

NOVEMBER 14, 2006

# the Bulletin

MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

## MCC Steps up Sustainability Efforts



*MCC's Steve Bass, City of Mesa's Kelli Collins, and MCC's Ron Dinchak discuss environmental issues at Green Group meeting.*

Dumpster dives, solar power demos, plastic recycling, native plant gardens, and waterless urinals are a few of the new projects that show an increased interest in environmental and sustainability initiatives on both Mesa Community College campuses.

“If you start to sense there’s a new energy, there is—new folks are stepping up,” said MCC geography instructor Steve Bass at a recent Green Group meeting that included students, staff, faculty, and administrators.

Ongoing projects at the Southern and Dobson campus include:

- \* A campus “dumpster dive” to analyze what percent of trash is recyclable.
- \* A solar demonstration project on Social and the Cultural Science building.
- \* Carpool parking spaces for employees and students who register for the travel reduction program.
- \* A pilot program to recycle plastic beverage containers in Social/Cultural Science and Life Science buildings.
- \* Environmentally responsible materials for new buildings and remodeling projects—paint, carpet, and fabrics with low volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
- \* The Student Environmental Action Club.

Ongoing projects at the Red Mountain campus include:

- \* A newly formed Environmental Focus group to address long-term sustainability.
- \* Annual desert clean-ups with faculty, staff, and students.

- \* A Desert Awareness Trail with interpretive signage for over 60 plant species.
- \* A Fitness Trail to promote desert awareness and fitness.
- \* A native plant garden incorporating water harvesting by Rosewood Building.
- \* The Student Outdoor Adventure Club.

Richard Cluff, director of facilities at MCC’s Southern and Dobson campus, is organizing the “dumpster dive” on Nov. 17 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Volunteers will sort through all waste collected for a 24-hour period to analyze what percent of volume is recyclable. Appropriate safety attire will be available and efforts to collaborate with student groups are underway.

“We spend over \$20,000 a year in dumping fees,” Richard said. “This would enable people to take a look at what goes into the landfill and show how much more we could recycle.”

He emphasized that the first concern is the environment, but the additional benefit is the savings. Right now both campuses have limited recycling programs, with cardboard and paper bins. The Red Mountain campus also recycles light bulbs by taking them to a Phoenix recycling center. Efforts to educate the staff and students could lead to more comprehensive programs and more efficient logistics to handle the recyclables.

Also in the works is the installation of waterless urinals that use a cartridge instead of water. Richard’s department will install waterless urinals in one of the restrooms in the Kirk Student Center, which will serve as a beta test site to examine the effectiveness.

The Green Group and the Sustainability Community of the Faculty and Professional Learning Communities Program are planning other initiatives, including the development of an MCC Environmental Studies Certificate that would consist of 15 credit hours of courses and a service project guided by a faculty member.

Contact Steve Bass if your building would like to participate in the pilot plastic recycling program or about any of these initiatives at (480) 461-7075 or by email at [bass@mail.mc.maricopa.edu](mailto:bass@mail.mc.maricopa.edu).

Contact Richard Cluff for more information about the Dumpster Dive at (480) 461-7095. Contact Paul Harasha at (480) 654-7729 or Yvonne Schmidt at (480) 654-7703 for more information about Red Mountain’s Environmental Focus group.

## Interactive Music Project

When MCC student Kim Wing steps toward two ultrasonic sensors with outstretched arms, she looks as though she is ready to conduct an orchestra. But there are no musicians or instruments—Kim creates the music with her own physical movements.

Kim, who has a number of disabilities including cerebral palsy and mental retardation, says being able to experience music in this way makes her feel free.

“It’s like I’m in another world,” Kim said. “My disabilities aren’t in the way. There’s no one telling you how to act or feel. You’re acting how you feel.”

Kim is part of an interactive music project for students with disabilities that uses a device called Soundbeam. MCC’s music technology teacher Keith Heffner heads up the pilot program, with assistance from disability resources employee Thomas Kusek. Heffner said he is always looking for ways to be more inclusive and expand music opportunities for disabled students.

“Soundbeam is very accessible,” said Keith. “It gives the students opportunities to experience music and express themselves through movement.”

Soundbeam is a device that converts physical movements into sound by using information from interruptions of ultrasonic pulses. Keith sets up two sensors that generate ultrasonic frequencies and when the field is broken with movement, it creates a trigger effect that translates into a MIDI (musical instrument digital interface) event that controls notes on a synthesizer.

Keith is able to determine the length of the beam, set up different scales, and choose background tracks to accompany the student’s creation. He can adjust the sensors so wheelchair-bound students can make music with chair movements. Soundbeam also has devices that allow music to be felt as well as heard.

Keith, who received an MCC Innovative Grant to fund the project, said he is excited to introduce the device to other faculty members and will be available to teach other departments how to use Soundbeam. As faculty become more familiar with the system, the music department can create projects that partner with other departments, including Physical Education, Dance, Theatre, Art, and Communications.



