Transcript
Pima Community College Perspectives
Segment 1: “Entrepreneurship Academy”
Guest: Stan Steinman, Dean, Workforce and Business Development

Segment 2: “Student Spotlight”
Guest: Andrew Mahan, PCC Student

(male announcer) Welcome to Pima Community College Perspectives, a look at how education enriches our community. And now, here’s your host, Nina Trasoff.

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(Nina Trasoff) Hello, and welcome to Pima Community College Perspectives. I am Nina Trasoff. I am delighted that you could join us. And we have a very interesting program today. We’re talking about Entrepreneurship and the new academy within Pima Community College that will be starting up this spring; very exciting possibility. My co-host, as usual, is Rachelle Howell, who’s the Assistant Vice Chancellor of Pima Community College. Welcome, Rachelle.

(Rachelle Howell) Hi, Nina.

(Trasoff) And I know some of your background with the College and in your prior lives has been with Small Business Administration. Small businesses are really the heart and soul of our economy.

(Howell) They are. And I think a lot of people might be surprised to hear that, because what we see on TV, what we hear about in terms of the economy is all about industry, what big industry is and is not doing and how that’s impacting the economy. But small businesses account for well over 95 percent of job development, just jobs, period, in the United States.

(Trasoff) And that’s so critical, especially in a time like this. And this is such a good opportunity for people who have an idea and have the will and the energy to start a business, because that is the engine that will really help us move through this recovery even more quickly.

(Howell) That’s true. And being an entrepreneur takes a certain set of skills, but they can be learned. And the goal behind our new program is to really take individuals that have that drive to be an entrepreneur, have their own business, and have a business idea, and teach them what it takes to actually take that idea and turn it into a business that’s a growing concern and a business that will create jobs.

(Trasoff) And that’s so essential, because there are so many businesses that start up and never make it through the one-year, let alone the five-year mark.

(Howell) That’s true. And often really it’s just a lack of knowledge, because if you have an idea or knowledge in one area that’s specialized to whatever idea you want for your business, it doesn’t mean that you know how to run a business.
(Trasoff) Right.

(Howell) They are two totally different things.

(Trasoff) They are indeed two different sides of the brain and all the rest of that. And so the College has a new Entrepreneurship Academy that falls within the area of Workforce and Business Development. And the Dean thereof is Stan Steinman, who’s with us today, too. Hello Stan.

(Stan Steinman) Hello Nina. Thank you. Thank you for allowing me to be here.

(Trasoff) I think this is a terrific and important topic. Entrepreneurship, as we’ve been saying, is such a key. How did you discover or discern that there was a need for this in the community?

(Steinman) Well, as Rachelle was saying, you know, small business plays such an integral part of our economy. And I think, in Tucson, it’s even more so. But after we got this grant, and, can I tell you how we got the grant?

(Trasoff) Oh please do!

(Steinman) I think it would be important. Congresswoman Giffords, Gabby Giffords was instrumental in securing this grant for us. She had the idea. She knows the economy in Tucson is so-- small business is so paramount to the community. She was a small business owner, so she certainly understood that. And she helped us secure the grant with the Small Business Administration. And as part of the grant, one of the things we had to do was discern the need in the community. So we went to all these different small business organizations and asked them questions about what kind of program they would want, what, you know, who would benefit, who, what courses should we consider putting in. So that’s how we went about discerning the need in the community. It was very important to get that down so we knew exactly who we’d be dealing with and what the needs would be.

(Trasoff) But there are several classes that the Chambers or other groups offer periodically or episodically to help people with this or that subject. What sets what Pima is setting out to do apart?

(Steinman) I think part of it is that the, the Pima College curriculum development is the key to making this a little bit different in that it has the whole weight of Pima College behind it in terms of the academic portions of it. And also it’s more comprehensive. It’s a very comprehensive program; it goes into depth in the various areas that people would need to understand. And it’s really a collaboration with all these other groups that put on programs also. We’re meeting with them on a regular basis and getting their input into what their folks would need, you know, who goes to them for small business information. So it really is a community-wide effort.

(Trasoff) And it’s very comprehensive.

