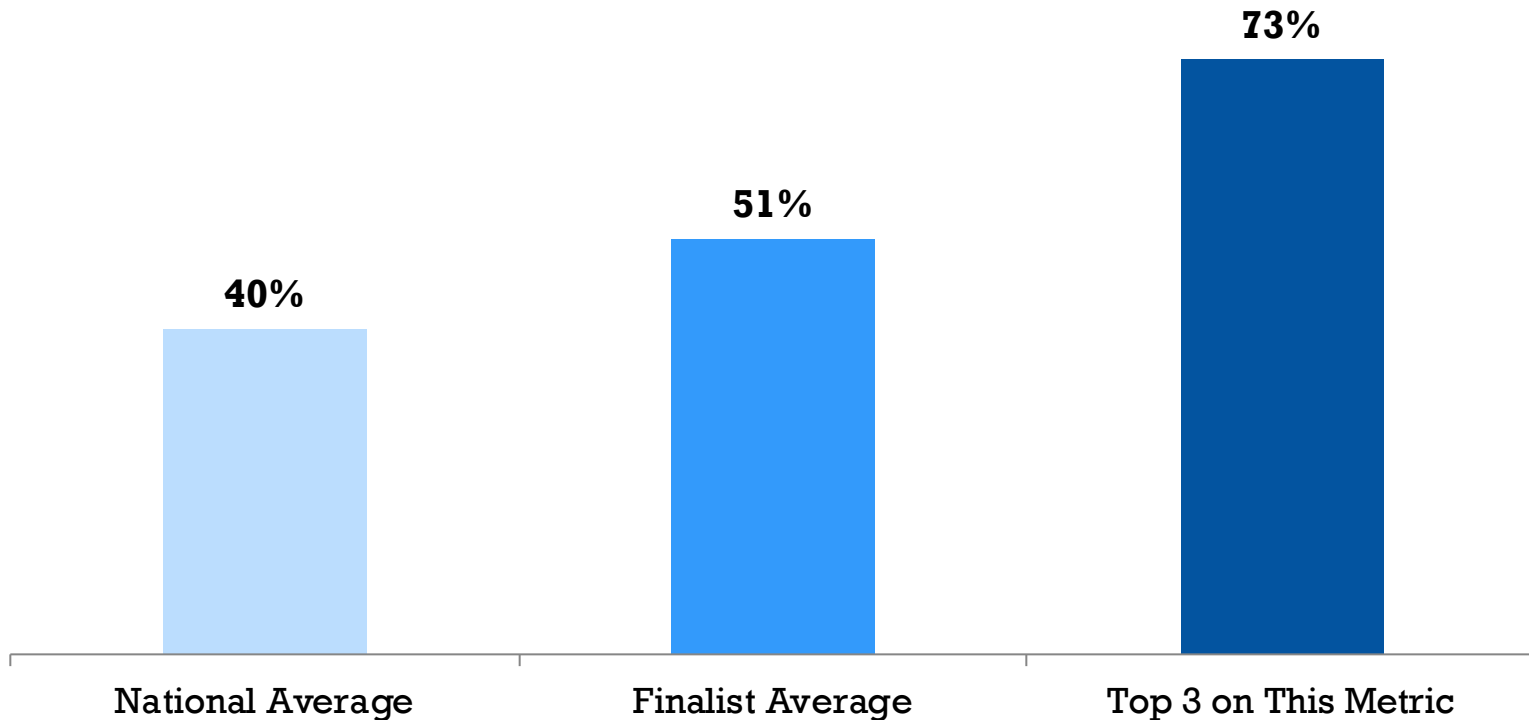
Odessa College, Odessa, Texas (2017, 2019)

Palo Alto, Alamo District, San Antonio, TX (2019)

Pierce College at Fort Steilacoom, Lakewood, WA (2019)

