

*Las Positas College  
For Immediate Release*

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**Kristina Whalen of Las Positas College Chosen for  
National Presidential Fellowship for Community College Leaders**

*40 Aspiring Community College Presidents Will Participate in  
2020-21 Aspen Rising Presidents Fellowship to Advance Student Success*

(Livermore, CA) - May 4, 2020 - The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program today announced that Kristina Whalen, Vice President of Academic Services at Las Positas college is one of 40 leaders selected for the 2020-21 class of the [Aspen Rising Presidents Fellowship](#), a highly selected leadership program preparing the next generation of community college presidents to transform institutions to achieve higher and more equitable levels of student success.

The [Rising Presidents Fellows](#) will embark on a 10-month fellowship beginning in July 2020. Delivered in collaboration with the Stanford Educational Leadership Initiative, the fellows will be mentored by esteemed current and former community college presidents who have achieved exceptional outcomes for students throughout their careers, and will learn strategies to improve student outcomes in and after college, lead internal change, and create strong external partnerships with K-12 schools, four-year colleges, employers, and other partners.

"Evidence shows that substantial improvements in student success are achieved only when presidents have the commitment and skill needed to lead change within their institutions and through partnerships in the community," said Josh Wyner, executive director of the College Excellence Program. "These fellows have been chosen because they embody that commitment and, we believe, will build their skills even further to become transformational presidents."

"During these unprecedented times, the chance to problem-solve and strengthen student opportunity through the Aspen Institute's forward-thinking expertise feels especially fortunate," said Kristina Whalen. "Las Positas has deep and important connections in the Tri-Valley and beyond. I hope to leverage this experience in ways that will amplify the already rich service Las Positas provides to the community."

The Aspen Rising Presidents Fellowship responds to the growing need for a new generation of leaders well-equipped to meet the challenges of the future. Nationally, nearly 80 percent of sitting presidents plan to retire in the next decade. While the traditional pathway to the presidency has excluded women and people of color, the incoming class of Aspen Rising Presidents Fellows is composed of 70 percent women and 61 percent people of color and represents institutions of varying sizes and locations.

Together, the 2020-21 fellows are leaders at colleges that collectively serve more than 500,000 students. As well, 42 Rising Presidents Fellowship alumni have become presidents of community colleges that collectively serve an additional 500,000 students nationwide.

**2020-21 Aspen Rising Presidents Fellows**

**Margaret Annunziata**, Davidson County Community College (NC)  
**Gita Bangera**, Bellevue College (WA)  
**Kaylyn Bondy**, Williston State College (ND)  
**Naima Brown**, Santa Fe College (FL)  
**Monica Brown**, Montgomery College (MD)  
**DeAnna Burt**, South Central College (MN)  
**Monica Castaneda**, Glendale Community College (AZ)  
**Tamara Clunis**, Amarillo College (TX)  
**Mildred Coyne**, Broward College (FL)  
**Renee Craig-Marius**, Reedley College (CA)  
**Mark Curtis-Chávez**, College of DuPage (IL)  
**Chrissy Davis**, Spokane Falls Community College (WA)  
**Tawny Dotson**, Clover Park Technical College (WA)  
**Kurt Ewen**, Houston Community College (TX)  
**Mary Gutierrez**, Diablo Valley College (CA)  
**Susan Guzman-Trevino**, Temple College (TX)  
**Paul Hernandez**, Mount Wachusett Community College (MA)  
**Lloyd Holmes**, Monroe Community College (NY)  
**Jennifer Kent**, Ranger College (TX)  
**Kimberly Lowry**, Lone Star College - Houston North (TX)  
**Ali Mageehon**, Southwestern Oregon Community College (OR)  
**Corey McCray**, Tidewater Community College (VA)  
**Donna McDaniel**, Texarkana College (TX)  
**Brian Merritt**, Central Carolina Community College (NC)  
**Scott Newman**, Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology (OK)  
**Mayra Olivares-Urueta**, Tarrant County College (TX)  
**Tammi Oyadomari-Chun**, University of Hawaii (HI)  
**Julie Penley**, El Paso Community College (TX)  
**Dilcie Perez**, Cerritos College (CA)  
**Nicole Reaves**, Northern Virginia Community College (VA)  
**Star Rivera Lacey**, San Diego Continuing Education (CA)  
**Irene Robles-Lopez**, Pima Community College (AZ)  
**Vince Rodriguez**, Coastline Community College (CA)  
**Kate Smith**, Rio Salado Community College (AZ)  
**Jackie Thomas**, Lone Star College-Tomball (TX)  
**Lena Tran**, San Jose City College (CA)  
**Joel Welch**, Western Piedmont Community College (NC)  
**Kristina Whalen**, Las Positas College (CA)  
**Jermaine Whirl**, Greenville Technical College (SC)  
**Jonathan Woodward**, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (MS)

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The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program aims to advance higher education practices and leadership strategies that significantly improve student outcomes.

Through the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the Aspen Presidential Fellowship for Community College Excellence, 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 students and students of color on American campuses. For more information, visit [highered.aspeninstitute.org](http://highered.aspeninstitute.org) and follow us on Twitter at @AspenHigherEd.

Stanford Educational Leadership Initiative (SELI) strives to help education leaders further develop their ability to transform education systems and drive meaningful change. SELI programs bring together the strengths of Stanford Graduate School of Education and Stanford Graduate School of Business, as well as additional Stanford faculty and resources, to offer multidimensional and immediately impactful professional development programming for practicing leaders in PreK-12, higher education, and policy. By fostering collaboration and building relationships between existing colleagues and among new peers, SELI programs create networks supporting participants' continued learning and organizational improvement. For more information, visit <https://seli.stanford.edu/>.

The Aspen Institute is a global nonprofit organization committed to realizing a free, just, and equitable society. Founded in 1949, the Institute drives change through dialogue, leadership, and action to help solve the most important challenges facing the United States and the world. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the Institute has a campus in Aspen, Colorado, and an international network of partners.

#### **About Las Positas College**

Las Positas College currently enrolls 9,300 students and offers curriculum for students seeking transfer to a four-year college or university, career preparation, or basic skills education. The College provides university transfer classes, retraining classes for those in need of employment or career advancement, a first-time educational opportunity for many adults, enrichment classes for those seeking a broader perspective, and career and technical training for those entering the technical and paraprofessional workforce.