

10/3/24 EPISODE 3: SPOTLIGHT ON ALUMNI: Dr. Selmon Welcomes Hackley Community Care CEO and MCC Alumnus Mike Weessies Home

Daniel Boothe

Hello again and welcome to another edition of JayTalk, Muskegon Community College's new official podcast where we talk all things Jayhawks. I am Daniel Booth. Alongside me co-hosting the operation is Miss Sue Samaniego as we welcome you to an all-new episode. Coming up on the program today, Muskegon Community College President Dr. John Selman takes over the microphone as he will be doing once a month, yes, once a month. Dr. Selman will be sitting down for a conversation with notable MCC alumni. The people who not only graduated from Muskegon Community College, but are also making a huge impact in our community and beyond. And it's all in anticipation and celebration of our upcoming centennial. Oh, you haven't heard about that yet? Muskegon Community College is turning 100 years old. That's right, 100 years old. That's going to be in 2026. And we here at JTalk want to speak with as many graduates as we possibly can leading up to our big birthday. We want to hear alumni tell us their story, how MCC shaped their lives, shaped their careers, and then connect them with students to perhaps help shape the next generation of MCC graduates and bestow some of that wisdom they may have learned along the way. So without further ado, I will pass over the show to MCC President Dr. John Selman as he sits down with Hackley Community Care CEO and MCC graduate Mike Weessies in this all-new special edition of JTalk.

Dr. Selmon

Mike currently serves on the board for Michigan Primary Care Association, Michigan Community Health Network, Pioneer Resource, and he's board vice president for the Muskegon Area School District. And he got to start where? Right here at Muskegon Community College. Mr. Weeses, thank you so much for your time and welcome home.

Mike Weessies

Thank you, Dr. Selmon. Good to be home.

Dr. Selmon

Good deal here. So can you share a specific experience during your time at MCC that you believe had a profound impact on your career path?

Mike Weessies

Oh, there's so many. I guess I'll begin with one person in particular. She worked in the financial aid office. Her name was Marge Stedham. And I remember that name from 35

plus years ago. My parents, I grew up in Laketon Township, where my dad still lives now. Dad worked at a local factory. Mom was a nursing supervisor part-time. So we didn't necessarily have the means for me to go away to a four-year university. So I remember my dad and I coming into MCC and meeting with Ms. Stedham. And she worked in the financial aid office, and she charted a course for my dad and I, for me in particular, obviously, where we could go to MCC, have my parents not claim me on their income taxes. That would allow me in my third and fourth year when I transferred to a four-year university to receive a Pell Grant. So essentially, I walked out of a four-year degree with about \$1,500 to \$2,000 in debt. I graduated from Ferris State. So, you know, that's just one person, but there are so many people, so helpful and friendly during my two years here. at MCC.

Dr. Selmon

Good job, Marge. 35 years still having an influence, an impact on a young man.

Mike Weessies

Absolutely.

Dr. Selmon

So, Mike, which courses or professors at MCC helped shape your understanding of your field and how did they influence your career decisions?

Mike Weessies

So, again, there's many professors that I enjoyed being in their class, but I'll never forget my first class, 8 a.m., Business Law with Duane Schechter. I still remember that name again from 35 plus years ago. I'll never forget some of the lessons that I've learned in that business law class that I still employ today as CEO, but also he taught us responsibility and set the tone for my college career here at MCC. by holding us all accountable. And the adage of Muskegon Community College being referred to as Coeur d'Alene High couldn't have been more wrong when I was growing up. When I came here, the accountability, the excellence in education, out of all my college degrees and fellowships, I think MCC was the toughest, most rigorous curriculum that I had.

Dr. Selmon

So how did your time at MCC help build a professional network? And can you share any specific connections that have been particularly beneficial in your career?

Mike Weessies

You know, I had so many classmates that I connect with. Friends and now colleagues that I necessarily didn't know during high school, but I built a relationship with them through meeting up with them at the student hall, but also in classes and just the small, small atmosphere. It was a great networking opportunity. that I still run into classmates to this day. In fact, there's quite a few of them that work here at MCC.

Dr. Selmon

Well, you mentioned a couple of challenges, but were there any challenges you faced during your years, college years, that ultimately help you grow and prepare you for your career?

Mike Weessies

I wasn't the best high school student. I had a lot of fun. I played sports. But just the rigor and the structure that MCC provided really propelled me to be prepared to go on to my bachelor's degree at Ferris State University and ultimately my master's degree in public administration at Western. So really it's just the structure, but yet also the excellence in education that really, it's still helping me prepare my staff, my teammates that I get to work with every day holding high quality care and excellence at a high level.

Dr. Selmon

So good deal. You kind of mentioned mentors and we all need mentors. We all need individuals to help us understand what it looks like along the way. Are there any other mentors during your time at MCC and how did their guidance shape your career trajectory?

Mike Weessies

Again, my experience goes back to the professors that I had. I'll never forget some of the professors, specifically my anatomy and physiology teacher that I had here. Boy, that was probably the toughest class that I ever had, but then as far as a mentor, she was able to help guide me through the class and get me through it. I learned so much that I didn't think I'd carry forward. Again, some of these things that you never thought I'd use today and use quite often.

