

Podcast - ErinHughesEp.6

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SPEAKERS

Geovanny Mayorga, Erin Hughes

Geovanny Mayorga 00:04

All right, everyone, welcome to MCC campus connections, a podcast that are getting dedicated to getting to know one another. You can find us on YouTube, Spotify, Amazon music and Apple podcasts as well. I want to remind everyone that you can contact us at podcast at MCC college.edu. And we look forward to hearing from you. So today we have another wonderful guest. It's Erin Hughes. Welcome, Erin.

Erin Hughes 00:33

Thank you for having me.

Geovanny Mayorga 00:37

lovely to have you looking forward to our conversation. You are our or MCs, director of admissions for certificate and degree programs. How's that going?

Erin Hughes 00:49

It's going good. We just wrapped up enrollment for our January winter starts. So we are currently in the middle of enrolling for spring. We have classes starting in April in May. So never ending here. We're right in the thick of it. So it's still still going great.

Geovanny Mayorga 01:06

That's wonderful. It was some of the some of the programs that we do I mean that we have a difference between international students because we we have a wonderful ESL program. And in the what you call domestic side, which are just marketing medical programs, you're

obviously mainly in charge of the domestic side. Right? What are the differences are different programs that are you recruiting for currently?

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Erin Hughes 01:37

Yeah, so we mainly focus on the health care programs. We have both certificate and associate level programs. We also enroll like you mentioned for the marketing, business accounting programs, but kind of our our main bread and butter or there's health care program. So our one and two year programs that we have here at MCC

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Geovanny Mayorga 01:56

wonderful like many of us, you didn't necessarily start in admissions. Talk a little bit about your background, you have a fashion design or some type of design degree.

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Erin Hughes 02:07

Yeah, yeah. So I went to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, actually for fine arts, and got into fashion design pretty quickly. And that enrolled in that program. My freshman year, actually, when I graduated, I worked for a couple designers here in the city. And that kind of led to more of a retail kind of direction. And that went kind of started doing that for a long time and went more in the management direction of retail got kind of in that world for about 20 years. It's an easy world to get. Not I wouldn't say stuck in but definitely fall into that and stay in that for a long time. But it's definitely hard work on your body, being on your feet all the time, running around in heels being on your feet for 10 to 12 hours a day. So I didn't end up having knee surgery in 2019. And that was kind of the breaking point for me where I just couldn't do that world anymore. Couldn't be on my feet like that, you know, for like I said 12 hours a day. And academics has always been a passion of mine, both my parents worked in education. So it was kind of an easy transition for me. Admissions, it does have a sales aspect to it. But it's you're selling a future for people. So it's, it's a little different than selling clothes or selling, you know, something that's, you know, a little bit more tangible. You're selling the future. So it was kind of an easy transition. And I've been in education now for about five or six years. So

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Geovanny Mayorga 03:30

I've never worked in in retail i I've tried mainly in like the sporting goods stores. I've never gotten hired, and I don't know why. But retail is not something that I've I've ever worked that. What are some of the stories? I mean, retail has a lot of customer service. Yeah. What are some of the stories you have from working in retail?

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Erin Hughes 03:56

Oh, I have so many stories, do you I don't think we have enough time for the stories that I have. But it's you meet a lot of people, I will say that you meet a lot of different types of people. You definitely have to have thick skin, especially working in the management aspect of it. There are

people that have a lot of opinions that you'll meet every day. But you meet some great people as well too. And you get to hear some amazing stories. And I think that's one of the things here at MCC working here that that's part of it that did carry over getting to hear people's stories and their backgrounds and kind of where they came from. That was a part of retail that I do miss but you do see that here a lot as well too. So you get to meet a lot of different types of people for sure.

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Geovanny Mayorga 04:38

I know that in customer service and retail. There's always the the customer's always right there's an opinion that the customer's always right. What What is your opinion on that? I personally and and the customer service that I've done, have not always bought into that the customer is not always right because they eventually they Do try to get to their advantage take it to their advantage, but what is your opinion on it?

