

NEWS RELEASE

West Kentucky Community & Technical College

CONTACT: Janett Blythe (270) 534-3079

Janett.blythe@kctcs.edu

WKCTC Proud to be Among Nation's Top Community Colleges Two Consecutive Years

PADUCAH, KY (March 19, 2013) - Highlighting the need to improve student learning and graduation rates in the nation's community colleges — leading to good jobs — the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program officially recognized Paducah's West Kentucky Community and Technical College as one of the 10 top community colleges in the nation - chosen from an original pool of nearly 1,200.

Faculty, staff, student and college supporters listened to a live Web broadcast from Washington D.C. Tuesday as officials named Santa Barbara City College in California and Walla Walla Community College in Washington state as co-winners in the 2013 Aspen Prize; each receiving \$400,000.

Two other top colleges – Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, N.Y., and Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown, S.D. will each receive \$100,000 as finalists with distinction. WKCTC and Southeast Community and Technical College in Cumberland, KY were among the 10 finalists. Last year, WKCTC was in the top five.

While some might be disappointed that WKCTC was not in the top five again, WKCTC President Barbara Veazey said she was extremely honored to be in the top 10 for a second consecutive year. "To be in the company of the best community colleges in the nation for two years is a validation that we are a preeminent community college, not only in our region but also in the nation. Who would not be happy and proud of that?"

In a pre-recorded message to those watching the live broadcast in Crouse Hall Tuesday, Dr. Veazey encouraged the audience to be proud of the accomplishments the college has made in the 10 years it has been a consolidated college. "To be in the top 10 is an incredible feat for our faculty, our staff, our students, and certainly a source of pride for our community," she said.

Today's announcement followed a rigorous, yearlong effort by The Aspen Institute to assemble and review an unprecedented collection of data on community colleges and the critical elements of student success: student learning, degree completion and transfer, equity and employment/earnings after college.

"I congratulate WKCTC and Dr. Veazey on this extraordinary accomplishment; it is well deserved," said Dr. Michael B. McCall, president of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. "The fact that WKCTC has been recognized by the Aspen Institute two years in a row as a top 10 community college; all within the college's first 10 years as a consolidated, comprehensive community and technical college; is a testament to the outstanding work of WKCTC's faculty, staff and leadership."

The Aspen College Excellence Program aims to identify and replicate campus-wide practices 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' capacity to achieve high levels of student learning, graduation, and post-graduation success in the labor markets, especially the growing population of low-income and minority students on American campuses.

Each year more than 10,000 students come to WKCTC seeking traditional two-year transfer associate degrees in arts and science, applied science degrees, diplomas or certificates.

“West Kentucky Community and Technical College offers a shining example of how strong leadership and college-wide attention to student success can achieve strong results in learning and degree completion,” said Joshua Wyner, Executive Director of the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program. “The college’s strong student results flow from a consistent focus on identifying gaps in student learning and completion, improving instructor effectiveness and program design, and measuring the effectiveness of – and continuously improving – all of its programs.”

Among the reasons WKCTC stands out as one of the nation’s top community colleges:

- 48% of first-time full-time students graduate or transfer within three years compared with the national average of 40%.
- Strong initiatives to recruit and prepare high school students for college – in western Kentucky, 38% of young adults either do not enroll or fail to complete postsecondary education.
- Awards approximately 43.8 credentials for every 100 full-time equivalent students, well above the national average of 29.

“With little-to-no job growth in the region, the college also works extremely hard to align its programs to existing opportunities and play a central role in regional economic development,” Wyner said.

####

About The Aspen Institute:

The Aspen Institute mission is twofold: to foster values-based leadership, encouraging individuals to reflect on the ideals and ideas that define a good society, and to provide a neutral and balanced venue for discussing and acting on critical issues. The Aspen Institute does this primarily in four ways: seminars, young-leader fellowships around the globe, policy programs, and public conferences and events. The Institute is based in Washington, DC; Aspen, Colorado; and on the Wye River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. It also has an international network of partners. For more information, visit www.aspeninstitute.org.