

MESA Milestones

Featuring momentous affairs of the MESA program at Allan Hancock College

Spring 2023

MESA Statewide Student Leadership Conference Returns

by Christine Reed, MESA/STEM Academic Success Center Counselor/Coordinator

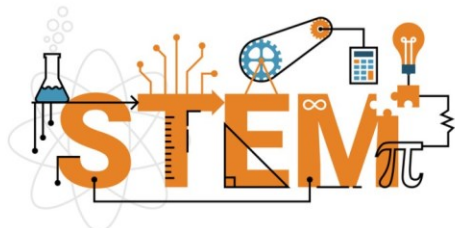
For many years, MESA Statewide provided MESA students across the state the opportunity to spend a weekend at Happy Valley Conference Center in the hills of Santa Cruz. Located in the majestic redwoods, the conference center offers groups a “retreat” and opportunity to focus their activities and experiences around their mission. This fun-filled, learning weekend is designed by the California Community College MESA Directors and engages students in STEM challenges, competitions, learning opportunities, and community-building projects. There is hiking, relaxing, eating, studying, and other activities students can do in between structured experiences. It literally is like going to summer camp over a weekend.



AHC has sent a group of five student each year since 2002 – the group typically chaperoned by the MESA Director, staff member, or a STEM faculty or dean. Since 2020 (you can guess why), this MESA Student Leadership Conference has been cancelled. We are so excited that it has returned this spring!



On March 31, a group of four AHC MESA/STEM students attended this year’s conference accompanied by Math Professor Chris Eachus (and former AHC MESA student!). We are so excited to have our students be able to re-engage in this invaluable developmental experience again!



Creating a More Hopeful Future

by Mariel Dawson, MESA/STEM student, Plant and Soil Science, transferring to Cal Poly, SLO fall 2023



My educational path has had a lot of rough and bumpy patches. I started my college career in 2007 back in New Jersey where I was born and raised. During my first year at community college our family suffered the tragic loss of my younger brother who was killed in a drunk driving accident. Eventually I decided I needed a big change and came out to California for a fresh start, living with my aunt and uncle in Ventura. I established residency in California, found my own apartment, and decided to go back to school at Ventura County College.

However, in 2015 I was diagnosed with severe Fibromyalgia, CFS (chronic fatigue syndrome), and IBS. These health issues made everyday life, like continuing going to school, studying, working, and even being social, almost impossible. I could no longer sustain normal activity; this was the first time I experienced housing insecurity because working even a part time was challenging. I was unable to keep up with my rent and became homeless, living in my truck. In the last decade I've experienced homelessness

twice, it was hard and scary not having a safe place to be every night.

Eventually, through a long healing journey, I began to gain some of my health and strength back. I found a place in Santa Maria where I could live with a few friends. For the first time in a long time I had a safe place to sleep and I was gaining my energy back. During the pandemic I realized that I had an opportunity to go back to college. I registered for the spring 2021 semester at Allan Hancock. I was immediately drawn to the Agriculture Plant Science major, but I was skeptical at my ability to become a science student. Science classes had never my strong suite but I had a desire to learn.

This new educational path has shown me my own deep interest in learning science, especially chemistry, and I have discovered that I am capable of succeeding in STEM courses. I have also been very fortunate in finding several mentors here at Allan Hancock that have believed in me and supported me along the way. Their encouragement and care made everything a little less challenging and more hopeful. This journey has taught me a lot about believing in myself and seeing my own self-worth. I never imagined that I would be seeking a degree in STEM, let alone be transferring this fall to Cal Poly SLO to study Plant and Soil Science!

Getting this far has been an enormous challenge, filled with days when I did not think I could make it; but through perseverance and determination I have been able to come through it all stronger than ever. These academic accomplishments are helping to ensure a more hopeful future for myself, one with financial and housing security. Eventually, I want to use my education to be able to give back to my community, especially those who are also facing homelessness or housing insecurities. My future is looking brighter than ever, and I am excited for where this next chapter of life will take me, and how I can eventually give back.

Don't delay! Now is the time to invest your time and energy into securing 2023/2024 scholarships and summer 2023 internships! See the links below and learn about securing scholarships and internships – two invaluable components of a STEM education.

