

Alumni Spotlight: Robert Hawkins and "The Mount Rushmore of MCC"



It is hard to imagine a life better lived than that of Robert Hawkins, a 1968 graduate of McLennan Community College. Over the course of almost 80 years spent living and working in the Waco area, six different Texas Governors have appointed Hawkins to

serve on eight different state boards and councils, most focusing on workforce development. Locally, he dedicated 20 years of service to the Bellmead City Council, serving four terms as mayor.

Yes, the list of Robert Hawkins' personal and professional accomplishments is vast. But were it not for McLennan Community College, he says, his life would have turned out much differently.

Hawkins attended LaVega High School, but left during his senior year to join the Army. After his service, he worked as a process inspector at McGregor-based Rocketyne. While the work was good, he knew he needed a college education to pursue his dream of working in education. Unfortunately, affordable educational opportunities in Central Texas were scarce.

In 1965, Hawkins heard rumors about an effort to launch a junior college in Waco, and soon he was circulating petitions to assist in the election effort. When McLennan Community College became a reality in 1966, Hawkins was one of the first 50 students to register for classes taught in the barracks at the James Connally Air Force Base.

"President Wilbur A. Ball, Dean of the College Chester

Hastings, and Dean of Students Larry Gilliam made us feel welcome and told us of a bright future that lay ahead for ourselves and the college," Hawkins remembers. "Students had easy access to these administrators. They were encouraging and during the course of the day you could see each of them going about their duties and answering questions."

The faculty, too, made a big impression on this enthusiastic student.

"The faculty were tops in their respective fields," he says. "I had several that changed my life—I call them "The Mount Rushmore of MCC." The faces on Hawkins' personal monument include Dr. Michael White, Billy Dowdy, Robert Trout, Charles Kennedy, and Clyde Koehne. Hawkins says these instructors gave their very best and prepared their students to hold their own in any academic environment. He later proved this fact by being the first student to transfer MCC credits out of state when he attended Syracuse University in New York on a union scholarship. He later transferred to the State University of New York at Albany, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree.

In 1970, Hawkins began his career at Texas State Technical Institute (now College) as Assistant to the vice president. He later launched the college's research department, writing grants and conducting feasibility studies. He ended his career at TSTC after 30 years, when he retired as Director of Special Projects. In 2009, his alma mater, MCC, fittingly named Hawkins the inaugural recipient of the Highlander Alumni Association Distinguished Alumni Award.

"Whatever success I may have had in my college experiences and education career, I can attribute to those two years at MCC," Hawkins says today. "As a citizen and a taxpayer, I am very proud of all MCC has accomplished and what it has grown to become. In my opinion, MCC is a major factor in the economic and cultural life of Central Texas."



Dr. Michael
White



Billy
Dowdy



Robert
Trout



Charles
Kennedy



Clyde
Koehne



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