

Aspen names Lee a Top 150 community college

BAYTOWN, TX — The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program today named Lee College as one of the nation's top 150 community colleges eligible to compete for the 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence and \$1 million in prize funds, as well as student scholarships from the Siemens Technical Scholars Program.

This is the fourth consecutive awards cycle that Lee College has been designated an Aspen Prize Top 150 U.S. Community College.

The Prize, awarded every two years, is the nation's signature recognition of high achievement and performance among American community colleges, acknowledging institutions for exceptional student outcomes in student learning; certificate and degree completion; employment and earnings; and access and success for minority and low-income students.

Lee College and the other institutions announced today were selected from a national pool of more than 1,000 public two-year colleges using publicly available data on student outcomes in three areas:

- Performance, including retention and graduation rates, transfers and degrees and certificates awarded per 100 full-time equivalent students;
- Improvement, awarded for steady progress in each performance metric over time; and,
- Equity, evidence of strong completion outcomes for minority and low-income students.

A full list of the selected colleges and details on the selection process are available at www.aspenprize.org.

“With the leadership and commitment of our Board of Regents, Lee College faculty and staff work tirelessly to develop innovative programs and strategies that ensure all of our students receive a quality education and the tools to create a better, brighter future,” said Pres. Dr. Dennis Brown. “We are proud to earn recognition as a Top 150 community college and excited to again be considered for the Aspen Prize.”

Nearly half of America's college students attend community college, with more than 7 million youth and adult learners working towards certificates and degrees in these institutions across the country.

“Community colleges have tremendous power to change lives, and their success will increasingly define our nation's economic strength and the potential for social mobility in our country,” said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. “This competition is designed to spotlight the excellent work being done in the most effective community colleges, those that best help students obtain meaningful, high-quality education and training for competitive-wage jobs. We hope it will raise the bar and provide a road map to better student outcomes for community colleges nationwide.”

Lee College has been invited to submit an application to the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence containing detailed data on degree and certificate completion, labor market outcomes and student learning outcomes.

For the first time, the 150 Prize-eligible institutions are also invited to nominate exceptional students enrolled in their best middle-skill STEM programs for scholarships. Up to 50 Siemens Technical Scholars will be selected from programs that provide outstanding preparation for high-demand jobs in manufacturing, energy, health care, and information technology. A partnership between the Siemens Foundation and the Aspen Institute, the Siemens Technical Scholars Program intends to help our nation's community colleges and their business partners bridge the gap between projected shortages of skilled workers and the millions of high-demand jobs in these STEM industries. Scholarship winners and the programs that deliver rigorous training enabling their success will be announced in fall 2016.

Ten Prize finalists will be named in fall 2016. The Aspen Institute will then conduct site visits to each of the finalists and collect additional quantitative data. A distinguished Prize Jury will select a grand prize winner and a few finalists with distinction in early 2017.