

'Wranglers' track, study rattlesnakes at Red Mountain campus

By MCC student Josh Bishop



In keeping with the policy of preserving the natural environment at Mesa Community College's Red Mountain campus, the college has developed a team of "snake wranglers" as part of an undergraduate research project.

Students are observing several Arizona Western Diamondback rattlesnakes that are sometimes found in the Sonoran Desert surrounding the 100-acre lot of the East Mesa campus.

Andy Bridges, one of the snake wranglers, hopes students come to observe and appreciate the snakes on display at the campus.

"There seems to be an unfortunate stigmatism about rattlesnakes, that they are these nasty, aggressive creatures," Bridges said. "They are actually very beautiful and amazing creatures."

Bridges started out his academic career in a much different field. Graduating with a bachelor's degree in political science, Bridges moved to Arizona to pursue a second degree in biology.

"I never even used my Political Science degree," Bridges admits, "I just found wildlife, specifically reptiles and amphibians, to be much more interesting."

Bridges and the rest of the student wranglers spend most of their time at the Red Mountain campus tracking and recording the movement of the local rattlesnake population. Before the snakes are released they are surgically implanted with tracking devices known as PIT tags. In addition to tracking their movements, the students also identify and record GPS location, internal body temperature, eating habits, preferred habitat and individual behaviors. And all of this is done every day.

The purpose of the studies is to better understand the nature of the rattlesnake and learn to appreciate them. All of the student's hard work and gathered information was recently

put on display at an exhibit at Red Mountain as part of the Family Discovery Series. The exhibit included maps of the rattlesnake's preferred habitats and travel patterns, displays of recent data, Q and A's with student wranglers and staff, as well as a guided presentation on the findings, hosted by Bridges.

The presentation included detailed information on each snake cataloged as well as a step-by-step walkthrough of the capturing, cataloging and surgery process.

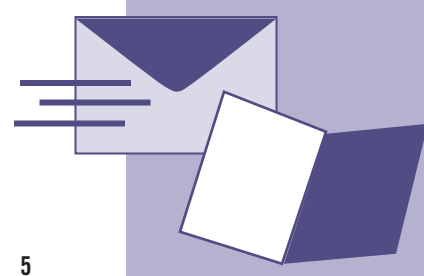
One of the most popular events of the night was a live demonstration of the student wranglers donning the tracking gear and searching for a rattlesnake that was supposedly loose in the building. There was a collective sigh of relief when the wrangler pulled a toy snake, complete with surgically implanted tracker, from under the chair of a very surprised little girl.

As for the snake wranglers, their work doesn't end with the exhibit. As long as there are rattlesnakes near the Red Mountain area, they will be studying them.

Jerry Vega, one of the student wranglers, summed up the experience with some rather poignant words. "I'm really excited to tell people about what we're doing," he said. "I mean come on, I get to track snakes every day, how cool is that?"



MCC snake wrangling students share their information about rattlesnakes during a recent Family Discovery Series presentation at MCC's Red Mountain Campus. Jerry Vega and Andy Bridges are on the left, along with the rest of the team.



Email or Print?

Do you receive emails from the MCC Alumni Association? If you do, this will be the last print newsletter you receive. In an effort to be more "green," the Alumni Office will no longer send print newsletters to the 20,000 plus people for whom we have email addresses. If you ever want a print version, you can print a copy from our website at www.mesacc.edu/alumni or have one mailed to you by calling 480.461.7794.



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Alumni & Friends

A Publication for the Mesa Community College Alumni Association



MCC's Red Mountain Campus Celebrates 10 Year Anniversary

Mesa Community College kicks off the fall semester with a ceremony celebrating two achievements at the Red Mountain Campus: the tenth anniversary of the campus, plus the official award presentation of the Saguaro Building's Gold LEED Certification.

Ten years ago, MCC built the Red Mountain Campus on 100 acres of Sonoran Desert in a somewhat remote, but growing, section of northeast Mesa at McKellips and Power roads. Today the campus is one of the anchors of Mesa's Power Knowledge Corridor, an area of higher education and research stretching south to Arizona State University's Polytechnic campus. The nearby 202 freeway now makes the campus easily accessible to the nearly 4,000 students who attend classes here.

Yet the development of the area has not swayed the college from the original goal of environmental stewardship that is an integral part of the Red Mountain culture.

"We have taken the driving factors of our original plan and built on those," said MCC Red Mountain Provost Jo Wilson. "The primary focus was on the environment. We wanted that to be a part of the campus, plus we wanted to involve the community."

