

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

New community college IT Institute starting classes at Mesa Downtown Center



Graham Bosch  3 days ago  4 min read  Add comment

A new IT Institute at the Mesa Community College Downtown Center is opening classroom doors to students this week. The program is an extension of the [Mesa Community College \(MCC\)](#) information technologies program, led by Dr. Linda D. Collins, chair of the Business and Information Systems Department.



“We found a lot of opportunities.”

[The new IT Institute](#) will offer courses in areas including blockchain, app development, data analytics, project management and more.

Collins said the idea for the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) IT Institute started with the [Everyone Can Code program](#) at MCC, a mini-certification course through Apple that teaches students to develop apps for the Apple App Store. MCC first offered the program in June 2017.

“It turned out that we were selected as one of only six colleges in the United States to participate in this project, and it’s only been about a year,” Collins said. “Apple provided us with the free curriculum, which is wonderful, and we’ve built our coursework around that.”

The Everyone Can Code program had 16 graduates in May 2018, and over 200 students participated in some way. At the same time, the Business and Information Systems Department faculty decided to introduce classes about building a “blockchain,” a new financial services technology that is becoming a popular initiative among Arizona businesses and legislators.

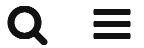
“If you’ve heard of cryptocurrencies like [Bitcoin](#), then you’ll know that blockchain has something to do with them, but business is looking at blockchain as doing much more than cryptocurrencies,” said Dennis Kibbe, residential faculty at the MCC network academy. On the most basic level, a blockchain is a write-only “distributed ledger” for use in financial exchanges that is cryptographically signed and cannot be changed.

“There can be no dispute whether a transaction happened or not, when it happened and who the money, for example, is transferred to,” Kibbe said. “It makes it a way for people who may have never met each other, or do not necessarily trust each other, doing business with a system where they system provides the trust rather than the individuals.”

The best way to find out what jobs are out there for students is to reach out to local businesses and lawmakers, Collins said. The MCC program has received interest from state legislators who want to see more students trained on blockchain technology, she said.

“It’s going to be innovative, active and inspirational to everyone,” Collins said. “That’s also because we ask questions. We don’t assume that a corporation is going to want something. We have them come in and work with us.”

Dr. Angeline Surber, program director for multimedia and game technology at MCC, said she expects a lot of exciting new programs to be available in the next few years at the new IT Institute, which is located in the Mesa Downtown Center at 145 North Centennial Way.



Surber has been teaching at MCC for 18 years and now teaches the Apple app development course. The ability to get innovative training in technology, coding and app development at 85 dollars per credit hour creates “fantastic” affordability, Surber said.

“I think the focus is not only about transferring our class credits to universities, but the focus is also we want students to get jobs,” Surber said. “And the big focus is to get industry to kind of partner, and government to partner, with the college so that we can get our students immediately employed.”

The MCCCIT Institute will occupy the second floor of the Downtown Center until a permanent location is chosen, Collins said. Program [registration is open now](#), and faculty urge anyone who is interested to sign up immediately, as classes fill up quickly. MCC classes start August 18 and August 25, and the next set of classes at the Downtown Center begins on October 15.

“This is just the beginning,” Collins said. “We feel so committed to being in downtown Mesa. We have the support of the mayor, and just being able to be close to the light rail and all the action that’s going on there, and the students are excited and engaged about this too. It’s something we’re looking forward to doing.”



Graham Bosch

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