



Lessons from the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
COLLEGE EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

Winners and Finalists

Winners

Santa Barbara City College, *Santa Barbara, CA (2013)*
Valencia College, *Orlando, FL (2011)*
Walla Walla Community College, *Walla Walla, WA (2013)*

Finalists w/ Distinction

Kingsborough Community College, *Brooklyn, NY (2013)*
Lake Area Technical Institute, *Watertown, SD (2011, 2013)*
Miami-Dade College, *Miami, FL (2011)*
West Kentucky Community & Technical College, *Paducah, KY (2011)*

Finalists

Brazosport College, *Lake Jackson, TX*
Broward College, *Ft. Lauderdale, FL*
College of the Ouachitas, *Malvern, AR*
El Paso Community College, *El Paso, TX*
Hostos Community College, *Bronx, NY*
Indian River State College, *Fort Pierce, FL*
Kennedy-King College, *Chicago, IL*
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, *Perkinston, MS*
Mott Community College, *Flint, MI*
Northeast Iowa Community College, *Calmar, IA*
Olympic College, *Bremerton, WA*
Renton Technical College, *Renton, WA*
Santa Fe College, *Gainesville, FL*
Southeast Kentucky Community & Technical College, *Cumberland, KY*
Southwest Texas Junior College, *Uvalde, TX*



Four Measures of Community College Excellence

**High absolute
performance**

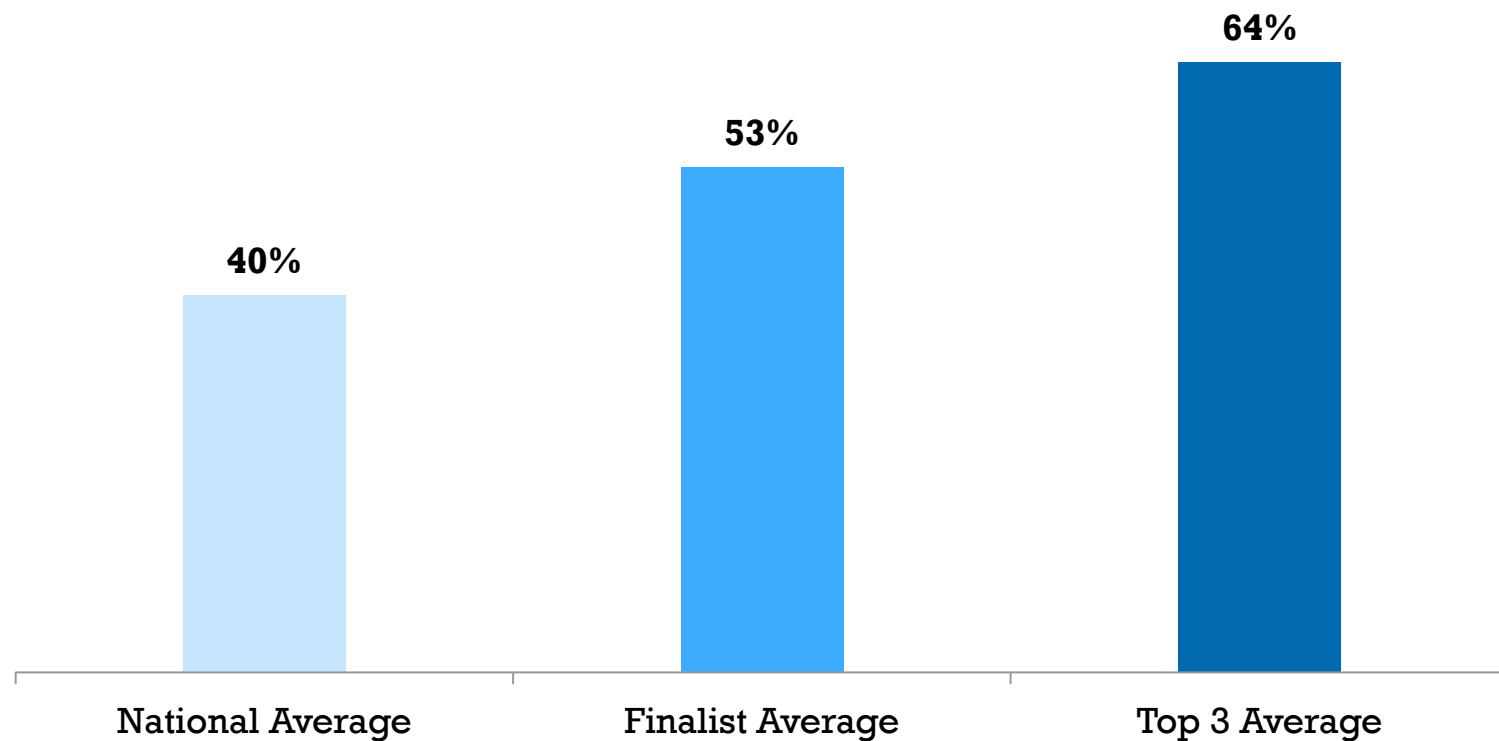
Learning outcomes
Completion outcomes
Labor market outcomes
Equity in outcomes

