



**MESA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
A MARICOPA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Alumni & Friends

FALL 2024



## MCC faculty encourages others to experience a world far beyond their own: Dennis Wilson, Ph.D.

*Dennis Wilson, Ph.D., Mesa Community College Biology faculty, has traveled with MCC Study Abroad students into the wilds of Africa, the piazzas of Italy, and the jungles of Costa Rica, exploring amazing wildlife and breathtaking landscapes along the way.*

Growing up in England, Wilson was mesmerized by the wildlife shows about Africa, but he was also troubled by the famines in Ethiopia and the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa. "As a kid, I didn't think I'd ever get to actually go to Africa," said Wilson. "That fascination obviously slowly grew inside, culminating in a year-long expedition where I drove from South Africa to the UK."

Fast track to 2001. After moving to the U.S., earning a Ph.D. at the University of Oregon, finishing a postdoctoral at Arizona State University, and spending more than a year as a visiting research fellow at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, Wilson began teaching biology courses at MCC.

"In 2009, I went to the Cheetah Conservation Fund to participate and speak at a human-wildlife conflict conference," says Wilson. "It was after that when I decided to put the Namibia Study Abroad program together. I felt others needed to experience and see a world far beyond their own."

Typically, 14 students participate in the four-week summer program, learning about global conservation, biodiversity, and environmental issues, as well as the impact of expanding human populations and climate change.

"I want to take students on an incredible journey outside their comfort zone because that's the learning and growth zone, and that's what they need to experience," Wilson added. "I've designed the program to be as authentic as possible so they can experience and live in Africa, not just visit and observe from within a tourist bubble. The cultural experience at the Himba village is a great example."

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# President's Corner

Dear Alumni,

I am honored to serve as President of Mesa Community College and look forward to getting to know you this academic year. Throughout my career I have experienced the important contributions that engaged alumni offer and the motivation students find in the achievements of our former scholars. The stories of time spent on the paths of achievement at MCC give voice to the transformative legacy of education.

This college has given many Thunderbirds that first, firm educational footing toward an exemplary life. Some of you, the first in your family to attend college or even graduate from high school, were given a foundational opportunity at MCC to reach your dreams. Be assured that the challenges you faced are deeply understood by myself and our three new executive leaders -- Mr. Robert Budach, VP of Administrative Services; Dr. Jeannetta Hollins, VP of Student Affairs; and Dr. Joanne Russell, VP of Academic Affairs. We are all first in our families to attend college.

I am proud to lead MCC as it continues its commitment to support students in overcoming challenges to success. Dedicated staff and an exceptional faculty inspire our scholars to establish careers they might never have dreamed of, which have led to earning life changing scholarships from prestigious organizations such as the Fulbright Foundation, Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, and the Benjamin A. Gilman International Program.

MCC was recently recognized by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge for its nonpartisan democratic engagement efforts. MCC received the ALL IN Silver Seal for its voting rate and the 2022 Arizona Campus Voting Challenge Highest Registration Rate in the Community College category. For the November election, MCC's Southern & Dobson and Red Mountain campuses are official voting sites, serving the community and educating our students in civic engagement and public service. On the ballot this November is Proposition 486, the Arizona Expenditure Limit and Maricopa Community Colleges. This initiative would update a formula established in 1980 regarding Maricopa Community Colleges' finances. You can find details at [maricopa.edu/about/expenditure-limitation](http://maricopa.edu/about/expenditure-limitation) or send questions to [expenditure.limitation@domail.maricopa.edu](mailto:expenditure.limitation@domail.maricopa.edu).

I urge you to volunteer your expertise to our clubs, classrooms, and career festivals. We welcome your participation in the college's 60th Anniversary Celebration with festivities starting in January 2025. I hope to meet you at some of MCC's athletic games, festivals, workshops, and cultural entertainment.

Adelante!

**Richard Daniel, Ph.D.**

President  
Mesa Community College



*At the Fall President's Welcome, left to right, Robert Budach, VP of Administrative Services; Dr. Jeannetta Hollins, VP of Student Affairs; Dr. Joanne Russell, VP of Academic Affairs; and Dr. Richard Daniel, MCC President.*



# MCC HALL OF FAME

Join Mesa Community College (MCC) for the annual Hall of Fame ceremony.

The MCC Hall of Fame honors alumni, community members, and MCC employees whose personal and professional accomplishments and positive contributions to the college and community set them apart.

**Thursday, October 24, 2024**

6 p.m. - Hors d'oeuvres Reception, MCC Art Gallery Patio

7 p.m. - Program, MCC Theatre

Mesa Community College, 1833 W Southern Ave, Mesa, AZ 85202

Free and open to the public. RSVP Required • RSVP at: [mesacc.edu/alumni/hall-fame/2024-hall-fame](https://mesacc.edu/alumni/hall-fame/2024-hall-fame)

## 2024 HALL OF FAME HONOREES

### OUTSTANDING ATHLETE

**Marloshawn Franklin**, first team All-Western States Football League honors at MCC, earned a scholarship to UC Berkeley then went to the NFL Philadelphia Eagles and San Francisco 49ers, the Canadian Football League, and now is in the European League of Football.

