

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### West Kentucky Community and Technical College Named Among Ten Finalist for 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence

*WKCTC has earned a place on the ten finalists' list every year the Prize has been awarded*

PADUCAH, KY - September 13, 2016 – West Kentucky Community and Technical College was named today one of ten finalists for the [2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence](#), the nation's preeminent recognition of high achievement and performance in America's community colleges. WKCTC now enters the last stage of the competition for the \$1 million prize fund that will be awarded in March 2017 in Washington, D.C. to the winner and up to four finalists with distinction. (See complete list of finalists below.)

WKCTC's Aspen Prize finalist status has made Dr. Anton Reece's upcoming arrival on campus as the college's new president even more special. Dr. Reece becomes WKCTC's second president on October 1, succeeding President Emeritus Barbara Veazey who retired in July.

"It's exciting to begin my presidency and learn that WKCTC is again being recognized as a national Aspen finalist," Dr. Reece said. "The ongoing national recognition of WKCTC by the Aspen Institute clearly reflects and reiterates the quality and standard of teaching excellence and student engagement that occurs on a daily basis at the college. In addition, the four-time national finalist ranking reflects the level of community, business and industry partners confidence in supporting access and the employability of our graduates."

WKCTC has earned a place on the ten finalists' list every year the Prize has been awarded (2011, 2013, and 2015) and was named a finalist with distinction in 2011 and 2015. The Prize, awarded every two years since 2011, recognizes outstanding institutions selected from an original pool of more than 1,000 public community colleges nationwide. With a singular focus on student success, the Prize assesses community colleges' achievements in four areas: student learning, certificate and degree completion, employment and earnings for graduates, and access and success for minority and low-income students.

"A Prize finalist every year since 2011, West Kentucky Community and Technical College continues to impress us with its deep commitment to the success of its students and to its community," said Joshua Wyner, Executive Director of the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program in Washington, D.C. "From partnering with local organizations to reach out to minority students, to maintaining programs that allow students to earn college credit while completing high school, their ongoing dedication to improving lives beyond their own doors is remarkable."

The Aspen Institute highlighted the following areas in West Kentucky Community and Technical College's qualifications for the recognition:

- Successfully closing college-level course completion gaps between minority and non-minority students enrolled in accelerated developmental courses
- Work with the community to secure funding to build the Emerging Technology Center to bring together state-of-the-art facilities, customized training for business and industry, and college courses to meet the technology needs of the regional labor market
- A degree in Health Science Technology (HST) that allows students to earn a marketable credential in as little as one semester

Interim WKCTC President Charles Chrestman said WKCTC's participation in the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence has contributed significantly to the continuous improvement of the college's programs and services. "It has connected WKCTC's administrators, faculty and staff with some of America's best minds and practitioners in community college education, and the real winners in all of this are the students and taxpayers. It is quite humbling for the College to be recognized as an Aspen finalist for the fourth time," Chrestman said.

Community colleges today enroll nearly half of all US undergraduates—7 million students—working toward degrees and certificates. This includes rapidly growing numbers of low-income and minority students. While fewer than 40 percent of all community college students graduate, Aspen Prize finalist institutions demonstrate that every community college can help more students achieve success while in college and after they graduate.

This fall, the Aspen Institute visit WKCTC and the nine other finalist institutions to conduct a rigorous review process that includes the examination of learning, graduation, employment, and equitable outcomes for all students. Then, a distinguished Prize Jury of higher education experts will select a grand prize winner and up to four finalists with distinction.

The 2015 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence was awarded to Santa Fe College in Gainesville, Florida. In 2013, Santa Barbara City College (California) and Walla Walla Community College (Washington) were co-winners. In 2011, Valencia College (Florida) was the inaugural Prize winner. According to the Prize rules, former winners were not eligible to reapply this cycle.

The 2017 Aspen Prize Finalists (listed in alphabetical order):

WKCTC and Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown, SD, have been named finalists in four consecutive Prize cycles and two others were finalists for a second time (indicated with #).

- **Anoka-Ramsey Community College** – Coon Rapids, MN
- **Broward College** – Fort Lauderdale, FL#
- **Chaffey College** – Rancho Cucamonga, CA
- **Indian River State College** – Fort Pierce, FL#
- **Lake Area Technical Institute** – Watertown, SD
- **Northeast Community College** – Northeast, NE
- **Odessa College** – Odessa, TX
- **Pasadena City College** – Pasadena, CA
- **San Jacinto College** – Pasadena, TX
- **West Kentucky Community and Technical College** – Paducah, KY

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

The Aspen Institute's 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 New College Leadership Project, 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 [www.aspeninstitute.org/college-excellence](http://www.aspeninstitute.org/college-excellence).

West Kentucky Community and Technical College, a member of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, has been recognized four consecutive times by The Aspen Institute as an Aspen Prize Top 10 Community College and twice as a Finalist with Distinction for providing students with strong job training and continuing higher education opportunity, for achieving high completion and transfer rates, and for providing strong employment results for its graduates.

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