(Steinman) Very comprehensive. That’s the key; it’s a very comprehensive program. And it’s designed that people who need part of the program can go to only one class, or they can go to all classes. It’s broken up that way so someone who thinks they know a lot about marketing doesn’t want information
on marketing can go to information on the financing of the small business. But, you know, we encourage people to go to all the classes, especially if they’re just beginning a small business.

(Trasoff) Sometimes when you’re into it you don’t really know what you don’t know.

(Steinman) Exactly.

(Trasoff) And so going to all the classes can help you.

(Steinman) Would be very helpful to take in the whole thing, because it is designed to be comprehensive in terms of learning exactly what you need in small business. Also it’s good for someone who may have already started their own small business who would be interested in brushing up on their skills and getting that small business going. I think as we already said that one of the problems is that a lot of small businesses are started but they fail pretty quickly. So it’s important that they get these skills down, that they’re very knowledgeable of what they’re doing, especially the, how to go out and market your product, how to create your marketing plan, your business plan. It’s one thing to have this great idea, but it’s another thing to bring it to market, and it’s key that you have these skills down.

(Trasoff) And it’s the kind of thing that people don’t often think about. I mean, they have the idea; they believe they’ve done the market research to know that this concept, this business is needed or the product is needed. But sometimes even just the simple things of how to hire, how to file the EEOC rules, how to do payroll, how to counsel employees. And then there was one line that I saw in some of the background material that was shared; it’s how to focus on your business as opposed to being in the business.

(Steinman) Exactly.

(Trasoff) And if you would talk a little bit about that, because I thought that was a very important distinction.

(Steinman) We, you have to have the broader picture. You can’t just be inside the business. You have to look at all the aspects of what the business is doing: the person, who’s going to be coming to you, who the buyers are, who the, where you’re getting the product from, the laws. I mean, you know, now, today, we all realize that there’s so many laws that we have to follow. Small businesses have to follow them just as well as the large businesses in many cases in terms of employment law and the like. So it’s very important that they focus on that business, and, you know, they really need to keep their eye on the ball specifically. Eye on the ball is the key.

(Trasoff) And that really is the key, because it would be so, when a small-business person-- I can’t speak for all of them, but I know for many, when they get into the business, it’s because of the passion for the business or the product or what they hope to do. And the owner has to step back to focus on the business operations themselves, which sometimes, quite honestly, is just not as much fun as doing the business.

(Steinman) Exactly. The nuts and bolts are not the...
(Steinman)...is the difficult part. And that’s what you need to do to make it successful. And... it’s a lot of work. People have to realize, you know, starting your own business is not just a piece of cake. It’s a lot of work. There’s a lot that goes into it. I mean, from deciding where you’re going to locate. You know, if you’re opening a coffee shop, say, you know, what side of the street you open on is, can make the difference between selling one cup of coffee a day or a thousand cups of coffee a day. So little things that you don’t think about necessarily are so important. And one of the good things about the Entrepreneurship Academy, in each of the courses, on the second day of each course, we set aside an hour for small business owners, small business groups to come and talk to the students, be a little...

(Trasoff) Real life experience

(Steinman) Real life experience. It’ll be a little academy within an academy. And so they can have, you know, interaction with people who have been there, people who have struggled, people who have succeeded, and get the information from them how, what steps they took, what, you know, what pitfalls they may face, what rewards, you know. Hopefully the rewards will be there. That’s, and I think that’s exciting.

(Trasoff) It is exciting. Go back to the grant through Gabby Gifford’s office that or at least that she helped to move through the federal government. As a result of that, there is no registration charge to attend these classes.

(Steinman) That’s right. That’s right. The cost is covered; you know, the grant covers all the costs of the courses. So it’s a valuable opportunity for, you know, community members to come and participate in this program.

(Trasoff) Now I know the first classes are going to be starting in April, so you’re looking for people who are thinking about this to get in touch with you. Could you go through what the outline of the courses are? You said that there are six courses; what are the six topics that are covered?

