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MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE: INNOVATION SPARKS FREE RISE APP

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Member Spotlight

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Students in the [Mesa Community College \(MCC\) Everyone Can Code iOS Apple App Development program \(https://www.league.org/member-spotlight/mesa-community-college-everyone-can-code-project\)](https://www.league.org/member-spotlight/mesa-community-college-everyone-can-code-project) decided that a joint project was a perfect opportunity to put their knowledge to use. The outcome? The Resource Information Services for Everyone (RISE) app.

The development team of faculty and nine students from advanced and introductory classes were assigned roles that highlighted their skills. The team researched the existing app market, developed a plan, and began developing a proof of concept. Initially, the app contained helpful markers for on-campus resources such as registration, advisement, and tutoring to aid students in locating resources to support their academic success. But the team soon discovered that navigating campus was just the start.

According to a report by Wisconsin HOPE Lab (2017), more than a quarter of college students across the U.S. struggle with food insecurity. To address this issue, the student development team felt compelled to help students find resources to meet basic needs; they added the locations of nearby nominally priced food, food pantries, shelters, and health care services.

“We wanted to address many issues on a neighborhood scale,” said Ryan Winkle, an MCC student who serves as the app’s chief product officer and who conceived the idea. “As a group, we decided to narrow it down to food, shelter, and healthcare—the three necessities of daily doings.”

Dave Levy, MCC faculty and lead RISE developer explained, “Although there are a number of nearby resources available to our community, we felt the issue was not having an easy, confidential way for people to locate the assistance they need.”

Furthermore, the team wanted to ensure that all students have access to information about local resources. At this time, the RISE app is available in the Apple app store. Initial access for those without an iOS mobile device is provided via a kiosk in the library corridor at the MCC Southern and Dobson Campus. The team hopes to make an Android version of the app available in the near future.



Though the RISE app was developed for and by MCC students, the tool functions using geolocators, expanding its usefulness for all Maricopa County Community College District students and community college systems and higher education institutions across the country. According to Levy, “The project is scalable and may be used by anyone, anywhere.” RISE also allows organizations and businesses to promote basic needs resources and services to app users with custom marker locations.

From inception to completion, it took the development team about six months and an estimated 600 hours of work to ready RISE for the Apple app store. Students in the Everyone Can Code classes continue providing regular maintenance and performance updates to the app. Feedback and enhancement suggestions are received via email or star rankings as the app does not collect any data from users. The decision not to collect data was made to provide a welcome level of confidentiality for those experiencing food insecurity.

Future updates are planned to provide leads to transportation, veterans' services, disability resources, community services and employment opportunities.

Mesa Community College was the first college, among only six in the U.S., to be selected by Apple to participate in the Everyone Can Code Project (<https://www.league.org/member-spotlight/mesa-community-college-everyone-can-code-project>), offering Swift/Xcode courses for academic credit. In less than two semesters, students can complete all three Everyone Can Code courses, earning a Certificate of Completion in iOS Application Development (<https://www.mesacc.edu/programs/detail/ios-application-development-ccl>). Students can also earn an industry certification in App Development with Swift Certification Level. In its first year (2017-2018), over 75 MCC students took classes in iOS development. In two short years, more than two dozen students earned certificates of completion for successfully completing all three classes.

"Many apps are created to spur community change but most of them don't encourage locals to act locally to affect immediate change for themselves," said Winkle. "The RISE app is a hyper-local, 'hand up' that can be edited for any location. We aim to encourage people to use local resources in actionable ways."

[Click here \(https://www.league.org/member-spotlight/mesa-community-college-everyone-can-code-project\)](https://www.league.org/member-spotlight/mesa-community-college-everyone-can-code-project) to read MCC's initial *Member Spotlight* about the Everyone Can Code Project.

Reference

Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., & Hernandez, A. (2017). *Hungry and homeless in college: Results from a national study of basic needs insecurity in higher education*. Wisconsin HOPE Lab. Retrieved from hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Hungry-and-Homeless-in-College-Report.pdf (<https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Hungry-and-Homeless-in-College-Report.pdf>)

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