

RESEARCH BRIEF: ASPEN DOLLARS FEEDBACK RESULTS

Fall 2019



Palo Alto College (PAC) organized the Aspen Dollars event to collect feedback about Aspen Prize spending preferences from PAC faculty and staff. Participants shared their feedback using mock paper currency, or tokens.

Analysis of submitted recommendations suggests:

- Participants communicated a moderate preference in support of the *Student Empowerment* strategic direction.
- Staffing, physical plant, and equipment were the most common type of spending recommendation.
- Spending recommendations focusing on impacting the broadest groups of people (students and PAC overall) were more common than other types.
- No evidence for a consensus on a specific spending recommendation was observed.

Introduction

On August 20, 2019 members of the PAC community participated in the Aspen Dollars event as part of Convocation Fall 2019 activities. Organized by the Office of the President, this event was an opportunity for members of the PAC family to celebrate our receipt of the Aspen Rising Star Award. Additionally, this event was an opportunity to seek feedback from the PAC family about the best ways to invest the \$100,000 cash prize associated with this award.

Methodology

All individuals participating in this event were asked to provide 2 types of feedback on what they believed was the best way to use the funds earned from the Aspen prize. The first type of feedback was provided through tokens called *Aspen Dollars*. These tokens made to resemble paper currency with different denominations. Each participant received an equal amount of mock currency, though denominations were not held constant. Participants were invited to allocate a portion of their total currency to any of 5 different concepts. Each concept represents one of the 4 strategic directions of the Palo Alto College Strategic Plan: Maximize our Capacity to Serve, Student Empowerment, Innovative Performance Excellence, and Employee Empowerment. An additional open-ended category was added to facilitate sharing of

feedback that did not conform well to one of the previous categories. The importance a participant assigned to any of these categories is denoted by the total of the currency allocated to it. For example, a participant could have allocated all their tokens to a single category, spread it equally across categories, or assigned a specific amount to certain categories according to how important they felt each category was. Increased allocation of token value is indicative of increased category importance.

Once all token collection was complete, the Office of the President assigned a work-study student to tabulate the total amount of currency allocated to each of the 5 categories described above.

Item Analysis

The second type of participant feedback was conveyed by participants hand-writing a specific spending recommendation. This feedback was offered on the back of each token. Once token collection was complete, the Office of the President assigned a work-study student to enter all written spending recommendations into a spreadsheet. These recommendations were input verbatim, though some potential for typographical and legibility errors is acknowledged. The Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness was tasked with performing an item analysis on the recommendations and the creation of the current results briefing.

Item analysis is a qualitative research method for understanding large numbers of text responses. Each response (item) is read and assigned to one or more semantic categories. These categories can either be determined before reviewing the items (*a priori*) or the categories can emerge during the item review (*post hoc*). Categories for the current analysis emerged from the feedback provided by event participants. A total of 3 independent categories emerged from this data set and each item was assigned a value for each category.

The *Type* category refers to the type of purchase described or implied by the item. Values for this category resembled the funding types used for other strategic planning events and include:

- **Equipment:** The purchase of a device or durable item designed to be used multiple times.

- Event: Sponsorship or organization of a single public occasion or one with limited recurrence.
- Physical Plant: Construction of a facility on campus grounds or improvement to an existing facility.
- Professional Development: Funding or sponsoring events for the purpose of increasing the skill, knowledge or ability of campus employees.
- Programming: Sponsorship and maintenance of a series of activities (program) such that a specific goal is obtained.
- Public Relations: Funding to increase public awareness of the campus or one of its features/offerings.
- Redirect: Used when offered feedback did not endorse a specific recommendation but recommended the collection of additional feedback.
- Staffing: Funding for new employees or increasing remuneration of existing employees.
- Student Aid: Funding designed to be used directly by students, either as a grant, scholarship or other monetary incentive not designed to be returned to the College.
- Supplemental Instruction: Sponsorship and maintenance of a recurring program of instruction on either a co-curricular or extra-curricular basis.
- Unclassified: Used when a recommendation did not specify the purchase or finance of a specific object or activity.

