

# COLLEGE HISTORY

## Local History of the Victor Valley

Long before the valley became homesteaded, clean water pools along the Mojave River offered all sorts of weary travelers a life sustaining opportunity to halt their journey and set up camps at a place that would later become known as the Victor Valley (named after railroad engineer, Jacob Nash Victor in the late 1800's). Lush green vegetation, access to water, and indigenous wildlife attracted Native Americans, Spanish missionaries, settlers in wagon trains coming from Utah and other points of departure, miners seeking their fortunes in the gold fields to the north, early explorers, cowboys herding cattle, and later railroad workers.

The next natural step was the arrival of merchants who set up shop out of their wagons to feed, supply and outfit these way-farers around the early 1900s. As the stream of travelers increased, the first trading post was established in a place that later became known as Oro Grande. In time, the railroad completed laying track through the mountains and over the desert and people began to settle in the region. It didn't take long before enterprising land developers, guest ranch developers and businesspeople saw the opportunity to profit from this influx of people and the region began to grow.

Eventually, the cities of Victorville, Hesperia, and the Town of Apple Valley incorporated between 1962 and 1988. With the commerce, came a need for schools. The first high school (Victor Valley High School) was established in 1915 and served as the only high school for the next 65 years. Since the mid-80s, more than 20 diploma-granting institutions have been chartered to facilitate the needs of an ever-expanding population. The next logical step for the people of the High Desert was to establish a college to serve the needs of the region. It was on the campus of Victor Valley High School that Victor Valley College began its Tradition of Excellence 59 years ago.

## College History

Victor Valley College, located in Victorville, California, was established in 1961. It began as a part of the Victor Valley Union High School district, providing college-level courses to high school students. In 1965, the college gained its own district and was separated from the high school district. Since then, it has grown into a thriving community college serving the needs of around 17,000 students annually.

In its early days, the college was located in temporary buildings on the Victor Valley High School campus. In the mid-1960s, the current 253-acre campus was purchased, and construction began on permanent facilities. The first buildings were completed in 1967, and the campus continued to expand over the years to include additional classrooms, labs, and administrative buildings. The campus also featured athletic fields, a swimming pool, and a performing arts center.

Victor Valley College offers a variety of associate degree programs and certificate programs in fields such as Business, Health Sciences, Public Safety, and Technology. In addition to traditional classes, the college also offers online courses and other distance learning options. Students can participate in a number of clubs and organizations, and the college has a strong athletics program with several teams competing in intercollegiate sports.

Like several community colleges, VVC has previously faced challenges over the years, including funding cuts and declining enrollment, however, VVC has remained committed to providing quality education and Student Success to students of the High Desert region and beyond. The

college has a strong partnership with local businesses and community organizations, and its graduates have gone on to successful careers in a variety of fields.

Since the establishment of the Student Services Center – a new “front door” for VVC was created; a place where students can access all service departments under one roof – the focus has shifted to the long-awaited goal of building an educational event center and multi-purpose sports stadium on campus. The VVC Board of Trustees approved the sale of bonds to fund the establishment of this center in April 2020.

Construction began late 2022 with the intent to use the stadium in the Fall 2024 semester. The key goals of the project center on design, function, and sustainability, ensuring that the new facilities will be used daily to serve students and the community, will serve multi-functional purposes, and will be energy efficient and economically solvent. The opening of the “One-Stop” Student Services Center (2020) provided the opportunity to renovate and redesign Buildings 50 and 52 to support additional enhanced capacity classrooms which opened in 2023.

Redesign and renovation of the Food Court in the Student Activities Center resulted in a January 2022 reopening of a larger Restaurant Management teaching lab and Desert Rock Café. In 2023, a state-of-the-art Rams Café is scheduled to open.

## Changing Emphasis

Today, the College is a major institution of higher learning offering a complex schedule of educational opportunities to meet the changing needs of this growing region. The College serves between 17,000 and 20,000 students each per year. This translates into an annual full-time equivalent student enrollment (FTE) near 10,000. Current curriculum includes all the basics for transfer to four-year schools, degrees, certificates and job training. New areas of study include innovative programs in aviation, industrial maintenance; hybrid car maintenance and repair; construction apprenticeships; re-entry programs, cosmetology, commercial truck driving and much more. Nursing still remains one of the most sought- after areas of study offered by the College.

## Innovative Partnerships

In 1975, the Victor Valley College Foundation was established to help the College develop additional resources and build partnerships to strengthen the education our students receive. The Foundation has been instrumental in helping the College to expand facilities and educational programs even as the State of California reduced appropriations. While the Foundation regularly receives charitable contributions from generous individuals and grateful alumni to support the College mission, it has also been at the forefront of many of the College's most innovative strategic partnerships. Partnerships facilitated by the Foundation include working with local hospitals to increase the capacity of the College nursing program, with representatives of regional mining concerns to develop natural resource management programs; and with a consortium of local governments and employers to establish a new training program for certified aviation technicians in response to an industry need for workforce development. The Foundation worked with the County of San Bernardino Workforce Investment Board to implement training programs that allowed the College to launch programs in hybrid vehicle maintenance, geographic information systems, wastewater reclamation and solar photovoltaic installation. The Foundation also led the community effort to advocate for the passage of Measure JJ in 2008. The Foundation is led by community and college leaders who serve on

its board of directors. It accepts donations from thousands of individuals and corporations each year.

Charitable gifts to support Victor Valley College may be made to the Victor Valley College Foundation. For more information visit the VVC Foundation's website (<https://vvcfoundation.com/>).

In 2014, Victor Valley College was awarded a grant to facilitate career pathways pipelines throughout the region in five key industries: Automotive, Aviation, Energy / Utilities, Healthcare, and Manufacturing. One goal of what has become known as the RAMP UP project is to maximize the input of employers by establishing advisory councils that include all local schools and Victor Valley College together rather than the previous practice of multiple independent meetings at individual institutions. This work was initiated in 2015 and today nearly all targeted advisory councils have been identified or are in active development for the local area. This strategy is expected to help streamline curriculum, allowing local students to complete training that meets employer needs faster. Another goal of the RAMP UP project is to link schools and colleges together through technology, allowing them to share classes and learning experiences with one another. In 2016, the installation of these classrooms was completed, system tests successfully conducted and the first multi-site connection allowed students at eight high schools to participate in a healthcare industry lecture last month. RAMP UP also includes linkages to the Antelope Valley, Barstow and San Bernardino where similar activities are in development.

## **A History of Success**

For more than 60 years, thousands of High Desert residents have made the journey to Victor Valley College and gone on to become contributing members of society. From their ranks are civic leaders, business owners, service industry personnel, medical providers, first responders, and people of all walks of life who contribute to the health, and welfare, and culture of our community.

January 24, 2023, Victor Valley College was presented with the 2023 John W. Rice Award for Student Success by the California Community Colleges Chancellors Office and the Board of Governors.

Victor Valley College's success in advancing equitable placement involves a comprehensive strategy that combines strong tutoring programs, including vibrant math and writing centers, and tracking leading indicators that can deliver early supports for students who need them. The college has built a strong dual-enrollment program and a team of proactive student ambassadors to help connect students with a counselor or financial aid professional to assist them in other ways.