

The gift of education: MCC alumnus Wayne Balmer creates scholarship endowment

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MESA, Arizona -- March 11, 2021 -- A \$115,000 gift from MCC alumnus and current student Wayne Balmer, through the Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation, benefits Mesa Community College Exercise Science students.

Typically, endowments must mature for three years to establish the interest used for scholarships. Wishing to help students sooner, Balmer added an additional \$15,000 to his gift, covering \$5,000 in scholarships for each of the three years prior to the endowment maturing.

“Seeing so many students struggling financially, I established scholarships last spring to help them pursue their dreams. The pandemic has added a layer of difficulty for community college students, many who are raising families or working multiple jobs to make ends meet,” said Balmer. “Now I’m establishing the endowment to ensure long-term support of exercise science students.”

The first five \$1,000 scholarships are being awarded this academic year to assist students with expenses for the spring and fall semesters. Five additional scholarships are being awarded for the next two academic years while the endowment matures. Scholarship applications are reviewed by a committee during the spring semester, with the Foundation awarding the top candidates.

Balmer’s lifelong learning journey with MCC began in the early 1990s when he was the Community Development Manager for the City of Mesa. He says he studied to refresh his mind and focus on something besides his job, choosing classes of interest that fit into his work and life schedule. Named Williams Gateway area manager in 2001, Balmer used the knowledge learned while earning a Certificate in International Business to establish a foreign trade zone, attracting business investors to the project.

Throughout his career, which culminated in 2014 when he retired as planning administrator for the Town of Queen Creek, he took online courses in a vast array of topics such as sociology, death management, human resources and marriage/family therapy. He has served on the MCC Commission on Excellence in Education since 2004.

With five associate’s degrees and 10 certificates, Balmer is still enjoying classes for knowledge and fun. This semester he is taking a ceramics class and Workplace Communication Skills.

Balmer’s dedication to MCC and its students is being recognized on April 7, 2021, when he is being honored as the MCC Hero of Education during the Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation Heroes of Education celebration.

In selecting him for the honor, Christos Chronis, MCC chief development officer, said, “Wayne is a shining example of our mission of teaching and learning. We are eternally grateful for his continued friendship, service and charitable support.”

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Mesa Community College is nationally recognized as an Aspen Prize Top 150 U.S. Community College and is known for service learning, career and technical programs, civic engagement and innovative approaches to education. For more than 50 years, the college has served as a resource for career readiness, transfer education, workforce development and lifelong learning. Host to more than 30,000 students annually, MCC offers degree and certificate programs at its two campuses, additional locations and a combination of online formats. Through Guided Pathways with Integrated Support Services and a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, MCC is transforming how it champions student success, college completion, university transfer and career attainment and advancement. MCC is a Hispanic Serving Institution and nearly 50% of its students are the first in their families to attend college. Its American Indian Institute serves students from the 22 federally recognized tribes of Arizona as well as out-of-state tribes. MCC has the largest indigenous student population of all the Maricopa Community Colleges. The diverse student body includes more than 300 international students from 55 countries. Award-winning faculty are dedicated to student success, providing the education and training that empowers MCC students to successfully transfer to a university or compete in the workforce. Located in the East Valley of Phoenix, Arizona, on the traditional territories of the O’odham, Piipaash and Yavapai Peoples, MCC is one of 10 colleges in the Maricopa County Community College District. Visit mesacc.edu to learn more.

MCC is accredited by the [Higher Learning Commission \(HLC\), hlcommission.org](http://Higher Learning Commission (HLC), hlcommission.org).

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