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Alumni & Friends

SUMMER 2023



Tim Werner: Bringing Biomechanics to Mesa, Hollywood, and Across the Globe

Athlete. Teaching Credentials in Physical Education and Adapted Physical Education. Professor. Coach. Inventor. Entrepreneur. Stuntman. Actor. Tim Werner's experiences are varied and expansive.

Tim, a Thunderbird from the Class of 1976, grew up in Woodland Hills, California. He attended Notre Dame High School and became a California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Champion in the pole vault in 1974. When his father retired to Arizona, Tim learned the value of hard work on a farm in Gilbert.

"The act of physical labor helped me eventually hone my craft for track and field," Werner says.

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“Earning graduate credentials in kinesiology and biomechanics, Werner went on to apply his knowledge to teaching in the classroom, and coaching on the field. His passion for athletics culminated in being awarded two patents for a pole vault training device called the Swing-Up Rack. It is designed to build strength, fitness, and technique for athletes, keeping the core and shoulders engaged for the full range of motion required for a successful pole vault.”

Tim went on to attend classes at MCC and joined the track team, training under legendary coaches such as MCC Hall of Famers Selmer Olsen and Carvell Jackson. Werner worked alongside teammate Wes Herbst, who was 3rd in national point scoring in the decathlon in 1976.

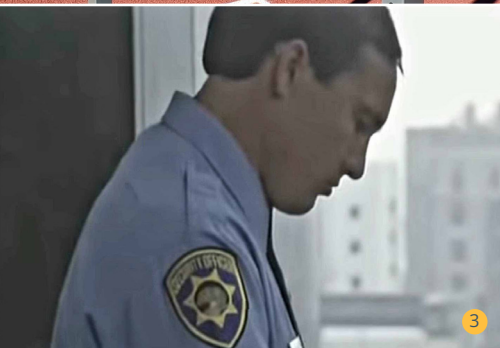
“I still keep in touch with Wes. His son is actually my attorney!” Tim says.

A wealth of experience at MCC prepared Tim for a wide-ranging career, which included a longtime stint as a film industry stuntman in Hollywood. Beginning in the 1980s, he is credited for 43 roles according to Internet Movie Database (IMDb). Some notables? The X-Files, Con Air, Heat, and working alongside Hollywood greats such as Robert De Niro, David Carradine, Bruce Willis, Sylvester Stallone, and Arnold Schwarzenegger. “I was really good at saying one word, and then dying,” Tim laughs.

Earning graduate credentials in kinesiology and biomechanics, Werner went on to apply his knowledge to teaching in the classroom, and coaching on the field. His passion for athletics culminated in being awarded two patents for a pole vault training device called the Swing-Up Rack. It is designed to build strength, fitness, and technique for athletes, keeping the core and shoulders engaged for the full range of motion required for a successful pole vault.

The device is now used by athletes around the world, which include: a current world record holder, a world champion, a gold medalist, an NCAA Champion, and numerous pole vaulters worldwide.

Werner’s time at MCC was invaluable to his professional journey. “It was a great experience at MCC, which prepared me for a diverse life,” Werner says. “The coaches were great, and the athletes were of every race and creed from everywhere—all around the country. I took a film class there. A particular physics class inspired me to study biomechanics. I made lifelong friends.”



1 Tim Werner as an MCC student

2 Swing-Up Rack

3 Tim Werner in Heat, 1995 (Warner Bros.)

Letter From Our President

Dear Alumni and Community Colleagues,

The 2023 Mesa Community College Commencement celebration was a joyous benchmark to my first exciting and productive year as president. More than 2,000 students earned Certificates of Completion and Associate's Degrees during the 2022-2023 academic year. The graduation ceremony on Saturday, May 13, 2023, brought together students, families, and friends to celebrate accomplishments that will be life changing. Graduation is always a rewarding and treasured experience for the faculty and staff who have taught, nurtured, and supported students through the work leading to their successes. Ms. Elizabeth Ward-Harris along with members of the MCC Alumni Association Advisory Board welcomed our graduates into the association, reminding them, "Once a Thunderbird, always a Thunderbird."

