

## Luis Ellis Fosters MCC Student Success With Minority Male Programs and Advising

Growing up in Panama, Luis Ellis brings rich multicultural and bilingual experiences to his academic advisor position in the Mesa Community College Office of Multicultural and ESL Services. As a staff liaison for the Black Student Union, the Male Empowerment Network and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, he serves as a role model, mentor and friendly face on campus.

Ellis moved to the United States and attended Mesa Community College pursuing engineering. But, a conversation with then Associate Dean Gordon Benson plus a work-study stint in advising made him realize that helping people succeed, especially students in higher education, was his calling.

He earned his bachelor's in social work from Arizona State University and, while keeping in touch with staff and faculty at MCC, served six years in the United States Army in Bosnia, Croatia, Germany and Kuwait.

With notable bilingual skills, he became an academic advisor at Gateway Community College, wearing many hats such as interim coordinator of the Achieving a College Education program (ACE) and co-advisor of the Hispanic Student Association. Earning a Master of Education, he began working at MCC as a college recruiter, but soon returned to the advisement arena, where he says he has the greatest impact on student success. Along the way, the Maricopa County Community College District launched the Minority Male Initiative.

"It was based on national and local data that minority men were not going to college at the same rate as their female counterparts," he said. "At Gateway, we had created a Minority Male Program that brought in college students and also young men from the high school on campus. It wasn't as structured as the program but our philosophy was it takes a village."

Today, Ellis spearheads a program at MCC that has been structured throughout the Maricopa



MCC Student Nathan Glover (left) receives some one-on-one mentoring from Luis Ellis.

Community Colleges as the Male Empowerment Network (MEN).

He explained, "Each college has a chapter, working toward the goal of providing a support system for our male students, letting them know they count and we do care about their success. A lot of times, guys don't think it is right to ask for help, so we are dispelling that myth and showing them it is fine to talk about what resources they might need."

In addition to the annual February conference, there are MEN mixers open to all males on campus, seminars and individual mentoring. Working with the ACE program, MEN at MCC is reaching out the high schools.


MEN social functions are often inspirational. Ellis pointed out a trip to a Diamondbacks game that included meeting with one of the D-back staff. The team employee talked about the persistence it took to get such an inter-


esting job and emphasized that the friends and contacts you make in college are part of a network that can help you land a dream job.

Ellis says advising students is a job he finds very rewarding. For a "people person" like him, there is true satisfaction in helping potential and current students successfully navigate higher education at MCC and beyond.

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