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By:  Price H.R. No. 1683

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, Amarillo College has been presented with the 2021 Rising Star award from the Aspen Institute; and

WHEREAS, The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program advances higher education practices and policies that significantly improve student learning, completion, and employment after college; the program biennially honors an institution with the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, and 2021 marks the first year that Amarillo College has been named a semifinalist for the prize; the school ultimately placed in the top five finalists and received the Rising Star award in recognition of its rapidly improving student outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Serving some 13,000 students, Amarillo College has received praise for its robust social services division, which helps break down barriers to academic success by offering aid to individuals in need; upon enrollment at the college, students answer questions to assess various risk factors, and those that face the greatest challenges receive regular contact from social workers to ensure that they stay on track to graduate; this program was expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic, with every staff member contributing to the outreach efforts; and

WHEREAS, Among its many other initiatives, the social services division employs three full-time social workers, offers 10 free sessions of mental health counseling, and provides emergency funds that can be accessed within 24 hours; in addition, the college established an affordable day care center; under the able leadership of AC president Russell Lowery-Hart, these efforts have produced outstanding results, and the college's graduation rate increased 18 percentage points over the course of five years; and

WHEREAS, Amarillo College plays a vital role in providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to build productive and fulfilling careers, and its well-deserved designation as one of the nation's premier community colleges is a testament to the dedication and perseverance of its administrators, faculty, and students; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 87th Texas Legislature hereby congratulate Amarillo College on its receipt of a Rising Star award from the Aspen Institute and extend to all those associated with the college sincere best wishes for continued success; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be prepared for the college as an expression of high regard by the Texas House of Representatives.