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Erin Hughes 05:05

Um, I think that's honestly changed a lot in the last couple years. You know, it's there's a certain aspect to it where you know, the customer is always right. But there are certain policies and procedures that you do have to adhere to right? return policies was always a big thing that, you know, is a point of tension when it comes to retail, being in the management aspect of it, which is where I spent majority of my time in retail, that was always a tough thing, when you do have to explain to somebody, we do have to follow the return policy, we can't, you know, change the system will only allow us to do so many things. And I do believe that everybody at some point should work in retail, or some type of customer service job. Because they'll see that you can't always bend the rules, you can't just, you know, change the rules for everybody, there are certain things you have to follow, and POS systems only allow you to do so many things. Right. So I do think that attitude has changed quite a bit in the last couple of years. To a certain extent, yes, you know, you should give good customer service. And there is, you know, a certain level of soft skills. And that's something we do teach here at MCC as well, too, is, you know, that soft skill aspect of it and the bedside manner and making sure, you know, when we teach healthcare, right, so when patients are coming in, and they're not in a mindset of feeling great, right, they're not feeling well, they're in pain, we do want to make sure that our students are prepared to deal with that, right, they're not going to have somebody who's coming in, in a great attitude, right, they're not in a good mood. But at the same time, you can't bend the rules for everybody. So you have to understand that as well, too. And I think a lot of people that have worked in retail, through COVID. And through, you know what has happened in the last four years, which I still can't believe it's been four years since all that is started. People aren't putting up with as much as they used to anymore. And that mindset has changed quite a bit. Quite a bit. Yes.

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Geovanny Mayorga 06:58

I spent five years at a different institution in the admissions department recruiting specifically students who wanted to go into the teaching profession. You spoke about your think your sister and your dad, or teachers or teachers at some point, yeah. When you made the transition into

education, what was that transition like and how, how different or similar was it from going to retail to working directly one on one with people? I

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Erin Hughes 07:28

think for me, it was relatively easy because in retail management, I always one of the things I always loved was training. When I was working in retail, I was sent to different locations sent to like Michigan and different parts of the country to do training and developing of people. That's always been a passion of mine, being able to take what I know and what I've learned. And I've had the opportunity and in my career to really have some amazing coaches and mentors, some that I'm still in contact with today, honestly, that have really been able to take me under their wing. And that's always something I've wanted to do as a leader. So training and developing people has always been a passion of mine, which is why I think being in the management role has always been something that I've been good at. So training and developing has always been a strength. So teaching kind of is like that. What is like that exactly like that, especially in a technical field that we're in like burned healthcare. So it is a technical expertise. So being able to kind of transition to that with that training, it kind of was an easy transition for me.

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Geovanny Mayorga 08:33

And prior to coming to MCC, you were at a different school. How was that transition from that school to Midwestern Career College?

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Erin Hughes 08:41

That was definitely different because that was not higher education. I know we talked a little bit about that. But that was definitely we're dealing with the parents. You're dealing with students that are three years old all the way through high school. And in working in retail, you're dealing with people that are 18 years and older. This is more like that, you know, your students have to be 18 A majority of our students are between the ages of you know 25 To 35 That's our average student body. So that's more of what I'm used to working with people who are you know, adults in the right sense at the job before this, you were dealing a lot more with the parents as opposed to the students themselves. So this is kind of more in my wheelhouse and definitely what I'm more comfortable with people dealing with people one on one as opposed to navigating, you know, dealing with a third person and going with the middleman.

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Geovanny Mayorga 09:30

Yeah, one of the things we talked about this a little bit how the pandemic changed a lot of things and a lot of lives and certainly changed my life. I thought a pretty I thought I had a good career path figured out and I was doing okay. And I think I had a lot of goals that I wanted to achieve and and once the pandemic hit that kind of As crumbled, right? And the job that I thought it was going to have for a few more years was no longer there because of the pandemic, how the pandemic changed you what, what were you doing before and what what ended up happening after the pandemic?

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Erin Hughes 10:18

Um, I mean, I was working the job at the International School before the pandemic. And I actually started here in June of the of 2020. I think it was a big eye opener for me, because it was healthcare. And so it really made me understand. And I actually have a niece, that's a nurse, and my mom works in the healthcare field, but kind of a different path. She's She's a therapist. So it really made me appreciate that aspect of that industry in general, it's so much not that I didn't respect the healthcare folks. Of course I did. But it really made me understand how kneaded it really is, and how many different avenues there are and different pathways there are, I had no idea until I started working here, that there's so many different directions that you can go in healthcare. And when we go into high schools, and we go into different places, and we talk to people about the different programs that we have here. It still amazes me how many people don't know the different programs that there are different pathways that there are, but then I look back, and I think I didn't know all of these different pathways, right? I didn't know that. There wasn't just nurse, and doctor, there's all these different technical fields, there's all these different directions that you can go and you don't have access to that, and you don't have exposure to that you just don't have any idea. So I think for me, it was just the education around how much there is in healthcare. That was the biggest thing for me, like just understanding all of that, and how vital that is to everyday life.

