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Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence

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**2013 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence Awarded to
Santa Barbara City College and Walla Walla Community College**

*\$1 Million Prize Rewards Community Colleges Achieving Outstanding Outcomes in
Learning, Completion, Minority and Low-Income Student Success and
Employment/Earnings*

Washington, DC, March 19, 2013 – The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program announced today that Santa Barbara City College (CA) and Walla Walla Community College (WA) are co-winners of the 2013 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. The two winners, along with the two finalists-with-distinction, were selected from the nation’s more than 1,000 public community colleges. Santa Barbara City College and Walla Walla Community College will each receive a \$400,000 prize to support their programs, while finalists-with-distinction, Kingsborough Community College – CUNY (Brooklyn, NY) and Lake Area Technical Institute (Watertown, SD), will each receive \$100,000. (See list of Top Ten Prize Finalists below.)

As the nation’s signature recognition of high achievement and performance in America’s community colleges, the Prize recognizes institutions for outstanding achievement in four areas: student learning outcomes, degree completion, labor market success in securing good jobs after college, and facilitating minority and low-income student success.

Dr. Jill Biden, Second Lady of the United States, joined John Engler, president of Business Roundtable and former Governor of Michigan, Richard Riley, former US Secretary of Education and South Carolina Governor, and Rich Karlgaard, publisher of *Forbes* magazine, at the Newseum in Washington, DC in celebrating the program and the hard work of the applicants. The winners were selected by a [Prize Jury](#) of 12 prominent leaders in education, business, civil rights, and public service.

“Santa Barbara City College and Walla Walla Community College offer outstanding models for achieving exceptional levels of student success at a time when our nation needs community colleges to do even more than they have in the past. The Prize co-winners are especially strong in two key areas every community college aims to achieve: preparing

students for jobs and to transfer to four-year colleges,” said Josh Wyner, Executive Director of the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program. “At Santa Barbara City College, faculty and staff are providing students just what they need to transfer and complete a four-year degree – a rigorous classroom education surrounded by first-rate supports from remedial math to college level writing. Walla Walla Community College’s visionary leaders stay on top of local economic job trends and job growth, and the entire college provides the kind of excellent training that students need to access well-paying jobs and that employers know will ensure future investments in the regional economy will pay off.”

Nearly half of America’s college students attend community college, with more than seven million students – youth and adult learners – enrolled across America, working toward degrees and certificates.

"As a community college teacher, I have seen firsthand the tremendous power community colleges have to change lives," Dr. Biden said. "Community colleges are essential to the President's goal of having the best-educated, most competitive workforce in the world. They represent a uniquely American idea – that if you work hard and get a good education, you can get the skills you need for a good job and build a better life for you and your family. We are pleased to celebrate the contributions of these Prize winners and finalists."

Community college students are more likely than four-year college students to be minorities, to come from low-income backgrounds, and to be the first in their families to pursue higher education. As the most affordable option in higher education, the average tuition at community colleges is about \$3,000 per year per student, less than half the average at public four year colleges and 10 percent of what is now charged by top private four-year colleges and universities.

“Community colleges are vital to a healthy American economy,” said Engler, co-chair of the jury that selected the winners. “With millions of unfilled jobs in this country because workers don’t have the skills to fill them, it’s critically important that we continue to support a strong community college system.”

“We owe it to students to shine a spotlight on community colleges like SBCC and Walla Walla that are excelling at providing students with an affordable high-quality education,” said Riley, jury co-chair. “This Prize is about improving student achievement and raising the bar for all community colleges because all Americans, particularly the growing population of low-income and minority students, are increasingly relying on community colleges to give them the skills they need for a better future.”

Santa Barbara City College

A comprehensive community college with a primary focus on transfer to four-year institutions, Santa Barbara City College sets high standards for students, and delivers strong services to enable students to reach them, from a first-rate writing center to specialized support programs for historically under-achieving students. SBCC has a large and growing number of Hispanic students – over thirty percent of the student body – who graduate and transfer at rates significantly above the national average. SBCC has built a strong culture that consistently drives to improve student success, paying special attention to ensuring that courses and programs align to the academic standards of four-year schools. The result: well

over half of the students who enter SBCC and transfer to four-year colleges attain a bachelor's degree within six years of leaving high school.

Expanding student development efforts beyond its campus to local high schools, Santa Barbara City College has created the largest dual enrollment program – which allows high school students to take community college courses – among California's 112 community colleges. SBCC is also helping high-school students, many of whom may not be financially or academically prepared, develop long-term educational plans through college readiness and career counseling programs.

- 64% of first-time full-time students transfer or graduate within three years compared with the national average of 40%.
- Five years after completing their two year degrees, graduates earn about \$43,000 per year – comparable to the wages of all other workers in the area.
- 48% of Hispanic students, who comprise over 30% of the student body, graduate or transfer within three years compared with 35% nationally.