**Improvement
over time**



Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

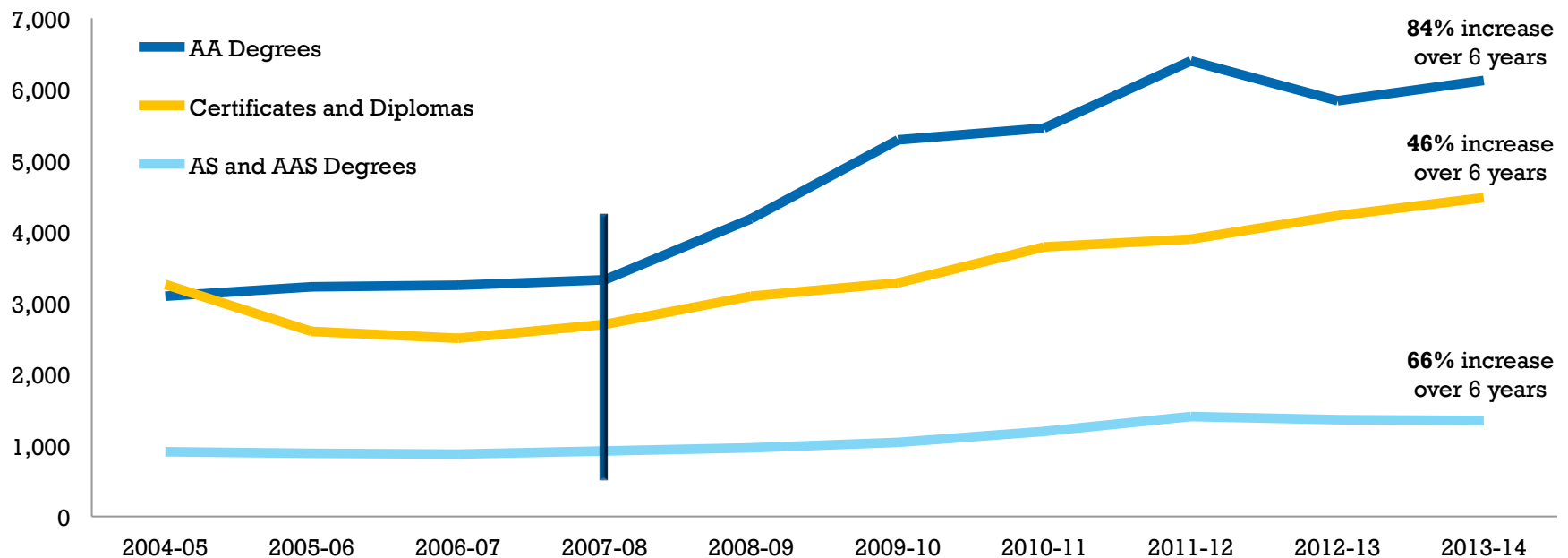
Completion/transfer rates that far surpass the national average



Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

Exceptional improvements over time in completion

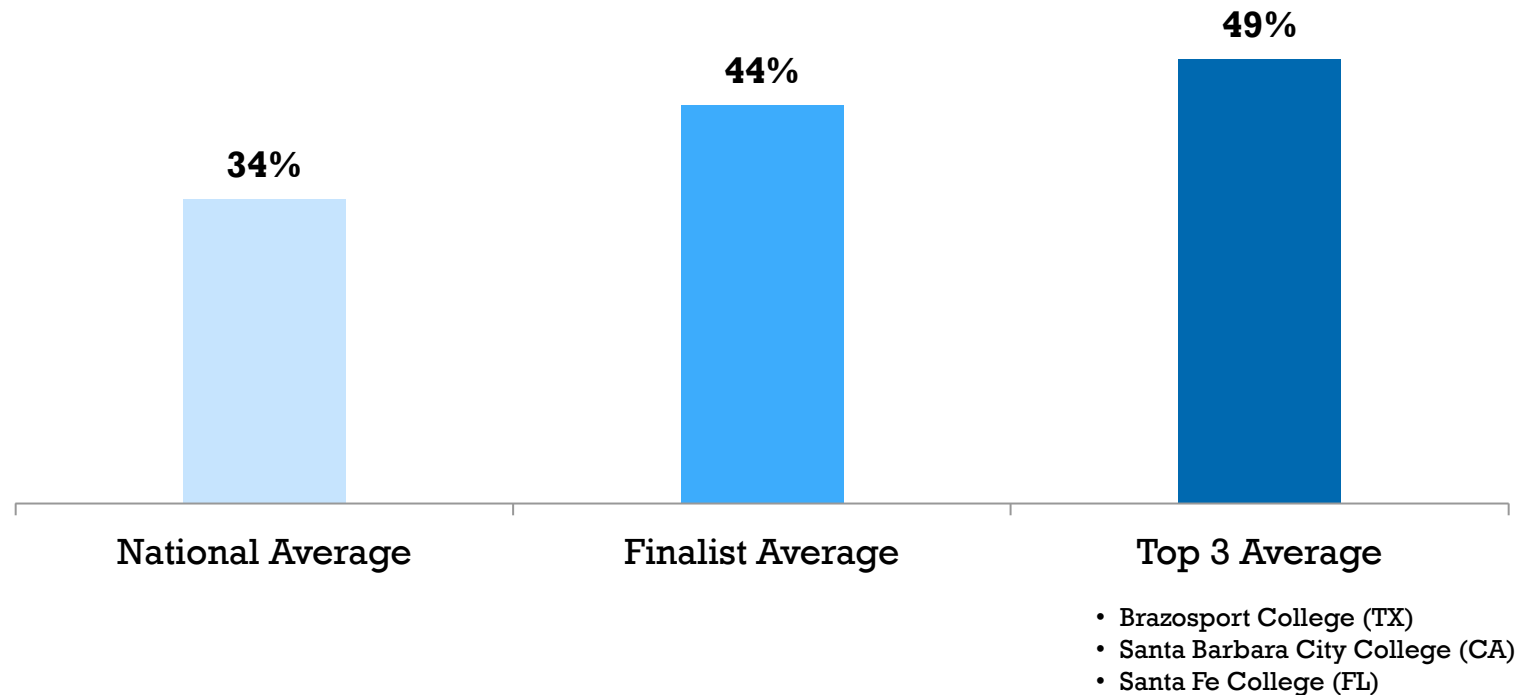
Increase in the number of credentials awarded at Valencia College, 2002-2011
AA, AS/AAS Degrees and Certificates/Diplomas Awarded



Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

Far greater equity in outcomes than the national average

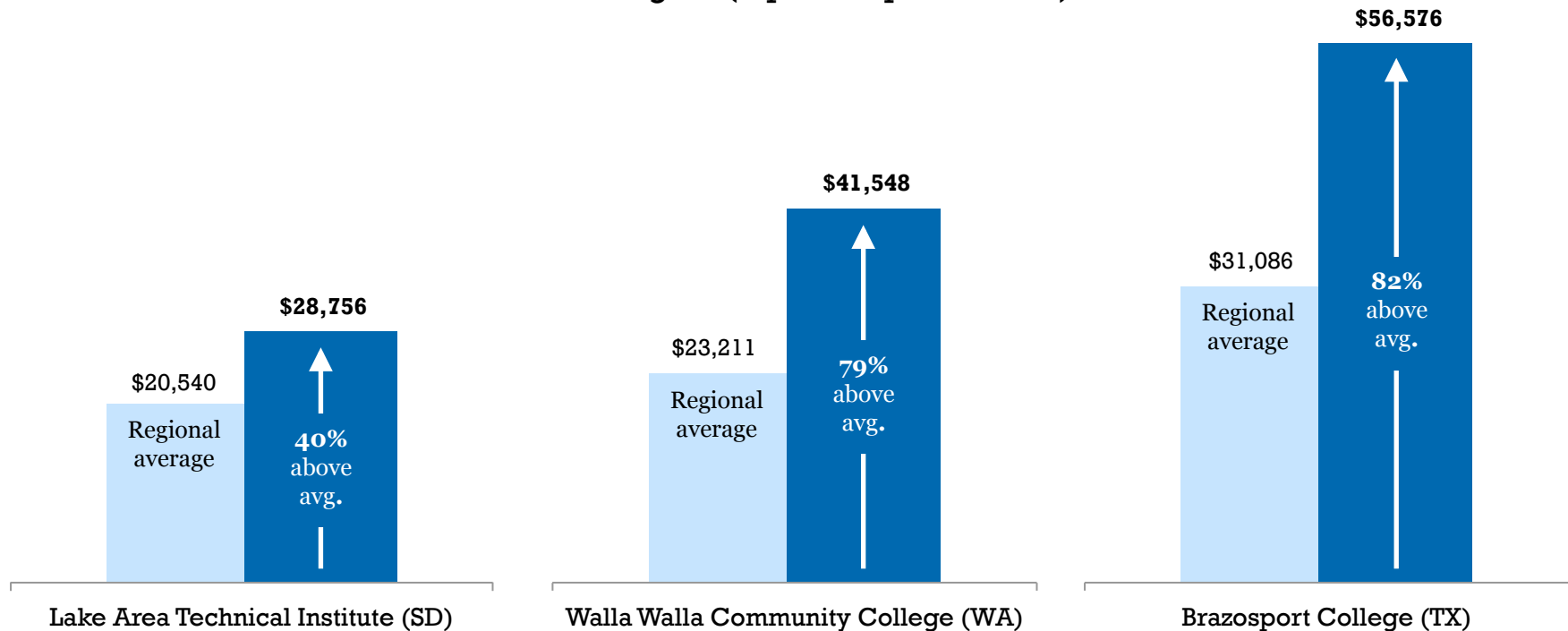
Three-year completion and/or transfer rates for underrepresented minority students compared to the national average



Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

Exceptional short-term labor market outcomes for graduates

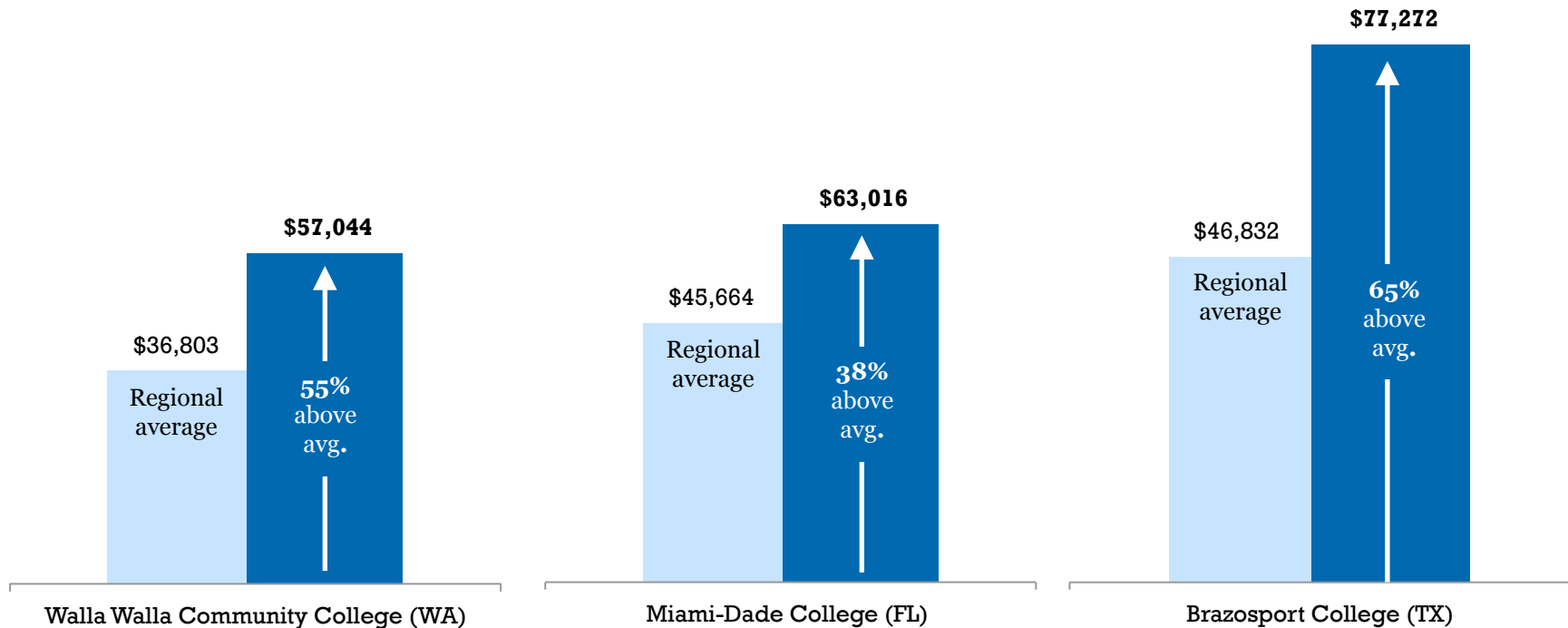
Average salaries of recent graduates compared to the average for all new-hires in the region (top three performers)



