



MEDIA RELEASE

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IMAGE: Graphic of "Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence Top 200-2027"

MCC Named as a Top 200 Community College Eligible for the 2027 Aspen Prize

\$1 Million Prize Honors Colleges Achieving Strong Student Results, Both in College and After Graduation

WASHINGTON D.C.: Today, the Aspen Institute named Miles Community College (MCC) as one of the 200 institutions eligible to compete for the \$1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the nation's premier recognition of high achievement and performance among two-year colleges. The 200 colleges were selected based on their

student outcomes data, including retention, completion, transfer, and bachelor's attainment rates.

MCC is the only college in Montana named to the list of eligible institutions and was previously nominated to apply for the 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2017 award cycles.

"Miles Community College is thrilled to be invited to apply for the 2027 Aspen Prize," stated Dr. Ron Slinger, president of Miles Community College. "Our selection for invitation demonstrates that the outstanding work of our Board of Trustees, faculty, and staff is being recognized nationally."

Starting in 2010, this is the ninth cycle of the Aspen Prize. Together, the 200 colleges selected represent the breadth and diversity of the community college sector, and are located in urban, rural, and suburban areas across the country. These institutions serve anywhere from a few hundred students to tens of thousands, with many focused primarily on workforce programs or transfer and bachelor's degree attainment (or a combination of the two).

"The Aspen Prize rewards colleges that achieve the kind of outcomes that actually matter to students—completing college degree programs that, in turn, lead to lifelong success," said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. "Aspen Prize winners offer a powerful message: Community colleges can deliver the kind of life-changing education that makes the American Dream real."

"We are honored by our selection," continued President Slinger, "which highlights the important role that our college plays in the lives of our students and eastern Montana."

Community colleges educate nearly six million students, with many student outcomes falling short in both the rate at which students graduate and the percentage of students who achieve success after graduation. The Aspen Prize process identifies and celebrates community colleges that demonstrate that achieving stronger outcomes is possible, providing a roadmap of effective practices and strategies for other colleges to follow.

The 200 eligible colleges have been invited to submit an application and participate in a rigorous review process that will culminate in the naming of the Aspen Prize winner in the spring of 2027. Over the coming months, the colleges that apply for the Aspen Prize will be assessed based on (1) student outcomes data, ranging from student transfer and completion rates to employment and wages after graduation, and (2) whether they have engaged in scaled practices that led to high and improving student outcomes.

"Among these 200 colleges are some really special places that deliver strong and improving outcomes for students across the board," Wyner said. "Our job over the coming 20 months is to gather a lot more data and work with a deep bench of field experts to assess which of these 200 stand out so we can not only honor them with a monetary award, but drive attention to the most effective field practices that other colleges can replicate."

This is the first time since the inception of the Aspen Prize that 200 colleges are eligible to apply, growing from 150. This year, in addition to publicly available federal data, over 600 colleges authorized the use of National Student Clearinghouse data on their institution's

degree completion, transfer, and bachelor's attainment rates for full- and part-time students.

For the full list and selection process details, visit the [Aspen Prize for College Excellence](#) website.

The Aspen Prize is generously funded by Ascendium Education Philanthropy and the Joyce Foundation. Previous winners are:

- 2025: Southwest Wisconsin Technical College (WI)
- 2023: Amarillo College (TX) and Imperial Valley College (CA)
- 2021: San Antonio College (TX)
- 2019: Indian River State College (FL) and Miami Dade College (FL)
- 2017: Lake Area Technical Institute (SD)
- 2015: Santa Fe College (FL)
- 2013: Santa Barbara City College (CA) & Walla Walla Community College (WA)
- 2011: Valencia College (FL)

Note: Colleges that have won the Aspen Prize are not eligible to apply in subsequent years.

About Miles Community College: Founded in 1939, Miles Community College (MCC) in Miles City, Montana, offers affordable academic transfer, career, and workforce programs with a strong focus on student success. MCC provides small classes, dedicated faculty and staff, and a vibrant campus community serving students and employers across eastern Montana and beyond. Learn more at milescc.edu.

About The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program: This program aims to strengthen higher education leadership and practice to improve student outcomes—with the ultimate goal of advancing economic mobility and developing talent for the good of each individual and society as a whole. For more information, visit the [College Excellence Program](#) website and follow us on LinkedIn, Bluesky, and X.

The Aspen Institute is a global nonprofit organization whose purpose is to ignite human potential to build understanding and create new possibilities for a better world. Founded in 1949, the Institute drives change through dialogue, leadership, and action to help solve society's greatest challenges. It is headquartered in Washington, D.C. and has a campus in Aspen, Colorado, as well as an international network of partners. For more information, visit aspeninstitute.org.

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