

## **Eight Maricopa Community Colleges Named Nation's Best**

*Eligible for \$1 Million Prize Recognizing Excellence in Student Success Outcomes*

PHOENIX – The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program today named eight Maricopa Community Colleges among the nation's top 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. The eligible colleges include Chandler-Gilbert, Estrella Mountain, GateWay, Mesa, Paradise Valley, Phoenix, Scottsdale, and South Mountain.

The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program helps advance higher education practices, policies, and leadership that significantly improve student outcomes. The Aspen Prize recognizes institutions with outstanding achievements in four areas: learning; certificate and degree completion; employment and earnings; and high levels of access and success for minority and low-income students.

"We are honored to have so many of our colleges named among the nation's best," said Maricopa County Community College District Chancellor Maria Harper-Marinick. "Our priority is—and always will be—to help students from diverse backgrounds achieve their educational and professional goals for a successful future."

Higher education attainment has never been more important. Estimates from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce suggests that out of the 11.6 million jobs created in the post-recession economy, 11.5 million require at least some college education. The vast majority of students who enroll in community colleges do so because they believe that postsecondary education will provide them a path to rewarding work, stable employment, and family-sustaining wages.

The 150 community colleges named today as eligible to compete for the 2019 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 300 students and as many as 95,000 students, these colleges represent the diversity and depth of the community college sector. This year, there are nearly 60 institutions eligible to compete for the Prize that were not eligible for the 2017 Aspen Prize.

The top ten finalists for the 2019 Aspen Prize will be named in May 2018. 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 Prize Jury will select a grand prize winner, finalist(s) with distinction, and rising star(s) in spring 2019.

For a full list of the top 150 eligible institutions, visit: [www.highered.aspeninstitute.org/aspen-prize](http://www.highered.aspeninstitute.org/aspen-prize)

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### **About Maricopa Community Colleges**

The Maricopa Community College District includes 10 regionally-accredited colleges – Chandler-Gilbert, Estrella Mountain, GateWay, Glendale, Mesa, Paradise Valley, Phoenix, Rio Salado, Scottsdale, and South Mountain, serving more than 200,000 students with two-year degree, certificate, and university transfer programs.