



The north entrance to the library at Mesa Community College's Southern and Dobson campus on Feb. 22, 2023 (Photo by Jordan Bell)

NEWS

Applications open for Mesa Community College free tuition program

Rey Covarrubias Jr. 03/07/2023

The Mesa College Promise program began accepting this year's first applications on March 1, providing in-need Mesa residents who recently graduated high school free tuition to Mesa Community College for two years.

Applications to the Mesa College Promise program are available until July 15 to any Mesa resident who received a highschool diploma in Arizona with a minimum GPA of 2.0, or a GED equivalent in 2021, 2022, or 2023 and qualify for assistance beyond what traditional college financial aid is able to provide.

Interested students need to first connect with one of [the advisors specific to the Mesa College Promise program](#), a portion of which work at valley high schools.

An advisor will help students fill [out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#), and complete the [MCC enrollment process](#) before applying to Mesa College Promise program in the online student center.

After submitting a FAFSA, students will receive a “Student Aid Report ” which includes an estimated family contribution figure that the college requires to be \$10,000 or less for students to qualify for the Mesa College Promise program.

Students who meet this requirement show what the college describes as “demonstrated financial need,” setting the groundwork to cover what traditional financial aid and scholarships cannot.

Students in the program are required to attend MCC full time, with at least 12 credit hours per semester to be eligible.

Once enrolled and qualified, program benefits last for two years, the amount of time needed to complete most associate’s degrees. The program includes up to \$2,070 worth of tuition each year, in addition to a semesterly \$250 stipend for education expenses, as well as an iPad loaned by the MCC library.

The inherent inclusivity of the program means that exceptions will be handled by the Mesa College Promise staff on a case by case basis.

Exceptions could include if a student needs to make a temporary deferment due to an internship, a religious mission, or if a student needs extra accommodations for their scheduled attendance at MCC.

“Mesa College Promise is more than an access initiative or financial award, it’s a holistic student success program!” said

Celina Salinas, director of strategic enrollment development at MCC.

The Mesa College Promise is a partnership between MCC and the City of Mesa that is now in its third year.

The program receives funds from public and private sources such as the City of Mesa, local Mesa businesses and philanthropists.

Funds are then administered by the Maricopa County Community College District. The partnerships and their funding that support the program are expected to last until June 30, 2026, according to Salinas.

Since its inception in 2021, the Mesa College Promise program has awarded 283 scholarships worth a total of \$95,339 to former Mesa high school students attending MCC, with 70% of them being the first in their family to attend college.

Over half of the students were Hispanic or female, with 72% of the diverse students from the program's first year remaining at MCC as of 2022, according to Salinas.

Tammy Robinson, president of MCC, is herself a first generation college student who has publicly advocated for the Mesa College Promise program throughout her short time as president.

“The City of Mesa and our MCC team have led this state in providing students with the support services and the financial resources they need to reach their dreams of college and a sustaining career,” said Robinson, who spoke along with [First Lady Jill Biden when she visited the Southern and Dobson campus on Feb. 14](#), in part, to highlight the success of the Mesa College Promise program and how it develops inclusive ways to make secondary education easier for all city residents.

“Now, at the White House, we are still working to make community college free, despite challenges from Congress.

And I know that communities like Mesa and nearly 400 other programs throughout the United States aren't going to wait," said Biden at her visit to MCC.

Accompanied by an assigned advisor throughout their entire time at MCC, Salinas wants students to know that the community they are building through the program is always meant to put the student first.

"We want students to know that they can achieve their college and career goals right here at MCC. We want them to know they belong, and that we believe in them and that we will provide a safe, inclusive learning environment to foster their growth." said Salinas.

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Rey Covarrubias Jr. is a freelance reporter for the Mesa Legend. As a lifelong Arizonan, he has found his passion in learning and sharing the diverse cultural and natural wonders of the state.

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