The campus has accomplished these goals and more in several different ways.

A native wetland, called a cienega, was created in the central courtyard to illustrate how reclaimed water can be used to create riparian habitat for native species and protect Arizona's natural riparian areas. In addition, a two-mile fitness trail circles the campus, offering students and residents exercise in a preserved desert area.

In the Saguaro Building, indigenous Sonoran Desert creatures are housed in the lobby's terrarium enabling undergraduates to have firsthand experience researching animal life. A snake wrangling pit aids in the study of snakes and reptiles. The building, which also supports performing arts programs, is the location of many science lectures and musical performances that are open to the community. In addition, MCC biology instructors often visit community classrooms.

The Saguaro Building itself was designed keeping the environment in mind, with energy-efficient and water-conservation features that earned Gold LEED Certification, the most prestigious and internationally-recognized standard for sustainable construction.

At the anniversary celebration, the Smith Group architects for the Saguaro Building will be on hand for the Gold Certification award presentation. In addition, the initial Red Mountain Campus planning team of Jesse DeAnda, Mary Vanis and Joe Pearson will attend and be recognized.

Community dignitaries Dina Higgins, Don Evans, Dana Saar and Rufus Glasper will make remarks and MCC Student Life and Leadership will dedicate a time capsule.

Wilson said the future of the Red Mountain Campus includes building an environmental program featuring an academic component of undergraduate research with an emphasis on community outreach.

"After 10 years, we are revisiting and ratcheting up to the next level," Wilson said. "We've done a great deal, but we have more to do."



10th Anniversary
WHEN
Oct. 20, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
WHERE
MCC's Red Mountain Campus,
7110 E. McKellips Rd., Mesa.

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MCC Alumni Association
EXCITING START, EXTRAORDINARY RETURN
Alumni & Friends is published by the Office of Institutional Advancement (IA) for the alumni of Mesa Community College.
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Mark Your Calendar

ALUMNI EVENTS – REGISTER TODAY AT WWW.ALUMNICONNECTIONS.COM/MCC AND CLICK ON THE EVENTS CALENDAR

October 3-13
Faculty Art Show
Navajo Room

October 10-14, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Scholastic Book Fair
Kirk Center Lobby

October 17, 7:00 p.m.
Evening Lecture Series in Psychology
Healthy Boundaries: Why Are They Important for Mental Health
Navajo Room

October 19, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Empty Bowls, Fundraiser for Paz de Cristo
Navajo Room

October 20-22, 24, 27-28, 7:30 p.m.
October 22, 29, 2:00 p.m.
A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum
Theatre Outback

October 20, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
MCC Red Mountain Campus 10th Anniversary
Saguaro Building

October 21, 10 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Environmental Action Club Plant Sale
Life Science Greenhouse

October 22
Homecoming Festival, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.
Football Game, 7:00 p.m.
John D. Riggs Stadium

October 26, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Empty Bowls, Fundraiser for Paz de Cristo
Mesquite Building

November 3 – 4, 7:30 p.m.
Fall Dance Performance
Theatre Outback

November 4, 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.
Astronomy Nights, Planetarium shows every half hour
Physical Science Building

November 9, 7:00 p.m.
Evening Lecture Series in Psychology
Gender Across Cultures
Navajo Room

November 16, 7:00 p.m.
Honors Lecture Series
Fashion and the Democracy of Style
Navajo Room

December 2, 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.
Astronomy Nights, Planetarium shows every half hour
Physical Science Building

December 2-3, 8-9, 7:30 p.m.
December 4, 10, 2:00 p.m.
The Infernal Machine
Theatre Outback

December 9, 7:00 p.m.
Fall Dance Classes Showcase
East Gym

January 27-28, February 2 – 3, 7:30 p.m.
January 29, February 4, 2:00 p.m.
Pygmalion
Theatre Outback

- Southern and Dobson Campus
- Red Mountain Campus

For a complete listing of events and times, check out our online calendars.
GENERAL MCC EVENTS mesacc.edu/alumni then click EVENTS CALENDAR **ATHLETICS** athletics.mesacc.edu/schedules

Fall 2011

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More than a year ago, the President of the United States committed this country to return to being first in the world in higher education, to again having the highest proportion of adults completing college. The target date for this accomplishment: 2020. This is an ambitious goal, and for the US to accomplish it, this country must graduate eight million students by the end of this decade, an increase of fifty percent. That means getting more students to college ready to learn and achieve, and getting more students successfully through the higher educational paths they begin. Our goal at MCC is to increase the number of degree completing students by 50% by 2020.

