

New Degree Program Prepares Students for Careers in Sustainable Agriculture

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Mesa, AZ (PRWEB) December 23, 2015

December 22, 2015 -- Beginning with the spring 2016 semester Mesa Community College will offer an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Sustainable Agriculture, the first of its kind in Arizona.

The Sustainable Agriculture degree will provide students with both the technical and small business skills needed to manage or develop a small farm or agricultural business. The program is focused on small scale and urban agriculture with an emphasis on natural practices and sustainability. Courses include Field Crop Production, Livestock Production, Aquaponics, Integrated Pest Management and Agricultural Marketing to name a few.

This degree is different from the certificate and degree programs in Sustainable Food Systems in that students gain hands-on experience in sustainable agricultural practices in the classroom and a working urban farm at the Center for Urban Agriculture. Produce is sold at the MCC Farmer's Market and the excess is given to local food banks.

"In response to an explosion in consumer demand for locally grown food, many existing local farms are expanding and new ones are cropping up around the valley. Our goal is to prepare a highly skilled, trained workforce and new entrepreneurs for this growing field," said Peter Conden, Director of MCC's Urban Horticulture and Sustainable Agriculture programs (<https://www.mesacc.edu/programs/urban-horticulture>).

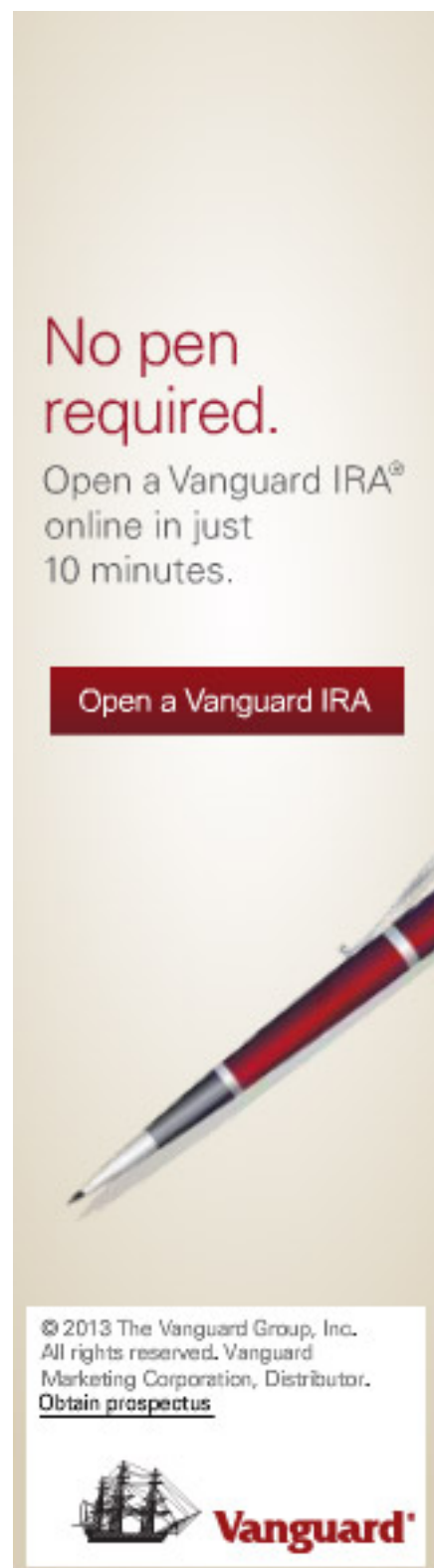
Conden is passionate about his work at the college and reports concerns about the origins of his own food, sustainability, managing resources, and pollution of the soil and groundwater. "Our program is based on organic and natural production methods," he adds.

Seed money for the program came from a 2014 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) education grant of \$108,000 which included a 25-percent match from MCC. "With assistance from the EPA grant we were able to write new courses, rewrite old courses, purchase equipment, and put this new program together," noted Conden.

At the MCC Center for Urban Agriculture, students are able to take classes and receive hands-on, real life experience working on the college's urban farm and greenhouse.

Registration for the spring semester is open. Visit <http://www.mesacc.edu/spring> (<http://www.mesacc.edu/spring>) to sign up for classes.


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Contacts

Dawn Zimmer, 480-461-7892, dawn.zimmer(at)mesacc.edu

Sally Mesarosh, 480-461-7283, sally.mesarosh(at)mesacc.edu

Mesa Community College is nationally recognized for its service-learning, civic engagement and innovative educational programs, which include university transfer, career and technical, workforce development, and life-long learning. Host to 40,000 students annually, MCC offers more than 195 degrees and certificate programs at its two campuses and additional locations. MCC's student body hails predominantly from the East Valley of Phoenix and includes Veteran, American Indian and International students who enrich the learning experience. Award-winning faculty are dedicated to student success providing the education and training that empowers MCC students to compete locally and globally. Celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2015, MCC is one of 10 colleges that comprise the Maricopa County Community College District. The District also includes the Maricopa Corporate College and two skill centers. For additional information, visit mesacc.edu.

Mesa Community College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) 800-621-7440.

The Maricopa County Community College District is an EEO/AA institution and an equal opportunity employer of protected veterans and individuals with disabilities.

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