Outcomes of Prize Finalist Colleges

Exceptional long-term labor market outcomes

Average salaries of graduates 5 years after graduation compared to the average for all workers in the region (top three performers)



Lessons from the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence



Themes characterizing the institutions that achieve exceptional outcomes for students:

- 1** Strong leadership and vision
- 2** Clear pathways to credentials and other intentional structures to support students
- 3** Intentional focus on improving teaching and learning
- 4** Consistent, systematic, and strategic use of data to improve practice
- 5** Integrated structures that link the college to the broader community for the benefit of students

Theme 1

Strong Leadership and Vision



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Findings: Five Qualities of Exceptional Leaders

1

Deep commitment to student access & success

2

Willingness to take risks

3

Excellent internal change management ability

4

**Strong, broad vision for the college, reflected
in external partnerships**

5

**Skill in fundraising and resource allocation tied to
student success goals**

Theme 2

Clear pathways to
credentials and other
intentional structures to
support students



Exceptional colleges have comprehensive student support systems that cross historic functional or curricular divisions:

Build new pathways to success, including narrowly defined course sequences, fully integrated learning communities, and block program structures.



Exceptional colleges have comprehensive student support systems that cross historic functional or curricular divisions:

Embed high-impact support services within the classroom (e.g., advising, registration, tutoring, note-taking guidance, career counseling).



Exceptional colleges have comprehensive student support systems that cross historic functional or curricular divisions:

Redesign systems from scratch (one-stop student service centers, new registration centers, etc.) and implement them college-wide rather than in small pilots.

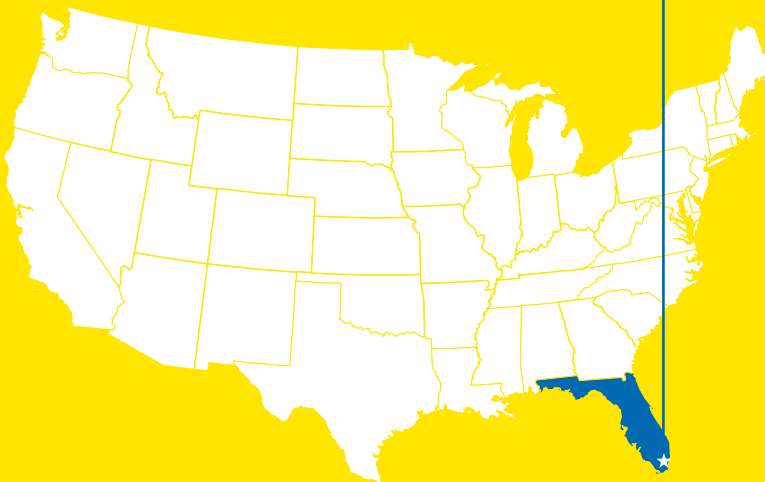


Miami Dade College



Faculty and advisors were engaged to create new simple degree pathways for 60% of incoming students.

Result: New default curricula for five degree pathways that, together, serve 60 percent of all new students.

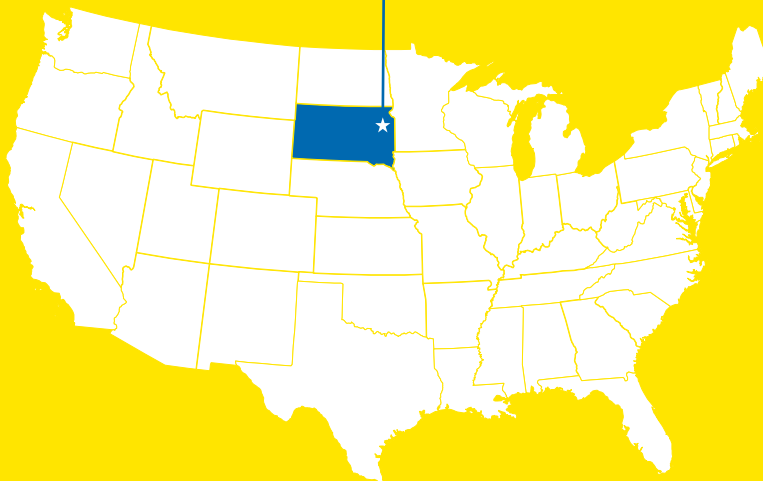


Lake Area Technical Institute



Structured, cohort-based, block-schedule programs ensure students stay on track.

Result: 76 percent graduation rate is among the nation's highest.