(Steinman) There are six topics we have. First one would be Understanding Entrepreneurship. This is an overview of entrepreneurship, what they need to understand about everything from market research to legal and property issues to what are the components of a successful business. And the second course is Financing a Small Business, and that’s critical. I mean, that’s where so many people who want to go into small business fall down, because they don’t have the financing background. They don’t do their financial plan. They don’t understand how profitability and cash flow. And then they get into trouble. So this is instrumental if someone’s going to start a business, that they understand these thoroughly.

The next class would be Strategic Assessment and Growth of Business. This is the, you know, the assessment of your business growth, the development of strategies as you’re moving along, how you’re going to make changes, how you’re going to grow the business. And that’s what it’s all about. It’s about starting with an idea, and new ideas spring up, and you take those ideas and you run with them, and it bears fruit. That’s the, this is sort of the bearing fruit of the program.
The next class would be Small Business Leadership and Organization. And you have to create for your company; you have to have a positive environment, and this is key. It is key to have a positive environment, you know, for your employees and yourself. And you, most people are starting a business because they were tired of something else.

(Trasoff) And they want to do it their way.

(Steinman) And they want to do it their way. So this is your opportunity to do it your way and make sure that it is your way; it doesn’t become the way that you...

(Trasoff) Right. Creating your kind of climate.

(Steinman) ...where you came from.

(Trasoff) I like that.

(Steinman) The next class would be on Marketing and Sales Strategy. You got the idea; you have to go out there and sell it. It does no good to keep it in the office, keep it on the shelf. You have to sell it. And this is the sizzle.

(Trasoff) Okay.

(Steinman) And then we have the Business Planning and Financial Forecasting. That would be the last class. And this, you know, you have to think ahead. You have to forecast ahead where your dollars are going to come from. You have to make sure you have, you know, money for the next, you know, cash for the next month’s rent.

(Trasoff) And then from this is going to, this initial coursework is going to go to computer eventually and be available online and then the next set of more in depth courses.

(Steinman) We have, there’s, yeah, part of the grant, the first stage was discerning the need. The second stage was bringing in subject matter, experts to create these classes, which we did, you know, the small-business experts helped create the classes. And then the next stage is to develop the online segment of the classes so they’ll be available, you know, more widespread and more convenient for people at times when they want to take them. So it’s a great opportunity.

Then we’re going to have the Entrepreneurship Boot Camp which will be a smaller number of classes, but they will be more geared to, more in-depth focus on these issues. You know, someone’s having a problem with marketing, these would be ideal; a marketing boot camp would be ideal for them. They can get all the information they ever need to know to get them back on track. And for financing, there would be just a wealth of information that will be provided at these boot camps on a very, very timely manner for them.

(Trasoff) This sounds fabulous. So, Rachelle, how do people get in touch if they’re listening to this and thinking they might like to take part of these first classes beginning this April?
(Howell) Probably the best, fastest way is to call 206-4500. They’ll be sent to the right place to get more information and register. The first classes start in early April. So it’s never too soon to get yourself signed up for these classes, especially if you’re thinking about starting a business. And if you are just thinking about it, this is a great way to grow that idea.

(Trasoff) I think that’s fabulous. Stan, thank you so much for joining us. I’m very excited about this, the Entrepreneurship Academy at Pima Community College. It’s going to be good for the College and good for the community.

(Steinman) Thank you very much.

(Trasoff) Thank you. And we will be back after a short break and switch subjects a little bit, and we’ll be talking with a student who is not your typical student at Pima Community College, although maybe he is.

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(announcer) For more than 40 years, Pima Community College has helped prepare the citizens of Tucson and Pima County for good jobs and better lives for themselves and their families. We don’t do it alone. We appreciate your ongoing investment in education, especially during these extraordinarily tough times. Your tax dollars, combined with student tuition, make it possible for thousands of Southern Arizonans to get a jump-start before transferring to a university, to get the training they need to stay competitive at work, and to prepare for the jobs of tomorrow. Many of our students are seeking to restart their careers after losing their jobs, and some, their homes, during the recession. All of our students know, as you do, that the more you learn, the more you earn. We know that today’s students are often juggling work and family, as well as school. That’s why Pima offers classes at night and on weekends at six campuses, more than 180 other locations, and over the Internet. Our programs deliver education how you want it, and give you the opportunity to achieve your goals at your pace. Today’s Pima Community College students will be tomorrow’s firefighters, nurses, police, teachers, and small business owners, the backbone of a safe, healthy, prosperous Tucson and Pima County. Thank you for your support as we continue to help you and your family build a better tomorrow. For more information, contact us at 206-4500, or visit us on the Web, at pima.edu. Pima Community College, Developing our Community Through Learning.