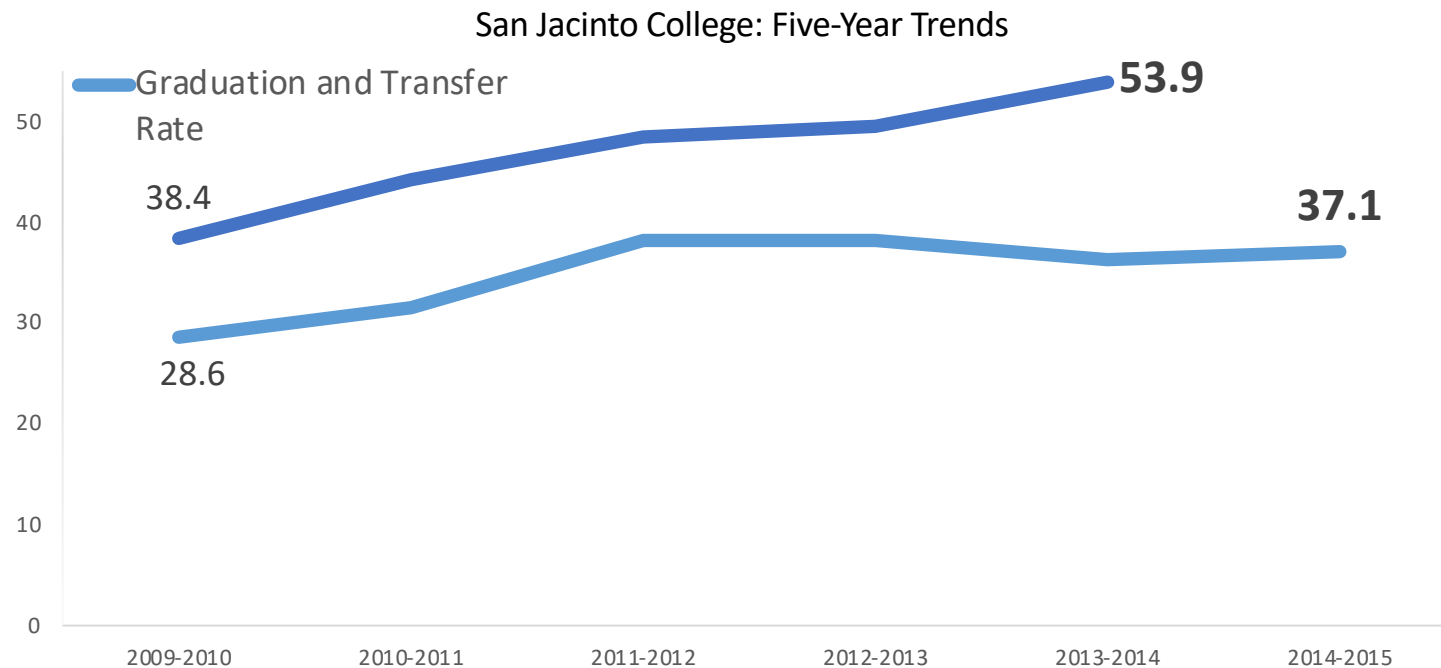
Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

Completion/transfer rates that far surpass the national average



Outcomes of Aspen Prize Finalist Institutions

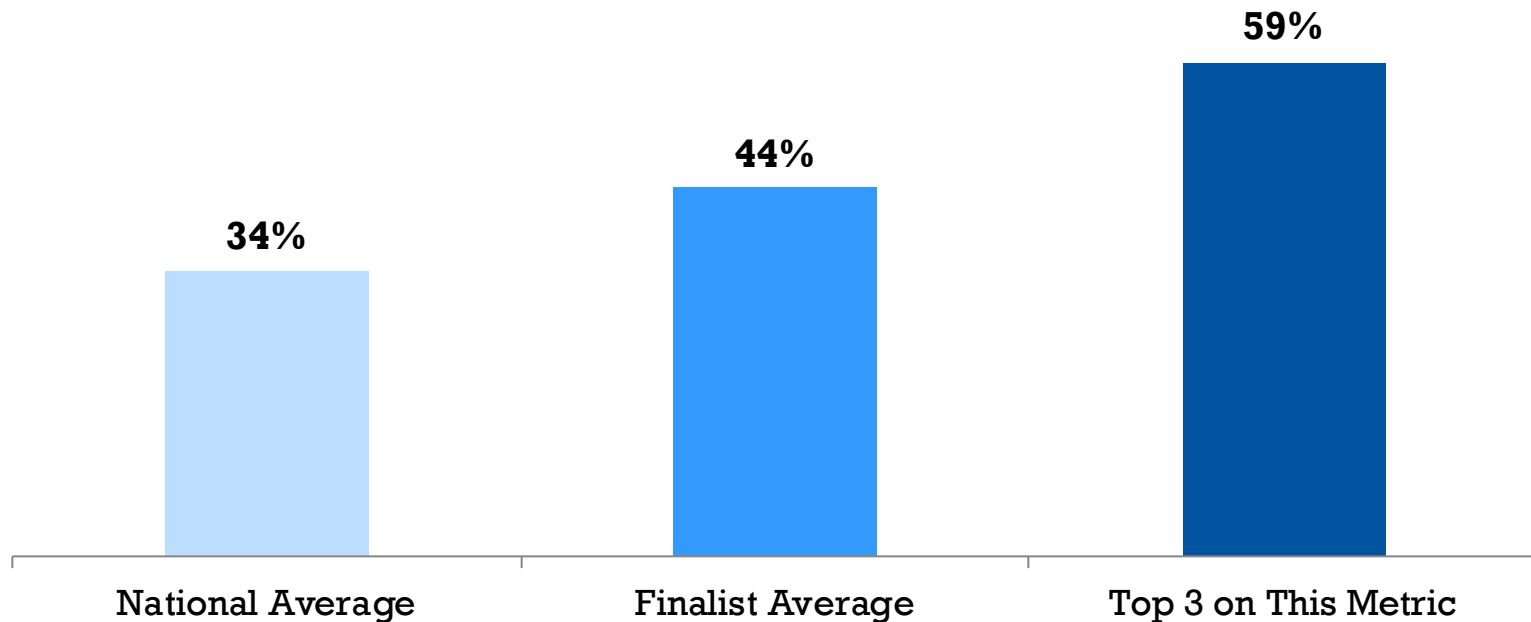
Exceptional improvements over time in completion



Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

Far greater equity in outcomes than the national average

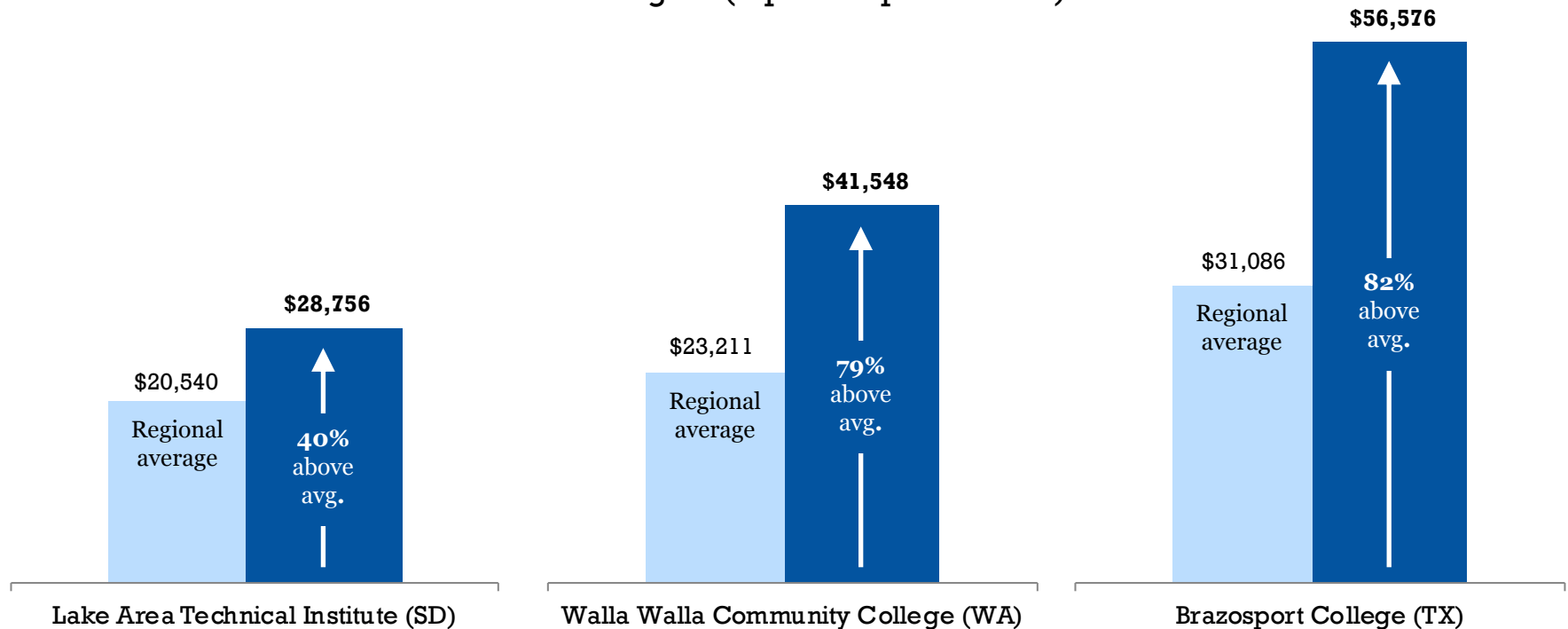
Three-year completion and/or transfer rates for underrepresented minority students compared to the national average



Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

Exceptional short-term labor market outcomes for graduates

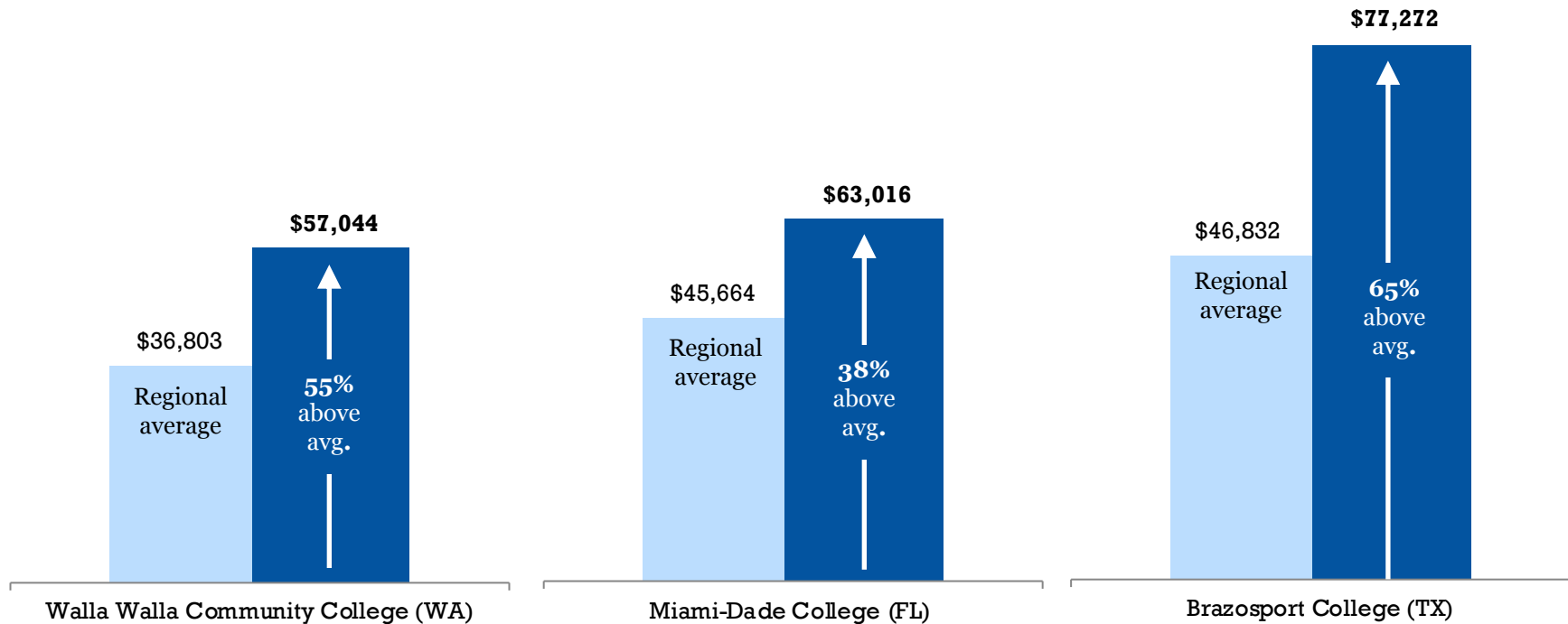
Average salaries of recent graduates compared to the average for all new-hires in the region (top three performers)



Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

Exceptional long-term labor market outcomes

Average salaries of graduates 5 years after graduation compared to the average for all workers in the region (top three performers)



Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence: Lessons

Themes characterizing the institutions that achieve exceptional outcomes for students:

1

Strong Leadership and Organizational Culture

2

Guided Pathways to Continuing Education and Well-Paying Jobs

3

Intentional Focus on Improving Teaching and Learning

4

Strategic Data Use to Improve Practice and Close Equity Gaps

5

Partnerships and Structures Aligned to Defined Student Outcomes

Other Common Denominators

- Student success is the college's core business.
- Faculty are engaged in students' success within and beyond the classroom.
- Output measures are used as the paradigm of assessing success.
- Students are not blamed for gaps in success.
- Equity is a core value in every aspect of the college's work.
- The college is perceived not as a destination but as an educational pathway – part of a community that must thrive and be engaged for students to succeed.
- College leaders share an understanding of the college's best and highest purpose—as well as its weaknesses.



More information:

Prize publications:

- *Lessons from the Aspen Prize*
- *Using Comparative Information to Improve Student Success*
- *What Excellent Community Colleges Do (Harvard Ed Press, 2014)*
- *Building a Faculty Culture of Student Success*
- *Using Labor Market Data to Improve Student Success*
- *From College to Jobs: Making Sense of Labor Market Return to Higher Education*

Leadership publications:

- *Crisis & Opportunity: Aligning the Community College Presidency with Student Success*
(executive summary and full report)
- *Hiring Exceptional Community College Presidents: Tools for Hiring Leaders Who Advance Student Access and Success*

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