### OUTSTANDING COACH

**Danny Sanchez**, twice honored ACCAC Coach of the Year, coached MCC men's and women's soccer with 12 All Americans and a 103-15-5 record coaching the women's team. Top Coach of the Year at several universities, he is now in his 13th year coaching the University of Colorado.

### EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

**Roy Cohen Ph.D.**, instructional expert in Abnormal Psychology, served in prestigious organizations in the Arizona clinical community and in Maricopa Community Colleges leadership roles during his 38-year college faculty career.

**Sandy de Neui**, over her 53-year career, designed a broad program of study to include jazz, tap, ballet, modern dance and choreography, in addition to originating the first dance performance company at MCC while coordinating collaborative physical training for other activities such as cheerleading and gymnastics.

### SERVICE

**Barbara Thelander**, as director of MCC Continuing Education and Community Service, helped New Frontiers for Lifelong Learning (NFLL) grow to be a significant attribute for the college and community. Now retired, she continues to lead as a major driving force for NFLL.

### ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT

**Antoinette Cauley**, an international painter and art activist, draws inspiration from her Phoenix roots to create visual stories aimed to create conversation and change. Her work speaks to the consequences of American slavery and colonialism by highlighting the beauty and resilience of Black American hood culture with a feminist undertone.

**David Hines** devoted his 30-year career to achieving the best as an educator, serving as a track, cross country and football coach. He is a nationally recognized high school athletic director.

**Robin Wilson**, lead vocalist/guitarist for the alternative rock band the Gin Blossoms, earned multiple platinum singles and albums and was inducted into the Long Island Music and Entertainment Hall of Fame.

## Thank you for staying connected with your alma mater!

You may have noticed this edition of the newsletter is a couple pages shy of its typical six pages. This is due to the rise in printing costs.

Please consider joining the 32,000 Thunderbirds who are receiving college news and information via our weekly email newsletter. You'll still receive the spring, summer and fall editions of Alumni & Friends, just in a different format, delivered directly to wherever you access your email. **Subscribe to eNews online at [mesacc.edu/alumni/membership](https://mesacc.edu/alumni/membership) or call 480-461-7943.**

## Everyone is invited! Empty Bowls @ MCC ANNUAL TRADITION FIGHTS FOOD INSECURITY



Bowls created by MCC ceramics students and faculty. Photo credit: Tonissa Saul

Tuesday, Nov. 5  
MCC Red Mountain Campus  
7110 E. McKellips Rd.  
(Saguaro Building)  
Hours: 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

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Wednesday, Nov. 13  
MCC Southern and Dobson Campus  
1833 W. Southern Ave.  
(Kirk Student Center, Navajo Room)  
Hours: 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Learn more at [mesacc.edu/events](https://mesacc.edu/events)



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Alumni & Friends is published by the Office of Institutional Advancement (IA) for the alumni of Mesa Community College.

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MCC student Parker Freeman



Namibia desert elephants



MCC student with Namibian villagers

MCC Biology student Parker Freeman participated in the 2024 summer program and says he gained an appreciation for the opportunities and blessings he has in America. **“Navigating international airports, bargaining with locals, self-navigating, developing relations with peers in my study group, and group discussions all contributed greatly to deepening my self-confidence,”** Freeman said. “I learned a lot about the environment and sustainability efforts I can put forth in my own life.”

On his most recent trip, “We helped build a huge protective stone structure around a water well at a local village,” said Wilson. “This stone structure protects the water source from damage by desert elephants who need water to drink. By protecting the water source from damage, the local people can live without conflict with the desert elephants. It was a super proud moment to finish the structure and engrave ‘MCC’ into the cement. Students actively made a difference to the quality of lives of the local people and were involved at the ground level in conservation biology.” The highlight for Wilson was building the structure and seeing the elusive and vulnerable desert elephants.

MCC Study Abroad programs are open to alumni, students and community members aged 18 and over. The programs, led by faculty experts, range in length from one week to four weeks, May through August. Course topics include marine biology, psychology, art history, religion, and more.

For more information about the Namibia program, contact Wilson at [dwilson@mesacc.edu](mailto:dwilson@mesacc.edu). For information about programs in Costa Rica, Ireland, Mexico, Japan, Africa, England, and France, visit [mesacc.edu/study-abroad](https://mesacc.edu/study-abroad) or email [studyabroad@mesacc.edu](mailto:studyabroad@mesacc.edu).