Students In Conversation: Spring FLEX Day Student Panel 2023 Episode 173

00:00:00 **Christian**

Yeah, those special program to me has been a blessing. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to study even if I wanted to, even if I had the goals, even if I had the good grades. Now, if it wasn't for Mt. SAC and those special program, the ABE Program, and the DREAM Program, all there together only on Mt. SAC, I wouldn't even be here.

00:00:21 **Christian**

So, please continue to do that. It's very inclusive, it's super respectful, has our best interest at heart, so I cannot be more grateful to Mt. SAC.

00:00:34 **Christina**

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

00:00:36 **Sun**

And I'm sSun Ezzell, and you're listening to the Magic Montie Podcast.

00:00:40 **Christina**

Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak - by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

00:00:57 **Sun**

We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC from the classroom to completion.

00:01:01 **Speaker 1**

And I know I'm going to achieve my goals, and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

00:01:05 **Speaker 2**

She is a sociology major and she's transferring to Cal Poly, Pomona. Psychology major, English major ...

00:01:12 **Sun**

From transforming part-time into full-time ...

00:01:14 **Speaker 1**

I really liked the time that we spent with Julie about how to write a CV and cover letter.

00:01:21 **Christina**

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

00:01:24 **Speaker 1**

To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

00:01:27 **Christina**

We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC, but most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni and producer of this podcast.

00:01:38 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, Learning Assistance Faculty and Professional Learning Academy Coordinator.

00:01:43 **Christina**

And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:01:51 **Sun**

Welcome back. This is your host, Sun Ezzell. In today's episode, we bring you a fantastic student panel hosted by counselor and Academic Senate, Co-Vice President, Sara Mestas at Mt. SAC's 2023 Spring Flex Day opening session.

00:02:04 **Sun**

Students are the experts on their own learning. Thanks for joining us to learn from these student panelists as they share their educational journeys, experiences, and wisdom. Enjoy!

00:02:20 **Facilitator**

Welcome Sara Mestas, my Co-Vice President of the Academic Senate and our panel of students. Thank you for being here with us today.

00:02:30 **Sara**

Good morning everyone. My name is Sarah Mestas, and I am counseling faculty here at Mt. SAC. I'm also the Co-Vice President of your Academic Senate.

00:02:37 **Sara**

So, today's theme is People, Prosperity, and Planet. And I have the pleasure of being able to bring a few of our students to meet you in a short panel session to help center us for today as we connect, hear new ideas, and learn skills to help us in the classroom. Students, thank you so much for being here, especially early in the morning during your winter break.

00:02:56 **Yesi**

So, my name's Yesi, I'm currently part of the of the DREAM Program, I'm a peer mentor there. I am transferring in the fall of 2023, and my major's World Languages and Global Studies, and I should be transferring with some type of study communication, international, or ethnic studies.

00:03:12 **Yesi**

My goal is definitely to give back to the community. I want to get into becoming an attorney and just become a civil lawyer and just give back.

00:03:20 **Sara**

Thank you, Yesi.

00:03:21 **Nico**

Good morning everyone. Thank you for having us here. Again, my name's Nico Ayanon. I'm majoring in Business Administration with an emphasis on accounting. I'm a part-time student, and this is my second year at Mt. SAC, and I plan on transferring to Cal Poly, Pomona.

00:03:34 **Nico**

I'm part of the Promise+Plus Program, which has been invaluable to me and significantly contributed to a continued positive experience here at Mt. SAC. I specifically appreciate so many of their benefits, very practical benefits I might add: free parking permits, quiz and exam, Scantrons, Sodexo, food cards, just to name a few.

00:03:52 **Nico**

I was also part of the STEM Program, which definitely helped me ease into college right after high school. This has also helped me get in touch with Counselor Sara Mestas, who has been a huge help in helping me keep on track to reach my academic goals during my time here at Mt. SAC.

00:04:07 **Sara**

Thank you, Nico.

00:04:08 **April**

My name is April Masley. I have been attending Mt. SAC for about a year and a half now. I am a nursing major and I am also part of the veterans team. I served in the military for eight years, and then started my journey at Mt. SAC to become a nurse.

00:04:26 **April**

So, I plan on transferring or attending the Mt. SAC Nursing Program. I've heard great things, so the career goal is to obviously become a nurse, but also looking further to being an educator in the medical field as well.

00:04:43 **Sara**

Terrific. Thank you, April.

