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Aspen Institute Names Top 150 U.S. Community Colleges Eligible For
2017 Prize For Excellence

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[College Excellence Program](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Gingle LeeProgram Manager, Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence
202-736-3504, gingle.lee@aspeninstitute.org**Aspen Institute Names Top 150 U.S. Community Colleges Eligible For 2017 Prize For Excellence***Prize-eligible Institutions Also Invited to Nominate Students Enrolled in High-Performing STEM Programs for Siemens Technical Scholars Awards*

Washington, DC, January 26, 2016 . Highlighting the critical importance of improving student success in America's community colleges, the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program today named the nation's top 150 community colleges eligible to compete for the 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence and \$1 million dollars in prize funds.

The Prize, awarded every two years, is the nation's signature recognition of high achievement and performance among America's community colleges and recognizes institutions for exceptional student outcomes in four areas: student learning; certificate and degree completion; employment and earnings; and access and success for minority and low-income students.

"There are exceptional community colleges across our country providing students with a high-quality, affordable education that leads to good careers and strong economic opportunity," said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. "Through this competition, we're working to inspire community colleges and help them understand how to ensure that more students succeed."

Nearly half of America's college students attend community college, with more than seven million students—youth and adult learners—working toward certificates and degrees in these institutions across the country.

The top 150 community colleges named today represent the diversity and richness of the community college sector. They are located in 35 states in urban, rural and suburban areas, serving as few as 300 students and as many as 60,000 students.

This year, California saw the largest increase among states in the number of colleges eligible for the Prize—tripling from seven to 21 since the last Prize cycle in 2015. Most states saw only small changes in the number of eligible institutions. A full list of the selected colleges and details on the selection process are available at www.aspenprize.org.

Spotlighting First-Rate STEM Programs

For the first time, the 150 Prize-eligible institutions are also invited to nominate exceptional students enrolled in their best middle-skill STEM programs for scholarships. Up to 50 [Siemens Technical Scholars](#) will be selected from programs that provide outstanding preparation for high-demand jobs in manufacturing, energy, health care, and information technology. A partnership between the Siemens Foundation and the Aspen Institute, the Siemens Technical Scholars Program intends to help our nation's community colleges and their business partners bridge the gap between projected shortages of skilled workers and the millions of high-demand jobs in these STEM industries. Scholarship winners and the programs that deliver rigorous training enabling their success will be announced in fall 2016. For more information and to view video profiles of 2015 Siemens Technical Scholars, go to <http://as.pn/stscholars>.

More about the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence

Valencia College (Florida) won the inaugural Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence in 2011, followed by co-winners Santa Barbara City College (California) and Walla Walla Community College (Washington) in 2013. Santa Fe College (Florida) won the Prize in 2015.

The 150 community colleges announced today as eligible to compete for the 2017 Prize were selected from a national pool of over 1,000 public two-year colleges using publicly available data on student outcomes. In their application for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, they must submit detailed data on degree and certificate completion (including progress and transfer rates), labor market outcomes (employment and earnings), and student learning outcomes. They must demonstrate that they deliver exceptional student results for all students—including those from racial minority and/or low-income backgrounds—and also use data to inform decisions and continually improve over time.

Ten finalists will be named in fall 2016. The Aspen Institute will then conduct site visits to each of the finalists and collect additional quantitative data, including employment and earnings data from states and transfer data from the National Student Clearinghouse. A distinguished Prize Jury will select a grand prize winner and finalists with distinction in early 2017.

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The Aspen Prize is funded by the Joyce Foundation, the Siemens Foundation, and the Kresge Foundation.

The Aspen College Excellence Program aims to advance higher education practices, policies, and leadership that significantly improve student outcomes. Through the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the New College Leadership Project, and other initiatives, the College Excellence Program works to improve colleges' understanding and capacity to teach and graduate students, especially the growing population of low-income and minority students on American campuses. For more information, visit www.aspeninstitute.org/college-excellence.

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.

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