



## Reetika Dhawan of Arizona Western College Selected for the Aspen Institute’s Rising Presidents Fellowship

*With Wave of Experienced Community College Presidents Retiring, New Aspen Fellow  
Commits to Learning the Practices of Transformational Leaders*

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*Yuma, AZ (April 17, 2024)* – The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program (Aspen) announced today that Reetika Dhawan, Entrepreneurial College Chief Executive Officer and Vice President of Workforce & Healthcare Programs at Arizona Western College, is one of 40 leaders selected for the 2024-25 [Aspen Rising Presidents Fellowship](#). Applying lessons from over a dozen years researching exceptional community colleges, the Aspen fellowship aims to select and prepare the next generation of presidents who can lead institutions to higher and more equitable levels of student success.


Many sitting community college presidents plan to retire in the next decade, creating an opportunity for college trustees and system heads to select leaders who have the skills and knowledge to achieve better outcomes for students. Aspen Presidential Fellows represent the next generation of college leadership: this incoming class of Aspen Rising Presidents Fellows is 58 percent women, and 55 percent are people of color. The institutions they represent are also diverse, located in 20 states, from small rural colleges to large urban campuses. The fellows, selected through a competitive process, will work closely with highly accomplished community college presidents and thought leaders over ten months to learn from field-leading research, examine demographic and labor market conditions in their communities, assess student outcomes at their colleges, and advance a clear vision for excellent and equitable outcomes for students while in college and after they graduate.

“With so many community college presidents taking or nearing retirement, Aspen has a heightened sense of urgency to develop new leaders who are committed to systemic change,” said **Josh Wyner**, Executive Director of the College Excellence Program. “Community colleges have a unique opportunity to advance the talent communities need and enable the economic mobility that draws so many students to higher education. I am confident that these fellows can realize that promise—and in turn advance the entire field—by taking the lessons from the highest performing colleges and preparing to bring those lessons to their first presidencies.”

AWC President **Dr. Daniel Corr** added, “I am extraordinarily proud of Reetika for being selected as an Aspen Presidential Fellow. The Aspen Institute simply recognized what we already know at Arizona Western College; Reetika is an extraordinary leader with unlimited potential. I’m certain that Reetika and AWC will both benefit from her participation in the Aspen Presidential Fellows program. I’m equally certain that Reetika’s cohort will learn a great deal from her.”

Rising Presidents Fellows aspire to enter a college presidency within five years of completing the fellowship. As fellows, they join a network of over 350 forward-thinking peers—175 of whom are sitting college presidents—who are applying concrete, grounded, and innovative strategies to meet student success challenges in their colleges.

“I am immensely honored and excited to embark on this enlightening journey as a member of the ninth Aspen



Rising Presidents Fellowship cohort,” said **Reetika Dhawan**. “I extend my heartfelt appreciation to Arizona Western College and Dr. Corr for their steadfast support and belief in my leadership potential. This fellowship represents an invaluable opportunity for growth, collaboration, and innovation, and I am eager to learn.”

The Aspen Rising Presidents Fellowship is made possible by the generous support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Burton Family Foundation, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, the College Futures Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, and JPMorgan Chase.

For bios and photos of all 40 leaders, visit [higher.ed.aspeninstitute.org/meet-the-rising-presidents-fellows](https://higher.ed.aspeninstitute.org/meet-the-rising-presidents-fellows).

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Located in the sunny, southwest corner of the state, [Arizona Western College](#) supports Yuma and La Paz communities by offering over 170 degrees and certificates in a wide range of academic and career and technical programs as well as non-credit courses in professional development, customized training, and personal enrichment areas. With 12 different locations and a service area that spans 10,000 square miles, AWC is also exceptionally unique in that it hosts all three state universities on its main campus for face-to-face classes. These partnerships provide seamless transfer pathways to baccalaureate degrees and beyond in a variety of high-demand programs. AWC is committed to doubling the rate of baccalaureate degrees earned in Yuma and La Paz counties by 2035 and is dedicated to its mission of transforming lives through education and partnerships to create thriving communities.

The **Aspen Institute College Excellence Program** supports colleges and universities in their quest to achieve a higher standard of excellence, delivering credentials that unlock life-changing careers and strengthen our economy, society, and democracy. We know it takes visionary college leaders to achieve this higher standard and we make it our mission to equip them with the knowledge, skills, and research-backed tools to inspire change, shift practice, and advance the capacity of colleges to deliver excellent and equitable student outcomes. For more information, visit [our website](#) and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

The **Aspen Institute** is a global nonprofit organization whose purpose is to ignite human potential to build understanding and create new possibilities for a better world. Founded in 1949, the Institute drives change through dialogue, leadership, and action to help solve society’s greatest challenges. It is headquartered in Washington, DC and has a campus in Aspen, Colorado, as well as an international network of partners. For more information, visit [www.aspeninstitute.org](https://www.aspeninstitute.org).