00:04:45 **Christian**

My name is Christian Manzano. I am part of the ABE Program (Adult Basic Education). Also, I'm a member of the DREAM Program. I major in Computer Science. I'm a special admin student, which means that I am working on the GED, and also, taking credit classes.

00:05:03 **Christian**

I would like to also shout out to the DREAM Program and to the ABE Program for letting me be part of this, that is my dream. Without them, I wouldn't be able to study. So, I really feel humbled by the opportunity, and I feel really grateful to all the DREAM Program and the ABE Program.

00:05:19 **Sara**

Thank you, Christian. This is a very nerve-wracking thing for our students, so thank you for all the shout outs in the chat. I'm sure that they're feeling loved and honored and appreciated. So, thank you so much.

00:05:30 **Sara**

Alright, so I'm going to get into the questions. I just have a few and honestly, if it's not something you feel like answering, no problem, we can just move onto the next one. But if you have something to say on each topic, by all means, we're just figuring this is a slow nice conversation that's going to start out our day and kind of kick off our own learning.

00:05:47 **Sara**

So, the first question I have for you is, when you're taking a great class with a great teacher - you don't have to say a teacher's name, nothing like that; but what does that that class look like? What are things that are part of that class that you really enjoy and appreciate?

00:06:02 **April**

So, for me, it's all about support. There's enough in life that serves as obstacles and there's going to be a lot of people who make a lot of excuses, but when a professor goes that extra mile in a great class, you can enjoy a class all day long.

00:06:17 **April**

But when a professor takes that extra step and really invests in the student, even the one-on-one, just maybe showing that little bit of effort that maybe somebody has never experienced before in their life - a professor can show support in ways that maybe a mother or father or family members have never done.

00:06:36 **April**

When students are taking the step to further theirselves and their career, they're taking a big step and when they have support where they might not, I think that's huge. I mean, it's been a really big thing for me, but a lot of people take more from the class when they do have that support. So, that's what I would think.

00:06:57 **Nico**

Just to dovetail with what April said, I really appreciated that point. It is a two-way street. If you want to get a good grade, get a better learning experience, you have to work with your teacher. It can't be them just giving their all and supporting you. You need to be able to work with that.

00:07:12 **Nico**

Also, I appreciate there's a balance between a relaxed setting and a strictly professional environment. Let me explain: a relaxed setting is great. I appreciate it when a professor is able to make the class feel at ease and comfortable to ask questions, no matter how seemingly simple they are, they don't berate or humiliate anyone in a condescending manner.

00:07:32 **Nico**

Instead, they're patient and understanding, and I really appreciate that. So, I said there has to be a balance. Teachers can get too comfortable and dare I say sarcastic. So, at times, it kind of gets to the point where it becomes for me, difficult distinguishing between professors genuinely explaining an assignment or a due date, or them being sarcastic.

00:07:55 **Nico**

I also appreciate when they encourage participation, it really gets me more invested in the course and it encourages colleague cohesion as well and I enjoy that cycle of helping, receiving help or clarification from my fellow classmates just to help each other.

00:08:10 **Nico**

A good professor, as April has mentioned too, is also available after class, during their office hours, that support. For example, I knew I could always rely on my business law professor if I needed additional help in fully grasping a concept that was new to me. So, that's what makes a good learning environment for me.

00:08:28 **Yesi**

I guess for me, from my experience, I really enjoy it - to add to what April and Nico have said, like I a hundred percent agree with everything they've just said. But to add onto that, I really enjoy it when the ... or I notice too, it's not even just me, like my classmates. Like we enjoy it when the professors kind of make the material that we're learning a little bit more engaging.

00:08:49 **Yesi**

I've had really amazing professors where they've set up the lectures in a story mode but as well like have like pivotal points within the lecture where they ask questions or they bring out materials where they connect for us to understand what the concept or the theory, what we're supposed to take out of that.

00:09:08 **Yesi**

They definitely like support, communicating is important. I think just understanding too, like as professors, like I understand like you guys won't be able to connect with every single student like a hundred percent one-on-one. But I guess just understanding the student's background, like their identity.

00:09:24 **Yesi**

I myself, like I have so many identities, I'm like undocumented, I'm gender queer, and all these other things. So, I have all these perspectives that I'm just kind of like trying to understand them. Sometimes it can be a lot when I'm trying to study a material or study something in general.

00:09:40 **Yesi**

So, just knowing that a professor understands like my background and knowing that I am trying to make the effort, I just have other things that I have to attend to, that helps too. Just knowing that ... I don't want to say like they need to baby me or anything like that, but just like knowing that somebody that's trying to teach you understands where you're coming from kind of thing. Like that helps as well.

