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# MCC Student Takes Home First Place in National Poetry Competition

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**November 30, 2018**

MESA, Ariz. – Nov. 30, 2018 – Mesa Community College student Jacobo Perez received the coveted first place honor at a national literary competition sponsored by the League of Innovation, a consortium of community colleges across the nation.



His poem, “How to Cross the Border Illegally or How to Make Tamales de Rajas,” was submitted to the national League Competition, along with other first-place Maricopa County Community College District Creative Writing Competition winners from all 10 Maricopa Community Colleges.

Their work was adjudicated by national judges and first-, second-, and third-place winners, along with the honorable mentions, were chosen in the categories of essay, fiction, one-act plays and poetry.

Perez said the award makes him very proud.

“But what makes me most proud is knowing my family and teachers and friends know and talk about my accomplishment,” Perez said. “Their recognition means a lot to me. I also boast about a praising commentary by the national poet laureate Tracy K. Smith, which also makes me very happy.”

The League winners received a Certificate of National Merit, a \$500 award from the League for Innovation in the Community College and will be published in the League’s Student Literary Competition publication.

“This recognition by MCC and the League of Innovation for the Community Colleges will encourage me to search for the poetry circles in my community and to continue reading, learning and dedicating time to poetry,” said Perez, who plans to graduate from MCC in Spring 2019. “My career goal is to be a Spanish teacher and to seek out advice and help from my favorite teachers at MCC who teach English and creative writing--Dr. Bob Baron and Josh Rathkamp.”

Perez said the poem was inspired by real-life personal stories about undocumented people that needed to be shared and by the Mexican-American writer Miguel Mendez.

“I wanted to write a poem that switched from something logical to something false and made up, but with intentions of becoming a simple and ignorant truth,” Perez said. “I also wanted to recreate the actual nervousness of what I felt hearing the stories blended with a soothing comfort of safety. What also inspired my poem was the humility, intelligence and courage of the Mexican people I grew up knowing and our family’s Mexican culture.”

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The **League for Innovation in the Community College** is an international nonprofit organization with a mission to cultivate innovation in the community college environment. Learn more at League.org (<https://www.league.org/about>).

**Mesa Community College** is nationally recognized for service-learning, career and technical programs, civic engagement and innovative approaches to education. The college serves as a resource for career readiness, transfer education, workforce development and lifelong learning. Host to 30,000 students annually, MCC offers more than 195 degree and certificate programs at its two campuses and additional locations. MCC is an

emerging Hispanic Serving Institution with a diverse student body that enriches the learning experience. Award-winning faculty are dedicated to student success, providing the education and training that empowers MCC students to compete locally and globally. MCC, located in the East Valley of Phoenix, Arizona, is one of the 10 colleges that comprise the Maricopa County Community College District. For additional information visit [mesacc.edu](http://mesacc.edu).

*Mesa Community College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).  
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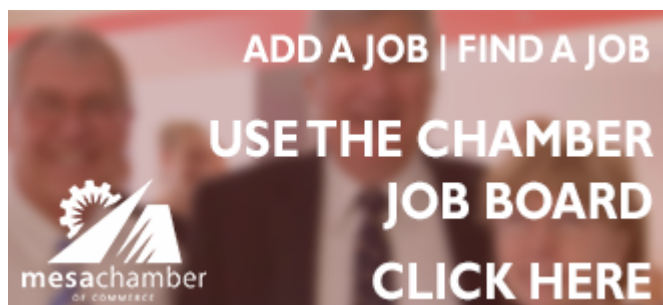
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