

MCC's first feature film crafted with expert alumni assistance

"Antigone" included in prestigious Phoenix Film Festival

In an exciting and creative response to a pandemic challenge, the MCC Communication, Theatre & Film Arts Department took requirements to wear masks and perform without a live audience, and produced the college's first feature film, "Antigone."

Theatre Program Director Kevin Dressler said, "We knew we were going to be wearing masks and thought - the Greeks wore masks - so this was the perfect pandemic play. One of the most interesting aspects is the serendipity that occurred because we had to do things differently due to the pandemic."

Dressler said ultimately it was a team of academic educators who took pandemic lemons and collaborated to make magic. The play evolved into making a movie that brought together MCC students, faculty, and alumni who are currently professionals in the film and theatre industries.

Dressler said the initial plan was for a Zoom presentation with an audience in fall 2020. But as COVID-19 continued to prohibit audiences, MCC design and production faculty member, Kara Thomson, suggested filming and contacted one of her former students, AJ Young, a 2010 MCC graduate whose LA cinematography career includes being the director of photography for a number of feature films and music videos.

"AJ said it 'sounded awesome' when we asked," said Dressler, "I've directed probably 80 stage productions but never a movie. AJ was able to take the ground plan of our set and turn it into a 3D computerized image that you could walk through."



MCC put the Ancient Greeks together with today's technology for a brilliant pandemic solution. Image by AJ Young.

With the 3D stage, characters were added and, instead of a traditional story board, camera angles were inserted in the script so the 95-minute show was able to be shot in 10, six-and-a-half-hour work days. Typically, it would take three or four weeks with months in post production.

2010 alum, Travis Marsala was tapped as associate director and stepped up to direct parts of the show. Marsala works in Chicago as a screenwriter, director, and is an accomplished puppeteer and cartoonist. Four additional

alumni brought their professional expertise to the film: Sean McBride, Billy Jones, Jason Kleinschmidt and Kristi Quiroz Kleinschmidt.

"Travis directed the Chorus and what I think is the best scene in the play, that between Creon (Antigone's uncle) and his son Haemon (Antigone's fiancée)," said Dressler.

Eleven student actors and nine student designers contributed to the project, gaining new experiences and valuable networking, which now reaches into the movie and entertainment industries.

"This was a great learning experience for our students who usually just learn the craft of stage acting," said Dressler. "Having the opportunity to be involved in an actual film production with a shooting schedule and modifying their skills for film was tremendous."

After online rehearsals, filming commenced in February 2021 on the MCC Southern and Dobson Campus. The film was streamed virtually in six showings in April 2021, featuring two drive-in showings for the premier. The good news is there will be another opportunity to see the film.

As a testament to its entertainment quality, "Antigone" was selected into the prestigious Phoenix Film Festival as a Showcase Feature Film. It is scheduled for showings on 7:45 p.m., Aug. 16 and 9:05 p.m., Aug. 19 at the Harkins Theaters Scottsdale 101. Order tickets and find more details at phoenixfilmfestival.com or call 480-513-3195.

Dear Alumni,

There is such excitement, energy and Thunderbird spirit as we slowly but surely returning to the offices, student services facilities, classrooms and athletic fields on our beloved Mesa Community College campuses.

The Long Awaited Return

Successfully following health and safety guidelines, MCC celebrated the conclusion of the spring 2021 semester with more than 1,500 students earning degrees and certificates. Enjoy the photos from our drive-through graduation celebration included in this newsletter.

While many of our students excelled and will continue to pursue higher education online and virtually, others have expressed a longing for the in-person, one-on-one, small-class format that is the hallmark of the Thunderbird educational experience. For the fall semester, MCC is planning a robust mix of in-person, hybrid, live online and online formats. Virtual student services continue throughout the summer, with in-person services becoming more available in July as we prepare to welcome students back to campus in August. We look forward to integrating business processes developed during COVID into our new, better normal, including offering one-on-one virtual chats and video appointments, which many students say best fit their busy lives.

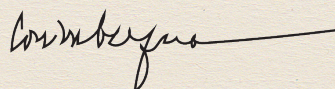
What We've Accomplished

Honoring our achievements in serving our students' needs, here are some highlights of how we've been meeting unprecedented challenges with Thunderbird creativity, determination, compassion and dedication.