The *Impacted Unit* category refers to the primary or focal beneficiary of the recommended expenditure. Values for this category were either explicitly mentioned or could be reasonably inferred from the content of the feedback. A total of 42 unique values emerged for this category. A value of *Unspecified* was assigned to any item for which a primary beneficiary could not be determined, while *General* was assigned to any item with a non-specific or particularly broad set of beneficiaries.

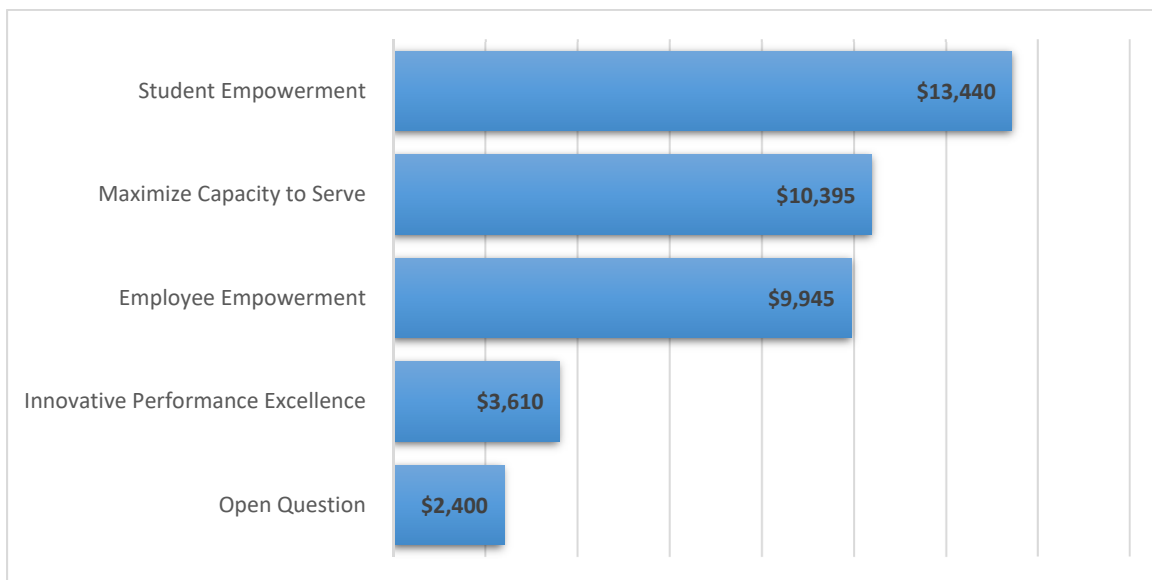
The *Detail* Category was used to group feedback that was identical or similar to at least one other item. The total of 543 items of feedback provided by participants were collapsed into 267 categories based upon their similarity to each other.

Results

Aspen Dollar Allocation

Results of overall token allocation is summarized in *Figure 1*. The *Student Empowerment* category received the largest number of tokens, indicating that participants believed this to be the most important strategic direction to which Aspen Prize funding should be allocated. This category received 29% more tokens than the next most endorsed category, Maximize Capacity to serve. The *Open Question* category received the fewest tokens.

Figure 1: Observed Aspen Dollar Allocation



Item Analysis

Figure 2 summarizes the distribution of the comments across the *Type* category. The most frequent categorization of submitted recommendations were assigned an *Unclassified*. The most frequent categorizations with some semantic content were Staffing, Physical Plant, and Equipment.

