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### **Two South Dakota technical institutes named among top 150 US community colleges**

PIERRE, S.D. – The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program today named Mitchell Technical Institute and Southeast Technical Institute among the nation’s top 150 community colleges eligible to compete for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence and \$1 million in prize funds, as well as the Siemens Technical Scholars Program student scholarships. The schools were selected from a pool of nearly 1,000 public two-year colleges.

The prize is the nation’s signature recognition of high achievement and performance among America’s community colleges and recognizes institutions for exceptional student outcomes in four areas: student learning, certificate and degree completion, employment and earnings, and access and success for minority and low-income students.

MTI President Mark Wilson and Southeast Tech President Robert Griggs issued a joint statement: “The clear mission of our technical institutes is to prepare a skilled workforce for South Dakota. Our state’s technical institute system is committed to continuous improvement. Students can be confident that their education prepares them for in-demand technical careers; business and industry can be assured that graduates are ready to take on the challenges of the modern workplace. National recognition like the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program affirms our efforts are making a difference.”

Both schools will move forward to the next round of the competition for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence by submitting an application to be reviewed through a rigorous evaluation for a spot on the top ten Aspen Prize finalists list. Top ten finalists will be named in May 2018. 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, finalist(s) with distinction and rising star(s) in spring 2019.

Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown was the most recent winner of the Aspen Prize in 2017.

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The 2019 Aspen Prize is funded by the Joyce Foundation and the Siemens Foundation.

The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program aims to advance higher education practices, policies and leadership that significantly improve student outcomes. Through the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the Siemens Technical Scholars Program and other initiatives, the College Excellence Program works to improve colleges’ understanding and capacity to teach and graduate students, especially the

growing population of low-income and minority students on American campuses. For more information, visit <http://highered.aspeninstitute.org/>.

The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, D.C. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. The Institute is based in Washington, D.C.; Aspen, Colo.; and on the Wye River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. It also has offices in New York City and an international network of partners. For more information, visit [www.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.aspeninstitute.org).