**Phoenix Business Journal**

**You can build an app for that: Phoenix-area college expands Apple coding classes**

'It's not just taking a class, it's building a future'

Three Mesa Community College students discuss Apple's Everyone Can Code project in an app development class. From left: Joshua Smith, Itchell Dautt and Joshua Adams.

By Hayley Ringle – Reporter, Phoenix Business Journal

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Dave Levy is a self-taught app developer whose boss encouraged him to take Mesa Community College’s app development courses through a partnership with California tech behemoth Apple Inc.

During the introductory class, Levy ended up helping other students when his work was done and he was subsequently asked to teach three of the classes the following spring.

“I learned a lot in the class and by teaching the class as well,” said Levy, an audiovisual technician for MCC. “Students were more motivated to take this class than any others. With starting salaries of [at least] $70,000, these skills are super valuable.”

Dave Levy is recognized as one of the initial Apple Everyone Can Code graduates with (l-r) Linda Collins, department chair of Mesa Community College's department of business and information systems; Deb LaVergne, MCC program director for computer information systems; and Angeline Surber, MCC program director for multimedia & game technology.

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Mesa Community College was one of six community colleges in the U.S. chosen by Apple last year for its app development curriculum geared towards community college and high school students.

See inside Apple's $2 billion data center in Mesa

Mesa Mayor John Giles, Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, Apple's Vice President of Global Real Estate and Facilities Kristina Raspe and Apple's Mesa Site Operations Manager Damon Smith were a part of the Apple data center opening press conference on Aug. 15, 2018.

While the curriculum is available as a free download from Apple’s iBooks Store, MCC offers an expanded, custom curriculum using Apple’s Everyone Can Code program as a base with three levels of classes that can be finished in less than a year, said Linda Collins, chair of MCC’s business and information systems department.

“We just thought it was really an exciting opportunity,” said Collins, who originally was invited to a local Apple store in April 2017 to learn more about Apple’s educator programs. “It had never been offered before. Now you can get college credit and certificates in iOS app development. We got involved because there are tons of people out there doing app development.”

Apple invested $2 billion in its Arizona Data & Global Command and Data Center in Mesa. The Phoenix Business Journal recently had a tour of the center.

Apple's Arizona Data & Global Command Center in Mesa

Apple officially opened its Arizona Data & Global Command Center in Mesa on Aug. 15 after spending $2 billion to repurpose the 1.3 million square-foot building.

Damon Smith, Apple's site operations manager for the Arizona Data & Global Command Center, moved to Mesa in 2015 to open the center. He has worked for Apple for eight years.

Apple (Nasdaq: AAPL) chose MCC for the partnership because of its nearby presence and the school’s strong academic reputation serving a wide variety of students, said an Apple spokesman.

Apple’s app development with Swift is an extension of Apple’s K-12 Everyone Can Code curriculum, which offers anyone the ability to learn, write and teach coding. Swift, Apple’s programming language, has been used to create popular apps such as Airbnb, Venmo and Yelp, according to Apple.

MCC debuted its app development courses in August 2017, and all four introductory classes quickly filled up. The eight-week courses also include a second level and a third level class before students can earn the micro certificates in iOS app development. Sixteen graduates completed the courses in May, Collins said.

Linda Collins is the chair of Mesa Community College's business and information systems department.

Enlarge

Linda Collins is the chair of Mesa Community College's business and information systems department.

“We’ve had a wide variety of students from 17 to people in their 60s taking the classes,” she said. “The commonality is they wanted to learn how to code. We just found a lot of interest and excitement. It’s not just taking a class, it’s building a future.”

School began this week and spots are still available for students wanting to take the intro classes, available online and in person. Another set of classes will start in September and October. MCC charges $85 a credit for in-state tuition, with a $15 registration fee, she added.

MCC is offering nine classes this semester among the three levels available, ranging from intro to advanced.

“It’s been a neat opportunity,” she said. “Apple wanted people who are highly skilled in app development. Data shows us that software and app developers have at least 10,000 job openings with up to $90,000 annual starting pay.”

Other Maricopa County Community Colleges also are using the curriculum to offer classes at their campuses, including South Mountain, Rio Salado and Scottsdale community colleges.

The Apple coding classes also spurred the opening of MCC’s IT Institute at its downtown Mesa center. Evening classes will be offered on blockchain, data analytics and smartphone repair, with more planned to be added depending on local business needs, Collins said.

“The impetus is to get people engaged and give them employable skills,” she said. “We’re doing disruptive education where they can get new skills in less than a year. We want to make this a place to go and connect to other businesses and industries. Certificates are available on these topics so employers know they have those skills.”