



Northwest Iowa
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January 30, 2014

NEWS RELEASE

*May be published
when received.*

NORTHWEST IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE NAMED AS ONE OF TOP 150 IN THE COUNTRY

*Nation's Signature Recognition of Excellence, Chosen from over 1,000 Community Colleges
Which Serve Nearly Half of All Undergraduates in US*

Highlighting the critical importance of improving student success in America's community colleges, the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program has named Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) as one of the nation's top 150 community colleges. NCC is now eligible to compete for the 2015 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 high levels of access and success for minority and low-income students.

NCC and 149 other community colleges were selected from a national pool of over 1,000 public two-year colleges using publicly available data on student outcomes. The formula used to select the colleges was devised by expert analysts at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems in consultation with an expert advisory committee convened by the Aspen Institute. The data focuses on student retention and completion, considered from three perspectives:

- Performance (retention, graduation rates including transfers, and degrees and certificates per 100 "full-time equivalent" students)
- Improvement (awarded for steady improvement in each performance metric over time)
- Equity (evidence of strong completion outcomes for minority and low-income students)

Together, the 150 community colleges eligible to compete for the Prize represent the diversity and richness of the entire sector:

- They are located in 37 states across the nation;
- They represent urban, rural, and suburban markets; and

- They encompass big community colleges and small community colleges—from Miami Dade College in Florida serving over 100,000 students to Carver Career Center in West Virginia serving fewer than 500 students.

“Community colleges have tremendous power to change lives, and their success will increasingly define our nation’s economic strength and the potential for social mobility for every American” said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. “This competition is designed to spotlight the excellent work being done in the most effective community colleges, those that best help students obtain meaningful, high-quality education and training for competitive-wage jobs after college. We hope it will raise the bar and provide a roadmap for community colleges nationwide.”

Dr. Alethea Stubbe, President of NCC, commented, “Student success matters to all of us. It is an honor to be one of the top 150 community colleges in the nation recognized by the Aspen Institute for the third time in a row. This illustrates that the College provides excellence in its educational programs and services not only regionally, but nationally. There has never been a better time to be proud of our mission, our students, and the impact NCC alumni make in our communities and our world.”

Northwest Iowa Community College has been invited to submit an application containing detailed data on degree/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 2014. 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 a few finalists with distinction in early 2015.

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

This is the third time in a row NCC has been recognized by the Aspen Institute as a College of Excellence. NCC was previously recognized in 2011 and 2012 (there wasn’t a prize in 2013). A full list of the 150 community colleges is available at www.AspenPrize.org. Prize winners will be announced in early 2015.

The Aspen Prize is funded by the Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Joyce Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Lumina Foundation.

The Aspen College Excellence Program aims to identify and replicate practices and policies 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' and policy-makers' understanding of what is needed to teach and graduate post-secondary students, especially the growing population of low-income and minority students on American campuses. For more information, visit <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/cep>.

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.