Walla Walla Community College

While it too offers strong transfer oriented programs, Walla Walla Community College's greatest strength is developing students for jobs and helping to drive growth in the regional job market. It maintains strong relationships with employers to assess whether what students are learning is aligned to specific job needs. By adding new programs and trimming others based on which programs will provide the best opportunity for employment and good wages, Walla Walla helps students obtain degrees that translate into genuine opportunity in areas from nursing to wine-making to wind energy.

With a majority of its students entering below college-ready standards, Walla Walla has placed a priority on responding to issues that cause students to drop out. The administration and faculty have developed strategies such as mandatory personal, academic and career advising, as well as unique technological tools used to counsel students on program selection and track student progress to a degree. These programs have led Walla Walla students, many of whom are the first in their family to attend college, to achieve graduation and transfer rates well over the national community college average.

- 54% of first-time full-time students transfer or graduate within three years compared with the national average of 40%.
- In 2011, new graduates earned \$41,548 – about 80% higher than the wages of other new hires in the region.
- 48% of underrepresented minority students graduate or transfer within three years compared with 34% nationally.

The Selection Process

The Aspen Institute convenes three committees of thought leaders and practitioners to evaluate community college performance through rigorous review of data and practice: [Data/Metrics Advisory Panel](#), the [Finalist Selection Committee](#), and the [Prize Jury](#).

The 12-member Prize Jury that selected this year's winners and finalists-with-distinction included:

- **John Engler (Co-chair)**, President, Business Roundtable, former Governor of Michigan
- **Richard Riley (Co-chair)**, Senior Partner, Nelson Mullins Riley and Scarborough LLP and EducationCounsel LLC; former Secretary of Education; former Governor of South Carolina
- **Esther Aguilera**, President/CEO, Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
- **Anthony P. Carnevale**, Director, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
- **David Leonhardt**, Washington Bureau Chief, *The New York Times*
- **Michael Lomax**, President/CEO, United Negro College Fund
- **Joe Loughrey**, retired CEO, Cummins, Inc.
- **Wes Moore**, Author, *The Other Wes Moore*; military veteran
- **John Morgridge**, Chairman Emeritus, Cisco Systems, Inc.
- **Charlene Nunley**, Program Director, University of Maryland University College's Doctor of Management in Community College Policy and Administration; former President, Montgomery Community College
- **Jon Schnur**, Executive Chairman, America Achieves
- **General Anthony Zinni**, former Commander in Chief of United States Central Command (CENTCOM), United States Marine Corps (retired)

Affiliations of Prize Jury members listed solely for purposes of identification, and do not reflect organizational endorsement of the Aspen Prize.

For a full electronic press kit, including additional student outcomes, policies and practices that distinguished the Aspen Prize Winners and Finalists-with-Distinction, as well as details on all of the Prize Finalists, please visit: www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/aspen-prize/media-resources. Follow the Aspen Prize on Twitter #AspenPrize.

Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence Top Ten Finalists

Winners

Santa Barbara City College (Santa Barbara, CA)

Contact: Joan Galvan, (805) 965-0581 ext. 2307, jcgalvan@sbcc.edu

Walla Walla Community College (Walla Walla, WA)

Contact: Melissa Harrison, (509) 527-4675, melissa.harrison@wwcc.edu

Finalists-with-Distinction

Lake Area Technical Institute (Watertown, SD)

Contact: LuAnn Strait, (605) 882-5284 ext. 241, straitl@lakeareatech.edu

Kingsborough Community College- CUNY (Brooklyn, NY)

Contact: Ruby Ryles, (718) 368-5543, ruby.ryles@kbcc.cuny.edu

Finalists

Brazosport College (Lake Jackson, TX)

Contact: Serena Andrews, (979) 230-3245, Serena.Andrews@brazosport.edu

Broward College (Fort Lauderdale, FL)

Contact: Aileen Izquierdo, (954) 201-7540, aizquier@broward.edu

College of the Ouachitas (Malvern, AR)

Contact: Amber Childers, (501) 332-0234, amber@coto.edu

Santa Fe College (Gainesville, FL)

Contact: David Houder, (352) 381-3625, david.houder@sfcollege.edu

Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College (Cumberland, KY)

Contact: Chris Jones, (606) 589-3003, chris.jones@kctcs.edu

West Kentucky Community and Technical College (Paducah, KY)

Contact: Janett Blythe, (270) 534-3079, janett.blythe@kctcs.edu

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The Aspen College Excellence Program aims to identify and replicate campus-wide practices that significantly improve college 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/policy-work/aspen-prize.

The Aspen Institute mission is twofold: to foster values-based leadership, encouraging individuals to reflect on the ideals and ideas that define a good society, and to provide a neutral and balanced venue for discussing and acting on critical issues. For more information, visit www.aspeninstitute.org.