Table 1: Item Analysis Results, Impacted Unit

Impacted Unit	Counts	Impacted Unit	Counts
Total	543	Vet Tech	3
Unspecified	97	Students, Dreamers	3
Students	86	Students, Evening	3
General	84	Teaching and Learning Center	2
Employees	63	Art	2
Graduation	27	Students, Concurrent	2
Faculty	24	Brewing	2
Academics	19	Alumni Relations	1
Library	16	Administrative Assistants	1
Advising	15	Admission and Records	1
Staff	15	Students, Spring Graduates	1
Ag/Hort	10	Student, STEM	1
Students, Athletics	9	Student, Prospective	1
Tutoring	8	Student Success	1
Redirect	7	Writing Center	1
Employee	7	DSS	1
PTE	6	Students, PAC Men	1
STEM	6	Students, PTK	1
SHARE	5	Lab Science	1
Business Administration	4	TRiO	1
Testing Center	4	Students, STEM	1

Analysis of the *Detail* category is made challenging by the wide variety of recommendations provided by participants. After collapsing all items that were near semantically identical; 269 unique recommendations (from 543 individual submissions) remain to be considered. Frequency of values in the *Detail* category are presented in *Table 2*. The three most frequently observed categorizations are associated with a non-specific recommendation. For instance, feedback recommending “More technology” without specifying what the technology might be, how it might be used, or who might use it would be categorized as *Unspecified Technology*. The 3 most frequently offered recommendations with specific semantic content were:

1. Bonus for faculty and staff
2. Meditation center
3. 360 visualization lab in library

A total of 200 recommendations were completely unique, or at least sufficiently different from any other recommendation observed. Given the variety of recommendations and the number of times each was endorsed by participants, this data does not yield evidence of consensus for any spending recommendation. For

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example, the *Bonus of faculty and staff* recommendation was the most popular specific spending recommendation found in this data set. Even then, it occurred 12 times accounting for 2.2% of all recommendations. All other recommendations were endorsed less often than this.

Table 2: Item Analysis Results, Detail

Detail	Counts	Detail	Counts
Total	543	Day care grants for students	4
Unspecified additional funding	31	Unspecified student empowerment	4
Unspecified	20	Direct student aid, emergency	3
Unspecified technology	19	Experiential learning training	3
Innovative	14	Employee empowerment	3
Bonus for faculty and staff	12	Overtime bonus	3
Meditation center	12	Break room	3
360 visualization lab in library	11	Women's empowerment group	3
Unspecified community wellness intervention	10	Unspecified employee empowerment	3
Unspecified professional development	10	Unspecified training opportunities	3
Unspecified childcare	10	Unspecified advisor support	3
Green energy at PAC	8	All-district conference to exchange innovative ideas	3
Conference travel funding	8	Direct student aid, scholarships and grants	3
Ag/Hort building	8	Dreamer resources center	3
Ask students how to spend money	7	Center for innovation & entrepreneurship	3
Equipment for sports team	7	Unspecified alumni intervention	2
Childcare for employees and family	6	Television advertising	2
Career Center	6	Hiring more adjunct faculty	2
Unspecified community program	5	PAC funding	2
Salary increase	5	Bookstore grants	2
Align programs to labor markets	5	Train advisors	2
Book rental fee grant	5	Team/morale building events	2
Internship and externship resources	5	Direct student aid, small scholarships to as many students as possible	2
Direct student aid, unspecified	5	Fund additional faculty	2
Replace current technology	5	Inter-college social	2
Unspecified Co-Op program	4	Direct student aid, scholarships and grants- Early admission	2
Hire science advisor	4	Evening day care	2
Student choir	4	Experiential learning	2

