

# August 2025



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

### Crafton Hills College Earns Top UC Transfer Ranking in Region for Third Straight Year



For the third year in a row, Crafton Hills College (CHC) has been recognized as the top community college in Region 9 for University of California transfer admission rates. According to the UC Information

Center, CHC's 2024–25 transfer admission rate rose to 78.99%, up from 73.68% last year.

Black and African American students achieved a 100% admission rate, and Latinx students 81.03%, reflecting the college's strong commitment to equity and closing opportunity gaps.

"This ranking is the result of intentional, equity-minded work," said CHC President Dr. Kevin Horan. "When we align our efforts, our students reach new heights."

Leaders credited the success to student-centered support, equity-focused initiatives, and strong collaboration across campus,

particularly through the University Transfer Center and counseling teams.

Looking ahead, CHC plans to expand these efforts even further, ensuring every student has access to the guidance, resources, and opportunities needed to achieve their transfer and career goals.

This recognition highlights Crafton Hills College as a model for other institutions, demonstrating how a strong commitment to equity, collaboration, and student success can change lives and strengthen communities.

*Photo: CHC graduate, Zamard Baraki, transferring to UCLA.*

### Fire Academy 112: Crafton Hills College Celebrates 33 Graduates



Crafton Hills College honored 33 graduates of its 112th Fire Academy on May 22 in the Finkelstein Performing Arts Center. This spring's class included former Marines, world travelers, and even a sponsored skateboarder; all celebrated for completing the rigorous 18-week program.

Four awards were presented:

- **MT 241 Scholarship:** Ferdinand Torres
- **Highest Academic Achievement:** Rylan Burnett
- **Most Inspirational Cadet:** Paul Viramontes
- **Instructors' Award:** Jose Villa, who also delivered the class address

Villa praised his classmates' perseverance, saying the program taught them to be problem-solvers, leaders, and "better, well-rounded men." Academy Chief Ryan Harold closed the ceremony by reminding graduates that while the skills learned at Crafton are essential, "the true essence of being a firefighter is rooted in the heart... courage, compassion, and strength. You are prepared, and you won't face these challenges alone."

*Photo: Fire Academy graduates.*

## Crafton Hills College Graduates Largest EMT Class



CHC celebrated its largest-ever Emergency Medical Technician class on May 27, honoring 155 graduates in back-to-back ceremonies.

"This number of graduates is double what we had last semester," said Interim

Associate Dean of Public Safety Amanda Ward, who credited the support of family and friends for helping students reach this milestone.

The event also marked the final graduation held in the current PAC before the opening

of a new performing arts center this summer.

Vice President of Instruction Keith Wurtz praised the Class of 2025 for their resilience, professionalism, and commitment to serving others, adding, "These graduates are ready to face the unexpected and make a difference in every life they touch."

Many graduates plan to continue their education at Crafton, while others are stepping directly into EMT roles—bringing their skills and compassion to communities throughout the region.

The record-breaking class underscores Crafton Hills College's role as a leader in emergency medical training, preparing students to meet growing workforce demands and strengthen emergency response across Southern California.

*Photo: EMT graduates.*

## Celebrating Creativity: Sand Canyon Review Preview Party Unites Community



On May 15, the Roadrunner Café at Crafton Hills College came alive for the Sand Canyon Review Preview Party, a celebration of the college's annual literary magazine. Organized by students in Introductory Literary Magazine Production with faculty advisor Professor Lauren Bond, the event brought together students, faculty, contributors, and community members for an evening of art, writing, and connection.

Guests enjoyed interactive displays, bookmarks and stickers designed by students, coloring pages based on published artwork, and a slideshow of pieces from the 2025 issue—all while sampling pizza, lasagna, and cookies.

Highlights included a photography exhibit by Alexis Scullin, original music from students Gianna Lopez and Sunny Gunn

(accessible via QR codes in the magazine), and a special recognition of the Jack L. Hill Lifelong Learning Literacy Center, whose learners contributed poetry and stories. Featured authors Katy Garcia and Alexia Clark also mingled with attendees to discuss their creative process.

The evening concluded with heartfelt thanks from students, who reflected on the joy of seeing their collaborative work come to life.

The Preview Party not only launched the new issue of The Sand Canyon Review but also rekindled Crafton's creative community, demonstrating how art and literature continue to inspire connection and growth.

*Photo: Sand Canyon Review contributors.*

## Crafton Hills College Representatives Honored at 2024 California EMS Awards



Six Crafton Hills College representatives were recognized at the 2024 California EMS Awards Ceremony on June 4 for their outstanding contributions to emergency medical services. These honorees exemplify the highest standards of courage, dedication, and professionalism:

**Chief Mike Smith – Distinguished Service Medal**  
Chief Mike Smith, a Crafton Hills College alumnus and Foundation Board member,

has dedicated over 40 years to advancing EMS, from responding to the 9/11 disaster to advocating for legislative changes. He continues to support EMS education and students at Crafton Hills College.

