



Alum to Prof: LAVC's Respiratory Therapy Program Director's Full-Circle Journey

This year is the 50th anniversary of the [Respiratory Therapy program](#) at Los Angeles Valley College. It is also the first year that the program offers an online bachelor's degree, making it the first bachelor's program ever in Valley College.

For Respiratory Therapy Program Director Gregory Morrison, this is a milestone moment. Not just for LAVC, but also for himself. Not many alumni find their paths leading back to their alma mater when they leave. Morrison not only returned but also helps the very program he graduated from in 1979.

After the two-year RT program, Morrison went on to work at Northridge Medical Center and then St. John's Regional Medical Center. A chance meeting at a conference in 1997 with the then director of the RT program resulted in his return to LAVC as part-time staff—he had a bachelor's degree in health education from California State University, Northridge.

Morrison came on board full time in 2004 and became the program director in 2008. The RT program team includes Professor Cheryl Pearson as the director of clinical education and six full-time faculty, including Medical Director Dr. Rothfeld. Several members of the



Greg Morrison

CLASS OF 1979

Respiratory Therapy Director, LAVC



team are graduates from the program that were hired as instructors.

“Our program is very much a family. We’ve all known each other for years. Many of them I knew before we hired them,” says Morrison, crediting the program with some of his closest friends and mentors.

San Fernando Valley born and raised; Morrison helped with his family-owned delivery business growing up. But knew he wanted a career and not just another job provided by a company. His original career plans though were completely unrelated to his current field of work. He had an associate’s degree from Pierce College out of high school.

“I was a biology major; I was going to be the next Marlin Perkins for Mutual of Omaha’s Wild Kingdom, but I got burnt out in chemistry. A friend who’d been looking at the nursing program at LAVC shared there’s a respiratory therapy program,” Morrison shares. Being a science major meant he was qualified and could step into the program right away.

Back then, no one on campus knew anything about the RT program. A lot of students that enrolled were those that were unsuccessful getting into the nursing program. But much has changed over the years—now healthcare programs are doing well and are highly rated. LAVC’s award-winning RT program is so popular that some students wait a year to get in.

Morrison’s favorite part is going to the hospitals to work with students. Where many faculty only see students for one semester, his RT program team sees them for almost two years. Long hours spent working together conquering intense theoretical and practical coursework result in strong connections and that close family bond Morrison mentions.

The pride in his voice is palpable when he shares some hospitals specifically recruit students from the RT program because of the quality training they are known to receive at LAVC and at different area hospitals they partner with, which truly readies them for the workforce.

Morrison adds, “I describe our program as an intimate family, and that’s something that the other RT programs can’t say.”