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Spotlight Article

Valencia College

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Overview

The curricular and co-curricular experiences, along with the teamwork our students demonstrate within our classroom culture result in high job placement rates. The curriculum consists of five semesters of rigorous instruction incorporating didactic, lab and clinical education. Active learning opportunities are made available in many didactic courses and the clinical experience consists of a one-to-one ratio between student and preceptor throughout fifteen local healthcare facilities. Part-time faculty members provide support towards student learning within lab and clinical rotations. The program accepts a cohort of 30-35 students annually. All courses are web-enhanced to extend learning centered teaching strategies beyond the classroom.

A Day in the Life of a Respiratory Therapist

Mission

The Valencia Respiratory Care Program is committed to the development of competent entry-level respiratory therapists specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of patients with acute and chronic cardiopulmonary disease. The program strives to graduate therapists to meet the growing needs of the healthcare community. Valencia's program provides a strong educational base in therapeutic techniques using online courses, a state-of-the art simulation lab, and hands-on experience at some of the community's major medical centers and physician offices. Students gain diverse clinical experiences through interaction with physicians, adults, pediatric and neonatal patients. The program emphasizes critical thinking, effective communication, professionalism, collaboration within the healthcare team and the pursuit of lifelong learning.

History

The Respiratory Care Program started out as a hospital-based program at Orange Memorial Hospital in Orlando in 1968. All students took their academic course work at Valencia Junior College on Oak Ridge Road. Clinical practicum was implemented and carried out at Orange Memorial Hospital (now a division of the Orlando Regional Healthcare System).

The Respiratory Care Program at Valencia College has been fully accredited since 1972. Lynn Capraun MS, RRT developed the program and held the program director position until his retirement in 2009. His legacy lives on through the endowed Lynn Capraun Respiratory Care Alumni Scholarship, which awards financial assistance to students enrolled in the AS degree respiratory care program. Today the respiratory care program is considered one of the longest running programs in the country with some of the most excellent facilities available for clinical practice.

Associate of Science Program Curriculum

Prerequisite for Admission		Credit Hours
BSC 2085C	HUMAN ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY I	4
PHY 1007C	PHYSICS WITH MEDICAL APPLICATIONS **	4
Mathematics	See Gen. Ed. Core Requirement **	3
	Credit Hours	**11**

Year I		
SPRING TERM		
MCB 2010C	MICROBIOLOGY +*~	4
ENC 1101	FRESHMAN COMPOSITION I +*~	3
RET 1025	PRINCIPLES OF RESPIRATORY CARE +*	3
RET 1485	CARDIOPULMONARY PHYSIOLOGY +*	3
RET 2350	RESPIRATORY PHARMACOLOGY +*	3
	Credit Hours	**16**
SUMMER TERM		
BSC 2086C	HUMAN ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY II	
RET 1295	RESPIRATORY DISEASE MANAGEMENT +*	3
RET 1450	Basic Physiology Monitoring +*	3
RET 1274L	RESPIRATORY CARE LAB I +*	2
RET 1874L	CLINICAL PRACTICE I +*	3
	Credit Hours	**11**
Year II		
FALL TERM		
RET 1264	PRINCIPLES OF MECHANICAL VENTILATION +*	3
RET 1875L	CLINICAL PRACTICE II +*	3
RET 2447	HEMODYNAMIC MONITORING +*	3
RET 2283L	RESPIRATORY CARE LAB II +*	2
	Credit Hours	**11**
SPRING TERM		
RET 2244	ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT +*	3
RET 2714	NEONATAL/PEDIATRIC RESPIRATORY CARE +*	3
RET 2284L	RESPIRATORY CARE LAB III +*	2
RET 2876L	CLINICAL PRACTICE III +*	3
	Credit Hours	**11**
SUMMER TERM		
RET 2877L	CLINICAL PRACTICE IV +*	3
RET 2920	RESPIRATORY CARE PRACTICUM +*	3
Humanities	See Gen. Ed. Core Requirement +*~	3
AMH 2010 or AMH 2020 or POS 2041	UNITED STATES HISTORY TO 1877 +^ or U.S. HISTORY 1877 TO PRESENT or U.S. GOVERNMENT	3
	Credit Hours	**12**
	Total Credit Hours	**72**

Valencia College's Respiratory Care Program Experiences

Respiratory Care Week hospital goodie baskets

Class of 2025 Yajaira Linares and Sabastian Valentin Poster Presentation

Mary Russell class of 2024, Francesca Fey class of 2023, Mackenzie Smith class of 2024 and Halina Lawrence class of 2023 American Lung Association Fight for Air Climb.