In order to move our college completion agenda forward, a number of new initiatives and services are in place for students.

MCC's HelpCenter – With the increasing number of online and hybrid courses and the use of technology in the teaching and learning process, students must have access to technical support.

SmartThinking –MCC students can now access online tutoring provided by SmartThinking. In addition to traditional tutoring services, students can access 24 hour one-on-one tutoring from any internet connection at no cost. E-tutors are available in: writing, math, accounting, statistics, finance, economics, biology, physics, general and organic chemistry, and Spanish. This tutoring resource is only for MCC students who are working on assignments for MCC courses.

Ask a Librarian – Ask a Librarian is a collaborative virtual reference service of the Maricopa County Community College District. At this site, reference service is provided in an interactive mode, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. A librarian is always available online, in real time, to assist students, faculty, and staff with information needs.

Connect For Success – Among new students coming to MCC each semester, over 65% of them are placed below college level in at least one subject matter, and close to 33% in two subject matters. To help these students beat the odds, we initiated a college wide mentoring program, called Connect for Success. Today 182 faculty and staff have signed up and received training to be mentors who will advise and support 266 students who are placed in two remedial courses.

Career Ready – Career Ready is a network of MCC alumni and friends who serve as volunteer advisors and mentors to MCC students. Volunteers counsel students about career choices or educational paths and will open doors for students seeking professional growth. Visit www.mesacc.edu/career-ready for more information.

As an alum, you know the value of college completion. Please let prospective students know about MCC's commitment to student success and completion. Also, please consider becoming part of our efforts by volunteering for the Career Ready program. Thank you for your valuable support to MCC!

Sincerely,

Shouan Pan, Ph.D.
President

Can you help a student become CAREERReady?



Career Ready provides a network of alumni and friends from a variety of professions who serve as volunteer advisors and mentors.

You provide students an opportunity to ask questions about career or educational paths, while opening doors for professional growth.

Advisor Network for Informational Interviewing

An informational interview is a brief meeting where you offer an insider's perspective on a particular career or educational path. If you're contacted, the interview can take place on the phone, via email, or in person.

Mentoring Program

Career Ready mentors are committed to passing along the practical wisdom they've gained from real-world experience. You offer support and feedback on issues such as:

- Business etiquette and communications
- Career and academic goals
- Balancing work and family life
- Landing a first job
- Staying motivated and focused
- Building a professional network
- Making a positive first impression

Visit www.mesacc.edu/career-ready to learn more.

This fall marks the beginning of the fourth year since the opening of Mesa Community College's Planetarium. The college holds free Astronomy Nights that are open to the public on the first Friday of every month. We spoke with Kevin Healy, Astronomy Faculty and Planetarium Director, about the facility and the astronomy program at MCC.

Question: What has the reaction of the general public been to MCC's Planetarium?

Answer: The response to the planetarium and Astronomy Nights has been very positive. Visitors are delighted that a state-of-the-art facility exists in the East Valley. The general public and schoolchildren both visit the MCC Planetarium to experience the wonders of the Universe.

We typically get between 200 and 400 visitors to an Astronomy Night. The biggest effects on our attendance are whether

during a day, a month, a year, or even longer in the case of the planets. Many of our full-dome shows are also appropriate for college classes, so instructors use those to spur interest at the beginning of the semester or highlight a particular topic during the semester. We also use the Planetarium for a variety of laboratory class exercises involving the seasons, the phases of the Moon, or teach students how to find particular constellations in the night sky.

Q: What do you see as the future of the space program now that the shuttle missions have ended?

A: The Space Shuttle was a fantastic flying machine and accomplished many firsts in human spaceflight. It allowed 16 countries to assemble the International Space Station. However, Shuttle never lived up to the dream of making space flight less

asteroid, Vesta, for a year-long visit. In addition, New Horizons is cruising along for a rendezvous with Pluto in 2015 and Juno just launched for a visit to Jupiter in 2016.

It's a time of change in the U.S. space program, but there is still a lot to be excited about and there will be loads of fresh images to marvel at.

Q: What type of employment opportunities are available with an astronomy degree?

A: Astronomy is a technical field, so training in astronomy develops many skills useful in the modern workplace: critical thinking, computer programming, technical writing, as well as knowledge of chemistry, physics, and high-tech instruments.

