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Committing To Better Diversity Equality And Inclusion In The IT Industry

Alvin Bridges, III, Manager of Computer Operations and College Technology Services, Mesa Community College

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Historically, the technology industry in the United States is not known for diversity in its workforce. According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 68percentof the IT workforce in the U.S. is white, 14percentAsian American, 8percentHispanic/Latinx and 7percentAfrican American compared to other private industries. Adding to those statistics, IT employs a greater percentage of men, 64percent,compared to women, 36percent.

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While the IT job market is experiencing tremendous growth in computer science and engineering positions, not to mention the industry’s resilience even in a down economy, it has been unable to fill positions with a qualified workforce that includes minorities. But through opportunity, cutting-edge academic curricula and innovative industry partnerships, we can bring greater diversity, equality and inclusion to the IT industry.

At the community college level, many minority students haven’t had the exposure or opportunity to further their education in IT and secure gainful employment. Some are the first in their families to attend college. Recognizing these challenges, Mesa Community College (MCC) makes every effort to impact the lives of traditionally marginalized and underserved students in the community.

Just recently, the institution had been training outside interns to become certified in Jamf, an industry-leading Mac management tool for Apple devices. MCC had hired and trained six interns to become certified to service the 200 Mac units in the art department.

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Soon all six left to work in Jamf administrative jobs which pay more in the private sector. MCC then realized that it could offer courses in Jamf training and certifications, targeting minority and disadvantaged students, among others, which would enable them to earn and learn. The impact to students and the college would be profound. Currently the Apple Developer Enterprise Program management job market has more jobs than certified applicants.

After several months of planning and strategizing, later this summer the college will have one certified Jamf instructor and a developed curriculum for the Fall 2022 semester. In just a few semesters we can change a first-generation college student into a functional Jamf administrator which can effectively change the trajectory of their lives using industry-standard tools and best practices.

Taking a bold approach to industry partnerships to help ease student financial burden, we requested that Jamf, located in Eagan, Minn., enable MCC to offer a 66percentdiscount to students who take the training program for certification. There's an economic crisis on college campuses today. Many of the students we serve must choose between purchasing books and buying groceries. This is a unique opportunity to infuse diversity, equality and inclusion into the world using a tool from a company that believes in these principles on a platform that also believes in them.

Offering a Jamf certification curriculum only strengthens our other partnerships. Currently, the college offers Apple Enterprise hardware repair servicing for the 900 iPads loaned out to students as well as other college-owned devices.

We also work hand-in-hand with the Maricopa IT Institute-East Valley (MITI-EV), a regional workforce training and education center (based out of MCC) providing tailored industry workforce solutions to successfully meet industries' specialized workforce needs. MITI-EV helps meet the emerging technological workforce's demand for talent in the areas of blockchain, app development using Swift/Xcode, big data, gaming, cloud computing, mobile and wearable technology and the Internet of Things.

In addition, Apple recently announced it is working with community colleges and universities to offer on-campus prep courses for the Apple Certified IT Professional badge and, through its Community Education Initiative (CEI), is providing scholarships to cover the cost of the exams for participating students. Mesa Community College is part of Apple's CEI through MITI-EV with courses available in Fall 2022.

With these affiliations we can bring students and industry partners together to solve problems and enhance workforce solutions through marketing, outreach and events accelerated education pathways and grant-funded opportunities that lead to employment.



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