



NEWS RELEASE

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San Antonio's Palo Alto College named "Rising Star" by national Aspen Prize – *Among top one percent of community colleges in nation* –

The Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program announced today that Alamo Colleges District-Palo Alto College is a "Rising Star" award winner of the 2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the nation's signature recognition of high achievement and performance among America's community colleges.

"Representing the Alamo Colleges District and community colleges across the nation at this level is an honor for each one of us at Palo Alto College, and this achievement would not have been possible without our faculty and staff's commitment to the journey and the support of our entire community, including the leadership of the Alamo Colleges District," said Dr. Robert Garza, president of Palo Alto College. "Whether students are the first in their family to attend college or looking to continue their education, Palo Alto College has always believed that education should be accessible to everyone. And by keeping our students first and being one of the best in the nation, we will continue to be a place where our community and students can achieve their dreams and aspirations for a better life."

During an award ceremony in Washington, D.C., Palo Alto College was honored for building clear pathways to degrees and transfer, exceptional student advising, and strong partnerships with K-12 systems, which have resulted in remarkable improvement in the graduation and transfer rate over four years, from 28 percent to 47 percent.

"Palo Alto College has engaged in an impressive set of structural reforms over the past few years focused on building clear pathways to transfer and restructuring advising," said Joshua Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program. "These reforms, which the College has extended into its work with high school students, have enabled Palo Alto to improve student success rapidly, delivering to more and more students what they want and need: a valuable degree."

The Aspen Prize is awarded every two years since 2011 and recognizes outstanding institutions selected from an original pool of more than 1,000 community colleges nationwide. With a singular focus on student success, the Aspen Prize assesses institutional performance in four areas: student learning, certificate and degree completion, success after graduation in the labor market and in transfer to four-year institutions, and equity in access and success for students of color and low-income students.

"The Board and all of us in the Alamo Colleges District family are so proud of Palo Alto College's outstanding accomplishment of being recognized with the Rising Star Award by the Aspen Institute," said Dr. Mike Flores, chancellor of the Alamo Colleges District. "They are the first of our colleges to win this prestigious honor and be named one of the top ten finalists for the Aspen Prize, and this recognition reflects their dedication, hard work and commitment to student success and performance excellence."

The 2019 Aspen Prize winners, Indian River State College (Fort Pierce, Florida) and Miami Dade College (Miami) will receive \$350,000 each. Aspen awarded three colleges with the “Rising Star” award for their strong record of improvement: Palo Alto College, Odessa College (Odessa, Texas), and Pierce College at Fort Steilacoom (Lakewood, Washington). Each “Rising Star” winner will receive \$100,000.

The prize winners, Rising Stars, and finalists were announced on by Aspen Prize jury co-chairs Ángel Cabrera, president of George Mason University, and Kathy Warden, chief executive officer and president of Northrop Grumman. Cabrera and Warden led a distinguished Prize jury of education, business, and civil rights experts to select the top colleges, part of a rigorous review process that included the examination of extensive data on performance and improvements in learning, graduation, workforce, and equitable outcomes, along with multiday site visits to each finalist school.

2019 Aspen Prize Winners

- Indian River State College (Fort Pierce, FL) – 24,300 students
- Miami Dade College (Miami, FL) – 96,000 students

2019 Rising Star Award Winners for dramatic improvement

- Alamo Colleges District-Palo Alto College (San Antonio, TX) – 10,600 students
- Odessa College (Odessa, TX) – 7,500 students
- Pierce College at Fort Steilacoom (Lakewood, WA) – 10,430 students

2019 Finalists

- Broward College (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
- CUNY Kingsborough Community College (Brooklyn, NY)
- Mitchell Technical Institute (Mitchell, SD)
- Pasadena City College (Pasadena, CA)
- San Jacinto College (Pasadena, TX)

The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program aims to advance higher education practices, policies, and leadership that significantly improve student outcomes, especially for the growing population of low-income and minority students on American campuses. The program is part of The Aspen Institute, which has a mission of fostering leadership based on enduring values and providing a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. For more information, visit highered.aspeninstitute.org.

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.

Palo Alto College, part of the Alamo Colleges District, is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges and a recipient of the 2015 Texas Award for Performance Excellence, a finalist for the 2016 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, and a Rising Star winner of the 2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. With over 10,000 students, Palo Alto College is accredited to offer associate degrees and short-term certificates. The College is located on the south side of San Antonio at 1400 W. Villaret Blvd. at I-410 and Texas Hwy 16 and online at alamo.edu/pac.

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