



**MESA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
A MARICOPA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Alumni & Friends

SUMMER 2024



## Mastering the Art of Self-Discovery: The Story of Douglas Miles Sr.

“You know, thanks to this call, I’m remembering a lot about my time at MCC. It’s probably the most personal I’ve been during an interview,” says Douglas Miles Sr., independent artist, owner of Apache Skateboards, and advocate for artistic expression for communities and people of color.

He attended MCC part-time in the 1980s while working at the then-booming Motorola Semiconductor plant on Broadway and Dobson roads. At the time, it was one of the largest employers in the state. Miles worked in quality assurance, looking for defects in production.

“I worked the second shift from 4 p.m. to midnight,” he says. “I took my daughter to school in the mornings, so I knew I would have enough time to take classes before I started work.” He found MCC both affordable and convenient since he lived nearby. He began by taking classes in guitar and piano, “I was always into music and art, and I wanted to study my passions.”



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“Being at MCC opened my eyes to the vastness of it all – philosophy, sociology, art. I was in the library all the time.”

He became a full-time student years later, pursuing that passion in art via graphic design in addition to social work. The combination of disciplines came naturally to Miles. “As part of the San Carlos Apache Tribe, I had a strong sense of community already instilled in me,” he says, remembering MCC’s commitment to Native students through the then-named American Indian Center and mentorship from founding member, Garrison Tahmahkera. “Native American people in general are very closely connected to their families and their community – you really learn how important those things are. Social work fits into that community-centered thinking, and I was able to apply that to my art and visa versa.”

For Miles, he saw similar traits in other communities while growing up in a diverse Phoenix neighborhood. Styles, music and culture were all influences on his studies.

“I would go to the MCC library and research great artists and great musicians. I really enjoyed learning about the Harlem Renaissance – Hughes, Ellington, Holliday – high art coming from challenged communities,” he says.

An excitement brewed in Miles, one that drove him to learn more. Though as a young artist, he was initially uninterested in some of the foundational concepts of visual art. “I flunked my high school art class,” he admits. “I vividly remember not wanting to draw boxes and paper bags; I wanted to draw people, faces, and more intimate details. But guess what I had to do in my beginning art classes at MCC? Draw a box!”

This experience taught him a very important lesson while at MCC: a good foundation matters. “It took me a little while, but I finally began to appreciate what I thought were the simple things: scale, tone, color value, perspectives. What I learned at MCC are concepts I’m still using now.”

Sometime after his college years, Miles’s son, Doug Jr., was a young boy wanting a skateboard. With Doug Sr. now equipped with a graphic design background, he decided to design a board himself. “I painted a blank board myself,” Miles Sr. says. “It had an Apache warrior figure drawn on it, and once other kids in the neighborhood saw my son’s skateboard, they all wanted one. It took me a while to get them mass-produced, but by the turn of the century, Apache Skateboards was born.” The company’s first major show occurred in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 2004. He now runs the company with Doug Jr.

At any given time, Miles Sr. can be working on three to four different projects. He’s currently designing a blanket for the Urban Indian Center of Salt Lake in Utah. He’s a public muralist who’s had his fine art appear in galleries across the Southwest. His skateboard designs are being sold at popular shops such as Zumiez. He’s designed clothing for Volcom, Etnis, the Phoenix Suns, in addition to other design work for reputable companies such as Verizon, Smartwater, and Red Bull.

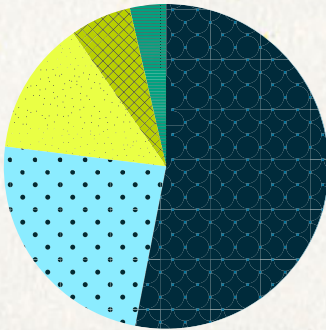
“It’s really neat to slow down and realize how influential those few art courses were on the mastery of my style and technique,” he says. Near the end of this interview, Miles reflects on the fundamental principles of leadership and personal growth: “You really can’t lead anyone until you lead yourself, and that’s where education comes in. I’m proud of my time investing in it at MCC.”

“I think I’ve always been embarrassed talking about my education, because I never graduated high school,” Miles says.

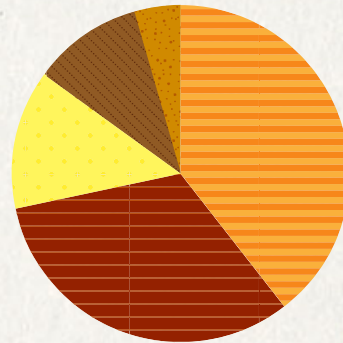
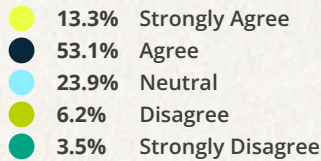
“At MCC, I learned how to become a better student. I was excited about learning and spent hours in the library. They were probably some of the best times I had.”

# 2024 Alumni Engagement Survey Results

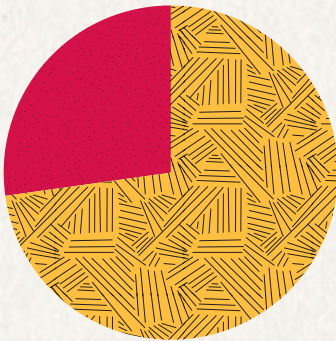
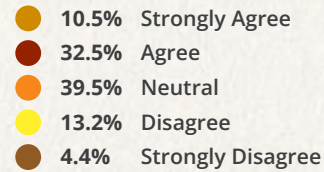
We asked, and you responded! Thank you to all who participated in our Alumni Engagement Survey. Your voice is very important to us as we seek to tell the MCC story in a way that resonates with you, our Thunderbird family. Rest assured, we will continue to provide our readers with high-quality content outlining the successes of Mesa Community College.



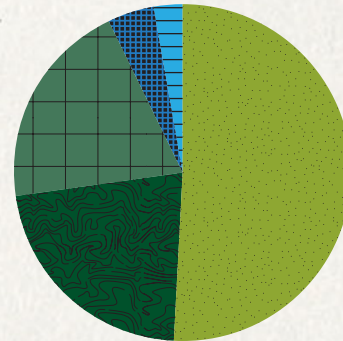
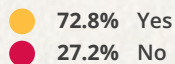
**As an alumni member, I feel a connection to MCC.**



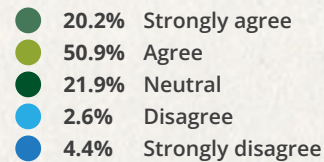
**I feel I am a part of the MCC alumni community.**



**Have you returned to campus for any reason after your time in school?**

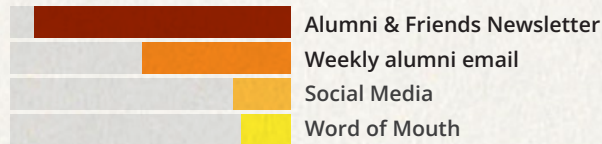


**I am satisfied with the communication I receive from the MCC Alumni Association.**





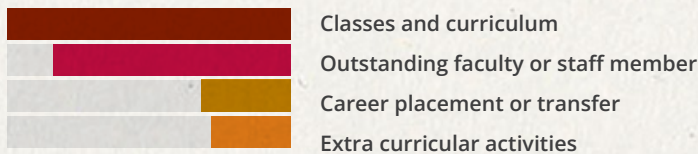
## How do you hear about events at MCC?



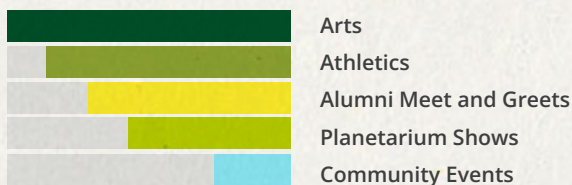
## What types of MCC print or digital content resonate with you?



## What were the most positive aspects of your time at MCC?



## What kind of event would get you back to campus?



Have some additional feedback? Feel free to contact us at [alumni@mesacc.edu](mailto:alumni@mesacc.edu) or by calling 480-461-7960.

# WHAT IS NEW FRONTIERS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING (NFLL)?

New Frontiers is a Mesa Community College non-credit, community education program designed by and for our active senior community.

With over 225 active participants, NFLL members serve as MCC ambassadors to our growing community of active adult learners, providing peer-led classes (in person and online), social events, volunteer opportunities, and physical activities like hiking, biking, and walking groups.

Membership is open to anyone interested in lifelong learning. While the majority of our members reside in the East Valley, we have members from all around the greater Phoenix area. Winter visitors are also welcome. If you live out of state, you are more than welcome to participate in online offerings.

*Membership for a full year, September 1 to August 31, costs \$80.*

*[Learn more at newfrontiers.mesacc.edu](http://newfrontiers.mesacc.edu)*



**NEW FRONTIERS**  
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

*Expand your world*

**A PROGRAM OF MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE**



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# MCC Hall of Fame



## Now Accepting Nominations!

The MCC Alumni Association will host the annual MCC Hall of Fame event this fall. The 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.

Nominations are being accepted through **July 1, 2024**, in the following categories:

- Alumni Achievement
- Community Partner
- Service
- Distinguished MCC Staff
- Excellence in Teaching
- Outstanding MCC Athletes
- Outstanding MCC Coaches

To review the criteria for each award and submit a nomination, visit [mesacc.edu/awards](https://mesacc.edu/awards)



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## Thank You for Being a Thunderbird Hero!

A massive **THANK YOU** goes out to each and every one of you! Your incredible support during MCC's **Be A Student's Hero Day of Giving** was nothing short of amazing. Together, we're making dreams come true for our students as they pursue their educational goals. We are happy to share that we not only exceeded our initial campaign goal for 2024, but increased our giving from 2023 by 11%!

In case you missed it, you can still make your gift today: [mesacc.edu/give-online](https://mesacc.edu/give-online).



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

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