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MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE: THUNDERBIRD TECH STUDIO BUILDS COMPETENCY AND SUPPORTS STUDENT SUCCESS IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

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September 2021

Member Spotlight

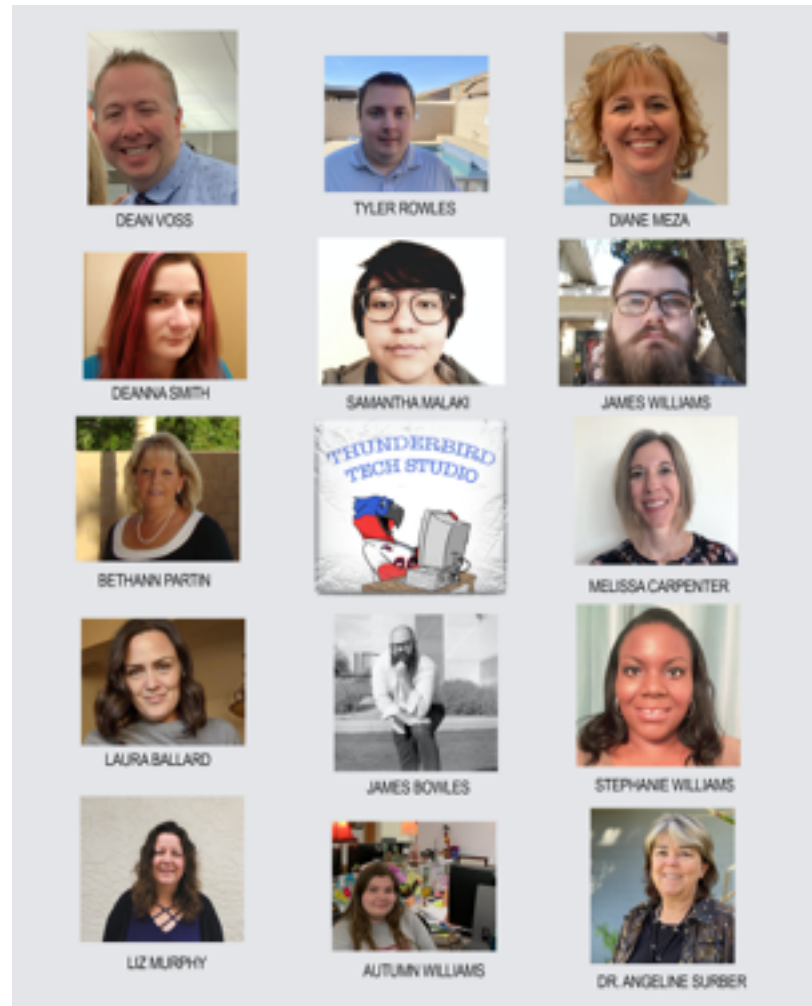
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At Mesa Community College's **Thunderbird Tech Studio**, students can receive one-on-one guidance and tutoring for using and mastering technology that supports their academic learning. The Tech Studio team provides support for common college-supported technology tools such as Windows and Mac operating systems, Microsoft Office, Google Drive Suite, Canvas, and other systems. The beauty of the Thunderbird Tech Studio design is that it will morph into an in-person service once the pandemic subsides, thus allowing students to choose when, where, and how they receive technology tutoring and assistance. This new resource fills a gap in the multitude of resources MCC offers.

The creation of the Tech Studio was essential to meeting the immediate needs of students during the pandemic as well as the long-term technology needs of community college students. Like other institutions, MCC was forced to transition to online teaching and learning in spring 2020. Some instructors weren't familiar with the nuances of teaching entire courses online. Students, whose only concern should be learning, had many questions and concerns related to online learning and the software and programs necessary to support their education.

The Thunderbird Tech Studio became the bridge for students to transition to the remote learning environment. Students can access live tech assistance with a single click through Cranium Cafe. Lab assistants, who are well versed in all the programs necessary for online teaching and learning, connect with the student in need using voice, webcam, or text. Furthermore, both parties share their screens to follow along directly and address the issue at hand. The lab assistants help students with virtual meeting programs and offer guidance for setting up microphones and webcams, navigating Canvas (MCC's learning management system), and connecting virtually with a tutor or instructor.



Thunderbird Tech Studio team

In addition to offering one-on-one technical support, a Canvas page was created with an abundance of tutorials and guides to assist students after hours. The tutorials—available in multiple formats—are personalized for the intended audience by using a user's point-of-view so students following along will see the exact same thing on their screen. For example, a student tutorial on Cisco Webex will only cover the features available to students and include images that show the screens students see. These tutorials are also brief; they cover the bare minimum knowledge requirements a student needs to access the desired program.

Originally created specifically for the MCC Computer Information Systems (CIS) department to serve both its students and faculty, the virtual online lab was showcased at a meeting with Academic Affairs leadership in fall 2020. The Foundations Action Team—a college committee dedicated to student success—had been conceptualizing a service that would teach students about the technology they need to participate in their classes and complete class assignments. When members of the committee found out about the CIS online lab, a group of stakeholders, including members of the eLearning department, came together to expand the lab's services into a collegewide platform, renamed Thunderbird Tech Studio, in early 2021.

Visits jumped dramatically once the service was promoted to students taking any course at MCC. Solutions to particularly challenging problems are crowdsourced by a group of individuals from MCC's HelpCenter, Center for Teaching & Learning, eLearning, and Foundations for Student Success. With the collective knowledge of these dedicated employees, most problems are solved within minutes. Longer tutorial sessions for students needing to develop skills in Microsoft Office or online products to complete class assignments are also available. The CIS department continues to staff the Tech Studio and the Learning Enhancement Center has provided additional training to enhance the customer service skills of the lab assistants.

Moving forward, these stakeholders will continue to work together to develop a permanent staffing model and to design a physical space for on-campus services. MCC's goal is to create a presence for the Tech Studio that includes both drop-in and virtual support no later than fall 2022.

Lead image: Tyler Rowles, MCC Computer Lab Supervisor, assists students contacting the Thunderbird Tech Studio.

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(Specific Dates Coming Soon)



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January 25-27, 2022 Virtual



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