<https://www.hancockcollege.edu/mesa/Scholarship.php>

<https://www.hancockcollege.edu/mesa/MESAinters.php>

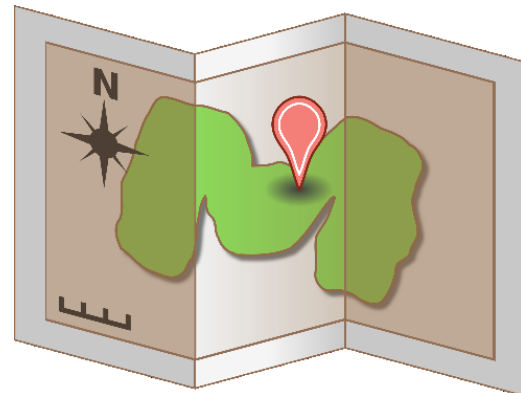


The only thing standing between you and scholarships/internships is your effort to make it happen. If you need help, see your MESA/STEM Centers for assistance. Make it happen for yourself. You will never regret it!

Check Out Our STEM Maps!

by Angelica Eulloqui, MESA/STEM Academic Success Center Counselor

The AHC STEM maps are a great tool for students to learn about the various degree options that can be accomplished at the college. The college provides local AHC degrees and/or Associates Degrees for transfer in all STEM areas. We have developed STEM maps that provide comprehensive information regarding the requirements needed to complete a STEM degree and transfer to a 4-year university. STEM maps help student stay informed and on-track. Since there is not a transfer degree in engineering available, we have created engineering maps that are designed to ensure that students complete all of the required coursework at AHC in order to be as competitive as possible to Cal Poly, SLO. Although the STEM maps are a great resource we encourage that all STEM students meet with MESA/STEM Counselors, Christine Reed or Angelica Eulloqui to develop a comprehensive student education plan that is catered to the student's major and university transfer goals.



Map are available at <https://www.hancockcollege.edu/pathways/index.php>

Anxiously Awaiting the Future

by Santiago Vargas, MESA/STEM student, Chemical Engineering, transferring to UC fall 2023

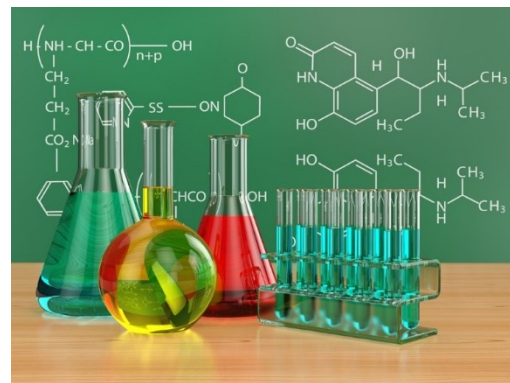


Ever since I took my first chemistry class in high school, I knew I wanted to have a chemistry-related career. My chemistry teacher in high school was a chemical and process engineer before beginning to teach at a high school. I wanted to model my path as he did, but I thought going down the engineering route would be too difficult. Back then, when I heard the word engineer, I thought of really smart people, people smarter than me, and even though I was smart myself, I wasn't confident enough to go down the engineering path.

When it came time to apply at Hancock, I chose the Chemistry for Transfer major with the goal of being a chemist, not because that is what I wanted to do, but because it was the easiest path for me to take and have a chemistry-related career. I was unsure of how things would turn out in the future because being a chemist to me wasn't exactly exciting. I didn't like being in a lab environment and just thinking of making a career in that was something that I didn't look forward to, so I ignored the future and tried to just focus and do well in school.

I did well in my first year at Hancock but was not able to get the number of A's that I had set as a goal for the year. In the fall of my second year, I met a friend who was also very interested in the chemistry field, except she was taking the engineering route in chemistry. I thought that was very cool and so I asked to see what her Student Education Plan looked like out of curiosity. When I saw that we were taking the same exact classes except for 2, maybe 3 classes, I started to second guess my choice of not choosing to go down the engineering route. I started to talk to some of my close friends and some counselors and after some time of internal debate, I decided to change my mind and go the engineering route. I thought that after making that decision, things would get tougher. I thought that just thinking of the engineering courses I would have to take would be enough to psych me out and cause me to start doing badly in school, but the opposite happened.