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Geovanny Mayorga 11:45

Yeah, during you know, I certainly working in customer service, which, which is what I was doing prior to coming here. I definitely saw a lot of changes in the way customer service was dealt with. More specifically, because the ones that are giving the customer service are the ones that are also getting all the all the attacks. Prior to coming here I had I had an interview somewhere else. And I believe the question was somewhere around, you know, what has changed since the pandemic and I said customer service changed? I don't think the person who was interviewing me liked that answer. I don't think that person agreed, and that's okay. I mean, but I remember thinking, if you can't see how customer service changed, then I'm not sure you're going to be able to succeed moving forward since since the pandemic. One of the things that that that Utah just talked about is how appreciative we should be of the medical service, because they also do at a lesser level provide customer service. Is that you started using your your design skills. You were you started doing masks and other things for for medical service workers, correct?

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Erin Hughes 13:12

Yes. So it all kind of started. My niece was sharing with me like I mentioned, she is still in Ohio, and she is a nurse. She actually graduated with her nursing degree from Ohio State during the pandemic. She didn't even get like an actual graduation, they did a virtual graduation. And I remember when everything happened in 2020, where there was such a shortage of PPE. And, you know, I know Joanne's join fabrics was doing this thing where you could buy kits and you could put together masks and then you could go pick up the kit and put the mask together and take it back to Joanne's and I had a couple friends that also worked in health care. And they were like, Hey, would you be if we sent you fabric and you know, elastic, would you be able to put together some of these masks and I just started doing it for people like that had asked me

like local friends. And and my nice of course, and then it just kind of blew up into a thing that I was just doing. I wasn't working at the time. I hadn't started at MCC yet. And this was a span of a couple months. And even actually, after I started working at MCC, it was still relatively remote. Because nobody was back on campus yet. So I was still doing it in my spare time. And I started going to the post office pretty regularly and the postal worker was like gearing here like two or three times a week, what are you mailing out? And I mentioned to her Oh, I'm sending out mass to people and making masks at home. And she was like, Well, you know, we're still out in the field. We're still you know, working, you know, every single day we're here. We're out, you know, putting things in people's mailboxes. I have a bunch of old postal shirts that you know, don't fit me anymore. If I were to give those to you, could you turn those into mass? And I said Oh, absolutely. So I started making masks for her and then it turned into her co workers and then a bunch of different postal workers. So my local post office it never got any bigger than that because I'm only one person, but I ended up making several different prop only about 100 different masks for my local post office as well to just out of old postal shirts and like T shirts and postal like polos and things like that for people. So

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Geovanny Mayorga 15:11

yeah, I have a few family members in the medical field, doctors offices, dental offices, what are some of the programs that they're most popular and some that that may not be the most popular, but are up and coming?

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Erin Hughes 15:28

What are some of the programs? Yeah. I mean, our Dental Assisting program that's still one of our newer programs, we opened that when we opened our evergreen Park campus in about in, I guess it was November of 21. Now, so it's been just over two years. sterile processing is another one. That's a program again, that I didn't know was a field in the healthcare field. It's one of the ones that's not talked about a ton. It's behind the scenes. You know, people talk about surgery all the time. And being in the OCR and sterile processing. If they didn't have that program, they wouldn't be able to clean sanitize and repack all of those tools that are used in surgery. End is another one, the long name electro neuro diagnostic technician or EEG tech. They are actually again, it's kind of the hidden gem of our of our school. Those are people that actually learn how to put the electrodes on and read the brainwaves of people who have suffered head trauma, maybe from epilepsy, or from a car accident, things like that, to be able to help people you know, live with epilepsy. And the Epilepsy Foundation is one of our community partners that we partner with every single year and have some great events with them as well. So those are probably our three programs that I like to talk about a lot, because not a lot of people know about those programs. Talk