00:10:00 **Christian**

I will say that something that helps me a lot is when a professor knows or dominates his subject, like I had a professor, algebra professor, the subject was hard, but the professor gave us a good sample of what he was going to teach, and he knew that if we were able to learn how to resolve those problems, we were able to basically resolve any other exercise that come our way.

00:10:24 **Christian**

So, when a professor gives you that type of knowledge, that basic tools, I think you eventually become successful at any subject. And I agree with my classmates, understanding our background is such an important - like the connection, I know it's a class of 30 people, 30 classmates, and when the professor tries to go above and beyond for a student or for all students, we feel different, we feel special. So, I will say that's what makes a class successful.

00:10:54 **Sara**

Thank you. Thank you, everyone. The next question I have is about challenges. So, we know that we've got a whole lot going on, and so I wanted to ask you, what challenges do students experience that you know of, that we may not know about or understand as faculty?

00:11:09 **Yesi**

So, I'm not sure if this is too much related to academia, but I kind of sometimes observe my classmates like where's their mindset? Like is their mental health okay or something like that, along those lines. I don't know if this is related to the pandemic, but I feel like with like a lot of the incoming students coming from high school, like that graduated during the pandemic more like me returning students and things like that.

00:11:33 **Yesi**

We have, I feel like this mental baggage, and I feel like that mental baggage for some of the students, it prevents them from fully seeing like it's affecting their academic. I guess what I'm trying to say is like I feel like mental health I think is like the number one thing and it can range from anything.

00:11:52 **Yesi**

It could range from like maybe a classmate doesn't even know that they have like some form of like - I don't want to be dramatic but like PTSD or something like that. Or like maybe they can't do boundaries well like they can't separate like when to do homework, when to have family time, when to have me time.

00:12:07 **Yesi**

Just juggling all of that, I see that more as an issue than the academic. I feel like if students are able to have that emotional and mental support, then it'll be easier for them to retain the information, be more attentive in class and things like that.

00:12:23 **Christian**

I agree with my classmate. I believe the pandemic changed everyone. It was a hard two years, those hard two years doesn't go away with a flip of a switch. So, that's hard on students. I will also think that the cost of living has some impact on students. I believe the days of parents telling their kids to just focus on their studying, don't worry about anything else - those days are gone.

00:12:49 **Christian**

Out of high school, you have to support your parents, out of high school, you have to work because the cost of living is a little bit hard. And of course, this is not the faculty or the college fault by any means, but it will be something to consider for professors, to have that in mind that the students are dealing with not only mental health, but also the economic struggles, the cost of living has on students.

00:13:13 **Christian**

I believe it will not be bad to be a little bit mindful of the homework that you're going to give to students so they can focus on their classes when they're in class and when out of class, they can also focus on other stuff because right now, it's very difficult to just focus on one.

00:13:32 **April**

I would like to tag in and say going to school and balancing life, anybody who has gone through going to school, starting a career, they've all experienced that as well. Just the balance and finding that happy medium for their life.

00:13:50 **April**

Nobody's life is the same. Everyone's going to have their own problems, their own challenges that they face, their own things that they have to balance, but it's also finding your priorities honestly. Everybody's going to have one specific thing that they find to be a higher priority, and if that's not school, then it's not school. But you have to find that balance, I guess.

00:14:14 **April**

But I would say that I think more social media is a challenge for people nowadays. Personally, I don't have any social media. I find that it's a big relief. I don't have to worry about who's saying what about me, what's going on with this person or ... I can just focus.

00:14:33 **April**

I mean , I feel like it's a good thing to reach out and connect with social media, but it's also become more of a distraction for students. So, knowing that, I feel like teachers will be able to say, "Hey, put your phones away for two hours a day." I feel like that's not really asking a whole lot, but understanding that some people don't really know how to take that balance and apply that to their lives.

00:14:55 **April**

So, social media has become more dominant in our culture and just like I said, finding a balance, it's so important but a lot of people are not taught that. So, just understanding that it's not taught the way it used to be and they might not understand how to set priorities in their life. Just understanding that as a challenge, I think it would go a long way.

00:15:19 **Nico**

Yeah, and just really briefly, because you guys definitely highlighted the main points, it's great when professors are able to recognize the effort that my fellow classmates do put forth. Even though they are balancing family life, even though they're balancing their work life.

00:15:36 **Nico**

I personally know a lot of classmates who just come late to class or aren't able to attend at all. And that's difficult because they are working at the same time. I understand that when you register for a class, you are committing to that schedule and you're working in best to work in harmony with that schedule on top of your work schedule. And sometimes, they do conflict.