*Kim Wing dances to music from the "Soundbeam" as Keith Heffner watches.*



“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.

## Alumni give back

Each year, numerous Mesa Community College alumni give back to the community by generously sharing their talent and expertise. MCC alumni offer their skills in a variety of different ways, whether it's volunteering, mentoring students, or serving on the board of the MCC Alumni Association.

Marcy Snitzer, MCC's Coordinator of Alumni Relations and Communications, said MCC has the largest number of alumni in the Maricopa County Community College District, with 69 percent of more than 63,000 alumni living in Maricopa County. Alumni are some of MCC's most effective advocates, sharing their positive experiences to promote the college.

Alumni participation shows up in a variety of places at MCC. In last year's music and theatre productions, MCC alumni wrote and/or directed three MCC theatre acts and one musical. Former students served as teachers and mentors to current MCC students.

Here's a list of just a few active alumni who can spotted helping with campus activities:



Debbie Hunt and Anthony Occhiuzzi

- Frank Morales, who has volunteered as a Spanish medical interpreter at local medical clinics and now teaches beginning Spanish at MCC. Frank created the Barbara McGaughey scholarship for MCC nursing students.

- Emmett J. Ronan and David Udall, two MCC alumni who are judges of the Maricopa County Superior Court. This fall, Ronan and Udall are participating in a series of community forums at MCC and other community colleges around the Valley talking about their experience on the bench.

- Diana Occhiuzzi, who teaches design at Tempe's Corona del Sol High School and is a professional interior designer. Diana currently serves as Chair of the MCC Alumni Association Board.

MCC's Alumni Association supports events such as Homecoming and has created an awards and recognition program. Last year MCC alumni held their first fundraising drive for student scholarships.

The association is dedicated to finding new ways to engage alumni for the benefit of the college and is currently looking at ways to survey the alumni to more affectively identify areas of expertise. Several projects are under development to make even more use of alumni skills, including the MCC Speakers Bureau, one-on-one mentoring, shadow days, and student internship opportunities.



Diana Occhiuzzi

For Nancy Langdon, who earned an associate degree at MCC in 2000, connecting with students is the reason she returns to MCC. "I like the opportunity to talk to business students and give them advice," said Nancy, who has mentored a student and participated in shadow day. "I tell them about my experiences and point out the opportunities they have at MCC."

Marcy said many of the alumni she works with say they like to feel connected to the college and many remember their time at MCC fondly.

"There's a perception that our alumni who transfer will have a stronger affiliation to the where they received their bachelor's degrees, but a lot of alumni say that their first experience in college is what they remember most," Marcy said.

Since alumni often stay in touch with MCC faculty, the alumni office encourages faculty and staff to provide updates about former students to the alumni office. Faculty and staff may also nominate an outstanding MCC alum for the Alumni Achievement Award. Applications are reviewed based on the individual's professional accomplishments and service to their professions and communities. Awardees will be honored in the spring. Information about the nomination process is available at [www.mc.maricopa.edu/alumni](http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/alumni) or by calling the Office of Alumni Relations at 480-461-7792. Nominations are due January 8, 2007.

## Student Outcomes Assessment Update



Assessment Week 2007 is  
February 26 to March 3.

The MCC Faculty Senate Student Outcomes Committee (SOC) is busy examining results from the 2006 student outcomes assessment and setting goals to use the assessment results to improve student learning and measurement tools. Last spring 3,000 general education students took four general education assessments in Information Literacy,

Numeracy, Problem Solving, and Scientific Inquiry. In addition, a group of students enrolled in Career and Technical programs participated in the workplace skills assessment.

Assessment results showed significant differences between the beginning and completing students in all assessment areas. Critical thinking scores are significantly higher for completing students and are similar to the community college comparison cohort. Students were relatively skilled in the use of numeric models, evaluating information for currency, relevancy, and reliability, and distinguishing between possible reasons for a problem. More difficult outcome areas include using results, making conclusions based upon information, making inferences, and using information effectively.

Sam Martinez, English faculty member and SOC Chair, said the more challenging outcome areas cut across all curriculum subjects.

“Faculty might think about these results when submitting proposals for Results Outreach Committee grants,” Sam said.

Last year, the Results Outreach Committee (ROC) sponsored several projects addressing assessment results, including an information literacy workshop series and a workshop to apply brain research to writing instruction.

For 2006-07, SOC hopes to increase awareness and communication to faculty about college assessment, SOC/ROC events and general assessment issues. More communication with students about assessment issues is also a goal.

The development of a new assessment for global learning is a new proposal for the committee this year. Shereen Lerner submitted a written proposal containing the rationale for exploring global learning as a general education outcome and SOC has approved exploring the outcome. This is the first use of the new process for adding outcomes that was drafted by the committee last year.

The SOC committee also discussed other ways of disseminating assessment results. The dates for Assessment Week in 2007 are Feb. 26 to March 3.

ROC grant proposals are due in the spring and faculty can contact Sam Martinez at 480-461-7502 for details.