[music]

(Trasoff) Welcome back to Pima Community College Perspectives. I’m Nina Trasoff and joined as always by Rachelle Howell. Rachelle, I was saying that we had an atypical student coming up, although there really is no “typical” student at Pima. That’s one of the many beauties about the College is that it attracts so many different people at different stages of their lives.

(Howell) That’s true. Yeah, there really is no such thing as a typical student. We do have an average age. The average age of our typical student, even though we just said that there really wasn’t one, is 27 years old. But, you know, as we’ve talked about in the past with the economy the way that it is and other
things happening out there in the world, we’ve seen an influx of older-than-average students over the past couple of years and really expect that to continue.

(Trasoff) And there are a lot of older students, myself included, who go back for enrichment, for a class that is just of interest or to learn something new. But there also are a lot of people coming back to school because they want to change the direction of their lives. And Pima is such a good place to do that.

(Howell) That’s true. They want to change the direction of their lives, or they have to change the direction of their lives. So many people are coming back to restart a career. A lot come back because they want to move up in their chosen field. But we really are in a situation right now where the services that the College offers are critical to those individuals who need a jump start.

(Trasoff) And we have less of a jump start and more of a change of life, truly, a guest with us today; his name is Andrew Mahan. Andrew is, if I may, your age is 58.

(Mahan) Yes.

(Trasoff) And you had been working for years and years in one field and really felt it was time to just really change your life.

(Mahan) Absolutely. Absolutely. And Pima was a major part of that. It was an easy transition. I started out, everyone’s been helpful from the beginning, and it’s been an easy thing to do.

(Trasoff) Okay, well talk about what prompted you to do it though.

(Mahan) I was in a situation where it’s not that I wasn’t going anywhere; it was just very stagnant. And I could see my future, and I wanted to advance. I wanted to be able to do more with myself. And that’s where Pima came in. I started, my wife kept saying, “Go to school. Take a class. Just take one class.” And that’s what I did, and that was it. She said it took her 10 years to get me into school, and now it’s going to take her 10 years to get me out.

(Trasoff) Or possibly never.

(Mahan) [chuckles]

(Trasoff) If you really love it, there’s no reason to stop going for classes. But you’ve really done, I don’t want to say a 180, but it’s a major change from what you had been doing. You’ve, is this an old love? And we’re talking about getting into computers and technology, which some might say those of us of a certain generation are a little older to be getting into that. But you’ve really found a niche within that.

(Mahan) Oh absolutely, absolutely. It was something that was a hobby, something that I was, that I enjoyed working with. And my wife said, you know, “All you’re doing helping people with computers and such, if you go to school, you can get a degree, and they pay people to do that.”

[all laughing]
(Trasoff) And very nicely I might add.

(Mahan) Absolutely. And it’s opened up an amazing amount of opportunities for me and an amazing amount of things that I can contribute back to the community, because I’m more informed now. I understand the situation better now. So...

(Trasoff) Now you had come from a background where you had earned a GED many years ago and then went into the work force probably of necessity, not really giving you enough time to go on to college, which would’ve been a luxury then.

(Mahan) Absolutely, absolutely. And it’s not necessarily a luxury now, but it’s something that I’m really, really enjoying. And I think that I’m enjoying it more now than I would have at that point. I wouldn’t have appreciated it as much as I do at this point. And it’s just...

(Trasoff) I’ve heard that from so many people who have gone back as an older student.

(Mahan) And yeah, that’s been a lot of the process. And I’ve just, I’ve just really enjoyed it. And the support mechanisms that are in place, it’s amazing. Once you open the door, it’s amazing how many more doors start opening.

