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**NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE, CURTIS, NAMED AS  
ONE OF TOP 150 2-YEAR COLLEGES IN THE COUNTRY**

**Washington, DC, January 29, 2016** –Highlighting the critical importance of improving student success in America’s community colleges, the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program named the **Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture at Curtis, Neb.**, as one of the nation’s top 150 colleges eligible to compete for the 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence and \$1 million dollars in prize funds, as well as Siemens Technical Scholars Program student scholarships.

The Prize, awarded every two years, is the nation’s signature recognition of high achievement and performance among America’s 2-year 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.

Nearly half of America’s college students attend community college, with more than seven million students – youth and adult learners – working towards certificates and degrees in these institutions across the country.

“Two-year and community colleges have tremendous power to change lives, and their success will increasingly define our nation’s economic strength and the potential for social mobility in our country,” said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. “This competition is designed to spotlight the excellent work being done in the most effective community colleges, those that best help students obtain meaningful, high-quality education and training for competitive-wage jobs after college. We hope it will raise the bar and provide a roadmap to better student outcomes for community colleges nationwide.”

A full list of the selected colleges and details on the selection process are available at [www.aspenprize.org](http://www.aspenprize.org).

**Scholarship Opportunities**

For the first time, the 150 Prize-eligible institutions are also invited to nominate exceptional students enrolled in their best middle-skill STEM programs for scholarships. Up to 50 Siemens Technical Scholars will be selected from programs that provide outstanding preparation for high-demand jobs in manufacturing, energy, health care, and information technology. A partnership

between the Siemens Foundation and the Aspen Institute, the Siemens Technical Scholars Program intends to help our nation's community colleges and their business partners bridge the gap between projected shortages of skilled workers and the millions of high-demand jobs in these STEM industries. Scholarship winners and the programs that deliver rigorous training enabling their success will be announced in fall 2016. For more information and to view video profiles of 2015 Siemens Technical Scholars, go to: <http://as.pn/stscholars>.

The **Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture** and 149 other colleges announced on Jan. 26<sup>th</sup> were selected from a national pool of over 1,000 public 2-year colleges using publicly available data on student outcomes in three areas:

- **Performance** (retention, graduation rates including transfers, and degrees and certificates per 100 full-time equivalent students)
- **Improvement** (awarded for steady improvement in each performance metric over time)
- **Equity** (evidence of strong completion outcomes for minority and low-income students)

The **Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture** has been invited to submit an application to the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence containing detailed data on degree and certificate completion (including progress and transfer rates), labor market outcomes (employment and earnings), and student learning outcomes.

Ten finalists will be named in fall 2016. 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 and a few finalists with distinction in early 2017.

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**The Aspen Prize** is funded by the Joyce Foundation, the Siemens Foundation, and the Kresge Foundation.

**The Aspen 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 New College Leadership Project, 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 [www.aspeninstitute.org/college-excellence](http://www.aspeninstitute.org/college-excellence).

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