**River Casner – Medal of Valor**

A recent graduate of Crafton Hills College's paramedic program, River Casner sustained severe burns while rescuing individuals from a burning vehicle. His bravery underscores the life-saving commitment of Crafton Hills College-trained professionals.

**Roberta Valencia – Inter-Service EMS Recognition Medal**

Roberta Valencia, a Colton Police Officer, heroically rescued a severely burned child from a house fire, personally transporting him to emergency care. Her actions highlight the strong connection between law enforcement and EMS. She is also married to a Crafton Hills College EMS instructor.

**Nicole Castillo – EMS Cross**

A graduate of Crafton Hills College's paramedic program, Nicole Castillo is a dedicated paramedic and EMS educator who has mentored numerous students.

She continues to demonstrate exceptional leadership and resilience in the field, shaping future EMS professionals.

**Sara Broncho-Morning – Meritorious Service Medal**

A longtime educator at Crafton Hills College, Sara Broncho-Morning has been instrumental in training EMS professionals through the college's Mobile Intensive Care Nurse program. Her 30+ years of experience have significantly impacted EMS education and training in the region.

**Brooklynne Cooper – Lifesaving Medal**

A current Crafton Hills College student and participant in the Cal Fire Yucaipa work experience program, Brooklynne Cooper performed CPR and used an AED to revive a collapsed gym member while off duty. Her quick thinking and dedication to emergency response reflect the excellence of Crafton Hills College's EMS programs.

These honorees exemplify Crafton Hills College's commitment to preparing students for impactful careers in EMS.

*Photo: Mike Smith receives distinguished service medal.*

## Honoring Excellence: A Night to Remember



On May 1, nearly 250 students, faculty, administrators, and family members gathered for the College Honors Institute's annual Recognition Reception. The event celebrated graduates who completed the

Honors Program, as well as recipients of special awards and scholarships.

President Horan presented each graduate with a purple Honors stole, and recognized

students earning the Honors Research Fellow Award and President's Volunteer Service Award. Scholarships were awarded to Lyilah Pina (Raymond Pryke Memorial), Sam Tuckett (Raymond Pryke Honors Achievement), and Zofia Owerkowicz (Daniel Bahner Memorial).

For the first time, the reception also included a Psi Beta induction ceremony for psychology students. A slideshow of the year's events highlighted the hard work and achievements of the program.

The evening was a milestone for graduates and a proud celebration of their academic excellence and perseverance.

*Photo: CHC Honors students.*

## Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Sam Truong - Bringing Anatomy to Life



For many Crafton Hills College students, anatomy and physiology means one name: Dr. Sam Truong. Since 2010, he has taught everything from ANAT 101 to advanced cadaver dissection while serving as faculty chair of Physical and Biological Sciences.

Dr. Truong is known for making complex material approachable. "I want students to understand the human body, not just memorize it," he explains. "Once they see

the connections, they can link it to patient care. Healthcare isn't just a job—it's about helping people during some of the hardest moments of their lives."

That perspective motivates his students and prepares them for competitive careers in nursing, radiology, and other health fields. Over the years, many have gone on to graduate programs and clinical roles, often staying in touch to share their successes.

Teaching wasn't always his plan. Originally an art major, he discovered a passion for working with students while serving as a teacher's aide. He later earned a B.S. in Biology from Cal State LA and a medical degree from Spartan Health Sciences University. After clinical work in Illinois, he returned to California and joined Crafton.

Since then, the anatomy program has grown from 12 to 19 course sections, introduced iPads for lab learning, and built a strong team of dedicated instructors. In addition to teaching, Dr. Truong advises the Health Science Club, mentoring students as they plan their next steps.

Outside of the classroom, he enjoys drawing, visiting art galleries, building websites, and watching ghost-hunting shows. For Dr. Truong, teaching is about more than anatomy—it's about giving students the confidence and foundation they need to succeed in healthcare and beyond.

*Photo: Dr. Truong with students.*

## Crafton Hills College Nursing Services Program Honors Spring Graduates



Crafton Hills College celebrated 19 graduates of its Nursing Services Program on May 21 with a heartfelt ceremony in the Finkelstein Performing Arts Center.

Program director Karl Amparo praised

the cohort for their "growth, grit, and commitment to serve others," noting the program's rigorous demands.

The evening included speeches by graduates Juliana Monarrez and Stephanie

Clifton, remarks from faculty, and the awarding of certificates. Five students were recognized for outstanding achievements:

- **Clinical Leadership:** Stephanie Clifton
- **Exemplary Clinical Practice:** Juliana Monarrez
- **Clinical Excellence:** John Lacaser
- **Academic Excellence:** Angelica Vasquez
- **Most Improved Scholar:** Ana Morales

After the ceremony, family and friends joined the graduates for a lively celebration.

Crafton's Nursing Services Program prepares students for careers as certified nursing assistants, home health aides, and acute care nursing assistants through hands-on training and flexible class schedules.

*Photo: CHC Nursing graduates.*