

NEWS BY YOU

## MCC mentor program helps new students

*Submitted by Mesa Community College spokeswoman Angela Askey.*

An innovative mentoring program, started last fall at Mesa Community College, matches incoming students with an MCC employee who will spend one-on-one time with them as they pursue a degree at the college.

MCC executive assistant Janet Felton said the program was developed as a result of a challenge issued by MCC President Shouan Pan in response to President Barack Obama's 2009 challenge to increase college completion rates.

Pan was concerned about the fall 2010 statistics, which showed that 69 percent (4,337 of 6,252 testing) of all new MCC students tested into at least one developmental course (reading, writing, or math) and 31 percent tested into two or more. Statistics also showed that 11,786 students (45 percent of those enrolled in fall 2010) were first-generation students.

"Most first-generation students are often underprepared and entering college is a daunting experience for them," Felton said. "This program provides assistance to make sure they have a

smooth transition to the community college process.

The Connect 4 Success program is a voluntary program for students enrolled in two developmental classes in a semester, with students having the option to forgo the services. Mentors are randomly matched to a student and asked to attend an orientation and meet with their student at least six times per semester. Mentors provide support and guidance in whatever the student wishes to focus on.

The pilot program in fall 2011 had 224 students eligible, with 149 who participated. At the end of the semester, participants had a 74 percent completion rate for the developmental English class, compared with non-participants who had a 55 percent completion rate. In developmental math, there was a 60 percent completion rate compared with a 30 percent completion rate of non-participants.

Participants in the program also tended to stay and enroll for spring classes, improving retention rates, with 76 percent who completed classes registering for Spring 2012.