

► WINTER 2025

NEWSLETTER



WOMEN'S WATER POLO WINS BIG!

FIRST PCAC CHAMPIONSHIP!

ALSO INSIDE:

ALUMNUS SPOTLIGHT CELESTE REID

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT REY BELL

ALUMNUS SPOTLIGHT - Celeste Reid

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.

Crafton was her first step into higher education, but one class stands out even now.

"I really enjoyed my History of Religion class," Celeste said. "It was an elective and set out a worldview and perspective of religions and

the cultural experiences from which communities are connected. The course was deep and significant for me."

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.

For Celeste, the job isn't just spreadsheets and reports; it's the people and the community behind the work.

"What I love most about Calimesa is the team that I work with and our Calimesa community and businesses," she said. "The City Manager, directors, and staff are exceptional professionals. With the leadership and guidance from the City Council, our combined knowledge and objectives are to serve the community with successful outcomes using reasonable and attainable strategies."

She especially enjoys seeing the day-to-day moments that remind her why public service matters.

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

"I really enjoy when the community comes together at one of the City's special events like the summer food truck events," she said. "I like seeing the results of the Public Works team with a clean up after a storm, having someone express appreciation for our Police and Fire services, and seeing a new business come to Calimesa through the efforts of our Community Development team. The

ALUMNUS SPOTLIGHT - cont.

community members and businesses are the reason why we serve 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.

“Professionally, joining this Board connected me back to my roots, my first college, my hometown, and community,” Celeste said. “Being a part of the Foundation Board allowed me to connect with other community and service-minded peers, and we were aligned in making an impact for the benefit of all Crafton Hills College students, current and alumni.”

Her interest in alumni work came from a simple belief: alumni are the ones who know what the experience really meant.

“I was motivated to be a part of the newly formed alumni committee because I knew those who are closest to any educational experience are alumni,” she said. “I wanted other alumni to feel and remember how Crafton Hills has been a part of their life journey, education, professional, and personal.”

One moment from her time with the Foundation still stands out: the opening of the Fire Academy Training Facility.

“The new facility was so exciting with demonstrations and going inside a training center that I would never otherwise see,” she

said. “However, even more powerful was having so many Fire Professionals and former academy classes come back together. It was a reunion of sorts.”

As she handed out commemorative challenge coins, she was able to talk with graduates and professionals she might not have met otherwise.

“I was not a Fire professional or graduate, but because of the Foundation, I shared this experience with them,” she said. “It was a wonderful evening.”

When Celeste describes what Crafton means today, she keeps it straightforward.

“Crafton Hills College is a bridge to a better life,” she said. “If you have attended one class at Crafton, you have leveled up. You will likely be more informed, you have invested in yourself and your mind, perhaps made a friend, and got to have a nice walk around a beautiful campus. Time is well spent at Crafton Hills College.”

And for current students trying to figure out what’s next, her advice is practical and encouraging.

“Some people have early insight as to what they would like to do professionally, for others it may take a while,” she said. “If you happen to be someone undecided about your future, keep moving forward. Take classes, step out of your comfort zone, keep your mind and heart open to what the world can offer, and be sure to have some fun along the way.”

SUPPORT YOUR ALMA MATER WITH A YEAR-END GIFT!



Our donors are our greatest asset when it comes to connecting our students with needs and opportunities to finish their courses successfully. From Emergency Grants to scholarships, we support students on their road to success.

Please consider a year-end gift to the CHC Foundation so that students can continue receiving support throughout the year. Gifts of all amounts truly add up and make a difference. You can make a one-time gift or schedule monthly/quarterly/annual donations.

To make a gift, please visit <https://www.craftonhills.edu/visitors-and-alumni/giving-to-chc/index.php>

Please contact us at CHCalumni@craftonhills.edu with any questions.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT - Rey Bell

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.

He believes that his teaching philosophy of empathy and accessibility was absent when he was a student. "Some of my instructors were quite intimidating," Bell said. "While they taught very well, I did not find them very approachable.

Bell has created a safe, inclusive environment for his students.

"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."

In addition to educating his students on clinical procedures, Bell believes that they need to understand the impact that they will have on patients' lives. "As graduates, these individuals will be entering a profession where patients are dependent upon them," he says. "I want my students to truly realize the level of responsibility that comes with this profession."

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."

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT - cont.

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 and are working as respiratory therapists. "It is wonderful to see them working as members of the respiratory care team," he said. "From time to time, they will send me texts or stop by to let me know how things are going. It is a great feeling to see how far they have progressed."

Prior to becoming an educator, Bell was unsure which direction to pursue after graduating from high school. "I excelled in math and science," he said. "I wanted a career that utilized both. I saw the title 'Respiratory Care' in the college catalog, and it seemed interesting. I had no idea what it entailed." That decision set Bell on a long and fulfilling career as a respiratory therapist; he worked clinically at Redlands Community Hospital and later at Riverside Community Hospital.

During his time working as a respiratory therapist, Bell found himself developing a desire to teach. "I realized that I thoroughly enjoyed assisting students in the clinical area," he said. In 2000, Bell had the opportunity to teach part-time at Crafton Hills College. Initially, Bell assisted in the lab and taught medical terminology, but eventually took on additional responsibilities. "One thing led to another," he said. "Now, I am still teaching."

