

LEADERSHIP & CHARACTER IN HIGHER EDUCATION



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Colorado College President Manya Whitaker Selected for Prestigious Aspen-Kern Presidential Leadership Fellowship

Washington, D.C.—July 16, 2026—Manya Whitaker, President of Colorado College since June 2025 and Interim President since July 2024, has been selected as a member of the second cohort of the Washington, D.C.-based Aspen Institute's Aspen-Kern Presidential Leadership Fellowship.

An offering of the Aspen-Kern Program for Leadership and Character in Higher Education, the fellowship is designed to support and enhance the leadership of new college presidents. At a time when leadership in, and the purposes of, higher education are unusually contentious, this program aims to emphasize the nontechnical aspects of undergraduate education, including the ability to think critically; to engage in civil, challenging, and creative dialogue; and to foster individual character that contributes to democratic citizenship and human flourishing.

Building on the Aspen Institute's 75-year history of humanities-based leadership formation, as well as the Kern Family Foundation's longstanding support of programs dedicated to advancing character education and a better society, the Aspen-Kern Program for Leadership and Character in Higher Education is a new resource in a time of great need and opportunity.

The program features a seminar-based fellowship for new presidents of four-year institutions, with workshops on leadership, personalized coaching with distinguished college presidents and other executives, and support for on-campus initiatives. It also provides humanities-informed seminars for individual institutions, practical resources, as well as thought leadership regarding new ways of conceiving and articulating the purposes of higher education. The program's fellowship will complement existing skills-

based support for college presidents within their first three years in office at public and private four-year undergraduate-serving institutions.

About the Aspen Institute

For over 70 years, the Aspen Institute has been the nation's premier gathering place for leaders from around the globe and across many disciplines to engage in deep and inquisitive discussion of the ideas and issues that both shape our lives and challenge our times. Founded in 1949, the Aspen 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 the Kern Family Foundation

The Kern Family Foundation's mission is to empower the rising generation of Americans to build flourishing lives anchored in strong character, inspired by quality education, driven by an entrepreneurial mindset, and guided by the desire to create value for others. They focus on initiatives that have long-term, systemic impact. The Foundation was established in 1998 by Robert D. and Patricia E. Kern, founders of Generac Power Systems.

About Colorado College

Colorado College is a nationally prominent, four-year liberal arts institution in Colorado Springs, Colorado, founded in 1874. Known for its innovative Block Plan, students take one class at a time in intensive 3½-week segments, allowing for deep focus and engagement in and beyond the classroom. With approximately 2,200 undergraduates, the College offers 42 majors, 30 department minors, and 24 thematic minors, as well as a Master of Arts in Teaching. Colorado College holds the Research Colleges and Universities designation from Carnegie and ACE and is consistently recognized as a top Fulbright and Peace Corps producing institution. A leader in sustainability, the College was the first in the Rocky Mountain Region and eighth in the nation to achieve carbon neutrality. For more information, visit www.coloradocollege.edu.

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