00:15:56 **Nico**

And we appreciate it when professors understand that and they recognize that they're doing their best to make it to class. You know, to learn, to reach their academic goal in the long run.

00:16:06 **Sara**

Thank you. Great responses. I'm always like more into this, like I could just sit back and listen. The next question: if you could think of one way we could improve as a college, what could we do? Or is there anything as a college that we do well? Like if you can think of something, what is it? So, what could we do better or what is it we do really well.

00:16:27 **Yesi**

I've been going to Mt. SAC since 2009. There was a period like 2015 until 2021 that I didn't go. I'm an undocumented student so I was here like before the DREAM Program was implemented. So, definitely, coming back and seeing the DREAM Program and all the services that they offer, like shout out to the DREAM staff.

00:16:46 **Yesi**

Like when I came back to California, because I was living in the East Coast for like three years, I came back not that good. Like I was not in a good space and I can say like hands down, the DREAM Program, like I wouldn't be here. I wouldn't be like getting all these acceptance letters from all these universities if it wasn't for them kind of thing.

00:17:01 **Yesi**

Like from mental support to like academic support, I feel like Mt. SAC definitely with the equity building and all the programs they offer there for like the marginalized students and students that just don't have a voice to begin with, like I feel like Mt. SAC hit gold right there for students.

00:17:17 **Christian**

Yes, and just to add, I feel personally so grateful with Mt. SAC. I feel very, very humble and grateful for the opportunity that those special program to me has been a blessing. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to study even if I wanted to, even if I had the goals, even if I had the good grades.

00:17:36 **Christian**

Now, if it wasn't for Mt. SAC and the those special program, the ABE Program and the DREAM Program, all there together only on Mt. SAC, I wouldn't even be here. So, please continue to do that. No complaints about the college. It's a great experience to be there. It's very inclusive, it's super respectful, has our best interest at heart.

00:17:58 **Christian**

So, I cannot be more grateful to Mt. SAC than I already are, and I cannot wait to graduate and give back because this opportunity, to me, it's being life-changing. So, I just want to shout out everyone and my adult special program. Thank you so very much.

00:18:15 **Nico**

It's the little stuff, right? The bookstore, the library sitting areas, the organized structure of the campus regarding where certain subjects and classes are located, student stores. I also appreciate having a counselor who can keep me on track during my time at Mt. SAC because I don't like feeling like I wasted time. No one does.

00:18:31 **Nico**

And with the help of a very beneficial tool, my counselor introduced me to that Mt. SAC has provided, and that's the Mountie Academic Plan (MAP). It helps me see the big picture and take it semester by semester, seeing my progress as I get closer and closer to the end and plan on transferring and reach my academic goals.

00:18:49 **April**

I'd like to say that I have really appreciate the Veteran Program, the vet center - all of them have been very, very influential in my growth as a student and just being there to help me. But I do have one thing that I would kind of change or implement.

00:19:06 **April**

I actually started school during the pandemic. So, for me, I never really got into orientation. It was online and everything like that. But for me, I'm an in-person learner. I love that hands-on learning. And for me, going to the campus, I knew nothing, I knew nobody.

00:19:24 **April**

So, for me, I feel like implementing maybe in that class for incoming students and just making it like a one-day class or a two day class that students can come to. They can see the faculty, the faculty can introduce themselves, the president, the vice president. I never knew any of those people respectively.

00:19:47 **April**

I never really knew anybody. But for me, I like putting a face to the name. When I see Mt. SAC, who is Mt. SAC, what is this body of people that are here to support me but I don't know them? Like I said, it came during the pandemic, so that wasn't really possible.

00:20:04 **April**

But we're out of the woods of that, so maybe implementing something along those lines for the students who are coming in , and just even an escort, signing up for a campus escort just to show people around the campus, show all of the different beautiful buildings. All of the progress that's happening and just explaining a little history, background, and just giving that one-on-one I think would be really great for students.

00:20:28 **Sara**

Thank you so much and I hope you all realize how appreciative we are of your morning and your feedback and your time and your story. And I hope you have a great rest of your break and we will see you next week.

00:20:40 **Facilitator**

Thank you so much students. Thank you Sara for putting this panel together. It helps us so much to hear your voices and to learn more about how we can best serve you. And thank you so much for being so open and candid. We so appreciate you.

00:20:57 **Christina**

Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast, and don't forget to share your favorite episodes.