Bell has filled several positions since he began teaching at Crafton. He served as the Clinical Director of Education and the Program Director, and currently works as a full-time professor in the Department of Career and Technical Education. Bell earned his Associate Degree in Respiratory Care from Victor Valley College, Bachelor's Degree in Public Health Education from California State

University, San Bernardino, and Master's Degree in Management from the University of Redlands. Additionally, Bell is a Licensed Registered Respiratory Care Practitioner and serves as an instructor for the Neonatal Resuscitation Program through the American Pediatric Academy.

"From time to time, they will send me texts or stop by to let me know how things are going. It is a great feeling to see how far they have progressed."

Although Bell has spent over 20 years in education, he still finds teaching exciting. "Watching students grow, pass their boards, and secure employment, it never becomes old," he said. "I genuinely enjoy what I do."

Bell spends his free time with his family and watching sports. "Basketball, football, baseball, horse racing, I support all of it," he said. Although many of his students view him as serious, Bell's family will attest that he is a big jokester. "My children say that my jokes are corny," he laughed. "However, my students will always remember me telling them to 'bank it in.' It is my method of reminding them to keep track of important information...whether for an exam or for the field."

Over 20 years at Crafton have provided Bell with a sense of purpose in his ability to help students succeed. "Each class, each student, provides a new opportunity for me to positively affect a student's life," he said. "To see them employed as respiratory therapists, and performing the tasks that they set out to accomplish, makes everything worthwhile."



ATHLETICS

ROADRUNNERS MAKE HISTORY WITH FIRST PCAC WOMEN'S WATER POLO CHAMPIONSHIP



Crafton Hills College made program history on Nov. 8, capturing its first Pacific Coast Athletic Conference (PCAC) women's water polo championship with a 12-10 victory over Palomar College. The title game was held at Southwestern College.

The Roadrunners battled past previously undefeated-in-conference Palomar in a tight, back-and-forth championship match. Crafton Hills held a narrow lead in the final minutes and secured the win with timely scoring and disciplined defensive stops.

The championship capped a standout postseason run for Crafton Hills. On Nov. 7, the Roadrunners edged Miramar College 7-6 in a nail-biting semifinal to advance to the PCAC final.

In addition to earning the 2025 PCAC Conference Champions Award, Crafton Hills also celebrated major individual honors. Jordan Gordon, who has served as the Head Coach of Crafton Hills Women's Water Polo since 2022, was honored with the PCAC Women's Water Polo Coach of the Year award for the 2025 season.

The landmark title marks a defining moment for the Crafton Hills College women's water polo program and sets a new standard for excellence in Roadrunner athletics.

For more on the team and upcoming seasons, visit the Crafton Hills College Women's Water Polo page at craftonhills.edu/athletics/womens-water-polo.

Several Roadrunners were recognized for their exceptional play throughout conference competition:

PCAC Player of the Year

Esther Crandell

First Team All-Conference

Esther Crandell

Rylee Huser

Sofia Shumway

Julia Pearne

Second Team All-Conference

Jennifer Lowenthal

Alyssa Ellis

PCAC Honorable Mention

Zoe Jennings

Jenna Rawlings

HOW TO GIVE

For over 50 years, the Crafton Hills College Foundation has supported CHC in advancing the educational, career, and personal success of our diverse campus community through engagement and learning. The Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization; therefore, contributions to the Foundation are tax-deductible.

Your investment will make a significant difference in the life of a student.



PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE

This elite group of donors make a \$1,000 annual commitment to support the mission of the CHC Foundation with a President's Circle Membership. This dynamic group of alumni, parents, faculty, and friends play a vital role in supporting the College, giving the President the flexibility to embrace new ideas and emerging opportunities while meeting the evolving needs of Crafton Hills College.



ANNUAL GIVING FUND

Contributions to the Annual Fund proved the precious gift of opportunity to thousands of deserving students by supporting scholarships and promoting excellence at the College. These unrestricted gifts give the Foundation the flexibility to respond to our student's greatest needs.



SCHOLARSHIPS

An Endowed Scholarship Fund is established through a minimum gift of cash or stock totaling \$12,500, which can be made over a period of five years. Endowment funds are invested prudently to establish a permanent fund in which the principal is held in perpetuity and only the investment income is expended annually (payout). These funds will support a scholarship forever.



PLANNED GIVING

The Foundation for CHC offers a variety of Planned Giving options. Whether your estate is simple or complex, there is a tax-advantaged gift planning vehicle that is just right for you. Your support will help CHC students succeed and will provide a lasting legacy for future generations.



STUDENT AND PROGRAM SUPPORT

Crafton Hills College provides quality instruction and support services that allow our students, many of whom face serious obstacles to completion, to pursue and achieve their educational goals. We are extremely proud to be the pathway to social and economic advancement for many who would otherwise not have the opportunity to pursue a college education. The college's low cost for an excellent education allows the impact of your investment to reach more students. Your gift to support CHC Students and Programs goes further at Crafton Hills College.



NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

There are many ways you can make a lasting impact at Crafton Hills College and at the same time pay tribute to a notable and influential person or organization. The CHC Foundation is striving to secure permanent endowments to support the ever growing academic, programmatic, and student needs of the Crafton through Naming Opportunities.



STAY CONNECTED



CHCalumni@craftonhills.edu



909-389-3245



@mycraftonhills



Crafton Hills College Foundation & Alumni