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Texas' San Jacinto Community College Wins National Award for Rapid Improvement in Completion

Top Ten Finalist for the 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, San Jacinto College Receives \$100,000 for 30% increase in graduation and transfer rates

Washington, DC, March 14, 2017 – A finalist for the 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, **San Jacinto Community College in Pasadena, Texas was recognized today with a Rising Star award for improving student completion.**

Awarded every two years since 2011, the \$1 million Aspen Prize recognizes institutions for their outstanding 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. The Prize is the nation's preeminent recognition for achievement and improvement in community colleges.

Selected from 1,000 public community colleges nationwide, **2017 Aspen Prize winner, Lake Area Technical Institute will receive \$600,000 in prize funds.** Florida's, **Broward College (Fort Lauderdale) and Indian River State College (Fort Pierce) were named Finalists-with-Distinction.** Two Texas schools, **Odessa College (Odessa) and San Jacinto College (Pasadena) were recognized with the "Rising Star" award for rapid improvement in student completion:** All four will receive \$100,000 prizes. (*See full list of Top Ten Prize Finalists below and read more information about them at <http://as.pn/1kr>.*)

"San Jacinto is delivering highly-skilled graduates to fuel economic growth and enable social mobility in the Houston region," said Joshua Wyner, Executive Director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program and author of *What Excellent Community Colleges Do*. "Student completion rates have risen steadily and substantially since San Jacinto reorganized and began to develop a strong culture where everyone at the college is uniquely focused on and held accountable for student success."

San Jacinto serves nearly 41,000 students who represent the cultural and ethnic diversity of East Texas. The college is deeply committed to expanding higher education access, making concerted aggressive efforts to enroll students who typically have limited or access to higher education. Today, Hispanic student make up more about half of the student body, a ratio much higher than that the college's service area.

But access is not enough for the colleges leaders, faculty and staff. San Jacinto has developed a clear and holistic completion agenda as well as strong workforce programs that are aligned with local employer needs and projected job growth, especially in the health care fields and petrochemical industry.

The outstanding student outcomes that helped San Jacinto earn its recognition for the Rising Star award, include:

- Strong improvement in three-year graduation/transfer rate , from 29% to 38% in five years
- Number of credentials awarded to students rose from 38% to 51% in five years

The Prize winner and finalists were announced at an event at the Newseum in Washington, DC, by Aspen Prize Jury co-chairs Mitch Daniels, president of Purdue University and former Governor of Indiana, and former Representative George Miller (D-CA).

Community colleges today enroll more than 40% of all US undergraduates – 6 million students – working toward degrees and certificates. These include growing numbers of lower-income and minority students. Aspen’s Rising Star winners demonstrate that community colleges can dramatically improve the success of students while in college and in completing a degree that leads to well-paying jobs and careers after college.

For more information about the 2017 Aspen Prize Winner, Finalists-with-Distinction, Rising Stars as well as information and lessons learned from the all of the Prize Finalists listed below, please visit: <http://as.pn/1kr>.

2017 Aspen Prize Winner - Lake Area Technical Institute (Watertown, SD)

Finalists-with-Distinction

Broward College (Fort Lauderdale, FL)

Indian River State College (Fort Pierce, FL)

Rising Star Award

Odessa College (Odessa, TX)

San Jacinto College (Pasadena, TX)

Finalists

Anoka-Ramsey Community College (Coon Rapids, MN)

Chaffey College (Rancho Cucamonga, CA)

Northeast Community College (Norfolk, NE)

Pasadena City College (Pasadena, CA)

West Kentucky Community and Technical College (Paducah, KY)

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The Aspen Prize is funded by the Joyce Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, the Siemens Foundation, and Pearson.

The Aspen College Excellence Program aims to advance higher education practices, policies, and leadership that significantly improve student outcomes. Through the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the Siemens Technical Scholars Program, 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 <http://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.