Students have a variety of experiences while in the program. They learn how to work with one another in simulations, group projects, case study presentations volunteer activities with the American Lung Association and Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, program recruitment demonstrations and classroom active learning opportunities. Labs are created to give the students the most real-life scenarios and equipment available. Valencia grants provide the students with ventilators that they will utilize in the hospital facilities. Our cohorts average 30-35 students a year. We are currently working on restructuring our program from a 5 semester to a 4-semester program to help provide more students to the community ia College Respiratory Therapy Open Table

Valencia College Respiratory Therapy Open Table

Supporting the Profession

Jessica Winn Class of 2015, Kimberlee Harvey program director, Derrick Layer class of 2011

Derrick Layer class 2011, Jovanny Diaz class 2018, Kimberlee Harvey program director, Kara Snyder class of 2015, Omar Hoylet class of 2017, Marius Pagel class of 2015.

Some of Valncia BS graduates have continued their education into MS programs. Many of our graduates have accepted management, education, and leadership roles within the community. Some AS graduates have had the opportunity to present abstracts at the AARC Congress. Graduates are proud of their AS program and many of them come back to teach as adjunct faculty. They want to be mentors for our students.

Student Clinical Opportunities

Students from the Class of 2024 with Part-time faculty member Amal Wathaifi Deeb, RRT at Orlando Regional Medical Center

The campus is located near a Level One Trauma Center, with four intensive care pediatric facilities, two intensive care neonatal facilities, ground transport teams and two critical care air transport teams. The students benefit from having ten adjunct faculty members from these facilities as their mentors. Adjunct faculty members hold positions such as neuro/cardiac ICU specialists, bronch specialists, level one trauma center, emergency department RT's, ground transport RT's and ICU pediatric/neonatal therapists.

FSRC/AARC Engagement

Students from the Class of 2025 with respiratory coach and Kimberlee Harvey program director.

One of our proudest traditions is the commitment our students give to volunteer their time competing at the Student State and National Sputum Bowl Competitions. Valencia College won the 2025 Florida State Sputum Bowl Competition and will be competing in the 2025 AARC National Sputum Bowl Competition in Phoenix. Valencia has been competing for many years in both state and national competitions. Students say this opportunity makes them proud to be a Valencia College student.

Students from the Class of 2025 at the AARC in Orlando Florida

Another unique opportunity that our students participate in is attending the Florida State Sunshine Seminars and AARC Congress Conventions. Valencia College provides student funding for travel, lodging and registration. In an average year, we can take all our students to the state conferences and half of the class to the national conferences with the help of Valencia funding and grants. Since the conference was in Orlando this past year, all 32 students were able to attend the three-day AARC Congress.

Graduation

Respiratory Class of 2025

Our students experience graduation like pinning ceremony. They graduate in July, so they do not participate in the college's graduation. For this reason, we host a semi formal graduation where approximately 200 of their family and friends can celebrate their success.

BS Cardiopulmonary Sciences Program

Sharon Shenton, MA Ed, RRT, RRT-ACCS, RRT-NPS
Professor and Program Director

Valencia College AS Respiratory Care graduates can advance their education via articulation into the BS Cardiopulmonary Sciences program. The BS degree includes 40 credits of upper-division cardiopulmonary and health sciences course work. Credit from the AS degree and general education coursework apply towards the 128 credits required for the BS degree. The basic admission requirements are an AS degree in Respiratory Care and the RRT credential. Our BS degree advancement program is open to AS graduates from regionally accredited colleges and available to out-of-state students. The program offers rolling admissions and a completely online format, with flexibility designed for the working RRT professional. In addition to the core requirements, students may choose from one of three concentrations: Advanced Critical Care, Community Health or Leadership.

Bachelor of Science in Cardiopulmonary Sciences Curriculum

Core Requirements **30 Credits**

RET 3287	Cardiopulmonary Diagnostics	3
RET 3354	Medical Pharmacology	3
RET 3536	Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation	3
RET 3715	Neonatal Medicine	3
HSC 4555	Pathophysiologic Mechanisms	3
HSC 4640	Intro to Health Law	3
HSC 4652	Ethics in a Pluralistic Society	3
HSA 4184	Leadership in Health Care	3
HSA 3702	Research Methods and Information Literacy	3
	Cardiopulmonary Sciences Elective	3

BS Cardiopulmonary Sciences - Concentrations **10 Credits**

Advanced Critical Care

RET 3269	Advanced Cardiopulmonary Critical Care	3
RET 3444	Introduction to Lung and Cardiac Ultrasound	3

