

Ep 14 Eric Valdez

MCC Campus Connections - Episode 14: Eric Valdez

Podcast Transcript

Geovanny Mayorga 0:18

All right, welcome everyone to Midwestern Career College Campus Connections. I am your host, Geovanny Mayorga. We are recording from our 203 North LaSalle campus. We are in a different room. Our other recording room was being used, so we did take a little bit of a hiatus for a little bit so we can reassess how our podcast was going and our audience. So we want to thank everyone who did the podcast in the past and look forward to everyone who's coming up.

Today we have a wonderful guest. He is Mr. Eric Valdez, our Student Success Coordinator. Welcome Eric. How are you?

Eric Valdez 1:00

I'm good. Thank you. Thank you for having me, Geo.

Geovanny Mayorga 1:03

Look forward to having our conversation together.

Eric Valdez 1:06

Likewise.

Geovanny Mayorga 1:07

How was your summer?

Eric Valdez 1:08

Great. Actually, busy. You know?

Geovanny Mayorga 1:13

Doing what?

Eric Valdez 1:14

You know, relaxing. You know, actually obviously.

Geovanny Mayorga 1:16

You gotta relax.

Eric Valdez 1:17

Have to, you know, went to - I actually went to Cape Coral.

Geovanny Mayorga 1:22

Where is that?

Eric Valdez 1:22

In Florida. Oh, it's by kind of like Sanibel Island, very—

Geovanny Mayorga 1:28

No idea, no idea. No.

Eric Valdez 1:30

It's, um, it's a nice community, you know, yeah, coastline, coastline. Yes, devastating, though, because they're still trying to, you know, rebuild after the hurricane. I forgot what hurricane it was, but it was the most recent one a couple years ago. They're still trying to, really. Yeah, so devastating. I had a lot of fun, and now prepping for classes next week.

Geovanny Mayorga 1:56

Oh yeah. Summer came and went so fast. Lollapalooza?

Eric Valdez 2:02

I have never been. I've never attended. I've never been to. Hopefully, if I - hopefully, I'd love to attend one day. We'll see.

Geovanny Mayorga 2:12

It all depends on the music acts.

Eric Valdez 2:14

It really does depend on the music.

Geovanny Mayorga 2:16

A couple years ago, when Green Day was here, I wish I could have gone to that. And Metallica. Wish I would have seen that.

Eric Valdez 2:21

That's a great lineup. What's wrong with you, Geo?

Geovanny Mayorga 2:26

Yeah right? You went to a certain concert.

Eric Valdez 2:32

Oh, I did. I did everyone. I went to the Cowboy Carter tour. I went to the Beyoncé concerts. Amazing, very, very propaganda, you know, based, but it was a lot of fun. Yes.

Geovanny Mayorga 2:47

Glad to hear that.

Eric Valdez 2:48

Yes, thank you. She's an icon. She's everything. She's the moment. They're gonna hate me for this. I do want to, you know, introduce myself everyone. My name is Eric Valdez, and I probably serve as your Student Success Coordinator here at MCC. I am located at 223 Chicago main campus, and as part of your Student Services Coordinator, my role is to support you academically, personally, as well as professionally. We are here to support you towards your goals, towards graduation. So please reach out if you need any extra resources or just need advising in general. I'm just here to support you.

Geovanny Mayorga 3:27

Yeah, you're doing a great job. You've been here for about a year now, about to hit a year, yeah, next month, yeah. So yeah, part of that student services is the orientations we're currently doing. Talk a little bit about that, yes.

Eric Valdez 3:41

So we successfully host our virtual orientation sessions for both international and domestic students. But I do want to share that on the Student Services website, I created a Next Steps Orientation Guide for new students. So it's a step-by-step clear guide to help you get started. So it's updated on the Student Services

website with helpful checklists, tutorials. If you need help accessing that, please reach out to me at evaldez@mccollege.edu. Just ask.

Geovanny Mayorga 4:19

Yeah, wonderful. Each individual orientation is different based on program, correct?

Eric Valdez 4:26

On program, correct. Yes. We are also - we are also doing virtual and in person.

Geovanny Mayorga 4:31

Yes, we are. We just finished our virtual orientation for MRI.

Eric Valdez 4:37

Sterile processing, radiology, and then now we're pivoting over to CMA, DMA, and then we have dental coming up. So yes, we're really booked and busy.

Geovanny Mayorga 4:49

Yeah. Every start of the term is pretty busy for us.

Eric Valdez 4:53

Yes. Evergreen's in-person orientation session is next week, so preparing for that. Excited for that as well.

Geovanny Mayorga 5:00

Any particular tips for students as they prepare?

Eric Valdez 5:05

Pay attention. Don't fall asleep.

Geovanny Mayorga 5:10

During orientation.

Eric Valdez 5:11

Or in the lines of communication has to be open, so please reach out. You have any questions, comments, concerns, we're here to support you and help you. Okay, so that's the main tip. Yeah, stay awake, pay attention and do not fall asleep.

