

VICA President Stuart Waldman remembers his time at LA Valley College

Stuart Waldman is well-known throughout Los Angeles as the President of the Valley Industry & Commerce Association (VICA), an advocacy group devoted to advancing the economic interests of the San Fernando Valley region. What may not be as well-known was that he used to commute to Los Angeles Valley College via bicycle.

“It lasted for about two weeks,” he laughed. “I had bought a bike and I wanted to be able to go to a school where I could ride. I tried it for a little bit and then it got too cold.”

Waldman enrolled at LAVC in January of 1990. He had just returned from a tour in the Army, where he had been stationed in West Germany. He ended up getting his Associate’s Degree in German before he transitioned to Cal State Northridge, where he received his Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science.

“It was a complicated transition, because of the Northridge quake,” he recalled. “I remember they did a pretty good job of putting a semester together, but it was a weird situation. I drove by a collapsed parking garage every day.”

Waldman served for 11 years in the California State Assembly where he was Chief of Staff to two Assembly members before eventually joining VICA to serve as its President. When asked how community colleges support the economy of the San Fernando Valley, Waldman was thoughtful in his response.

“Obviously, the community colleges are training the employees of tomorrow. If you’re focused and you’re looking to get a bachelor’s degree, the schools can put you on that path. If you want to enter one of the certificate programs – there are programs that allow you to enter a profession where you can earn \$100,000 a year-those are incredibly helpful. There are also people who are going to a community college, and maybe they take only a couple of classes before they get a job. But they got the job because of what they learned. Teaching those skills that are enabling people to work is important.”



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Waldman highlighted the fact that many of the colleges serve not only students but the greater community as well. “The colleges are part of the fabric of our neighborhoods, whether it’s a high school kid taking an extra class that helps them get one step closer to graduating, or the community service center where kids do gymnastics, or the summer camps. They absolutely deserve our support.”

When asked what were some his key memories as a Monarch, Waldman mentioned that he was friendly with LAPD Deputy Chief Donald Graham. “He was the Associated Student Union President. Because I was working for the Clinton campaign at the time, we would hang out. We both had long hair, but he was in shorts and vans and was a skater, so it was different long hair.”

Waldman credits his time at LAVC for teaching him time management. “Taking classes at 6 pm after working, then turning around and taking another at 8 am the next morning, it definitely had an impact on me.”