Table 2 (cont.): Item Analysis Results, Detail

Detail	Counts	Detail	Counts
Meditation space	2	Employee breakroom	1
Life skills instruction	2	Additional adjunct faculty	1
Direct student aid, students without other forms of aid	2	Unspecified faculty-focused intervention	1
Larger classrooms	2	Goat	1
Event center	2	Compensation for degree attained	1
Unspecified learning resources	2	Expanded advising model	1
Sand volleyball court	2	Additional tuition reimbursement	1
Unspecified, likely for brewing and Oenology program related equipment	2	Promote telecommuting	1
Convocation center	2	Unspecified intervention to increase engagement between faculty and staff advising	1
Employee scholarships	2	Unspecified increase in quality of supplemental resources for students	1
strengthen external partners	2	Hire better tutors	1
Upgrade lab facilities	2	Incentives for "top canvas" faculty	1
Domestic abuse advocacy	1	Incentivize course success	1
Development of Co-Op program for students	1	Direct student aid, licensing exam fees	1
Winter wonderland competition for students and employees	1	Allowance for professional clothing, dry-cleaning and car washing	1
Supplement funding for community-focused events such as Eggstravaganza, pumpkin patch, etc.	1	Incentivize health and wellness	1
Construction facilitating the use of electric power at community-focused events	1	Full time community engagement position	1
Campus beautification, trees	1	Full time alumni position	1
Splash pad at Palomino Park	1	Institutionalize SHARE staff funding	1
Day care grants for employees	1	Childcare for employees and family, evening	1
Funding for pedological materials for each unit	1	Daycare discount	1
Unspecified mentoring for first generation students	1	360 visualization lab	1
Hire more full time faculty	1	Unspecified program updating	1
Funding for credentialing	1	Student center renovation	1
Serenity area	1	Volunteer opportunities during work day	1
Professional development for staff	1	Redesign work spaces to increase comfort	1
\$100 coupon to apply for specific professional development	1	Guest lecture series, professional development	1
Employee restroom	1	Faculty innovation center	1

Table 2 (cont.): Item Analysis Results, Detail

Detail	Counts	Detail	Counts
Work stations for advising	1	Smartboards for classrooms	1
TLC equipment	1	Mindfulness center	1
Unspecified morale intervention	1	New books	1
Increase faculty professional development funding	1	Transportation and swag for college tours	1
Training for lab tech	1	Solar panels	1
Stipends for faculty, staff and students for organization participation	1	Retreat event	1
Technology training	1	Direct student aid, stipends	1
Grass area	1	Unspecified funding for staff	1
Bonus for select individuals	1	Collaboration spaces in each building	1
Food for animals	1	First year success center	1
Unspecified funding for advising	1	Tie student awards to predictive analytics	1
Childcare funding	1	Direct student aid, scholarships and grants- High performing students	1
Unspecified program building	1	Bottle-friendly fountains around campus	1
Fringe benefits like dry cleaning, car washes and retail discounts	1	Individualized tutoring for high risk students	1
Healthy cooking classes	1	Direct student aid, bridge scholarship for students transferring from PAC	1
Hire additional adjunct faculty from internal sources	1	STEM center staff	1
Additional staff	1	Unspecified data analyst resources	1
Apple computers	1	Support for faculty to collaborate and mentor students	1
Better computing equipment	1	Direct student aid, living expenses	1
Graduation pins	1	Direct student aid, discretionary	1
Online advising platform	1	Educational incentive raffle for PAC Community members	1
Design high performance team plan	1	Tech support for student technology	1
Dinner	1	Cap and gown for select students	1
Food bank	1	Club sports funding	1
Staffing for development of cross-college writing initiatives	1	Office space for student organizations	1
Support having PTE programs assist with campus projects	1	Computer labs	1
Science advisor for pre-med and pre-nursing students	1	E Portfolio training	1
District wide departmental summits for exchange ideas and best practices	1	Genealogy center	1