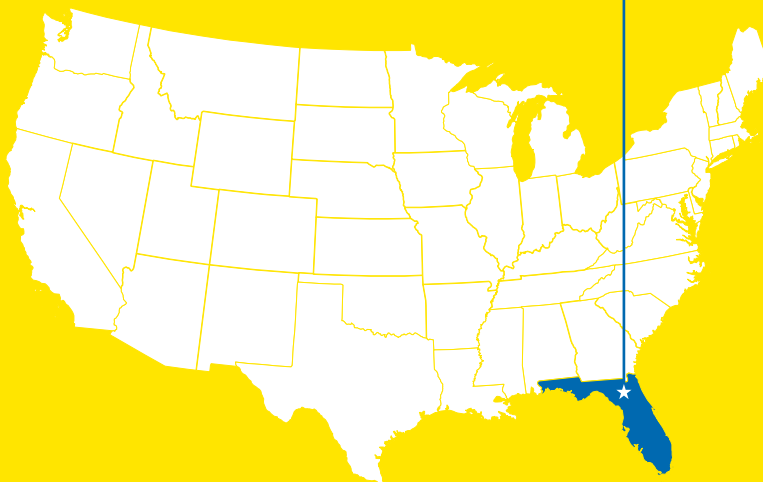


Santa Fe College



“My Academic Plan” online program builds guided course selection pathways for students based on their goals and lives, and creates alerts when students get off-track.

Result: Very high rates of four-year transfer and bachelor’s degree attainment.

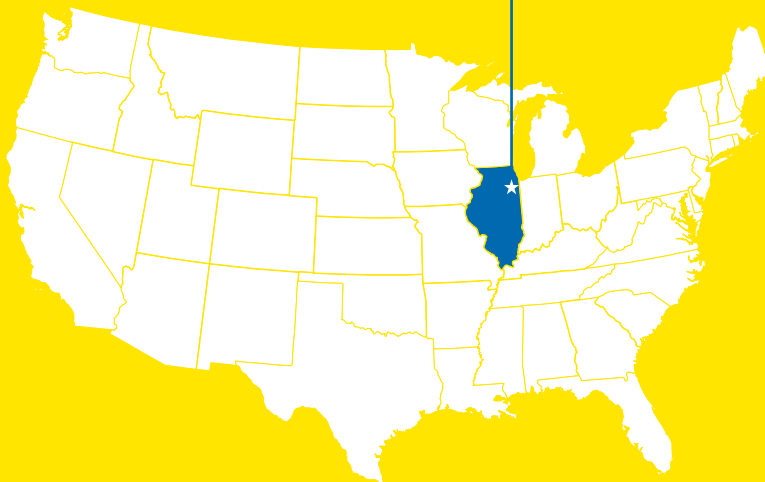


Kennedy-King College



New pathways built for all students (including those in developmental education) and reflected in new college catalogue.

Result: Doubling of graduation rates over five years.



Theme 3

Intentional focus on improving teaching and learning

Exceptional colleges set the expectation that faculty and staff will continually improve their own practices:

Faculty engaged in self-assessment and eager to improve their instruction to better serve students.



Exceptional colleges set the expectation that faculty and staff will continually improve their own practices:

Explicit connections between individual student learning and larger measures of course, program, and institution success.



Exceptional colleges set the expectation that faculty and staff will continually improve their own practices:

**A systematic use of evidence
of students' learning outcomes
to drive improvements
in instruction.**



Exceptional colleges set the expectation that faculty and staff will continually improve their own practices:

**Tenure and promotion models
supported by systematic
collection and discussion of data
on student learning outcomes.**



Valencia College



Culture where faculty consistently invent new approaches to teaching and measure whether they improve student learning—part of the exceptional Teaching and Learning Academy and a new process of tenure and promotion.

Result: Graduation rates nearly double those of peer institutions; strong transfer and bachelor's completion rates.

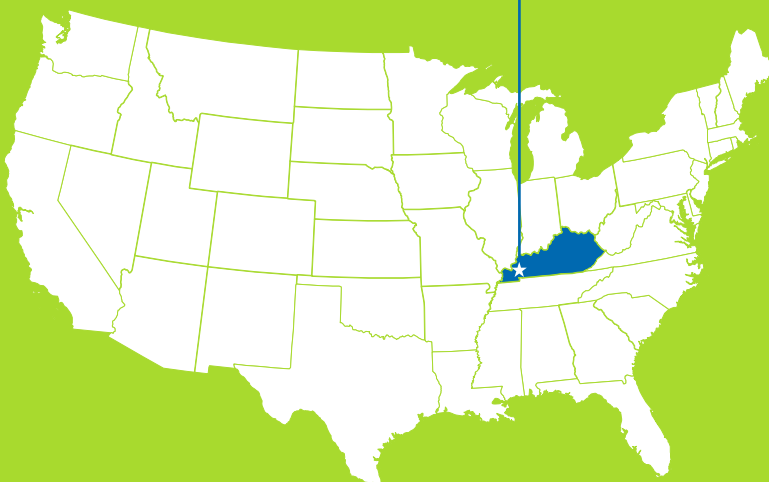


West Kentucky Community and Technical College



Widespread development and use of assessments to improve instruction, driven by leaders engaging in multiple strategies to create urgency around the need to improve student learning.

