
College Excellence
Program

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April 22, 2011

Dr. Ernie Lara
President
Estrella Mountain Community College
3000 N Dysart Rd
Avondale, AZ 85323

Dear President Lara,

Congratulations on being selected as one of only 120 community colleges nationwide determined eligible to apply for the inaugural \$1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence.

Announced in October 2010 at the White House Community College Summit, the Aspen Prize seeks to galvanize and accelerate efforts to improve community college student outcomes, bolstering effective leaders and enabling institutions to learn more effectively from their peers. With the first \$1 million to be awarded in December 2011, the Prize will reward and shine a spotlight on community colleges that deliver exceptional student results.

An expert panel has identified Estrella Mountain Community College, along with 119 other community colleges, as eligible to apply for the Prize based on institutional performance, improvement, and equity on student retention and completion measures. As you can see from the list of community colleges at www.AspenCCPrize.org, the eligible pool reflects the diversity and richness of community colleges in the United States.

The attached documents will provide you with important information about the Prize and how to apply:

- Aspen Prize Application
- Aspen Prize Data Templates
- Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence Overview

Please take full advantage of this opportunity to be recognized for excellence in student outcomes by submitting an application by June 15, 2011. We recognize that not every community college will be able to complete every element of the application. We ask that you do what you can to reflect the best information you have about student completion, labor market, and learning outcomes.

Upon receiving these materials, please email AspenCCPrize@aspeninstitute.org with the name of a contact person at your institution to whom we can send any follow-up information.

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Based on the applications submitted, a selection committee of community college experts will select 8-to-10 community colleges to progress to the next round of the competition based on exceptional student outcomes and data use in learning, degree completion, and employment and earnings. Aspen will conduct site visits to these finalist institutions between late-August and mid-October 2011, collecting information that will be used by a Prize Jury to select the winner.

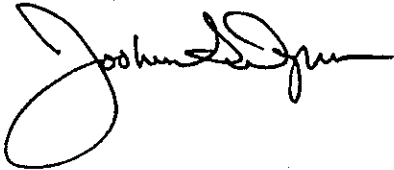
Between 8 and 10 finalists will be selected and broadly publicized in the early fall 2011. The winner will be announced in December 2011.

The Prize Jury will be co-chaired by former Governor of Michigan and President of the Business Roundtable, John Engler, and former Secretary of Education and Senior Partner at Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough and Education Counsel, Richard Riley, and will include prominent leaders from business, labor, media, civil rights, and other sectors of society.

You can learn more about the Prize online at: www.AspenCCPrize.org. If you have questions, please email Rachel Roth, Program Manager of the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program, at AspenCCPrize@aspeninstitute.org.

Thank you for your commitment to student success and community college excellence. We look forward to learning more from your application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joshua S. Wyner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and end.

Joshua S. Wyner
Executive Director
Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence