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EPA Awards \$81,600 to Mesa Community College for Innovative Center for Urban Agriculture

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SAN FRANCISCO – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded an environmental education grant of \$81,600 to Mesa Community College for the development of a cutting-edge "Center for Urban Agriculture" program which will include a degree program, urban farm site and engaging local elementary schools.

The Center for Urban Agriculture will partner with high schools, universities, industry, and communities. The program at Mesa Community College will serve as a model which can be replicated at sites across the state. Participants in the program will learn to utilize open spaces, abandoned lots, and suitable brownfield sites in the Greater Phoenix area to produce and eat healthy foods, reduce air and water pollution, reduce the urban heat island effect, establish and run profitable businesses, and beautify their neighborhoods.

"This environmental education effort will teach employable skills to students and enable them to become environmental stewards," said Jared Blumenfeld, EPA's Regional Administrator for the Pacific Southwest. "The hands on experience that Mesa Community College students will receive is unparalleled and will serve as a model for similar institutions nationwide."

"We are truly excited to have this unique opportunity to partner with the U.S. EPA on developing a Center for Urban Agriculture Program at Mesa Community College," said Dr. Shouan Pan, President, Mesa Community College. "This model program promises to promote environmental education and advance a growing industry."

Approximately 50 students will enroll in the Sustainable Urban Agriculture certificate and Associate in Applied Science degree program that will utilize an urban farm site and aquaponics in greenhouse classrooms and gardens. Mesa Community College plans to conduct 20 environmental education workshops for 500 community members. In addition, by taking 10 college-level courses, K-8th grade teachers can acquire an environmental education expertise for their professional development.

The EPA Environmental Education Model Grants Program supports environmental education projects that increase the public's awareness about environmental issues and provide them with the skills to take responsible actions to protect the environment. The EPA Pacific Southwest Regional Office received over 80 applications this year, and the Mesa Community College project is one of two projects in the Pacific Southwest Region that received an environmental education grant.

For more information, please visit: <http://www2.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>

For more information on Mesa Community College, please visit: <http://www.mesacc.edu/>

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