- We are so grateful to our **MCC Alumni Board members** who adapted to virtual meetings to continue to select and award student scholarships, brainstorm future events and alumni contributions to students, and plan our fall Hall of Fame celebration.
- An enormous amount of research and formulating fine details were contributed by college staff so that **Mesa College Promise**, the City of Mesa-led partnership with MCC, could begin accepting applications from Mesa residents who were graduating high school this spring.
- Bravo to the **346 students whose 5,300 hour of service-learning projects**, through the MCC Center for Community & Civic Engagement, contributed an economic impact of \$152,189 to our community.
- Putting a global spotlight on the college, **MCC's Cable Harness Wiring Bootcamp** partnership with Boeing is one of six programs in the nation named in New America's **New Models for Career Preparation National Cohort**. New America is a think and action tank.
- We are so honored that **MCC professor Kerry L. Muehlenbeck, Ph.D.**, chair of the Administration of Justice Studies Department, was appointed by Governor Ducey to **lead the Arizona National Guard**.
- We've remained on track pursuing our core values of **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)**. **Nicole Collins**, counseling faculty and co-chair of the DEI Council, has been selected as the first MCC College Diversity Officer. Serving on the President's Cabinet and College Leadership Team, Collins will provide leadership in partnership with the DEI Council on creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive college.
- **Collins and Beth Ann Wright**, program coordinator, Student Life & Leadership, and a DEI Council staff representative, shared some DEI strategies and activities in an article, "**Establishing LGBTQ+ Community at Community Colleges**," in HigherEdJobs, a leading source for academia careers.
- The **MCC Red Mountain Campus Vision Feedback Forum** provided valuable input on ways to create a sustainable vision for the Red Mountain Campus embracing the college and local community, while honoring past work and striving for growth. View the PowerPoint about the Vision Forum at mesacc.edu/red-mountain-feedback.

Our partnership with the City of Mesa flourishes as we strive to achieve the goal of offering residents opportunities to be skilled and prepared for career and economic success in the 21st century. I am pleased to have been appointed by the Mesa City Council to the inaugural Mesa Education and Workforce Development Roundtable, created to coordinate efforts advancing Mesa's education and workforce development goals.

Together We Thrive!



Lori M. Berquam, Ph.D.

Interim President
Mesa Community College





Congratulations

Spring 2021 Graduates



- * 248 RSVPs for the event
- * Each graduate was offered an opportunity to have a photo taken with Thor and our MCC Interim President, Dr. Lori Berquam, and received a swag bag (mask, stickers, and diploma cover)

MCC alumnus Wayne Balmer earned his sixth associate's degree and an additional certificate this spring.





On May 14, 2021, MCC hosted a drive-through graduation to recognize Spring 2021 Graduates. The spring semester was another fantastic success with more than 2,900 degrees and certificates earned by 1,565 students whom we celebrated in a heartwarming and festive celebration on the Southern and Dobson campus.

Please share in the memories at mesacc.edu/graduation.



* Visit mesacc.edu/graduation to view additional photos, video and listen to the inspiring messages from this year's graduation speakers.

* More than 50 faculty and staff attended and cheered on the college's latest alumni

Sports update alumni news



T-Bird sports are back!

Select MCC sports were able to practice and compete earlier this year. The sounds of our fans cheering on our T-Birds were among the welcomed signs of returning to a normal collegiate life on campus.

“It was great for fans and our student athletes when we were able to have spectators at our games this spring,” said John Mulhern, MCC athletic director. “Because of the success we’ve had navigating safety protocols in our athletic program, we are planning to be full steam ahead with all our teams next semester. We’ve just begun signing some great student athletes for fall.”

Find T-Bird news, features and game results at mesabirdsports.com. New this May is the T-Birds Spotlight Podcast, featuring MCC athletes talking about student successes in the classroom, competitions and daily college life. Episode one is Head Coach Kori Stephenson interviewing track and field star, Ellis Collins. Enjoy listening at MesaTbirdSports.com/landing/T-Birds_Spotlight_Podcast.

