



MESA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
A MARICOPA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Alumni & Friends

SPRING 2024



## Finding Identity in Verse: Marcus Campbell's Voice is Heard Through Creative Writing

Marcus Campbell learned to mine his experiences during the pandemic in 2020, along with the country's ongoing social and racial unrest, for his first published book of poetry as a Mesa Community College (MCC) Creative Writing student.

His fall 2022 book tour for *My Identity as a Stereotypical Side Character* concluded with The Identity Tour Showcase at Mesa's Nile Coffee Shop following the Mesa Book Festival on December 17, 2023.

The book came to fruition while studying in the MCC Creative Writing Program. "The cornerstone pieces of the text were written during my time in the program with much of the supplemental material coming about during the COVID lockdown," Marcus explained. "A lot of the social and racial unrest provided me with the motivation necessary to complete the book."



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“ Marcus credits MCC for “helping me reach my career goals in almost every conceivable way. Foremost, they’ve helped me to realize my potential and make concrete steps toward fulfilling it.”

Earning an Associate in Arts, an Associate in General Studies, and an Academic Certificate in Creative Writing in 2019, Marcus found that year to be a benchmark for his poetry in addition to his education. That year he received a second-place Vortex Award, a creative writing and arts publication produced in collaboration with Scottsdale Community College. Moreover, he was honored with a second place award for the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) Artists of Promise Exhibition for his poem, “My Identity as a Stereotypical Side Character.” The poem appeared in *Passages*, a collection of works by MCCCD creative writing program poets, fiction and non-fiction writers, screenwriters, and playwrights.

“MCC was an alluring place to study because of its accessibility—to teachers, administrators, and advisors,” he explained. “It offered diverse opportunities and an engaged administration.”

He credits Creative Writing Faculty Member Josh Rathkamp and Journalism and New Media Studies Program Director Nadine Arroyo Rodriguez with significantly impacting his education. “Mr. Rathkamp and the Creative Writing Program were fundamental in getting my writing to a publishable state. He also showed me in concrete steps how to take my ideas and turn them into published work.”

Marcus added, “Professor Rodriguez opened my eyes to what my creativity could do for me professionally. She was the first person to present artistic skills as professional tools, which helped me see myself not only as a creative but as an artistic entrepreneur.”

Taking advantage of the social opportunities MCC has to offer, Marcus became the features editor of the *Mesa Legend*, the college newspaper, established the *Mesa Legend Podcast*, and performed his poetry at the annual MCC Festival of the Arts. He also was a proofreader for the Glendale Community College publication, *The Traveler*.

As his education progressed, Marcus became involved with the Green Flag Program, a partnership between the Mesa Chamber of Commerce and MCC, providing students with office space, business tools, and the resources needed to launch a new business venture in today’s competitive environment. “It has been a great way to gain access to the means of production.”

Marcus previously worked in the communications department at the Mesa Chamber of Commerce, where he was able to use creative skills in an environment that helped small businesses and nonprofits. He currently works in the marketing department at the Arizona Renaissance Festival. “I can use my creative skills every day in a fast-paced environment while spreading revelry,” he says. Marcus also operates Desert Nights Media, a small business that provides social media management. ■

On-campus activities are a cornerstone of life at MCC. Fellow Thunderbirds and community members truly create a special environment. Here are some highlights from last semester. We invite you to return to MCC's campuses for exciting events this semester!

### President's Advisory Council Meeting

MCC welcomed members for the President's Advisory Council meeting of 2023 in December. Community members and MCC employees united to highlight their shared commitment to the college's success.

The meeting focused on the 2023-24 vision of "Reimagining MCC: Growing, Learning, and Belonging." Renowned international artist and alumna Antoinette Cauley shared her MCC story with the council, and her works were on display in the MCC Art Gallery.

Speakers provided highlights on topics such as allied health programs at the Red Mountain Campus, credit for prior learning, student engagement, and philanthropy. Community members engaged in conversations regarding potential bachelor's degrees offerings for MCC to consider.

### Halloween

After a 4-year hiatus, the MCC Halloween Extravaganza returned to our Red Mountain site, bringing over 1500 community members to the campus. This community tradition has been hosted at Red Mountain since 2011, and allows the community to celebrate the holiday in a fun and safe environment.

This community trick-or-treat welcomed alumni, families, current students, and friends. Over 30 creatively-themed booths were sponsored exclusively by student and college groups, featuring decorations, fun costumes, and various activities.

*The Red Mountain campus is nestled on 98 acres of Sonoran desert in Northeast Mesa, and has been serving students and the community for over 20 years.*

Volunteers from the community truly make events like this possible. We hope to see you there next Halloween!

### Performing Arts

MCC Performing Arts supported 132 events, performances, and staged rehearsals in Fall 2023 in MCC's premiere venues – the Performing Arts Center (PAC) and MCC Theatre. Over 10,000 patrons were served over the course of the semester.