I met a lot of great friends who were also hoping to go into engineering, though in different areas. My grades instead of going down shot up and it was because now I had something to look forward to in my future career. I started meeting and even exceeding my academic goals. I am a very different person from the guy that I was starting at Hancock. Back then, I wasn't confident in myself. I thought that my dreams and ambitions were not achievable because engineering was for people smarter than me. Today, I can say that I am as confident as ever and I am anxiously waiting for my future classes when I transfer out. I now realize that engineering isn't just for the "really smart people", it's for anybody who wants to pursue engineering.



If you want to pursue an engineering career but are too afraid to, I would say do it, you'll be happy you did!

Seek Out a Mentor – for the Sake of Your Success

by Christine Reed, MESA/STEM Academic Success Center Counselor/Coordinator



Most successful people have achieved their success with the help of a mentor. What is a mentor? A mentor is a personal and professional guide, someone who cares about your success, someone you can turn to for useful advice. A mentor is someone with whom you can share personal doubts and not be concerned that those doubts will be shared with others. A mentor is someone who has had similar experiences in their career and can understand your challenges, fears, excitements, and vision.

Having a supportive mentor doesn't happen without effort on your part. Most times you will need to seek out a mentor. Your mentor will not be helpful to you unless you make the effort to seek them out, ask for their support and mentorship, and work on building a relationship with them.

Here are actions to take to develop a mentor who can be helpful to you:

- **Be Open** - a mentor can't help you unless you let your mentor know your concerns, questions, successes, and personal ambitions.
- **Meet Regularly** - building a successful relationship takes time and effort and cannot happen without time together. It's hard for your mentor to help you without the ability to see you and be able to ask follow up questions. Electronic written communications are great to use for surface interactions, but not effective for meaningful guidance.
- **Accept Advice** – listen and be open to the advice of your mentor. It might not resonate with you immediately, but work on understanding their perspective – ask questions and talk through any concerns together.
- **Circle Back** - Once you have acted on the advice, let your mentor know how it worked out. Remember, your mentor is learning from you as well. Hearing back from you is also great motivation for continuation of the mentorship.
- **Honor their Contribution** – Mentors give of themselves to help you succeed. People love to see those they guide become a success. The more you can reinforce the value of the guidance given, the more your mentor will want to help you.

Source: <https://universitysurvival.com/student-topics/using-a-mentor/>

The Pursuit of Knowledge... and Everything Else along the Way

by Jadon Squibb, MESA/STEM student, Mechanical Engineering



When pursuing something as broad as the idea of ‘having knowledge’ it becomes crucial to understand what kind of knowledge you seek, why you seek it, as well as what you want to get out of it. Everyone’s path through life is unique and no one person is ever truly alike. Different circumstances in one’s upbringing can lead to a multitude of outcomes in which I can relate too as my education and career path has fallen victim to life’s unexpected circumstances, which has proved to being a core factor for how I have found myself in this amazing position I am in today. From the plan for myself to be a part of Aerospace, to help make a difference in this world and believing that goal was achieved through going straight into a university, came the realization that no matter where I begin I still have the ability to achieve that ‘pursuit of

knowledge’ without going straight into a University. Roadblocks in life can be what holds you back or what allows you to excel and develop. I choose not to let them hold me back.

As I found myself in my final year of high school anxiously awaiting college decision letters, the reality of my situation became overly apparent to me. Having been a scholar student for so long, from spending the past 6+ years of my life chasing A letter grades and excellence in the classroom on top of pursuing sports such as football and track, I felt as if I was lost in the idea that I would only be successful if I get into a high-end University. All my life I have wanted to become that guy who everyone goes to for an answer or the guy that will have a vast catalog of knowledge from the field I pursued to pass down to future generations. I allowed myself to be so focused and closeminded on the idea of all that mattered was earning A letter grades in the classroom and being involved in sports and clubs (all factors I was told would guarantee a spot in a university) that I never allowed myself to think about where I would go if I didn’t get accepted into the school I was focused on. I truly believed that everything I had worked for was coming down to a few final months as which college I was accepted into I would dictate how my life will turn out. That way of thinking hit me like a deer in the headlights on the day I received college decision emails. I was denied by 3 of my top UC schools applied for (UCLA, UC Berkley, UCSB), waitlisted into 3 others (UCSD, UC Irvine, Cal Poly SLO), and accepted into 2 (Cal Poly Pomona and CSU Long Beach). The two school I was accepted into, I had no intention of ever actually going to and just applied to get as many applications out as I could, but the real schools I would have loved to attend I was either denied or unable to get off the waitlist. That day I felt so defeated as I thought I had done everything right as a student and that all that work was now pointless. I was in a position where I now had no post-high school path in mind and felt an overwhelming sense of defeat. It wasn’t until I finally made the decision to attend Allan Hancock College when I felt that desire once again to continue that ‘pursuit of knowledge’, that I have put so much time and energy into, and to not let the circumstance of a few emails dictate what my future will hold.