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Geovanny Mayorga 16:43

a little bit more about the admissions process. How long does it normally take for students who enroll and how often our programs start? Yeah,

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Erin Hughes 16:52

so depending on the program, our associate level programs start anywhere from once to twice a year. We're always enrolling, but it depends again, on the program, you know, we have certain programs that we can only offer up for an open enrollment once a year just because of how popular they are. But certificate programs are basically enrolling all the time, depending on the start date, how long the process actually takes is really dependent on the student. Usually we tell students if you're on it, and you're able to turn in everything we can get you through the process within a week, they meet with an admissions counselor, they do an interview with the counselor, they walk them through the schedule, what the program itself looks like, which includes, you know, kind of what that externship looks like, the whole program itself kind of what the expectations are, what they'll get out of the program, what certificates they'll get when they complete the program. And then there's a list of documents that they'll submit, we do require students to be 18 years of age and have completed their high school diploma or GED. We do like you mentioned earlier, we do have some international students that come to our program. So if they do if they have completed their high school outside of the US, they will have to get it evaluated. But there's many evaluation services that we can recommend to students as well. They do have to complete a statement like a personal statement, and then an entrance exam as well, which we do help prep them for we give them study guides and practice tests. So and admissions counselors, we like to call them counselors as opposed to reps because we really do like to help them you know, all the way through the process. We collect their documents, and then what's great about our school because you know, we are on the smaller side and we we pride ourselves in that we get the opportunity to be really one on one with the students. They get to meet the head of the programs, the program directors during the admissions interview, or during that admissions process. They get to interview with the program directors and meet them virtually an interview with them. And that's kind of the final step of the process. And then they find out if they're entering into the program or not.

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Geovanny Mayorga 18:49

Yeah, I spoke on a previous episode about how we're a smaller school dedicated more to students. What do you feel are the differences between our art college versus say, a community college where students can also go to I think the

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Erin Hughes 19:03

biggest difference is that one on one experience that they get from the very beginning and the smaller class sizes. You know, our ratio of students is anywhere from 15 to 25 students per instructor. So it's not the kind of scenario where they're in a classroom of 70 students, right where you might be afraid to raise your hand and ask a question. If you're sitting in a classroom of 70 other students, it's a lot more of that close experience. All of our instructors either still work in the field or have worked in the field for a long time. So there's a lot of that personal experience that they can talk to. I know our especially like our surgical techs, instructors, they have so much personal experience they share with the students. During our info sessions. We do have recorded and live info sessions the students attend during the admissions process and they have so many stories that they share with the students as well. And it's cohort based so they get to be with the same group of students the whole way through, so they feel like they're real. They're part of a family by the time they graduate, which is a huge part of it as well.

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Geovanny Mayorga 20:05

Yeah. Hey, and we have programs that our downtown location where we're recording today, two or three, North LaSalle, and the Evergreen Park location. So either we have some in Naperville as well, correct. Yep. A year from excuse me, you're from the Midwest, from Ohio. How was how was growing up in in Ohio and then coming to Chicago after being in Ohio for a while? Well,

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Erin Hughes 20:27

I came to Chicago, I want to say I was around 12 years old. I came on a family vacation, we went to the Art Institute to visit and the second I stepped foot in that museum. I knew this is where I was going to be I was like, this is this is where I'm gonna go to school. This is where I'm going to be weather wise, it's about the same. You know, I'm used to the cold winters I'm used to not having much of a fall or much of a spring. Obviously, it's a bigger city. I mean, I'm from Columbus, which is a decent sized city, but you know, this is definitely bigger. But I've lived in Chicago now longer than I lived in Ohio. So at this point, this is home. But it's still the Midwest, everybody's still friendly. It's you know, I at one point in my life after I graduated college, I thought about moving to New York and doing the New York thing. I mean, I graduated with a degree with fashion so it's you kind of think that's at New York or LA is kind of the next step but I don't know that never really seemed like the right path for me. Chicago always seemed like home so it's it's a change but not really this is home for me at this point.

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Geovanny Mayorga 21:27

I you still do some of your designing and fashion stuff, right? You do like curtains or Yeah,

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Erin Hughes 21:33

occasionally right now it's more so like having curtains for people or making costumes for my animals. Or Halloween costumes for me and my husband, how many animals you have? Three. I have a dog who's actually today's his 10th birthday. And then two cats.

