

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

FEBRUARY 2026



Rey Bell Built His Classroom Around Connection, and Students Feel It

If you've taken a class in Crafton Hills College's Respiratory Care program, odds are you've met Professor Rey Bell. And if you have, there's a good chance he already knew your name within the first week.

Bell's desire to connect with each one of his students is a fundamental piece of his teaching philosophy. "By learning each student's name," he says, "it allows the students to feel acknowledged, accepted, and to begin feeling comfortable right away." This connection with his students is evident throughout his classes. Bell teaches a variety of courses in the Respiratory Care program (from introductory theory and lab classes to advanced courses) and also teaches and mentors students through the clinical portion of their training.

"There is no such thing as a dumb question," he says. "I want my students to feel that they can ask me anything, anytime...not just during my office hours. The doors to my classroom and office are always open."

Bell's passion for teaching has led him to



often ponder the hardships that his students have overcome to be successful.

"There was a student in our program who lived in a car the entire time they attended," he said. "They never missed a class, nor did they ever ask for assistance, nor did they miss a single clinical rotation. Not a single person knew that this student was living in a car until after graduation. They found employment and are doing well. If only I had known, so that I might have been able to assist."

These moments remind Bell of the true value of teaching: not just to provide knowledge, but to serve as a stable, positive influence for students striving for a better life.

Many of Bell's connections with his students continue after they graduate. Bell is a clinical instructor at Riverside Community Hospital and regularly encounters students who have graduated from Crafton.

Photo: Rey Bell with students

Crafton Hills College Honors Equity Champions



During Spring 2026 In-Service Day, CHC celebrated the 2nd Annual Equity Champion Awards.

This year's honorees include:

- Classified Professional: Rosemarie Hansen
- Faculty: Dr. Christopher Olivera
- Faculty: Dr. Danae Hart
- Administrator: Dr. Willie Blackmon
- Department: Counseling Services

These awards recognize individuals and a department whose efforts advance equity, inclusion, and belonging across campus.

The celebration also recognized the faculty, staff, and students who submitted nominations. Congratulations to all nominees and recipients for exemplifying Crafton Hills College's commitment to creating an inclusive community for all.

Photo: Delmy Spencer & Willie Blackmon

Crafton Hills College's Nursing Career Services Pathway adds 28 new health care professionals to the mix



Twenty-eight new Roadrunners from Crafton Hills College's Nursing Services Career Pathway are ready to enter the medical field after successfully completing program requirements.

Their success was recognized inside the college's Finkelstein Performing Arts Center on Dec. 16, kicking off a new season of graduation celebrations planned

for the new facility to celebrate Fall program cohorts and their accomplishments.

Crafton Dean of Career Education and Human Development Dan Word kicked off festivities as he always does: Encouraging the audience of loved ones to get a little bit rowdy and cheer on their favorite graduate.

"We are very proud of this class, and we look forward to seeing the wonderful work they will do in the field as they start their health careers," he shared.

Crafton's Nursing Services Program combines three certificates—certified nursing assistant, home health aide, and acute care nursing assistant—in one semester, allowing graduates to work entry level positions at hospitals and other care facilities.

Additional program highlights included the awarding of certificates, pins embossed with the program's logo (a first in program history), and the following announcement of outstanding performance and leadership awards:

- Clinical Leadership Award: Miressa Sanchez
- Exemplary Clinical Practice Award: Lythany Montoya

Photo: CHC Nursing Services Graduation

Crafton Hills College graduates confident, compassionate respiratory therapists



A respiratory therapist must have the motivation to care.

That's the core message Dr. Michael Sheahan, Director of Crafton Hills College's Respiratory Care Program, hoped his students keep in mind as they embark on a career as respiratory therapists.

"Your motivation is the patient," he shared while addressing Crafton's newest graduating cohort on Dec. 18. "Remember, that's a human being. [Your job] is caring for people. It's caring for family members. That is the crux of what we do."

Crafton's fall graduating cohort of 28 made program history becoming the first

graduating class to be celebrated inside the newly opened Finkelstein Performing Arts Center. The space was brimming with excitement as friends and loved ones filled the space with balloons, signs, flowers, and cheers.

Respiratory Care Assistant Professor Valerie Sevilla highlighted the class's tight-knit bond and the lessons that shaped them.

"Over these past two years, I've watched them grow from unsure students setting up their first ventilator to confident, capable and compassionate clinicians," said Sevilla.

Each graduate also received a scholarship through the Forrest and Valorie Greek Scholarship Endowment, a fund created by the Greeks to support the future of Crafton's child development, fire academy, and respiratory therapy programs.

Photo: CHC Respiratory Care Graduation

Trust + Resilience: The recipe of success for Crafton Hills College's 113th Fire Academy



It takes a village to help those looking to pursue a career in the field, a lesson Crafton Hills College's 113th Fire Academy shared when looking into the crowd of loved ones and teachers who supported them along the way.

