

## COMMUNITY Hites Scholarship to MCC grad helps smooth the transfer to ASU

By Kenneth LaFave

In 2013, Andrew Sypher was a 22-year-old with no college credits and eroded English language skills.

The halting English was "due primarily to having spoken Portuguese for two years" as an LDS missionary to Brazil, Sypher said.

His English now in good repair, Sypher is an award-winning college student, whose latest honor will assist him in making the transition from Mesa Community College, which he recently graduated, to his new status as a junior at ASU: the Phi Theta Kappa 2015 Hites Transfer Scholarship.

The Hites Scholarship of \$7,500 is awarded to students transferring from community colleges to four-year universities based on "academic rigor, leadership and engagement." Sypher was one of only 10 students nationwide selected for the award, named after Robert Hites of the Ralston-Purina company, who was also a community college instructor.

Sypher said the scholarship will

help him fulfill his dream of eventually getting a Master's Degree in an area of public service, and he credited Maricopa Community Colleges for the smoothness and efficiency of its transfer program.

The native of Fall City, Washington, recalled "falling in love" with Arizona on a road trip with his brother several years ago. He was especially impressed with ASU.

"That is when I stepped foot on the campus of Arizona State University for the first time," Sypher said. "I was impressed with the feeling that this was where I needed to pursue my education."

Years later, his Brazilian missionary work completed, Sypher faced the fact that limited funds put ASU out of the range of immediate possibilities. He then investigated the local community colleges, and discovered that "Maricopa Community



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Colleges has one of the best transfer programs in the country," Sypher entered the political science program at Mesa Community College with a guaranteed transfer to ASU.

Sypher's long-range ambition is to enter electoral politics. During his MCC tenure, he worked as a page for the Arizona House of Representatives, and as an intern with Doug Ducey's gubernatorial campaign.

His ultimate goal?

"To become a congressman," Sypher said, then added, laughing: "Whether you like it or not!"

While he is aware of the cynicism surrounded politics today, Sypher believes it remains a viable arena.

"I've always had a passion for government and democracy. The reason I love it is that I've always seen myself as an underdog, as someone who has had to fight for everything," he said.

"I relate well to people across the political spectrum. To me, electoral politics remains the best avenue to represent people's voices."

Working as a page at the Arizona State Capitol, Sypher said he was surprised to discover how easy it is to become involved in politics.

"People think of electoral politics as hard to get into. It's actually quite easy to get your voice heard and potentially to run for office."

Sypher cited Ronald Reagan as a political hero "for the way he worked across the aisle."