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the Bulletin

MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

New Physical Science building



Preview the new Physical Science building slated for construction next semester on MCC's Southern and Dobson campus by clicking on the PowerPoint presentation below. Money from the 2004 Bond initiative and collaboration between the Physical Science and Health and Wellness Departments make the construction of this building possible.

"This building will be a landmark for the entire campus, with interesting scenic features," said Jerry Davis, Vice President of Administrative Services. "MCC faculty have worked very well with designers and architects to get the most bang for the buck."

February 2007 is the deadline for the completion of construction documents and the groundbreaking is anticipated to occur in April. The building will be located on the west side of campus, just south of the Life Science building, where the gated employee parking lot is currently located. The employee parking lot will be relocated to the south.

The new building is designed to encourage student/faculty interaction and be adaptable to a variety of learning and teaching styles. The design keeps learning spaces, offices, and support areas for all disciplines in the same building. A planetarium is also incorporated into the plan.

The architectural design of the building provides sun and shade areas, with a seam metal roof and metal shade screen devices. The area surrounding the building will have an astronomy plaza with a drop-off pedestrian area, a front porch, a shaded gateway, and an outreach avenue.

Mystery of Circlestone

A team of MCC staff and students ventured deep into the heart of the Superstition Mountain Wilderness Area earlier this year as part of a quest to research the mysterious Circlestone Ruin. Preliminary research showed that locals had speculated for years on the origin and use of the ancient stone circle. Was it a trading center? A ceremonial structure? A celestial observatory? Armed with tools to collect surface data for a Geographic Information System (GIS) map of the ruin, the team hiked eight miles into the wilderness to learn as much as they could about Circlestone.

"This is an exciting project mixes mythology and science together," said Bruce Peterson, a speech communication instructor at MCC's Red Mountain campus who originated the Circlestone Undergraduate Research Project in 2003.

Circlestone lies about 35 miles east from MCC's Red Mountain campus, geographically placed near the highest point in the Superstition Mountains, Mound Mountain, at 6,010 feet. Bruce said it's possible to view downtown Phoenix on a clear day from the ruin. Circlestone is 136 feet in diameter, with walls 3 feet thick made of dry-stacked sandstone and 5 feet high in the highest sections.

The first documented account of Circlestone was in 1984 by Tom Kollenborn, an Apache Junction teacher who explored the area. Bruce said the early maps of Circlestone that were made with a compass were very accurate, but with today's more sophisticated

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GIS technology, the MCC team was able to produce more accurate maps that clearly showed the structure to have an astronomical alignment.

“Previously it was hard to say the site was used as a calendar, but with the GIS mapping system, it turns out that it measures the solar year,” Bruce said.

The mystery is not entirely solved, however, because they still don’t know who built it or when. Bruce said the theory is that the Hohokam Indians built Circlestone, but it would take an archeological dig to prove it. The probability of a dig is highly unlikely because of funding and the difficulty of digging in such a remote wilderness area.

The Circlestone project team, funded by a Maricopa Center for Learning and Instruction (MCLI) Grant, has no future plans to make any more trips into the wilderness area, but Bruce continues to guide students as they produce maps from recent findings and collect historical data that they publish on the Circlestone website at <http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/~vocewld/circlestone>. The Circlestone map set is also on display on the second floor of the Palo Verde building of the Red Mountain campus.

Bruce calls the Circlestone expedition and project “a tremendous success” thanks to the students and the assistance of MCC biology instructor Dennis Wilson, who hiked in with the students to the remote area. The success of the project has spurred efforts to begin more undergraduate research projects at the Red Mountain campus.

“This is an extremely unique opportunity for community college students,” Bruce said. “To be able to do undergraduate research that contributes to science is something you can’t usually do unless you are at a university.”



President’s Fall Luncheon explores enrollment trends

Faced with its second year of lower enrollment, MCC employees explored contributing factors and population trends at President Christiansen’s fall luncheon.

According to MCC’s Office for Research and Planning, data show that despite population growth, colleges throughout the Western United States are experiencing flat or declining enrollments. Among the factors contributing to the decline are a strong economy, low unemployment rates, demographic changes, increasing competition, and increasing tuition.

As MCC looks to the future, variables to consider include slower population growth projections for the East Valley than Maricopa County and Arizona, significant increases in the boomer and senior populations, and a growing Hispanic population. In addition, the composition of MCC’s student population is changing, showing an increase in the number of younger, transfer, and Hispanic students. There are decreases in older students and students attending for career-related reasons or personal interest.

Attendees were asked to consider how the information influences MCC’s strategic planning, enrollment management, program development, and marketing. Ideas ranged from reaching out to

Hispanics and baby boomers to expanding MCC online and more flexibility in access and choices.

To view the presentation prepared by the Office of Research and Planning, visit <http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/about/orp/briefs/documents/EnrollmantandpopulationtrendsMCC.pdf>.

