

Contact: KC Deane
Program Manager
Aspen College Excellence Program
202.736.5816 | kc.deane@aspeninstitute.org

PROJECT AIMS TO BOOST SUCCESS AT N.C. COMMUNITY COLLEGES

John M. Belk Endowment Partners with Aspen Institute to Enhance Outcomes at Eight Colleges

Washington, DC, September 2, 2015 — To help more North Carolina students obtain high-quality credentials – and get good jobs – the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program will partner with eight N.C. community colleges to advance student success.

With funding from Charlotte-based [John M. Belk Endowment](#), the [Aspen Institute](#) will bring expertise from its rigorous evaluation for the prestigious Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, to help selected N.C. colleges increase student success, including completion rates. The Aspen Institute is a national educational and policy studies organization.

“We’ve chosen North Carolina community colleges that have already demonstrated great promise and capacity for trying new things to help students succeed,” said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. “We’ll work together with these colleges to advance strategies that help students stay the course and earn credentials that confer the high-level skills needed for the jobs of today’s workforce.”

The “North Carolina Roadmap to Excellence project” seeks to improve outcomes in five areas – student learning, certificate and degree completion, transfer and bachelor’s degree completion, employment and earnings, and access and success for minority and low-income students. Community colleges selected are Brunswick, Central Carolina, Cleveland, Coastal Carolina, Davidson County, Guilford Technical, Halifax and Pitt.

“We are investing in the Roadmap to Excellence project because it is an innovative approach to help community colleges continue finding creative ways to boost completion rates and deliver relevant, high-quality education to more students,” said Kristy Teskey, executive director of John M. Belk Endowment.

The private family foundation recently awarded \$370,000 in grant funding to the Roadmap to Excellence project, which aims to illuminate best practices that can be replicated across North Carolina’s community college system, whose 800,000 students make it among the nation’s largest.

The Roadmap to Excellence project will engage experts to review the selected colleges’ plans, interview leaders and conduct intensive site visits to gather data and understand unique circumstances and challenges each college faces. The Institute will deliver to each institution a report with tailored recommendations to increase student success.

To inform their work, the review team will have access to analyses of the progression and outcomes of North Carolina community college students by college. These analyses will be conducted by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Teachers College Columbia University using data that the North Carolina Community College System has shared with the Center for Analysis of Postsecondary Education and Employment, which is housed at and run by CCRC.

To learn more, please visit www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/college-excellence/north-carolina-roadmap-excellence.

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 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/policy-work/college-excellence.

The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. 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, DC; Aspen, Colorado; 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.

John M. Belk Endowment is a private family foundation based in Charlotte, N.C. whose mission is to transform postsecondary education to meet North Carolina's evolving workforce needs. The Endowment supports programs and institutions aligned with this mission, which is based on the vision of its founder, the late John M. Belk. Mr. Belk served as the mayor of Charlotte and CEO of Belk Inc., the nation's largest family-owned and- operated department store company. He created the John M. Belk Endowment in 1995 to fund a national merit scholarship program for his beloved alma mater, Davidson College. For more information, please visit www.jmbendowment.org.

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