On Dec. 19, Crafton Hills College recognized its 113th Fire Academy during a lively ceremony filled with jubilation and

tradition inside the Finkelstein Performing Arts Center.

This cohort of cadets turned firefighters was comprised of 33 men and one woman who completed the rigorous program, which trains cadets with the knowledge and skills to become first responders and gain certification.

Cadets also learn the importance of relationships, bonds of trust built through team training and resilience that have the strength to never break.

"As firefighters, you experience some of the most rewarding moments helping people on their best days but also being present on their worst days," shared Class Speaker and Graduate Austin Marin. "When those moments come, trust and teamwork and our commitment to one another will matter more than anything else."

"We learn here that [this job] isn't just about facing difficult situations but it's how you respond to them and how we step forward without hesitation when people need us most," he said.

Additional ceremony highlights included remarks from Academy Chief Ryan Harold and Crafton President Kevin Horan and the presentation of a class plaque that will hang on a classroom wall.

Photo: CHC Fire Academy 113 Graduation

Crafton Hills College celebrates the first of three EMT cohort graduates



Crafton Hills College's Fall 2025 Emergency Medical Technician class cohorts were locked in and ready to go from their first day of instruction.

As they gathered for their final meeting as program students, Crafton's Monday and Wednesday cohorts were given one final instruction before officially becoming graduates: "Have fun."

"I am extremely proud of each and every one of you," said Interim Associate Dean of Public Safety Amanda Ward as she addressed the 55 who were recognized on Jan. 7. "EMT school is tough, but this is a very family-oriented profession. Just because you're done with EMT school doesn't mean we are done with you. We are always here to support you."

The evening ceremony was the first of three scheduled in the same week in the Finkelstein Performing Arts Center.

Crafton Hills' EMT program is rigorous. It requires 16 weeks of instruction, training students to perform basic life-support measures in a pre-hospital setting. EMT students care for people on their best days and their worst days. But despite the unexpected that might come their way, program facilitators were confident their graduates would truly be difference-makers in the field.

"What makes this class especially remarkable is what it took for you guys all to be here," said program instructor Skylar Antoncew. "But you all chose to be here when quitting would have been a lot easier, and that says everything about what kind of EMTs you will be."

Photo: CHC EMT Graduation

Crafton Hills College welcomes 40 new Emergency Medical Technicians to the 'family'



Graduating from an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program is not the finish line but the starting point for making a difference in the community. And Crafton Hills College's most recent crop of EMT graduates is ready for the challenge.

During a late afternoon ceremony on Jan. 9, students who completed their EMT training were recognized for their

accomplishments in front of a crowd of excited family and friends.

The ceremony was the second of three planned for CHC's EMT program, an 11 ½ unit series of courses teaching future EMTs how to perform basic life-saving support measures. In addition to on-campus learning, the college offers an off-site instruction course at the Del Rosa Station

in neighboring San Bernardino to reach more students.

"I am so proud of each and every one of you," said Glen Thronson, who led the Friday cohort. "And let me be the first to welcome you to the EMT family."

Program facilitators encouraged each graduate to keep moving forward, even during the hard times and the unexpected.

Emergency Medical Services assistant dean Amanda Ward, recalling her own struggles as a student, related that she understands the negativity EMT students must overcome.

"I had so many people tell me [when I started] I was so wrong, the wrong gender and 'You're not going to make it' because 'You don't have enough life experience.' And yet, we still have generations of folks proving them wrong," she said. "I am so proud of you for answering the call and wanting to go out and serve your communities."

Photo: CHC EMT Graduation

Crafton Alumna Returns to Her Roots Through Service and Giving Back



Celeste Reid's connection to Crafton Hills College started simply: it was close to home, and it made sense as her next step.

"I lived in Calimesa, and Crafton Hills was my closest and best option for a collegiate experience after I graduated high school," she said.

And it stayed with her. Years later, when Celeste returned to the area as Finance Director for the City of Calimesa, Crafton resurfaced in her life in a new way, through community ties, service, and the chance to give back.

After Crafton, Celeste continued her education at College of the Desert and later earned her bachelor's degree in business administration with an emphasis in Accounting from California State University, San Bernardino. Along the way, she considered a few different career directions before landing on the one that felt like the best fit.

"I considered several career options and ultimately decided to become a Certified Public Accountant," she said. "Being a CPA was the best path forward for me because I knew it would provide the ultimate flexibility. I could live anywhere I wanted

and have the capacity to be part of any industry I wanted as well."

That flexibility turned into a wide-ranging career. Over more than 30 years, Celeste has worked in CPA firms as an auditor and tax manager, supported a nonprofit performing arts center, and worked with a professional tennis tournament. She's also served in finance leadership roles in two municipalities. Today, she serves as Finance Director for the City of Calimesa.

Coming back to Calimesa after more than 30 years away also brought Crafton back into focus. She had the opportunity to meet with the Foundation Board and staff, and she was honored to be invited to join the Foundation's Board of Directors. Additionally, she became involved with the Alumni Committee.

Photo: Celeste Reid