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

Josh Wyner, Executive Director,
College Excellence Program, Aspen Institute
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

- 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.

*President Obama gave the commencement address at Lake Area Technical Institute in 2015.*
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
- Improvement over time
- Learning outcomes
- Completion outcomes
- Transfer outcomes
- Labor market outcomes
- Equity in outcomes
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>1,000+ public community colleges ➔ 150 semifinalists</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formula:</strong></td>
<td>IPEDS &amp; Census</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROUND 2</td>
<td>150 semifinalists ➔ 10 finalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application:</strong></td>
<td>Institutional cohorts &amp; NSC Transfer data</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROUND 3</td>
<td>10 finalists ➔ Prize winner, Finalists with distinction, Rising star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deep Dive:</strong></td>
<td>Transfer Data, Site Visits, Learning Assessments, Labor Market (UI match)</td>
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*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)
- **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)
- **Pierce College at Fort Steilacoom**, *Lakewood, WA* (2019)
The Aspen Prize

Winners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Name</th>
<th>City, State Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>San Antonio, Alamo District</td>
<td>San Antonio, TX 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian River State College</td>
<td>Fort Pierce, FL 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami-Dade College, Miami, FL</td>
<td>FL 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Area Technical Institute</td>
<td>Watertown, SD 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Fe College, Gainesville, FL</td>
<td>FL 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Barbara City College</td>
<td>Santa Barbara, CA 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walla Walla Community College</td>
<td>Walla Walla, WA 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valencia College, Orlando, FL</td>
<td>FL 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Finalists w/Distinction

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<tr>
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<td>FL 2013, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kingsborough Community College</td>
<td>Bronx, NY 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Jacinto College, Houston, TX</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Kentucky Community &amp; Technical College</td>
<td>Paducah, KY 2015, 2021</td>
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Rising Stars

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<th>College Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Amarillo College, Amarillo, TX</td>
<td>2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kennedy-King College, Chicago, IL</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odessa College, Odessa, Texas</td>
<td>2017, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palo Alto, Alamo District, San Antonio, TX</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce College at Fort Steilacoom</td>
<td>Lakewood, WA 2019</td>
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Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

Completion/transfer rates that far surpass the national average

- National Average: 40%
- Finalist Average: 51%
- Top 3 on This Metric: 73%
Outcomes of Aspen Prize Finalist Institutions

Exceptional improvements over time in completion

San Jacinto College: Five-Year Trends

Graduation and Transfer Rate

- 2009-2010: 28.6
- 2010-2011: 38.4
- 2011-2012: 40
- 2012-2013: 40
- 2013-2014: 53.9
- 2014-2015: 37.1
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

- National Average: 34%
- Finalist Average: 44%
- Top 3 on This Metric: 59%
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)

- **Lake Area Technical Institute (SD)**
  - Regional average: $20,540
  - 40% above avg.
  - Average salary of recent graduates: $28,756

- **Walla Walla Community College (WA)**
  - Regional average: $23,211
  - 79% above avg.
  - Average salary of recent graduates: $41,548

- **Brazosport College (TX)**
  - Regional average: $31,086
  - 82% above avg.
  - Average salary of recent graduates: $56,576
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)

Walla Walla Community College (WA)
- Average salary: $57,044
- Regional average: $36,803
- 55% above avg.

Miami-Dade College (FL)
- Average salary: $63,016
- Regional average: $45,664
- 38% above avg.

Brazosport College (TX)
- Average salary: $77,272
- Regional average: $46,832
- 65% above avg.
Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence: Lessons
Lessons from the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence

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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