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Geovanny Mayorga 21:50

Nice. Yeah. Anything you want to do with that as as just a hobby that you're going to

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Erin Hughes 21:54

do? Yeah, it's more so a hobby at this point. Yeah.

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Geovanny Mayorga 21:58

So you came here and you started actually as an admissions counselor? Correct. You made

So you came here and you started actually as an admissions counselor? Correct. You made your way up now. Your director? Yep. We're also overseeing backfield. Yeah. We'll talk a little bit about that. Yeah, so

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Erin Hughes 22:12

backfield is our partner school in the Kentucky they're in Florence, Kentucky. It's right on the border of Cincinnati. They have nursing programs there that's kind of their bread and butter. They have LPN, BSN and RN, they also actually started a snog Rafi program as well. So that's really where, you know, I work with them a lot, because that's a newer program for them. Whereas we've had some geography for quite some time now. So I work very closely hand in hand with their director of admissions and their admissions team, getting those programs up and running and those programs going so

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Geovanny Mayorga 22:46

what does the future hold? What what is that you want to continue doing? I mean, obviously we want to grow it was a career college grow admission that we have backfield to worry about what what is what what are your goals?

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Erin Hughes 22:59

Professionally, oh, man, I hope he continued to keep getting you know, more programs. I know we've got a couple dental hygienist is one that we're hoping that you know, in the next couple of years, building that lab and getting that, you know, going continuing to be able to have new programs is going to be a big thing for us. Continuing to get MC C's name out there. One of the things that I'm really working on working on as Director of Admissions is building that community outreach. You know, we've gotten the opportunity to work with some great organizations like Boys and Girls Club, the young women of color, Hidden Truth project I mentioned earlier, the Epilepsy Foundation, black men and white coats is an organization we worked with this year. So continuing to get our name out there and building, you know that community exposure is going to be a great thing for us. Because, again, we're a small school, right? We're not all over billboards, we're not all over TV. So just getting those relationships and building those partnerships is something that professionally, I really want to continue to work on. Yeah, we're

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Geovanny Mayorga 24:01

doing a lot. I think we're doing a lot of exciting things, obviously, you know, we started this podcast to try to get our community a little bit more involved. We're doing a little bit more student events, program, thing, more program oriented events, but I think we're still we're doing pretty good on that. We just not too long ago, we did a career fair, which I think went very well. And we're gonna continue doing that. Moving forward. Any particular events? I know we do. The Epilepsy which walk do we do? Yeah,

E Erin Hughes 24:31

we, every fall, we do the epilepsy walk. We have two different walks. We're hoping to do some in the Spring this year. And then we also one of the things that admissions has worked on with Student Services. We're actually going to work with them some more to but we started a student ambassador program last year, still relatively new program. We've only run it one so far with three students, one from certificate level programs, one admission or one associate's and then one international I'm going hoping to continue to build that as well. So hopefully have some student focused events with that maybe like a family night where students can bring their families in. I know that's one thing that students have always asked for. Because a lot of times we don't have like on campus housing because we are a smaller school. So having events like that, that are run by the students for the students would be something I would love to see, you know, run by our student ambassadors to where families could come and see. We have graduation.

G Geovanny Mayorga 25:27

Yeah. And we have wonderful locations to I mean, our Wacker locations right next to Chicago River, or, you know, LaSalle is overseeing some of the skyline. So we have been there. Yeah. So we're coming up to the end of our session. Anything else? Any questions you have for me anything you want to talk about that we haven't talked about?

E Erin Hughes 25:49

Not that I can think of, I think we hit everything that we wanted to talk about

G Geovanny Mayorga 25:53

time flies it goes, it goes by pretty quick. So I'd like to thank you for taking the time to stop by today and record one of our episodes. Hope you it's a great experience for you and looking forward to do more in the future. Want to remind our listeners so they can follow us on YouTube, Apple podcast, Spotify, and Amazon music, etc, etc. And you can write to us at podcasts that M C Cannstatt. edu. We look forward to hearing from you and talking to you on our next episode. So thank you, Erin. Yeah,

E Erin Hughes 26:26

thank you for having me.