Geovanny Mayorga 5:29

To all the new incoming students, we have a wonderful program which is our ambassador program. Talk a little bit about that, yeah.

Eric Valdez 5:39

So we do offer a domestic student - well, we have both Ambassador programs for both international and domestic students, but I'm in charge of all domestic students. So I was involved with the interview process, as well as just, you know, going through the application process with ambassadors.

But to become a domestic student ambassador, it's actually designed to identify students who are passionate about helping others, students that do show a strong leadership potential, as well as representing the values of our MCC community. And how it usually works is that you go through like a recommendation process, application.

Students may be nominated by staff, your instructor, program director, just based on like their engagement, your engagement, leadership or academic performance. But students can also self-nominate or apply through a short application outlining their interest as well as their availability. Basic requirements - you know, just being in good academic standing, you know, show strong communication skills as well as have a positive, you know, attitude, right, be reliable, professional and maintain, you know, be confident, right? Maintain confidence, reliability, right, and have completed at least one term. Preferable, flexible, depending on your program.

So it just depends on the program. And then the interview - we do have an interview process, informal meeting, and candidates may be invited to like a short interview or meeting with Student Services, admissions to discuss expectations, time commitments, interests, et cetera.

And then you go through the training, onboarding process and ongoing support and check-ins. So it's a big process. Yes, I do want to thank Aaron, the Director of Admissions, for supporting that program and coming up with that program. So again, thank you so much for all your support.

Geovanny Mayorga 7:37

Once students are selected, what are their responsibilities?

Eric Valdez 7:42

So it depends. I mean, you can help out with advocating for students, providing resources for students, helping with events, marketing, for marketing purposes. Marketing, it's a huge one, getting surveys.

Geovanny Mayorga 8:00

Yeah, so pretty much marketing. You're like, you're like the face of MCC. Yeah, it's a wonderful program.

Eric Valdez 8:08

Wonderful program, yeah.

Geovanny Mayorga 8:09

So I do want to congratulate our domestic student ambassadors. Rebecca at the 203 campus location. We also have Latifah at the Evergreen Park location, and we have Alexa at the Naperville campus. Yes. So congratulations, ladies. And they all do a great job. You should see their pictures. Yeah, they do amazing work.

They are amazing students and excellent representatives of our student body, and of course, Midwestern Career College. So it's pretty soon because we have - and I've spoken about this in previous episodes - that we have a wealth of knowledge, not only within our staff and faculty, but in our own students. And that shows with the caliber of student ambassadors.

Eric Valdez 8:53

Yeah, let me give you a great example. Like one of our student ambassadors, she's in the Surgical Tech program, and she's thinking about creating her own, you know, like Surgical Tech club.

Geovanny Mayorga 9:07

So nice for her. Happy for that.

Eric Valdez 9:09

Yeah, excited as well.

Geovanny Mayorga 9:10

And part of your responsibilities and something that you've done a great job of, because we didn't have a whole lot - we had a little bit, but not as much as I think you've been doing it in the recent months - which is events. Talk a little bit about your events that you have.

Eric Valdez 9:27

Thank you. So yeah. So I'm actually partnering with Olia, the librarian, LRC Resource Center support specialist. Olia, we're actually working together to create a landing page with all events and pictures and resources. In about a couple of months, we'll showcase that and make it live.

But our recent events in campus life here at MCC, we actually did hold a successful ice cream social. I believe it was three weeks ago. It was a great turnout. Strong student engagement, and that day was actually really hot. I believe it was like 110 degrees, so it was a perfect day to celebrate with ice cream. So I do want to thank everyone for supporting. We had Geo that supported us. Monica, Dr. Ali, Peter, Dr. Sabau. Thank you so much for all your support and student ambassadors as well. Rebecca, so thank you.

But we do celebrate a lot of student involvement as well as community building. So Monica from Career Services came up with a club - Career Talks - for students that are interested in discussing career opportunities, placements, as well as resume building, interview mock-ups, or if you just want to vent, you know, just please sign up. We're going to start in about two weeks.

Geovanny Mayorga 10:56

That's awesome.

Eric Valdez 10:57

Yes, it'll be hosted in the game lounge. And that's another, you know, club I do want to promote - we do have a game lounge. You're able to come relax, connect and enjoy some downtime. We have Pac-Man, we have Uno, Monopoly, we have a bunch of games. So come in and hang out and relax.

Geovanny Mayorga 11:10

Yeah, that's part of our student culture that we need to build up a little bit more. And I think students have been doing a great job of utilizing those resources. Thank you. And it was a great idea to have a game room, game lounge.

Eric Valdez 11:25

And staff, you're more than welcome to utilize it as well. I have seen some staff members utilize it like admissions and, you know, so please, please, please take advantage.

Geovanny Mayorga 11:34

Yeah, anybody want to donate any games?

Eric Valdez 11:37

Anybody want to donate? Please send me Chase QuickPay. Bring the games, of course. It has to be compliant, so make sure you're not bringing—

Geovanny Mayorga 11:51

Well, of course, I mean, they can just drop them off either at the reception or give them to Eric, and then we'll review the games and make sure they're appropriate.