We anticipate to more than double that in the Spring, with the potential to be hosting nearly 300 events, performances, and staged rehearsals. That's anywhere between 20,000 and 25,000 patrons before the month of July!

As our award-winning performances receive regional acclaim from the Region VIII Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, as well as the county-wide recognition from the AriZoni Awards of Excellence, spectators receive incredible value and quality in the performances at MCC.

*Interested in attending? Visit [mesacc.edu/arts](https://mesacc.edu/arts) for information on the upcoming season.*

### Athletics

We thank all spectators who attended Athletics events for the Fall semester. Men's and women's soccer, women's volleyball, and fall baseball and softball each were met with success and excitement for players, coaches, and fans of the sports.

MCC's annual alumni baseball game was held in November, celebrating past players, coaches, and teams. Longtime

Head Baseball Coach Tony Cirelli was awarded a plaque commemorating his induction into the NJCAA Baseball Coaches Hall of Fame.

In the Spring, MCC is very excited about our 16th ranked Women's Basketball Team. In addition, Track and Field returns with 93 student-athletes, a program that broke 17 records last season. For more information on schedules and stories, visit [mesatbirdsports.com](https://mesatbirdsports.com).

*Mark your calendars for March 2, 2024 to attend our alumni homecoming at an MCC basketball game. Let's support T-bird Athletics!*

### Hall of Fame

The 2023 Hall of Fame reception was held in the MCC Theatre on November 2, 2023. Thirteen individuals were inducted into this year's class, and their supporters came in full force. Over 200 people attended the event and showed support for distinguished alumni, outstanding achievements in athletics, recognition for staff and faculty, and service.

The MCC Alumni Association hosts the annual Hall of Fame event in the fall.

*The 2024 nominations open April 1. Nominations are due July 1. For more information, please visit [mesacc.edu/alumni/hall-fame](https://mesacc.edu/alumni/hall-fame).*

*Interested in getting involved or coming to an event? Contact [alumni@mesacc.edu](mailto:alumni@mesacc.edu) or call 480-461-7200.*

*For a full list of upcoming functions, visit [mesacc.edu/events](https://mesacc.edu/events).*



Dr. Robinson with Dr. Ruth Tan Lim, Pediatrician and Philanthropist, at President's Advisory Council.



MCC alumna and artist Antoinette Cauley shares her story.



MCC Red Mountain Halloween Extravaganza, 2023.



1500+ came to trick-or-treat.



MCC Music Theatre presents: *The SpongeBob Musical*.

# What's New Around the College



MCC Hall of Fame Inductees 2023.



MCC Women's Basketball ranked 16th in the country entering the 2023-24 season.

Be A Student's Hero!  
MCC's annual day of giving will be on Friday, May 3, 2024. More details to come!





# iBelong Receives National Recognition with Prestigious Terry O'Banion Award

Our Summer 2023 issue highlighted the MCC iBelong Student Success Initiative, a common platform for teaching and learning using an iPad Bundle.

As a result of the program's success, MCC has been named a silver winner of the prestigious Terry O'Banion Award by the National Council on Student Development (NCSD) for iBelong. The annual award honors exceptional college programs throughout the United States for their innovation, impacting student outcomes based on clear data, responding to a significant need, and serving as a model of student development goals.

By the end of the 2022-2023 school year, 2,000 students were enrolled in the initiative. For 2023-2024 that number has risen to 4,000. An MCC poll found that 73% of these students are female with 53% having first-generation college student status. An overwhelming majority indicated that the initiative helped improve their learning and is aiding in improved course completion and retention.

iBelong also has support from the faculty, a major component in the initiative's success. Within the first six-months of the iBelong training period, participation rapidly grew from five faculty members to 50. By the end of the 2022-2023 school year, that number grew to 100. For the 2023-2024 school year, faculty participation is at 110 and continues to increase semester to semester.

Patricia Herrera, MCC instructional technologist, who created, planned, and implemented the initiative in collaboration with Alvin Bridges, MCC's Chief Information Officer, accepted the award on behalf of the college at the 2023 NCSD National Conference held in October in Houston.

iBelong provides access to technology tools and resources to be successful. Students are provided with a bundle consisting of an iPad, keyboard, and Apple Pencil,

along with easy access to a robust technical support system. Since the program was introduced two years ago, it has proven to be extremely beneficial for students and faculty while demonstrating a cost-savings for the college.

**"Winning the Terry O'Banion Award means we're changing education. It means we're impacting students and that's what we're here to do," Bridges says. "The coordination and communication between MCC departments has been paramount."**

Herrera says student testimonials show "we are helping them feel like they do belong here at MCC. We're giving them the affirmation that they're doing the right thing by pursuing an education, by transforming their lives in their chosen professions. They feel that we value them."



Patricia Herrera Accepts O'Banion Award



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**Alumni Survey: We Need Your Input!**

Please take a few minutes to complete the brief survey at [mesacc.edu/alumni-survey](https://mesacc.edu/alumni-survey), or by scanning the QR code. We value your input and will share the results with you in our next issue, so stay tuned!



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