Result: Strong graduation rates and dramatically improved reading scores.

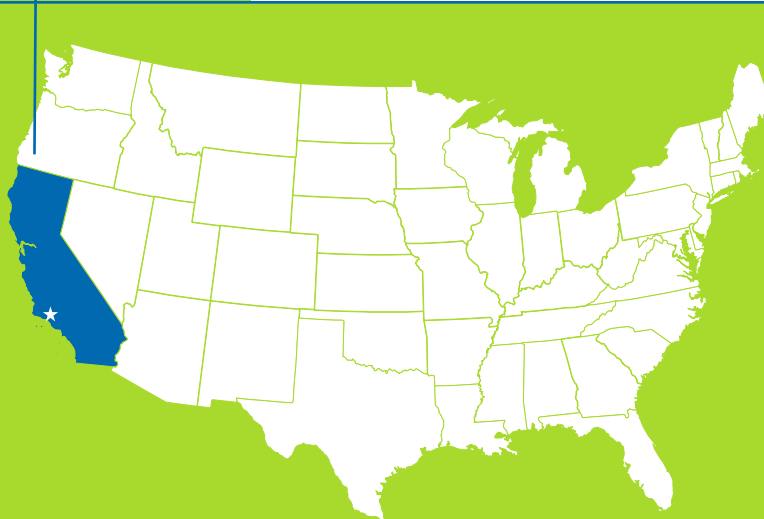


Santa Barbara City College



Driven by a strong, shared focus on transfer preparation and equitable outcomes, the college established strong hiring practices and tutoring centers aimed at delivering the rigorous education students need to succeed at the college and later in bachelor's programs.

Result: Very strong transfer and bachelors' degree attainment rates, including for Hispanic students.

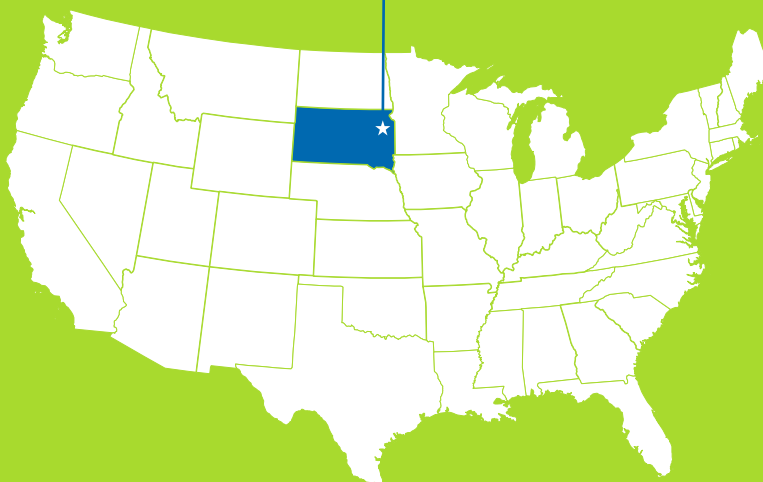


Lake Area Technical Institute



Comprehensive course in teaching pedagogy required for new instructors, driven by the recognition that many instructors come from industry.

Results: Very strong employment and earnings rates, reflecting strong employer satisfaction with graduates' skills.



Theme 4

Consistent, systematic,
and strategic use of data
to improve practice



Exceptional colleges strategically use student data:

**Data are distributed
consistently throughout the
institution that reflect the
focus on student success.**



Exceptional colleges strategically use student data:

Data help everyone understand students' longer-term success—such as labor market outcomes and post-transfer academic success.



Exceptional colleges strategically use student data:

**Faculty and staff are given
structured time and space to
meet, analyze, and discuss data
on student outcomes.**



Valencia College



Data are consistently used to focus everyone on common student success challenges that drive reform plans and to answer questions about which interventions work.

Result: Dramatic improvements in student graduation rates.



Theme 5

Partnerships: Integrated structures for the benefit of students

Exceptional colleges build new structures to link the college to its community:

Build strong ties with regional industries to design curricula for the jobs that exist to anticipate growing industries and help students get good jobs.



