

New Media Lab Experience at MCC incorporates many disciplines

By **Kian Hagerman** - October 4, 2017



MCC instructor Eddie Webb is teaching classes using the NMLE tools, including those Adobe provides to facilitate this cross-disciplinary learning method to enhance the written word with visual and audio elements. (Special to MyNewsMesa.com)

The New Media Lab Experience (NMLE) at Mesa Community College (MCC) offers students the opportunity to learn a wide range of skills that incorporate elements of many disciplines, like English composition to create multimedia projects.

MCC Interim President Sasan Pouretezadi said that “they are really learning how to tell a story through a digital medium.”

Adobe System, Inc has been welcomed as partner to this endeavor by MCC, and will provide software access to students to assist the learning process.



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“We worked with Sasan Pouretezadi for years, back when he was a CIO, and he was actually one of the first educators to approach Adobe with the idea of the new media lab concept,” said Strategic Accounts Manager on the Adobe Education team, Bradley Buchanan. “It has since gone on to really resonate across higher education in general.”

Buchanan said that this method of instruction can now be seen at other institutions, both two-year and four-year.

“What was very interesting to us was just the thought and vision that Sasan had around equipping students ... with a skill set that was, and has become even more, in demand by today’s employers,” Buchanan said. “The digital economy is interesting today; most people have a multitude of devices, so when they interact with content on the web, they are looking to engage at a deeper level.”

It is critical that students understand how to offer content for dissemination across multiple devices in this environment, according to Buchanan.

This focus would allow content creators to personalize the experience the audience has, with the goal of connecting more to the story.

“That was very appealing to us, he was thinking that way, and that was exactly where we wanted to take it and supporting that was almost a no-brainer to Adobe,” Buchanan said.

MCC instructor Eddie Webb is teaching classes using the NMLE tools, including those Adobe provides to facilitate this cross-disciplinary learning method to enhance the written word with visual and audio elements.

"Our goal is to expand the program past just the English department," Pouretezadi said.

Though English composition is key to the students' success in the class, the multimedia elements that are given weight means that those enrolled must learn modern ways of telling stories.

"I think that is the most important part here, is that we are modernizing how people in the workforce and students deal with language," Webb said.

These documentaries will focus on local and state issues, primarily around social justice, according to Webb.

"That's kind of the big shift; in the summer with the Hoop of Learning we focused on indigenous content," Webb said. "You know, Native American issues, and now we are going to expand that to Southwest issues."

The Hoop of Learning is a Maricopa County Community College District program that is designed to assist American Indian students as they move on to college from high school.

Webb said that he was excited for the implications of the expanded scope of the class, but that he along with Hoop of Learning will probably always have a focus on indigenous stories.

"I've been in the classroom teaching English composition, like 23 years; students get excited about this, because it is their world, it's the digital age that they live in," Webb said.

Pouretezadi also said that the impact the class has on those who take it is different.

"It's compelling and it touches individuals in a way that I think is unique," Pouretezadi said. "It engages faculty and students."

Efforts are being made to equip the classroom with new hardware, giving students access to new technology to work with.

"We're investing in sharing with the media folks over here, professional cameras, lenses, audio, lighting, all that," Webb said.

Access to Adobe software is provided for by Adobe, through their partnership with MCC.

"We're providing about 20-25 licenses, these are named user licenses for students that are in the field to Creative Cloud, but we've also worked with the institution for a number of years on licensing for all the machines that exist on the campus," Buchanan said. "So, we support it by the technology; those students that go into the new media lab today have access to the latest and greatest Creative Cloud applications."

Buchanan said that the licenses provided by Adobe would be used by students to shed light on their communities and tell compelling stories that you might not hear enough of, like the documentaries produced by Webb's class that focused on American Indians.

"While they are doing that, they will gain a skill set that could potentially change their career path, give them connections to industry and other opportunities that they may have never had access to," Buchanan said. "That is very energizing; if we can begin to shed light, and give these kids opportunity, that's very appealing to us."

Webb said that there are plans to build a website where a reel of the work being done can be viewed online.

There is also a plan in motion to offer a more complete education utilizing the methods introduced in the NMLE.

"The ultimate goal, and this is what I would like to see, is that we're going to start offering a new media certificate," Webb said.

This effort involves a number of departments on the campus, including English as well as the journalism, communications and computer information systems departments.

"We've been trying to get this thing going for a number of years," Webb said.

Changes in personnel at the administration level had delayed these efforts, to get the NMLE off the ground, according to Webb.

“Our interim president Sasan and I, and he needs a lot of credit, have been working together for the last few years keeping this alive,” Webb said.

Poureetezadi said that his was the easy part, which was recognizing Webb’s effort and the potential of the NMLE.

– Mesa resident Kian Hagerman is a Mesa Community College journalism intern for MyNewsMesa.com.

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