Eric Valdez 12:00

Yes, appropriate for sure. But I do want to mention that we do - well, Student Services, we also do offer support services and resources. We do know life can get complicated, but know that you're not alone. We're here to support you. So we offer resources.

So I am the housing liaison for homelessness and housing liaison, as well as if you're looking for resources like mental health resources, transportation, childcare and emergency aid, please utilize those resources on the Student Services website, or just reach out to me again. evaldez@mccollege.edu or studentservices@mccollege.edu.

Geovanny Mayorga 12:42

Yeah, that's really important. We talked a little bit about this in a different episode with one of the ambassadors who went through a rough time. And you should listen to that podcast with the student ambassadors and that little story that was told. It's important to know that you're not alone. Okay, try to speak to a friend, colleague, parents, anyone. Just speak to anyone. We're here to listen.

Eric Valdez 13:06

We are. If you want to just come in, I mean, I let my students know, like I'm open door policy, right? Just common vents. It's very bias-free and confidential. Just if you want to discuss, if you just want to vent, just reach out. I'm here to support. We can, you know, set a meeting on Teams. We can just talk.

Geovanny Mayorga 13:26

Yeah, I know you're trying to set up a little bit of a food pantry. Is that something you're prepared to talk about or not yet?

Eric Valdez 13:30

Um, so we're currently in the process of trying to figure out - trying to figure out, yeah, so logistics, around logistics. Um, we're still discussing liabilities as well as partnerships and, you know, finances, etc. But that should - I'll come back as a guest and mention that next time.

Geovanny Mayorga 13:51

Yeah, and you have some upcoming events.

Eric Valdez 13:54

So the upcoming events, yes. So for the month of August, we, you know, orientation, right? So back to school. But we're also celebrating Happiness Month. Okay? So be happy, right? Stay positive. We do have a barcode here that you can actually scan and leave a positive note, or anything positive, or just anything you want to share, then we can showcase that on the website.

But next month, we're actually going to be celebrating Constitution Week. So we're hoping to get a guest speaker from the Evergreen Park location, Mayor Burke. So hoping to get her to attend.

Geovanny Mayorga 14:51

Yeah, that's great. Yeah, you met her before.

Eric Valdez 14:54

Yeah. Hopefully we can have a live session, so all campuses can attend virtually. So hopefully she can do that. If not, then, you know, marketing, I'm sure they will - they'll take pictures and videos, and then we can, you know, showcase that. Yes. And what else? When is that? Constitution Week is September.

Eric Valdez 15:21

Oh goodness. Okay. So Constitution Week is September 17th through the 23rd.

Geovanny Mayorga 15:31

Oh, wow, yes.

Eric Valdez 15:33

In September? So, oh September, yeah. Okay, yeah. Want to make sure that the purpose of that is, of course, to observe that week, promote study and education about the United States Constitution. So can't wait for that. I have some Constitution packages that I'm going to be giving out, as well as some extra resources about the Constitution, or not resources, but you know, informational sessions.

Geovanny Mayorga 16:03

Uh, Eric, how can students get a hold of you?

Eric Valdez 16:07

So you can reach me - you can call me, right, extension 1102 or email me at evaldez@mccollege.edu or at studentservices@mccollege.edu.

Geovanny Mayorga 16:21

That's wonderful. I know we had a little bit of a tough time trying to put this episode together. Don't blame me. It was supposed to happen a long time ago, but someone decided they don't want to do it anyway.

Eric Valdez 16:40

I'm here now, right? Yes, I'm happy to be a guest on our episode. Thank you for a —

Geovanny Mayorga 16:47

How do I put it? A reoccurring guest. Oh, yeah, with paid benefits.

Geovanny Mayorga 16:57

We'll have to reevaluate that. We'll see how successful this episode is. Yeah, we'll see. So I want to thank you for doing it. I think we've done a great job, as everyone else has done in the past.

Eric Valdez 17:11

And then our next episode, we will discuss a little bit more about the food pantry, extra resources and just some more—

Geovanny Mayorga 17:19

And have some more guests? Yes, we're planning. I hear a lot of people want to be guests now that you're part of it. Yeah, we'll see about that.

Eric Valdez 17:30

I've been trying to promote it. Trust me. Good. Yeah, I'll let you know if I get any interests.

Geovanny Mayorga 17:38

I know everybody's jumping right with excitement. Don't scare me like that. I'm actually gonna get up and sit up. Say hello to everybody. Yes, anything else before we leave, Eric, you want to share with our students, our audience?

Eric Valdez 17:55

Just know that we're here to support you. And again, please reach out if you have any questions, comments or concerns. We're here to support you. Okay, Student Services.

Geovanny Mayorga 18:03

Wonderful. Want to thank you once again for taking part of the podcast this episode, and like I said, we're looking forward to our next guests. Yes, I know they're all excited to participate and share their ideas and their programs. So looking forward to that. And, yeah, looking forward to talk to you next time. Take care everyone. Take care, everyone. Bye.

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