Exceptional colleges build new structures to link the college to its community:

Work with K-12 districts
to align academic requirements
and implement early-warning
and college-prep systems
to reduce the need for
remedial education.



Exceptional colleges build new structures to link the college to its community:

**Work with four-year colleges
to develop collaborative
programs, guaranteed transfer,
and aligned academic
requirements for transfer.**



Exceptional colleges build new structures to link the college to its community:

Make the college a vital community asset, building brand recognition and attracting new resources that benefit students.

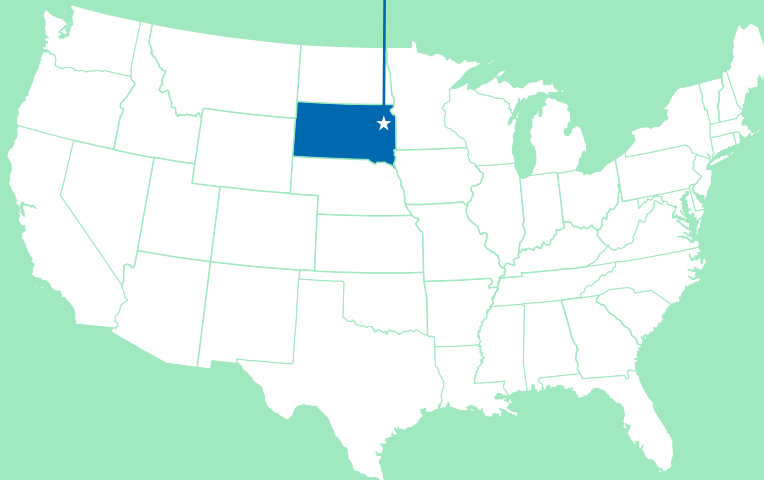


Lake Area Technical Institute



The college brings industry representatives into the classroom to advise students and instructors. The college has also built structural linkages to area businesses, which help develop curriculum, fund programs and scholarships, and help recruit students to the college.

Result: Strong employment and earnings outcomes for graduates; 76 percent graduation rate.

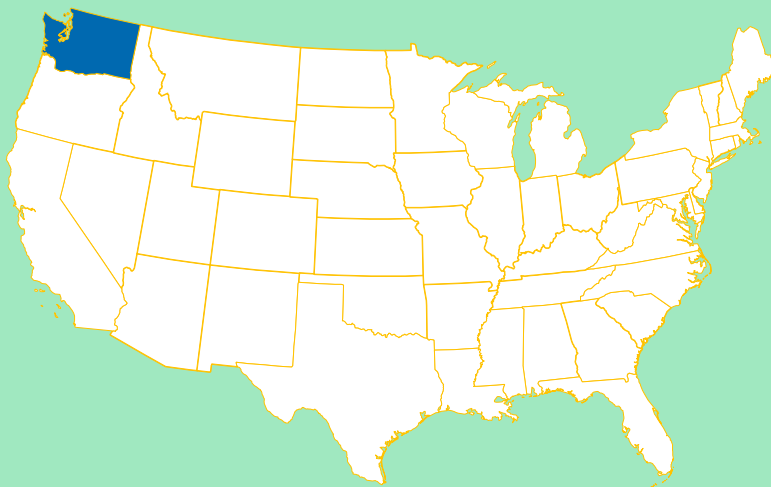


Walla Walla Community College



Walla Walla ties its workforce credentials, general education degrees, and its assets to specific community needs, building programs that ensure that the college effectively serves multiple elements of the community.

Result: Deep community support and ever-expanding opportunity for a diverse student population and the region at large.



Other Common Denominators

- Student success is the college's core business.
- Faculty are engaged in students' success within and beyond the classroom.
- Output measures are used as the paradigm of assessing success.
- Students are not blamed for gaps in success.
- Equity is a core value in every aspect of the college's work.
- The college is perceived not as a destination but as an educational pathway and a community that must thrive and be engaged for students to succeed.
- College leaders share an understanding of the college's best and highest purpose—as well as its weaknesses.



More information:

Prize publications:

- *Lessons from the Aspen Prize*
- *Using Comparative Information to Improve Student Success*
- *What Excellent Community Colleges Do (Harvard Ed Press, 2014)*
- *Building a Faculty Culture of Student Success*
- *Using Labor Market Data to Improve Student Success*

Leadership publications:

- *Crisis & Opportunity: Aligning the Community College Presidency with Student Success*
(executive summary and full report)
- *Hiring Exceptional Community College Presidents: Tools for Hiring Leaders Who Advance Student Access and Success*

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