A graduate of an astronomy program could pursue a career in astronomy



MCC Planetarium

Astronomy Nights are the first Friday of the month. Shows are from 6 to 10 p.m. Check www.mesacc.edu/planetarium for show information. Free show tickets are handed out at the event on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Planetarium is open to K-12 school groups who would like to learn more about astronomy. Educators should contact Dr. Kevin Healy at 480.461.7027 or khealy@mesacc.edu.

other events occur on first Friday nights and weather conditions.

In addition, we get more than 1,000 schoolchildren visiting the Planetarium during the school year.

Q: What has been the favorite film presentation?

A: "Tour the Universe with Pink Floyd" has been the most popular and the most requested show by far. When the Floyd show premiered last summer we had far more people attend each month than we could seat. We ran extra shows all summer and only after the third month were we able to seat everyone that showed up. It was a spectacular success!

Q: How is the planetarium incorporated into astronomy classes at MCC?

A: The Planetarium is used to demonstrate the various motions of the celestial objects

expensive or more routine.

This was realized by both the Bush and Obama administrations in their calls for the end of the Shuttle program. While the International Space Station remains in operation in Earth's orbit, the U.S. will have to develop new ways of carrying crew there and beyond. Several private companies are working on new smaller, less expensive rockets that could fly astronauts as soon as 2013.

At the same time, NASA's program of robotic missions to the planets continues. There are many missions exploring right now: Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter is surveying the Moon, MESSENGER orbits Mercury, Cassini orbits Saturn, the Opportunity rover is still driving on Mars, and Dawn has just arrived at the large

research using ground – or space-based telescopes or the spacecraft exploring the objects in our cosmic backyard. Astronomy training also prepares students for careers in software development for research or teaching. Astronomers can also become full-time classroom teachers or part-time instructors working at a planetarium or science museum. Astronomers also spread the excitement of astronomy by writing textbooks or books for the public.

Mesa Community Outreach Center

When it comes to applying for college, sometimes the first step is the hardest step to take.

The new Mesa Community Outreach Center is making that first step a little easier for students by offering a one-stop center packed full of resources for college and career exploration through outreach, resources, referrals and community partnerships. The center, hosted by Mesa Community College, assists students in finding information on any college, not just MCC. It's located on Centennial Way in downtown Mesa by the public library, allowing for broad access to all community members.



"Our goal is to provide awareness and access to post-secondary educational opportunities," said Kathleen Perales, MCC's associate dean of student affairs, community outreach and enrollment development. "We're here to offer information, resources and services to help students and their families navigate the educational planning process through a variety of pathways from early college planning, GED completion, college financial planning, re-careering and more. We have a keen interest in serving the whole community."

Perales said the community partnership aspect is a critical part of the center. Perales hosted an educational summit composed of local social service agencies, university partners and MCC this past February to discuss common goals in creating a local, regional and national model to address Arizona's economic deficit through post-secondary degree attainment.

"Our partnerships with social service agencies are critical," Perales said. "Their work assists our communities with immediate services that range from transitional housing to employment opportunities. Our hope is to take it a step further and be part of the conversation that helps these families achieve their educational goals for themselves and their children."

In addition to catalogs and computers for college exploration, the center also offers GED preparation in both English and Spanish, financial aid and scholarship assistance, SAT and ACT preparation exams, and much more.

Staff member Oscar Celaya, who has worked in education outreach for 24 years, said the center provides a personalized service and more one-on-one assistance than what can be found on many college campuses.

"Often the process is much more complex than just applying for financial aid," Celaya said. "There are sometimes cultural and language barriers, especially for first-generation students who lack family members who know how to guide them through the process."

Visits from university representatives are scheduled, as well as workshops on Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings beginning in September.

To help spread the word, the center is enlisting assistance from high school counselors, pastors and community agencies. Perales and Celaya also invite the general public to lend a hand.

"We are always looking for partnerships, volunteers, speakers and access to resources that help students achieve a college education so they can transform their lives for the better."

The Mesa Community Outreach Center is located at 165 N. Centennial Way, Suite 101, Mesa. For more information, contact 480.461.6200 or visit www.mesacc.edu/community/outreach.



Fall Workshops:

Oct. 8	10 a.m.	College 101 (In Spanish)
Oct. 11	6 p.m.	Family Night (In Spanish)
Oct. 18	6 p.m.	College Credit While in High School? Yes!
Oct. 22	10 a.m.	Re-Careering, Retraining and Resources
Oct. 25	6 p.m.	Building a Better Budget

Please call to RSVP at 408.461.6200. Space is limited.