



Southwest Texas Junior College

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**Aspen Institute Names Southwest Texas Junior College as a Top 150 U.S.
Community College Eligible for 2021 Aspen Prize
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Uvalde, TX, December 5, 2019 – The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program today named Southwest Texas Junior College as one of 150 community colleges eligible to compete for the \$1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the nation’s signature recognition of high achievement and performance among America’s community colleges. Based on strong and improving in student outcomes—including in learning, completion rates, employment rates and earnings, and equity—15 percent of community colleges nationwide have been invited to apply for the Aspen Prize.

“I am extremely proud of all the work our SWTJC team has done to advance student success. Unequivocally, this focus on student success has been our north star and positioned us to be recognized as one of the top community colleges in the nation,” said Dr. Hector Gonzales, SWTJC President.

The 150 community colleges named today as eligible to compete for the 2021 Aspen Prize were selected from a pool of nearly 1,000 public two-year colleges nationwide using publicly available data on student outcomes. Located in 39 states in urban, rural, and suburban areas, serving as few as 500 students and as many as 75,000 students, these colleges represent the diversity and depth of the community college sector.

Data show that over the last two years, student retention, graduation rates, and degree completion have improved at the top tier of 150 Aspen Prize-eligible colleges.

“Community colleges play a vital role in developing talent and enabling social mobility across the country, and it’s critical for them to get better at what they do,” said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. “We’re pleased to see evidence that these institutions are improving, that more are delivering on their promise. We’re also pleased to play a role in honoring outstanding community colleges and sharing what works to ensure great outcomes for students—through graduation and beyond.”

The top ten finalists for the 2021 Aspen Prize will be named in May 2020. The Aspen Institute will then conduct site visits to each of the finalists and collect additional quantitative data, including employment and earnings data. A distinguished jury will make award decisions in spring 2021.

Previous winners of the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence are: Miami Dade College (FL) and Indian River State College (FL), 2019; Lake Area Technical College (SD), 2017; Santa Fe College (FL), 2015; Santa Barbara City College (CA) and Walla Walla Community College (WA), 2013; Valencia College (FL), 2011.

For a full list of the top 150 eligible institutions and to read more on the selection process, visit www.highered.aspeninstitute.org/aspen-prize.

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About Southwest Texas Junior College

Founded almost 70 years ago, Southwest Texas Junior College is a comprehensive, public college serving eleven counties in Southwest Texas. The College provides accessible, affordable, high-quality education that prepares students to successfully transfer to senior colleges and universities; enter the job market; pursue their professional and personal goals; and contribute to the economic growth of the region. For more information, please visit www.swtjc.edu.