Table 2 (cont.): Item Analysis Results, Detail

Detail	Counts	Detail	Counts
Collaborative conference	1	Unspecified programs and awareness campaign for LGBTQ community	1
CTE for high school students	1	Community activities like yoga and meditation	1
Culinary program in cafeteria	1	Unspecified technology spending	1
Externships/Internships	1	Unspecified funding for professional clothes closet	1
STEM career opportunities brochure	1	Conference rooms for mock interviews	1
Diversity and sensitivity training	1	More advisors	1
Promotion of tutoring services	1	Additional covered outdoor seating	1
Engagements fund for students	1	Assistance with registration and enrollment	1
Tutoring support for high risk course students	1	Additional FT staff for testing	1
Expand student art exhibition	1	Additional programs	1
Expand writing center	1	Additional study and rest spaces across campus	1
Covered seating space for Concurrently enrolled students	1	Additional test proctors	1
Food service for evening students	1	Guide prep curriculum development	1
Free transportation to and from PAC	1	Unspecified funding for PAC Men organization	1
Guest lecture series, alumni	1	Direct student aid, PTK students	1
Gaming area for students	1	Traveling exhibit space	1
Increased wages	1	Bowling alley for employees	1
Hire testing staff	1	Funding for additional laboratory teaching assistants	1
Meetings with industry partners	1	Direct student aid, ECHS students transitioning to college	1
Expand tutoring centers	1	Go mobile to assist in completion of enrollment process	1
Funding for conference travel	1	Redesign SHARE space to provide privacy for students undergoing difficult conversations	1
Increased services for DSS students	1	Direct student aid, students retained from one term to the next	1
Innovation contest with prizes	1	Direct student aid, students employed full time	1
Instructional innovation center	1	Solar powered outdoor table with power outlets	1
International conference	1	Stress reduction program	1
E- Portfolio platform	1	Student laundry room	1
E Commerce education	1	Additional intensive and individualized advising including home visits	1
Job placement program	1	Fund student travel for students not in organizations	1

Table 2 (cont.): Item Analysis Results, Detail

Detail	Counts	Detail	Counts
Fund student travel for students not in organizations	1	Remodel library space into dedicated classroom	1
Refresher coursework for student tutors	1	Summer camp registration software	1
Equipment for space in new building	1	Improve Banner display of holds data	1
Token for math learning center activities	1	Staffing to assist with department-level assessment	1
Token for English learning center activities	1	Add student info to inactive records	1
Unspecified TRiO funding	1	Support online teaching strategies	1
Unspecified tutoring funding	1	Institutionalize SHARE services	1
Validation theory training	1	Licensed merchandise	1
Support group for female employees	1	Appreciation day, Fiesta Texas	1
Marquee sign	1	Expand WIFI access	1
Unspecified classroom technology	1	Enhance teaching and learning resources	1
Experimental learning, study abroad, increase of math tutors	1	Marketing in support of Agriculture/Horticulture programs	1
STEM Development	1	Recording studio	1
Project Access	1	Mobile App	1
Update tech to provide better services	1	Support student housing	1
Xeriscaping and Butterfly waystation	1	Public relations in support of PTE programs	1
Guest lecture series, authors	1	Fund teaching center	1
Seed money to raise capital	1		
Increased art technology	1		
Seed funding for staff facilitating college and community collaboration	1		
Testing center staff	1		
Faculty conference travel	1		
Staffing for night/weekends tutoring	1		
Additional classrooms	1		
In-class presentation equipment	1		
Health clinic, Bae B Safe	1		
Guest lecture series	1		
Employee golf cart	1		

Aspen Dollar Allocation

Upon evaluating the feedback from faculty and staff about the best ways to invest the \$100,000 cash prize from the Aspen Rising Star Award, dollars were allocated based on the following considerations:

- Results of token allocation (see pages 5-12)
- Alignment to Palo Alto College strategic directions: Innovative performance excellence, maximize capacity to serve, employee empowerment, and student empowerment
- Alignment to the Aspen Institute's four areas of student success: Learning, completion, labor market, and equity.

Strategy/ Program	Owner(s)	Amount	Strategic Direction	Aspen Pillar
Student Emergency Grants	Kiana Pina, Delilah Marquez	\$15,000	Student Empowerment	Completion, Equity
Professional Development Funds for Teaching and Learning Center	Julie McDevitt	\$10,000	Employee Empowerment	All
College Starts at Birth	Dr. Garza	\$15,000	Student Empowerment; Maximize Capacity to Serve	Equity
College Action Plans	Pedro Hinojosa	\$25,000	All	All
Faculty Mentoring	Amanda Salinas	\$10,000	Student Empowerment	All
High Challenge Course Action Plans	Tony Villanueva, Patrick Lee	\$10,000	Student Empowerment	Completion
Labor Market Outcome Study with EMSI	Katherine Doss/ Caroline Haring, Dr. Pfang	\$15,000	Student Empowerment	Labor Market