Entering my first semester at Allan Hancock, being the fall semester of 2022, I was lucky enough to have found the MESA/STEM Academic Success Center prior classes opening up. I signed up and attended their ‘Week of Discovery’ for incoming MESA/STEM students and realized how different my time at a community college could be from what I had led myself to believe. I saw the resources offered and the figures I would have the privilege to be around and just knew I was where I needed to be. Since arriving on Allan Hancock’s campus, I have done as much as I can to make use of the staff and resources available having learned so much from the workshops and symposiums I attended to the professors and counselors I have been in contact with. I continue to be amazed as the resources I have been granted an access to as I have so many professors



with an abundant amount of knowledge in mathematics, physics, chemistry, engineering, programming, life, etc that I feel as I have learned more about myself and my career choice in 8 months more than I ever did in my K-12 years. I have found myself in such an amazing position as I am on course to transfer in the coming years as a Mechanical Engineering major aspiring to transition into Aerospace Engineering, have been granted pre-requisites allowing me to be in the classes I am in now, such as Calculus 4, being involved in MESA/STEM and the schools Science/Engineering Club, as well as helping me to attain internships/jobs as I will be accepting my first internship for an Aerospace Engineering company in the summer of 2023 as well as looking to tutor in the fall semester of 2023. I owe so much of what I have going for me to the amazing staff/network that Allan Hancock and the MESA/STEM program have to offer and am so grateful and unbelievably excited for what the future holds.

So to all the people, courses, experiences, opportunities, and more that await, save a seat as I will be there before you know it!

Challenging Myself Beyond Barriers

by *Serenity Macedo, MESA/STEM student, Biology*

Before starting at Allan Hancock College, I was nervous because I came from a small high school. However, the community college is a pocket-sized school compared to the prized, prestigious, and populated universities my peers were attending. I had several acquaintances and friends attending, but none were STEM majors. I am a biology major, still discovering my future career, but I want to help those struggling with mental and physical health. My passion has always been the driving force behind my academic success, but this time it felt different since I didn't know anyone in my courses. School never came easy to me; I have always needed to put in extra work.

As the semester began, I kept to myself, afraid to reach out to other STEM students because I felt I wasn't as intelligent as them. This mentality made me question my ability to accomplish my goals. My mental health was deteriorating almost as fast as my grades were. The saying goes, Keep Calm and Carry On, but I was everything except *calm*. I contacted my parents, friends, and resources like counselors and tutors, but I understood that my future was solely my responsibility.

Despite my mental barriers, I went to the MESA/STEM Academic Success Center, the Academic Resource Center, and library but hesitated to reach out. I was proud of myself for studying, but didn't have much of a social life. The first semester was a harsh learning life lesson for me. I need to always believe in myself even if I am skeptical about trying something new.

Winter break gave me the time I needed to process the notion that everybody struggles. Everybody has their fair share of opportunities and challenges, so don't assume you are the only one experiencing hardships. Discarding this mental barrier allowed me to recognize my strengths and weaknesses. I allowed myself to try and make new companions, which resulted in mentors, friends, and a significant other. Despite having the lowest GPA I have ever had, my growth mindset allowed me to free myself of the imposter syndrome I was severely suffering from. The obstacles thrown in my path weren't ideal; however, I was asked to be a peer mentor and be more involved in MESA/STEM. After experiencing some struggles with professors, lack of discipline, and sense of self, everything was going to be okay.

Although this is my first year, I've experienced many highs and lows, but both have taught me valuable lessons. I am so young and have so much life to experience. Life is realizing that there are constant ebbs and flows; it's how you respond to them that can make or break you. And even if you are broken, it's always possible to get up and try again.