MCC T-Birds achieved remarkable successes this past semester, especially notable because it was accomplished during the pandemic.

Here are some highlights:

Women’s beach volleyball, new to the MCC team rosters this spring, ended their first official season of competition by winning their final match of against South Mountain, 3-1 achieving a 4-0-1 record for the season.

The **MCC track & field** teams wrapped up their 2021 season on the **final day of the NJCAA Outdoor Championships**. The women’s team finished seventh in the team standings, while the men’s team finished 16th. The women edged out Central Arizona

College by three points to be the highest ranked ACCAC & Region I team in this year’s final standings. Fourteen athletes garnered **All-American** honors, with each of them placing within the top 10 of their respective events. **Mary Siml** won the 3,000-meter steeplechase with **Ellis Collins** taking second. MCC has an incredible total of 886 All-Americans in its track and field history. Siml is our 98th individual national champion.

The **women’s golf** team tied for 9th place at the NJCAA Women’s National Championship, finishing in the top 10 in the nation for the 15th time in the past 20 years. **Alyzzah Vakasioula** tied for fifth place individually and earned first team All-American honors.

The **men’s golf** team finished in third place at the Region I, Division II championship.

The **men’s tennis** team clinched the 2021 ACCA Region 1 title for the seventh consecutive year and placed 12th at the NJCAA National Championship, their tenth straight year finishing in the top 20 in the nation.

T-Birds men’s baseball team finished the regular season with a 25-23 overall record and finished third in the Region I, DII Tournament. Three MCC players earned postseason awards from Region I and ACCAC baseball. Team captain **Josh Leslie** earned a spot on the Region I - DII 1st Team; **Zach Wagner** and **Lucas Danielewicz** on the 2nd Team.

Interested in cheering on your Thunderbird teams? Rosters and schedules are available at MesaTbirdSports.com.

Alyssa Barbagallo (right) dives for the return with backup from Maggie Scranton.



Mesa College Promise: 2-years free at MCC

The first Mesa College Promise eligible high school graduates are receiving funding to attend MCC, for two years at no cost, beginning with the fall 2021 semester.

Mesa College Promise is a commitment from the City of Mesa to its residents that eligible graduating Mesa high school students can attend MCC for two years with Arizona resident tuition and fees fully funded.

The first College Promise Program within the Maricopa County Community College District provides financial support to students with demonstrated financial needs but who have not received enough Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) funds or other scholarships to completely cover the cost of attending MCC. Eligibility includes a 2.0 or better high school GPA and Mesa residency. Full details, criteria and applications are available at mesacc.edu/mesa-promise.

Students will work with an MCC academic advisor to develop a personalized education plan, mapping their courses for the next two years. Less than full-time enrollment or an extension of the program beyond two years may be approved, when it is in the best interest of the student.

“The pandemic is affecting everyone, including the students toiling to complete high school online. I’m pleased we’re able to offer the Mesa College Promise program to some of these extraordinary students – our future Thunderbirds,” said MCC Interim President Lori Berquam, Ph.D. *“Our goal is to be the source of possibilities, whether it is earning credentials to enter the workforce, an associate’s degree or transfer credits to a university. We are opening doors for the next generation of community college learners.”*

Student funding is awarded through the Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation. The Mesa College Promise is a public-private partnership with funding from the City of Mesa, Mesa businesses and philanthropists, and the federal CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act).



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EXCITING START, EXTRAORDINARY RETURN

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

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Alumni, please keep in touch!

As activities, events and collegiate life are returning to campus, we are refreshing our MCC alumni contact directory. This is not a published list but rather how we reach out to our alumni members with important news, articles and requests for their input and opinions. Please, we would like to hear from you to affirm that our contact information is correct. Also, this is the time to share your ideas for events you'd like to see and contributions you might make such as sharing your professional expertise with classes, mentoring, lending a hand at job fairs and all the many great ways Thunderbirds traditionally give back to their alma mater. Please confirm your email address, post office address, phone number and include your name at tracy.martin@mesacc.edu, so you can receive alerts in the timeliest manner. If you prefer, phone Tracy Martin with your information at 480-461-7943.