

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

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Crafton Hills College Fire Academy Celebrates 111th Graduating Class



When cadets from CHC's 111th Basic Fire Fighter Training Academy began their rigorous 18-week program, they were determined to finish the program as a unified group.

So, when a fellow cadet was experiencing transportation issues and considered dropping out, Cadet Jason Thomas stepped

up and assured his classmate would get to-and-from the college to complete his studies.

"This group has come together and bonded like no other," shared Academy Chief Ryan Harold during a special graduation ceremony for the class on Dec 12. "They committed themselves to the

motto of 'As One.' They hang out, have dinner[together]... I can't say enough about how proud I am of how they bonded with one another."

Twenty-nine cadets made up the 111th class, all of whom had loved one's "hooting" and "hollering" for them on stage. Each academy graduation features graduation traditions such as the ringing of the fire bell, a special performance on pipes to kick things off, and remarks from program facilitators like "Crazy Instagram Mom" and Interim Associate Dean of Public Safety Amanda Ward.

"You are forever special to me as you are the first academy that I've got to serve in this particular capacity. I am so happy to have witnessed this and been able to participate with you," Ward said. "I am extremely proud of you."

Photo: Margie Orland and Zackery Anderson.

Dr. Chris Olivera Delivers Keynote Address at California State Conference on Biliteracy



On Nov 7, Dr. Chris Olivera, Professor of Microbiology and chair of the Kinesiology & Health Education department at CHC, delivered a keynote address on biliteracy and the power of language to an audience of pupils throughout the state who have completed the biliteracy program, their parents, local dignitaries, delegates, and San Bernardino County Superintendent of

Schools Ted Alejandre and his team.

This annual event celebrates California pupils who have demonstrated mastery of bilingual skills and been awarded the Seal of Biliteracy, which will appear on their diplomas.

Photo: Dr Chris Olivera.

Rejoice Chavira, Beloved Crafton Hills College Counselor, Announces Retirement



After more than 20 years of championing student success, Rejoice Chavira, a dedicated counselor and advocate at Crafton Hills College, has announced her retirement at the end of Fall 2024. Chavira, known for her unwavering belief that every student has a story worth hearing, began her career at San Bernardino Valley College in 1999 before joining Crafton in 2002 as a counselor for the EOPS/CARE/CalWORKs department. Over the years, she transitioned into leadership roles but ultimately returned to counseling, which she describes as her “why.”

Chavira built her career on fostering meaningful relationships with students and colleagues. Her approach was simple yet impactful: start with a conversation. “Tell me about yourself,” she would say, opening the door to connection and trust. Her efforts helped countless students overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. Chavira credited her success to the support of Crafton’s leadership, including former Presidents Gloria Macias Harrison and Dr. Cheryl Marshall, as well as current President Dr. Kevin Horan.

Reflecting on her decision to retire, Chavira

said it was a difficult choice but one rooted in family. “My husband has been retired for 10 years, and when the opportunity presented itself, we had a heartfelt conversation about what the future holds for us,” she shared. Now, she looks forward to spending more time with her husband and growing family while cherishing the memories of her time at Crafton.

Chavira’s legacy extends beyond her professional achievements. She leaves behind a community inspired by her dedication to student success and her belief in the power of collaboration. “It takes everybody working together,” she said, emphasizing the importance of teamwork across departments to help students thrive. Her advice to students reflects her personal philosophy: “The more obstacles you overcome, the stronger you become.”

The Crafton community will deeply miss Chavira’s positivity and compassion, which have touched the lives of so many. Her impact as a counselor, mentor, and advocate will continue to resonate, reminding all of the importance of listening, supporting, and believing in one another.

Photo: Rejoice Chavira.

Crafton Hills College Theatre Program Brings ‘The Great Gatsby’ to Life



Crafton Hills College’s theatre program transported audiences to the Roaring ‘20s with a production of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* from Dec. 6-8 at the Finkelstein Performing Arts Center.

The F. Scott Fitzgerald novel “*Gatsby*” was released in 1925 and has since been adapted for the stage, film, and television. Its main character, Nick Carraway, shares his experience navigating the social scene of Long Island, New York, with the audience through first-person narration.

Directed by Department Chair Paul Jacques, the adaptation featured eight novice actors, stage veterans, and a live jazz band, exploring themes of classism,

obsession, and the darker side of the American Dream.

Ismael Sanchez, an 18-year-old theatre major, made his debut as narrator Nick Carraway, bringing personal insight to the character’s innocence and perspective. The cast included William Merrigan as Jay Gatsby, Sidney Pulido as Daisy, and Roe McCarty as Tom, among others.

“It was truly a great experience,” said Sanchez of the immersive performance, which showcased the complexities of Fitzgerald’s timeless classic.

Photo: CHC theatre students.

Crafton Hills College’s ‘Tight-Knit’ Respiratory Care Program Celebrates New Class of Graduates



The Crafton Hills College Respiratory Care Program celebrated 19 graduates in a lively ceremony on Dec. 16 at the Finkelstein Performing Arts Center. The group, dubbed the “Fab 19,” completed a rigorous four-semester program, balancing lectures, labs, and clinical fieldwork.