(Trasoff) I love that. But it must have been, and this is only me projecting, but that first step of starting back in school when you’ve been out of school for 30 years about, to come back into school, that first time going into a classroom and knowing that you are taking a class. There had to be some trepidation with that.

(Mahan) I think the word would be "scary."

[laughter]

(Mahan) It was extremely scary. And when we, when we, my first thoughts of going back to school was that I’ll be around a lot of kids who are going to be looking at me being an old timer and such as that. But what I found out was that the kids, once you’re there, and they realize that you’re there to learn just like they are, it’s, they open up. I have a lot firmer understanding of who this next generation is now and a lot more respect, and it really opened a lot up to me. There’s bright kids; there’s brilliant kids in this world. And I’ve got a lot more confidence in the generation behind us now.

(Trasoff) That’s nice to hear. That really is. How about the teachers who, I know Pima is used to the fact, [clears throat], excuse me, kids from 13, 14, 15 years old up to the more senior generations that are taking classes. But was it at all odd for them, or were they able to see that if you’re here you must really be serious? Otherwise, why would you be coming back?

(Mahan) Exactly. I think from the onset [clears throat] that’s the way the teachers look at you. If you’re there to learn, and it doesn’t matter what your age is, if you’re there to learn, the teachers are there. They support you. They will give you all of the work and everything that you can expect.
(Trasoff) So there are student-success classes that help students who are returning. Is that, was that helpful to you as you came back into the school setting?

(Mahan) Absolutely. The STU 121 course, it’s called “Progress.” And it’s for helping students come back to school, students of, that haven’t been in school for awhile, single mothers, people returning to school after not being there for a long time. And it really helped as far as navigating the administrative portions, as far as learning how to write papers again, as far as research. And there’s so many things that that course-- I am really glad that I took that course to start with, because it just gave you a fast track right back into school.

(Trasoff) And how do you juggle work and school, or are you able to not be working as much now?

(Mahan) Actually, I’m probably working more now than I was before I decided to go to school. At this point, I have two jobs and going to school full time. But this-- I’m graduating right now. But it’s a matter-- and that’s part of what the Progress course helps with, too, is that they help you not only with negotiating your financial situation, but negotiating the time, and setting aside the time, and setting up time frames and a schedule that will help you succeed.

(Trasoff) You know, in a way this is related to the first portion of this program, Rachelle, where we were talking about Entrepreneurship and helping people who were starting businesses learn the technical things that they need to know to get started. It sounds as if the class that Andrew’s referring to does the same thing for students who are returning, helping them get organized and succeed.

(Howell) Well, that’s true. And if you think about it, we are each, to a certain extent, our own small business, and we have to learn what it takes to be successful in our life’s chosen work. And that’s what these classes are about.

(Trasoff) So when did you figure out that you could actually succeed?

(Mahan) I would say probably by the second or third class [chuckles], because I was already applying knowledge and information. I thought that I knew about computers, but within, this is an introductory class, and within the third or fourth class, I realized how much more and what the depth of this area was.

(Trasoff) And so now you’re going to be graduating this May with an Associates in Applied Science Degree?

(Mahan) Yes.

(Trasoff) And then also you’ll have the two certifications.

(Mahan) Absolutely.

(Trasoff) So Linux is one of them, and the other is System Administration?

(Mahan) Yes.
(Trasoff) Which makes you a very valuable person, it seems to me.

(Mahan) It seems to be turning out that way.

[laughter]

(Mahan) Yes it does.

(Trasoff) That’s great. But isn’t it fun that you can go back to school and become a skilled professional and just change your life doing something you absolutely love?

(Mahan) Absolutely! That was, that’s the entire key. I mean, I looked at it as just being a theory, but it’s real. It happens. You go back to school, you learn, and you move on. And it’s not only what you get, it’s what you can give back.

(Trasoff) Oh Andrew, that’s great! What a great way to end the program. Thank you so much for joining us Andrew Mahan.

(Mahan) You’re welcome.

(Trasoff) One of Pima’s many, many success stories. And Rachelle, thank you again for being with.

(Howell) Thank you.

(Trasoff) And thanks to all of you for listening. I’m Nina Trasoff. This has been Pima Community College Perspectives.

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