To Your Success

by Bryce Kazumi Miyahara, MESA/STEM Academic Success Center Learning Lab Coordinator



If you've ever taken a look at the campus map of Allan Hancock College, or perhaps just by walking around, you may have noticed a number of tutorial centers. By name, they would be the ARC, the Math Center, the Writing Center, the Language Lab, and the MESA/STEM Academic Success Center. This begs the question: "Why spend the resources to have this many tutorial centers?" And the answer is that tutoring is simply that integral to student success.

Unfortunately, the importance of tutoring is not heavily emphasized at the high school level, and students are conditioned to seek tutoring only if and when they are failing a class. But AHC is not a high school; these are college-level courses that use significantly less in-class time to cover more material, and therefore move at an exponentially faster pace. To properly combat this, AHC has invested numerous resources into providing free tutoring services for nearly every discipline, and the MESA/STEM Academic Success Center is your home for specialized STEM tutoring.

Just in our center alone, we offer weekly drop-in tutoring (accessible remotely or in-person), embedded tutoring, organized study groups, and review sessions. But while tutoring at AHC is free and diverse, it is not available 24/7. It is up to YOU to keep yourself up to date on when tutoring is being offered, to effectively manage your time, and to fit tutoring into your weekly schedule whenever you can.

If you would like to learn more about each tutorial center, then this link will be a great place to start: <https://www.hancockcollege.edu/ahctutoring/index.php>



But you can't stop there; you should get into the habit of regularly visiting the centers in person, regularly studying there, and regularly talking to the tutors there. You must abandon the mindset that tutoring is to be used only if and when your grade drops below a certain percentage. Sticking with that mindset will result in you failing classes you would have otherwise passed, wasting time and energy you would have otherwise saved.

But I tell you all this to emphasize that such strife can be avoided. AHC and the people that work here WANT you to succeed. They're fighting and working together for your success, and you must join in the fight. During your time at college, you will eventually come to a point where it is evident that studying alone is not enough. Don't let that point take you by surprise; be proactive, be persistent, and seek tutoring now.

SCIENCE

Check Out Your MESA/STEM Academic Success Center (M500)



Features include:

STEM Study Center with student-use computers and project completion tools

STEM Learning Lab including comprehensive STEM tutoring services and supplemental course material resources

STEM Collaborative Classroom for small group study and instruction

STEM Student Decompression Lounge when it is time to take a break

STEM Onsite Academic Counseling available to meet the academic and career planning needs of STEM students at Allan Hancock College

Spring 2023 MESA/STEM Academic Success Center Activities

Jan 27— UCSB-Smithsonian Scholars Program Presentation (1:00pm - 2:00pm)

Feb 3— UCSB-Smithsonian Scholars Program Presentation (11:00am - 12:00pm)

Feb 3— Internships Opportunities & Strategies Workshop (1:00pm-2:00pm)

Feb 6— Resume Workshop (2:30pm-4:00pm)

Feb 10— Financial Aid and Scholarship Workshop (1:00pm-2:00pm)

March 10— Recognizing and Managing Burnout Workshop (1:00pm-2:00pm)

March 22— CSU Monterey Bay/Aquarium Field Trip (6:00am-6:00pm)

March 31-April 2— 2023 MESA Student Leadership Retreat in Santa Cruz, CA

April 14— You're Outta Here Workshop* (1:00pm-2:00pm)

April 29— E5 Women in Engineering Field Trip to CSU Long Beach

May 3— You're Outta Here Workshop* (3:00pm-4:00pm)

May 12— MESA/STEM Student Achievement Celebration 2023 (4:00pm-6:00pm)



*For students who are planning on transferring Fall 2023, don't miss this workshop!



The Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Program

is an academic program that provides a wide range of support services and activities aimed at fostering student achievement and increasing the success and participation they experience while pursuing a degree in mathematics, engineering, computer

science, biology, architecture, kinesiology, or other science-based programs. MESA enables students to prepare for and graduate from a four-year university with a math-based degree. It also seeks to increase the diverse pool of transfer-ready community college students who are prepared to excel as math, engineering and science majors. Through the



program, students develop academic and leadership skills, increase educational performance, and gain confidence in their abilities to compete academically and professionally. Visit our website at www.hancockcollege.edu/mesa.