For most program students, working a full- or part-time job is not possible. These students also sacrifice their personal time to keep up with these challenging requirements. Despite the rigors they face, the 19 finishers quickly became a tight-knit family unit, supporting one another along the way, and were encouraged to always find laughter when times get tough.

“Respiratory therapists are serious when it comes to their work because it can be very demanding,” said Daniel Rojas, director of clinical education for the program. “But during this past year, we found time for little jokes and a little bit of humor here and there that the class asked me to share.” one such joke began, “Do you know what respiratory therapists do?” The answer: “I’ll tell yah—if you stop breathing, these people will help you.”

In addition to the lively audience, this year’s graduation ceremony was filled

with moments of reflection from Crafton leaders like Dan Word, CHC’s dean of career education and human development, and Respiratory Care Program Director Dr. Michael Sheahan. Kimberly Smith, a respiratory educator with the Riverside University Health System, served as a guest speaker, while Jacob Chabot, a member of the “Fab 19,” delivered the class address.

No graduation ceremony is complete without acknowledging the academic successes of each graduating student who each received a special scholarship to use toward the cost of their certification by the Respiratory Care Board of California. Individual awards were as follows:

- The Jesson Scholarship Award: Valencia Lauran
- The Clinical Award: Makenzy Allanson
- The Academic Award: Marva Mortensen

Photo: Valencia Lauran and Amy Minjares.

Crafton Hills College Celebrates 89 EMT Graduates with Joy and Pride



On December 19, Crafton Hills College celebrated 89 students from four cohorts who graduated from the college’s Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program. The event highlighted the dedication, hard work, and resilience of these future first responders, as well as the exceptional faculty and staff who

supported their journey.

The ceremony began with a warm welcome from the program’s dean, Dan Word, who commended the graduates for their commitment to completing a rigorous program designed to prepare them for the challenges of emergency

medical services. He also emphasized the strong community support that played a pivotal role in their success.

Family, friends, and faculty filled the room with applause and cheers as each graduate’s name was called. The Crafton Hills College EMT program has long been recognized for its excellence, consistently producing skilled professionals who go on to make a meaningful impact. This year’s graduating class is no exception, with many already securing positions in emergency medical services or continuing their education to advance their careers.

The celebration was filled with joy, gratitude, and hope for the future, as the 89 graduates prepared to embark on their journeys as EMTs, ready to serve and make a difference in the lives of others.

Photo: EMT graduates.

CHC Programming Students Shine at SoCal Regional Contest



Fifteen Crafton Hills College students participated in the Southern California Regional International Collegiate

Programming Contest (ICPC) on Nov. 16, coached by Professor Sandra Ruiz and Daniel Bickel II. Competing against 88 teams from two-year colleges and universities, CHC's team "Crafton Hills College Parus Major" earned an impressive 34th place, finishing second among community colleges.

This marked CHC's second time participating in the event, showcasing their growth and dedication. "It was a long day but well worth it," said Professor Ruiz. "Students were excited about their achievements and are eager to return next year."

The competition day spanned twelve hours

and included registration, meals, orientation, and a five-hour programming challenge. Students gained valuable experience in teamwork, problem-solving, and working in diverse computing environments. Professor Ruiz emphasized the event's benefits, noting it enhances résumés, prepares students for interviews, and fosters connections with peers from other institutions.

Crafton Hills College continues to demonstrate its students' talent and commitment to excellence in computer science and programming.

Photo: CHC computer programming students.

Crafton Hills College Performing Arts Center: A Sustainability Spotlight



Crafton Hills College's new Performing Arts Center will set a benchmark for sustainable innovation while enriching music and theater education. Currently under construction, the facility is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2025.

The center seamlessly integrates indoor and outdoor learning spaces and has received the Sustainable Innovation Award for Honor in Energy/Operational Carbon from the U.S. Green Building Council of Los Angeles.

Designed to achieve LEED Gold certification, the Performing Arts Center incorporates sustainability features such as

phase change materials to regulate indoor temperatures, a solar photovoltaic system to offset energy consumption, and strategic solar shading for enhanced comfort. With its low Energy Use Intensity and restoration of 50% of the site with native, drought-tolerant vegetation, the facility reflects a strong commitment to environmentally conscious design.

This visionary project meets the College's goal of a modern performing arts venue and serves as a model for sustainable construction in educational facilities nationwide.

Photo: Employees tour new PAC.

Celebrating Anquanetta May -- 17 Years of Dedication



CHC bids farewell to Anquanetta May after 17 years of service to the college. During her tenure, she made an indelible impact on countless students and the Health and Wellness Center. Anquanetta's reliability, kindness, and genuine care for others have been an inspiration to those who worked alongside her.

On Dec 17, a celebration was held in honor of May, where colleagues shared heartfelt

memories and extended their best wishes for her future.

As Anquanetta embarks on a well-deserved retirement, her contributions and legacy of compassion will remain a cherished part of the college's history. We extend our best wishes to Anquanetta for a retirement filled with joy, fulfillment, and new adventures.

Photo: Anquanetta May.