

# Mesa college has supported its community for decades

Roc Arnett, AZ I See It 4:40 p.m. MST April 7, 2015

*My Turn: Community colleges have become increasingly necessary over the years, and I'm honored to have led this one.*



(Photo: David Kadlubowski, AZR)

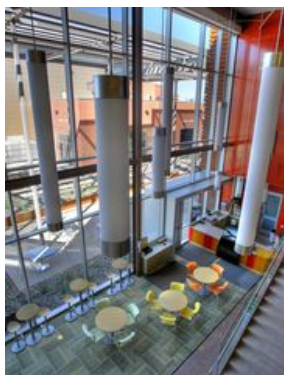
As the first president of Mesa Community College's student government in 1963 (when it was still an extension of Phoenix College), I was afforded many opportunities. Among them, I helped select the college's first mascot, the Hokam, in honor of our area's first known inhabitants.

Additionally, I was privileged to attend a conference for community college student-body officers at Chaffey College in California. It was at this conference where I learned what it meant to be a leader, who we should be as leaders, and what we could accomplish.

At MCC I connected with others like me, people looking to improve their lot in life; business and community leaders who shared a vision of growth and prosperity. Faculty and staff were as eager to teach as we were to learn, to provide opportunities for us to transform our lives, and build the future for our community.

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My involvement at MCC has continued since it became a standalone institution 50 years ago. I've watched it become a vital component of the economy, culture and standard of living in Mesa and its surrounding communities. I've served on the Alumni Association board and currently serve on its Commission on Excellence.



The atrium of the Saguardo Building at Mesa Community College Red Mountain Campus Wednesday, June 8, 2011 in Mesa. (Photo: David Kadlubowski, AZR)

The college is embedded in our community and continues to connect students to new and innovative practices with a focus on consistent improvement and providing life lessons through classroom and community experiences.

Leading the East Valley Partnership, I have advocated on behalf of the East Valley in economic development, transportation, aviation and aerospace, technology, tourism, arts, health care, tribal relations and education, to Mesa Community College and community colleges in the area.

As a former student, I know firsthand the quality of education and opportunities offered at MCC. The skills I acquired and lessons learned through the connections made from my involvement in student government and coursework at MCC provided me with a foundation for success, and established precedence for my passion for community involvement and service.

It's true: The more involved and supported students are, the easier it is to overcome life's obstacles.

It's not easy to measure, but is important to note the way MCC's more than 30 student clubs and organizations support and prepare students for the next step in their education and in life.

Leadership skills, critical thinking, teamwork, organization and collaboration are just some of the skills I learned while serving student government at MCC, and the list of opportunities for students to avail themselves in this critical area of personal and professional development today is too long for me to list.

MCC's 50-year legacy of preparing students for university, career and life options cannot be overstated. I'm living proof, and there are thousands of others with amazing stories on how their experience at MCC positively changed their life.

Strengthening communities through excellence in education — it's what MCC has, and will continue to do, with our support. All four community colleges in the East Valley have been fabulous and outstanding to our economy; we need them.



Roc Arnett (Photo: Courtesy of Roc Arnett)

To this day I have the letter opener I received at the Chaffey conference on my desk; it serves as a reminder of who I wanted to be and what it took to bring me to where I am today.

I am thankful to have had the opportunity to be so intertwined in the continuation of impactful education and learning in the East Valley. Happy Birthday, Mesa Community College!

*Roc Arnett is president and CEO of East Valley Partnership.*

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