

West Valley VIEW

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Friday, April 29, 2011

EMCC ranked in top 10% of U.S. community colleges

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Estrella Mountain Community College in Avondale has been named among the nation's 120 best community colleges.

The Aspen Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit, announced the top colleges earlier this week.

The West Valley campus was one of only two Arizona institutes of higher learning honored by the group. Cochise College in Douglas was the other.

The U.S. has approximately 1,200 community colleges.

EMCC, a Maricopa Community College, made the list by insisting on high standards for learning, college completion without delay and serving as a training ground for jobs that pay competitive wages, officials said.

Citing the need to focus on the value and potential of community colleges, Josh Wyner, executive director of Aspen's College Excellence Program, released the following statement:

"We must set the bar much higher than we have in the past. To achieve excellent student outcomes, we need to highlight our country's success stories and learn from them so that we can keep reaching higher."

Wyner went on to stress the importance of graduating more students through community colleges with knowledge and tools needed to be successful in the workforce.

"Recognizing community colleges like EMCC sends a message to others that aspire to excellence," he said.

Ernie Lara, president of EMCC, said he was honored his campus received the recognition.

"Being included in this group is a positive reflection on our faculty, staff and students," Lara said in a press release. "We have always known that EMCC was about TLC (Teaching, Learning, Caring). The real winners are our students who succeed in their educational endeavors."

Jill Biden, a community college professor and wife of Vice President Joe Biden, joined Arne Duncan, U.S. secretary of education, in announcing the winners Monday at an Aspen Institute event.

The top 120 community colleges are now eligible to compete for \$1 million in prize money from the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program.

Eight to 10 finalists will be announced in September. Aspen Institute will then conduct site visits to each of the finalists' campuses in the fall. A jury will select a grand prize winner and two or three runners-up in December.

To see the entire list of Aspen Institute's top 120 community colleges, visit www.AspenCCPrize.org.

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