

# Starting or continuing your educational journey? Now is the time to enroll

Joan Westlake, for Mesa Community College Published 3:00 a.m. MT May 29, 2019 | Updated 9:47 a.m. MT May 31, 2019

***Colleges, like Mesa Community College, are transforming the student experience***

CONNECTTWEETLINKEDINCOMMENTEMAILMORE



MCC student Sonrisa McLaughlin and her children Sawyer, 4, and Thomas, 7, enjoy one of the college's services that help meet life's challenges, the Children's Center that provides quality daycare. (Photo: Mesa Community College)

"I don't want to earn more money and have a career I enjoy," said No One Ever! But whether pursuing a degree or jumping right into job training, reality often throws up barriers. Recognizing life can get in the way of learning, colleges are transforming the student experience to help people meet the challenges each step along the way.

Inclusiveness and fostering student success have always been at the heart of community colleges. [Mesa Community College](#) continues more than half a century of offering quality education for all. Currently, MCC is at the forefront of the [Maricopa Community Colleges student experience transformation](#) with innovative programs as well as revising approaches to learning and services.

## **Starting Early**

Earn college credits in high school – what a great start on the future! Adding to successful outreach programs, MCC placed full-time advisors in Mesa high schools resulting in more students getting personal guidance that has increased the number entering college. Also, partnerships with local high schools are increasing the number of [dual enrollment](#) students who earn college credits while in high school. One example is

Dustin Smith, who earned three associate degrees from MCC plus an Arizona General Education Curriculum and an Academic Certificate in Sustainability. Two weeks later, she received her high school diploma from the charter high school AAEC, located adjacent to the Red Mountain campus where she attended college classes. Smith has been accepted by Stanford, which she says has always been her dream university.

### **Starting Right**

Being on the most direct path usually begins with basic courses. To help students with foundation courses such as English, reading, and math, MCC expanded the options to [determine placement](#). Now, in addition to the Accuplacer test, students may be assessed by their high school grade point average, GED scores or ACT scores. Students who need help to bring their skills up are not given the time-consuming expense of extra classes but instead are placed in college-level English and math classes with added lab instruction time, which has proven very successful. Reading help is being enhanced by using text from other classes.

### **Finding Your Path**

[Pathway Mapping](#) is another added feature MCC has introduced to help in deciding what to pursue and the most direct way to reach goals. Not certain what to pursue? [Career Coach](#) is a free online quiz to help discover majors and in-demand careers based on your interests. The [MCC Career Services Department](#) offers free assistance for career planning, job searching, internships and employment.

### **Meeting Needs**

Kris Bliss, director of MCC student services, says the [Student Life & Leadership Department](#) continues to expand programs to address some of the challenges students face. A recent student survey found finances was the top concern. Affordable tuition at MCC is 75% less than at Arizona state colleges and universities. Plus, many services are free such as parking, tutoring, counseling and advising.

MCC has created [Z Courses](#) [Zero-Textbook-Cost classes] so you don't have to purchase textbooks or online materials. These courses are all available online. By fall 2019, MCC will have a complete Z Degree Associate in Arts degree available.

[Partnerships](#) with more than 45 universities across the nation including Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University and University of Arizona provide the seamless transfer of credits. Additionally, some agreements allow students to earn bachelor's degrees taking the majority of credits at MCC such as the [Connect2NAU 90/30](#) program.

With a degree in business, Sonrisa McLaughlin decided to re-career into nursing and was directed to MCC for science courses. There she discovered the [Bachelor of Science in Nursing](#) (BSN) degree in MCC's [highly ranked nursing](#) Concurrent Enrollment Program.

"I couldn't believe when I heard about the BSN program," said McLaughlin, "It is so well organized, the teachers are excellent, and I'll save more than \$15,000 than if I attended the university I was considering."

While taking classes, she learned about on-campus child care. [MCC Children's Center](#), with reasonable tuition, easy accessibility and hourly enrollment, has earned high ratings from First Things First Arizona for child care providers. MCC and Gateway Community College recently received a grant that provides child care funding for qualified student parents.

"It is awesome," said McLaughlin of the center. "My daughter goes there and my son also in the summer. It is such quality care and the teachers are wonderful."

Bliss says Student Life also helps students with basic needs. "We have many students who are struggling to meet food and clothing needs," she explained. "Some are homeless, couch surfing with friends or staying with relatives as they are working to improve their lives."

Student Life has the Mesa Market, a food pantry (on the Southern & Dobson and Red Mountain campuses) for any MCC student providing up to 10 nonperishable food items and five hygiene products each week.

As a class project, MCC students developed the Resource Information Services for Everyone ([RISE](#)) app, which connects people to sources for nominally priced food, shelter and health care.

"There are so many resources on campus and beyond," said Bliss. "If you need help, the best place to come is [Student Life](#) where our staff and students will get you to the assistance you need."

### **Apply Now**

If you are beginning or continuing your educational journey, now is the time to [enroll](#) for fall. It can take up to eight weeks for [financial aid](#) applications to be processed so start now. Learning can fit into your life.

**Members of the editorial and news staff of the USA Today Network were not involved in the creation of this content.**