In March, MCC revitalized the President's Advisory Council. I had the pleasure of beginning to work with distinguished members of our community that included elected officials, Mesa Public Schools leaders, donor partners, and other community members who share a commitment to the success of Mesa Community College. The Advisory Council contributes insights and participates in shaping future initiatives and strengthening the connections between MCC and the community we serve.

A February 13th visit to MCC by First Lady of the United States Dr. Jill Biden and U.S. Secretary of Education Dr. Miguel Cardona brought the Mesa College Promise Program into the national spotlight. This partnership between MCC and City of Mesa, along with numerous corporate and private donors, provides funding and resources to students in the program. In March, the First Lady spoke at the National League of Cities Congressional City Conference again mentioning MCC's students "getting great jobs in their area with companies like Intel."

MCC continues to reach venues and areas where community colleges are not typically found. MCC was part of the 3rd National HBCU Blockchain and FinTech Conference, which connects university leaders, faculty, and students to shape the future of Financial Technology

education and research. Also, I took a team to The Conference Board's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion session. This global platform allows attendees to share their work and discuss topics such as race, social justice, neurodiversity, women's health, and disability.

Mesa Community College alumni continue to bring pride and acclaim to their alma mater. For example, Sacramento Kings head coach and former MCC student athlete Mike Brown was named the 2022-23 NBA Coach of the Year. Brown was inducted into the Mesa Community College Hall of Fame in fall 2022. However, it was in the middle of the NBA season and he was unable to attend the Hall of Fame ceremony. MCC staff presented his award in Phoenix just before the first Kings game with the Suns. Find details of the presentation at mesacc.edu/alumni-hof-brown and video at youtube.com/watch?v=kpV--ecRpMA

Excitement for Fall 2023 at MCC is already building as students are registering for classes, including the historic offering of bachelor's degrees. I wish you, and your families, good health and fun over these coming summer months.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tammy Robinson".

Tammy Robinson, Ed.D.
President
Mesa Community College

“Mesa Community College alumni continue to bring pride and acclaim to their alma mater.”

MCC Legacy Brings Together a Family of Thunderbirds



“

My parents have always encouraged all of us to pursue our education.

Kaitlyn Yazzie's parents both attended MCC in the early 2000s. Her mother, April, went on to design and create Native American skirts; her father, Andrew, went on to work for Pepsi before becoming a chef in Scottsdale.

“My parents have always encouraged all of us to pursue our education,” Kaitlyn says. By “us” she is referring to herself and her siblings, of which there are six in total. Kaitlyn is the oldest.

Following in the footsteps taken by April—who learned how to design clothes thanks to her sister (Kaitlyn's aunt)—Kaitlyn is now studying fashion design at MCC. “Ever since I was little, my mom would make my traditional Native outfits,” Kaitlyn recalls.

Both April and Andrew are originally from Farmington, New Mexico, situated in the Navajo nation near the Four Corners region of the United States. April and Andrew met through church in Farmington. After they were married, they moved to Arizona, and April attended MCC knowing that her sister was already a student. Andrew also enrolled.

“My mom was pregnant with me when she was a student here, so I've been a part of campus pretty much my whole life,” Kaitlyn says.

She notes how supportive her parents are in pursuing an education that will lead to a prosperous career, as well as an insight into self-discovery. Back in high school at Mountain View in Mesa, Kaitlyn was part of the HOOP of Learning Program, which is designed to increase Native American participation and matriculation rates in college while empowering Indigenous students to reach their goals. She graduated high school with HOOP and college coursework to her name, and even took a summer pre-requisite class before she started the Fashion Design program at MCC.

“This first year, I've been collecting some basic info about fashion design, such as illustration,” Kaitlyn says. “I was well prepared for college, and I'm excited to start taking my electives.”

She also adds how supportive the faculty have been at MCC during her first year. “My professors have been great. I've been encouraged to expand my knowledge and think ‘outside of the box.’ I'm also able to work and spend time with my friends and family, so the flexible schedule is really helpful.”