Dr. Selmon

So how's your relationship with the alumni community from MCC impacted your career, both professionally and personally?

Mike Weessies

So, again, I still connect with quite a few of my high school classmates and also MCC classmates that are still employed with, are now employed with MCC. And just that support and knowing that they're helping out other kids, students, just knowing that they've helped my three kids. I've been blessed that all three of my kids went to MCC. My oldest daughter graduated five or six years ago, and now she's in pharmacy school, set to graduate in May. My son graduated a year or two after my oldest daughter and is now working, went on for his bachelor's degree in supply chain management at Grand Valley, and now he's working as a manager at a transportation company. My youngest daughter, she graduated about three or four years ago in the nursing program, one of the toughest nursing schools, nursing curriculum in the state. And now she's a surgical nurse at Trinity Health in Pontiac. three very successful, I call it off the WCS payroll, which is kind of nice. They're all doing quite well. But you talked about mentorship and just caring compassion. I think I've shared with you, Dr. Selma, my youngest daughter's story of having a health issue her freshman year in college, significant health issue, and the care and compassion that her professors provided to her still gives me goosebumps and kind of puts a tear in my eye. Just the emails that I reviewed from those professors and how they cared about her, I don't know if she would get that type of compassion if she were at a larger institution. And then she only took one semester off of school and then completed her nursing degree. So many, many thanks to all of the educators here at MCC and the administration.

Dr. Selmon

Good job. What a wonderful story. What a family affair with the Muskegon Community College, and we're so proud of that. So thanks for sharing that piece. What advice would you give to a current student at MCC who is looking to leverage their college experience for career success? So what advice would you give them?

Mike Weessies

Take this education seriously here at MCC, again, it is the real deal. I think, again, the coursework that I had here, had I not gone to MCC, I'm not sure I would be sitting where I'm at as far as when I went to Ferris State University, I was able to graduate with honors, and MCC provided me that structure and that rigor to be a great student. So my advice to any student, I do talk to a few students, here and there and also high school students when I was on the board at Reese Buffer Board of Education is go to MCC, best education that I've seen in West Michigan. So don't take it lightly and... Listen to the professors, but also listen to the advisors. They really do a great job and know what they're doing.

Dr. Selmon

If a student wanted to talk about being a leader in a healthcare facility, would we be able to connect you with that student and help that student build a community and help that student understand what it looks like along the way, the career path?

Mike Weessies

100%. I love this institution. MCC has just been a pillar in our community, but also it would be in my best interest, I'm 55 years old now, so to find the next set of leaders that want to be in healthcare, I'd be happy to talk to anyone and help them. So Dr. Summan, I have a question for you. I mean, the facilities here are amazing. The strategic plan or the goal for MCC for the next three to five years?

Dr. Selmon

Well, we have a facilities master planning process going right now, and so we're looking out 10 years. In 2 years, Muskegon Community College will be 100 years old. And so we're looking at preparing this institution for the next 100 years. And so our strategic plan now is around access, equity, and excellence. And so you'll see a lot of that messaging coming out as we begin to celebrate our centennial, our 100 years. And so, but we're looking ahead to the next 100 years. And we're trying to position the institution in terms of our facilities, our programs, and our service to to meet the new challenges that we have in higher education here.

Mike Weessies

So Dr. Salman, as an alumni, instead of just writing a check, which I know is also always welcome, what else can alumni do to help spread the word about MCC and the value of the education and the importance of receiving a degree here at MCC.

Dr. Selmon

Well, alum can help in a lot of ways. One, we want you to re-engage. Alumni stories is another way, because everybody has a story. Everybody has a journey. So share your journey. Share your experience. with the college and what it was like here as a student and then the impact that it had on your career path. Just share your stories, in other words, just share your stories, be a part. We have a lot of activities here on campus for the community. Come back and join us and be a part of that. If you have an opportunity to share information, work with a student in particular, because that's the important piece is to help students build community. An alum can do that. You know, you're in positions to do that. You have experiences and students can learn from you. So come back, get engaged. We have alumni office. Touch base with us. Just get involved.

Mike Weessies

That I like to talk. So any chance that I get the opportunity, when people ask me about my college education, I always start off with the best education that I received was right here at MCC. So I'm not shy about saying that, and I'd be happy to be one of those alumni that help spread the word.

Dr. Selmon

Yep, we're going to reach out to you, so I look forward to it. So appreciate having you on the show, and certainly wish you and your organization the very, very best.

Mike Weessies

Thank you, Dr. Selmon, for having me on your inaugural podcast, and absolutely honored to be a part of this program. So thank you very much.

Daniel Boothe

A huge thank you once again to Mike Weessies and Dr. Selmon for that conversation, and thank you for tuning in and listening. Sue and I will be back next time with another round of amazing guests to discuss all things MCC. Until that time, I am Daniel Booth. Have a wonderful week here at Muskegon Community College, and go Jayhawks!