



THREE COLLEGES NAMED PRESTIGIOUS ASPEN PRIZE FINALIST

~Award recognizes high achievement and performance~

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., May 15, 2018 – Today, three Florida College System (FCS) institutions – Broward College, Indian River State College and Miami Dade College – were named among 10 finalists for the 2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. This award is the nation’s signature recognition of high achievement and performance in America’s community colleges.

“I am incredibly proud that out of all the community colleges throughout the country, three Florida colleges have been selected as finalists for this esteemed award. This well-deserved recognition highlights the hard work of Florida colleges which have made students their top priority,” said Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart.

Two of Florida’s 28 community and state colleges have captured the Aspen Prize. This year, Florida is one of only two states in the United States with multiple finalists. This is the first time any single state has seen three of its colleges in the finalist pool.

“Congratulations to Broward College, Indian River State College and Miami Dade College for being named as finalists for the coveted 2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence,” said Florida College System Chancellor Madeline Pumariega. “This outstanding recognition is a testament of the dedication and commitment to excellence of the college faculty, staff and students, as well as Florida’s collective priority on student success.”

Awarded every two years since 2011, the Aspen Prize recognizes institutions that achieve high and improving student outcomes, selected from over 1,000 community colleges nationwide. Focused solely on student access and success, the Aspen Prize recognizes community colleges with exceptional achievements in four areas:

- Student learning;
- Certificate and degree completion while in community college and after transferring to a four-year institution;
- Employment and earnings rates after graduation; and
- Access for and success of minority and low-income students.

The winner of the \$1 million Prize purse will be named in April 2019. Until then, Aspen will work with a team of national experts to collect extensive, additional data and conduct multi-day site visits to the 10 finalist colleges.

“I am consistently impressed by Florida’s community colleges,” said Joshua Wyner, Executive Director of the Aspen College Excellence Program. “These three community colleges demonstrate that it is possible to achieve high and improving levels of student success in every measure Aspen weighs, dispelling the myth that community colleges must choose between high levels of student learning and degree completion, or between excellent workforce development and transfer preparation, or between open access and equitable outcomes.”

Broward College (BC), a 2017 Aspen Prize Finalist-with-Distinction, stands out as one of the nation’s top community colleges for various reasons, including the College’s graduation/transfer rate of 48 percent being eight percentage points above the national average. With strong relationships to four-year partner universities and tailored advising services, Broward College also achieves rates of student transfer to four-year schools that are significantly higher than the national average.

“Our recognition as a finalist for the third time confirms that the hard work of our dedicated students and staff does not go unnoticed,” said BC President J. David Armstrong, Jr. “Last year, Broward College used the winning prize money to fund 24 faculty-led classroom initiatives. The project-based and collaborative learning has helped our students achieve their goals in the classroom and beyond.”

Indian River State College (IRSC), also named a 2017 Aspen Prize Finalist-with-Distinction and a 2015 Aspen Prize Finalist, stands out as one of the nation’s top community colleges for reasons regarding the College’s impressive three-year graduation/transfer rates for all students (49 percent as compared to 40 percent nationally), as well as for the 17 bachelor’s degrees offered in its world-class facilities, all aligned to high-demand jobs in the region.

“The selection of Indian River State College as a three-time Aspen Prize Top 10 Community College is a tremendous honor recognizing the exceptional commitment to student success and results achieved by our college’s faculty, staff and administration,” said Dr. Edwin R. Massey, IRSC president. “Advancing to the final round of this competition for the third consecutive time brings increased national attention to our college and community, and more importantly, validates our drive to continuously improve for our students. IRSC’s sustained excellence is a credit to our people — students, employees and community partners — who strive every day to be the best college in America. This honor is truly theirs.”

Miami Dade College (MDC), also a 2011 Aspen Prize Finalist-with-Distinction, stands out as one of the nation’s top community colleges for reasons including a partnership with Florida International University (FIU) that helps students seamlessly transfer to FIU, including guaranteed admission to FIU upon completion of the associate in arts degree. This relationship has resulted in transfer outcomes well above the national average. The College has also aligned institutional practices and policies to student success through its Student Achievement Initiative and Guided Pathways work, leading to an impressive

overall three-year graduation/transfer rate above the national average with no attainment gap for students of color.

“We are extremely proud and honored to be named a finalist,” said MDC President Eduardo Padrón. “It speaks volumes about MDC's commitment to support all students, especially those with the greatest financial challenges.”

Two of the five previous winners have been from Florida; Valencia College in 2011 and Santa Fe College in 2015.

For more information on the Aspen Prize, visit <http://highered.aspeninstitute.org/aspen-prize/>.

For more information on Florida's College System, visit www.floridacollegesystem.com.

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For more information about the Florida Department of Education, visit www.fldoe.org.