Kaitlyn has a clear goal for where she hopes her future will go, along with how she can be an example for others. “I want to have my own business, or make luxury designs with a Native influence,” she says. “Especially because I'm Native, I want to show other Native students that it's possible to get an education and make a name for yourself. With all these programs that are able to help you, it's possible.”

The legacy set forth by her parents almost two decades ago upholds what MCC has meant for Kaitlyn's entire family. “All of my mom's 4 siblings have been at MCC. My uncle's wife went here. My younger sister is now taking classes through HOOP herself.”

HOOP is Indigenous by design and based on a traditional Native American worldview of a circle—a hoop—of lifelong development. Fitting for a story about one family's circle of life, from womb to classroom. “MCC is very close to where we're growing up,” Kaitlyn says. “We're going to stay here for a while, and I hope to encourage my siblings to follow their dreams as well.”



- 1 (Left to Right) Andrew Yazzie, Kaitlyn Yazzie, April Yazzie
- 2 Kaitlyn Yazzie wears a skirt her mother made



iBelong: Intersection of Education and Technology

When other colleges nationwide (and Apple themselves) are asking, “how were you able to do that?,” you must be doing something right.

MCC is one of the only higher education institutions that has established a system to manage 10,000 iPad devices through the iBelong Initiative. The program model, which distributed more than 2,000 iPads to students this past fall semester, is being nationally recognized and adopted by other institutions.

How did MCC do it?

Patricia Herrera joined MCC in 2021 in the Center for Teaching & Learning as an instructional technologist. One of her first projects was increasing access to technology by distributing mobile devices to MCC students in response to the pandemic. The transition to remote learning highlighted a large equity gap, something MCC Information Technology was tasked to address.

“After attempts to deploy several types of devices to students in the early stages of going fully remote, we decided to go with iPads—200 to begin with,” says Interim Chief Information Officer Alvin Bridges. Bridges notes the sheer practicality of using the iPads that were lying dormant in instructional classroom carts. From the reduction in device reset time, to enhanced security and remote management capabilities, to simple user-friendliness, rolling out iPads was streamlined.

When Herrera arrived and device usage expanded to about 500, she was ready to help grow the program further.

“We realized this was becoming a movement at MCC,” Herrera says, “and connected with administration to get a college-wide initiative going.” She worked on a proposal to procure 5,000 iPads. With other programs writing their own proposals, a total of 7,500 iPads were procured for use at MCC.

The team had to demonstrate cost-savings, instruct users on how to operate the devices, and create infrastructure to account for that many units. Thus, the “iPad Room” was created at the Southern and Dobson Library, which is a storeroom equipped with a cataloging system and physical storage, a remote control hub, and iPad provisioning carts that can completely reset dozens of devices for new usage at once—roughly 6 minutes per device.

“The expansion was largely faculty driven,” says Bridges. “We started with only a few; we now have over 100 who have joined in the last year and a half. About 235 class sections have iPads. We’re creating a community of practice.”

Data

Early data shows that 87% of participants found the iPad to be “extremely beneficial” to their academic success. Student testimonials highlight the importance of having access to this type of technology, and how simple it was to integrate into their schoolwork. Over half were first generation college students, and more than 70% of all participants surveyed were female.

Recognition

MCC presented a session, “Using iPads to Create a New Reality for Teaching and Learning” at the American Association of Community Colleges Annual Meeting in 2023. MCC received the District-wide 2023 Diversity Advisory Council Award of Excellence for “reaching students in the mobile era while closing the digital divide.” Apple has invited MCC to showcase the iPad’s capabilities on their roadshow presentations, for which we have produced a webinar.

“Our next goal is to connect the iPad distribution on a program level. We want students to be able to purchase the device at the beginning of the program, and get to use it throughout,” says Herrera.

Impact

The combined efforts of the MCC Library, College Technology Services, Center for Teaching & Learning, and the Thunderbird Tech Studio underscore how student success is truly enriched by collaboration.

“We’re changing the way people learn,” says Bridges. “I’m so proud to hear that this program is enhancing their learning experience.”

“We’re transforming lives. Students understand they’re able to attend and stay in school with access to technology,” says Herrera.



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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 3, 2023, 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.

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