“My desire is to look into new technologies and make people aware of them as I find them,” Keith said. “It connects so many different departments—Disability Resources, Dance, Theatre, and so on. But mostly this project is for students to have access to expressing themselves through art and movement.”

MCC student Scott Redman’s fascination with the technology is apparent as he moves his hands back and forth toward the sensors.

“The barriers are down,” said Scott, who has epilepsy and mental retardation. “You’re free—you’re out of the box.”

—Attend the Soundbeam Concert on Dec. 4 at noon in the Navajo Room of the Kirk Student Center.

Red Mountain groups focus on future



Jo Wilson

As MCC's Red Mountain campus passes its five-year milestone, the college reaches out to employee groups and student groups to provide input on a shared vision for the future. Both the Red Mountain Employee Council and the Red Mountain Student Advisory Group are working to examine and take action on campus-wide issues.

Jo Wilson, Red Mountain's Dean of Instruction, said the Employee Council serves as a voice for the

Red Mountain campus.

"The council is a group that identifies issues—the bigger picture and the little details—in a way that brings together the campus and allows it to be heard collectively," Jo said.

Each employee group is represented in a leadership role, with Patrick O'Brien as council chair and Emily Dimson as chair-elect. The council works with the administration to provide leadership on issues such as defining what it means to be an environmental campus, implementing the campus recycling program, and providing input to the campus strategic plan.

"The council was already in existence, but it's just beginning to jell into a strong force," Jo said. "They are truly beginning to be engaged in strategic planning and directions the college will take."

A Red Mountain Student Advisory Group that began in September is also stepping up to provide student input on some of the same issues addressed by the Employee Council. Joni Grover, Red Mountain's Dean of Student Affairs, said the purpose of forming the group is to gain valuable insight into initiatives directly affecting students.



Joni Grover

"The overarching goal is to engage students in experiential learning beyond the classroom and to get them involved in various aspects of campus learning," said Joni, who facilitates the group. "A good example of this was the discussion topic of buildings at our last meeting. Their feedback was shared with our campus dean, Jo Wilson, for inclusion in new building planning."

Ideas from the student group meeting in October included building more flexible, environmentally conscious classrooms, using art in functional ways, and providing more shady areas for students to congregate with venues for bands and entertainment.

The group will meet at least twice an academic year, with upcoming topics such as the new Student Information System and other initiatives.

SIS "Go-Live" Date Set

The District Project Team for the new Student Information System (SIS) has provided the colleges with a tentative "go-live" schedule for deployment in October 2007. The proposed schedule will require approximately 100 hours of system downtime from Thurs., Oct. 4, 2007 through Monday, October 8, 2007. This will allow for data conversion and acceptance testing. During downtime, Legacy SIS (our current system) may be in read-only status (no changes can be made). If needed, the emergency contingency plan is to restore Legacy SIS to end users if the deployment is not successful.



Sentinels to the East



Sculpture by Joan Waters

A collaborative effort to beautify the southeast corner of campus near the welding building is beginning to take shape. At the center of the project is a welded steel sculpture of three tree-like pillars that branch out into slotted leaf forms through which light passes to form patterns upon the ground. Local artist Joan Waters created the sculpture, “Sentinels to

the East,” when she was a student at MCC as part of a 2004 Innovative Grant project with welding instructor Rod Hammil.

Now classes from MCC’s technology department are taking it to the next step by enhancing the sculpture area with a concrete base, student seating, and landscaping.

“The one grant served as a springboard for all of the different classes to design the area,” Joan said.

This semester, MCC instructor Ford Doran’s landscape construction class poured concrete to form a decorative base around the sculpture. A curved brick section surrounds part of the round base.

“It gives students an area to sit and a place to show off the sculpture,” Ford said. “We wanted to compliment the color and form of the sculpture.”

Plans are in the works for next semester’s landscaping class to install irrigation so plants can be added to the area. In the future, a decorative metal screen may be created and installed to cover up an unattractive electrical transformer box.

Joan said she created the sculpture to serve as sort of a watchtower or guardian that would watch over the campus. The leafy top part suggests the growth of the campus.

Joan, who originally did her undergraduate studies at the Maryland Institute College of Art, said taking a welding metal sculpture class at MCC spurred her own growth as an artist. As she sweated in the heat with her welding helmet, long gloves, and flame-retardant jacket, she admits she didn’t like the class at first. But she soon discovered that the art she created through painting and drawing could be translated to metal.

“When I took the welding class, it transformed my career and brought attention to my work,” said Joan, who has been a full-time artist for the past six years. “The class contained a variety of artists from all walks of life and everyone learned from each other.”

Another of Joan’s sculptures, “Carried Away,” is currently on display as part of downtown Mesa’s Sculpture in the Streets exhibit. Joan was also chosen to create an installation for the Burton Barr Library in Phoenix and her work is in numerous public and private collections in the Scottsdale/Phoenix area and on the East Coast.