RET 4931	Special Topics in Evidence-Based Critical Care	2
RET 4950	Advanced Critical Care Capstone	2

Community Health

HSC 4500	Epidemiology	3
RET 4034	Health Care Delivery and Access	3
RET 4524	Community Health and Wellness	3
RET 4940	Community Health Capstone	1

Leadership

HAS 4110	Organizational Behavior	3
HSA 4340	Principles of Human Resource Management	3
HSA 4502	Health Care Risk Management	3
HSA 4850	Healthcare Leadership Capstone	1

Since the program's inception in 2014, more than 200 Central Florida RRTs have graduated from Valencia's BS Cardiopulmonary Sciences Program. Many of our graduates have gone on to obtain leadership positions in the community and a number have pursued graduate education. There is an average of 85 students enrolled in the program, mostly on a part-time basis. Many of the colleges in the Florida State College system now offer a BS in Cardiopulmonary Sciences, so we have come a long way since Valencia's BS program started.

Echocardiography Advanced Technical Certificate

RRTs with an AS degree also can complete an Advanced Technical Certificate program in Echocardiography. This 18-credit program includes three part-time semesters of didactic study with laboratory practice and three concurrent semesters of clinical practice. This program is offered onsite at Valencia College. Graduates are eligible to sit for the Registered Cardiac Sonographer (RCS) credentialing exam offered by Cardiovascular Credentialing International (CCI).

Leadership Team

Dr. Deborah Hardy is an established higher education leader with more than 30 years of administrative and teaching experience across community college, technical college, and university systems. A first-generation college graduate, she has built a career distinguished by her commitment to academic excellence, student success, and institutional advancement. She most recently served as Vic e President of Academic Affairs at Chandler-Gilbert Community College, a comprehensive institution serving nearly 20,000 students annually. In this capacity, she oversaw a $37 million budget, supervised more than 250 faculty and staff, and provided strategic leadership in curriculum, accreditation, dual enrollment, and innovative academic programming. Among her notable accomplishments was the successful development and approval of the college's first bachelor's degree in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, as well as the advancement of partnerships with Arizona State University to integrate artificial intelligence into humanities education.

Previously, Dr. Hardy served at Lakeland Community College in Ohio as Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning and Dean of Faculty, where she guided accreditation, faculty development, program review, assessment, and new university transfer partnerships. Earlier, as Dean of Science, Math and Health Technologies, she expanded health programs, secured state and federal grant funding exceeding $7 million, and co-led a $40 million levy campaign for a major health building expansion and renovation. Her leadership has consistently emphasized collaborative innovation, student-centered strategies, and resource development to strengthen institutional capacity.

Dr. Hardy began her academic career as an assistant professor at Baylor College of Dentistry's Caruth School of Dental Hygiene, Associate Dean for Health, General Education and Community Education, and she has remained active as a consultant, keynote speaker, and peer reviewer, team chair, Institutional Action Council member for the Higher Learning Commission.

She earned her Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from the University of Akron, and both her Master of Science and Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene from Old Dominion University.

Throughout her career, Dr. Hardy has been recognized for her leadership and service, including being named Woman of the Year by the United Way of Lake

County, receiving Crain's Notable Women in Healthcare recognition, and earning the Outstanding Educator Award from Old Dominion University.

Kimberlee Harvey MSc, RRT, RRT-NPS is a tenured professor and program director for the Associate of Science in Respiratory Care Program for Valencia College. She obtained an A.S. degree in respiratory care and an A.A. degree at Valencia College in 1995. While working full-time, she graduated with a B.A. degree in education from the University of Central Florida in 2000. She continued her education and graduated with an M.S. in respiratory care leadership from Northeastern University in 2015. She is a registered respiratory therapist (RRT), a neonatal/pediatric specialist (RRT-NPS), a member of the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC), Florida Society for Respiratory Care (FSRC), and American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC). Kimberlee is also a board member for the American Lung Association, New Program Committee for the Coalition for Baccalaureate and Graduate Respiratory Therapy Education (CoBGRTE) and Florida Committee for the Advanced Practice Respiratory Therapist (APRT). In 1995, she began working at Orlando Health and Arnold Palmer Children and Woman Hospitals as a respiratory therapist to help patients with breathing problems, such as asthma, cystic fibrosis, COPD and in 2007 also became a life support educator for Orlando Health medical staff and students enrolled in the paramedic and nursing programs at local community colleges. In 2008, she joined the team at Valencia College as an adjunct professor for the Respiratory Care Program and became the clinical coordinator shortly after. In 2025, Kimberlee accepted the position as the program director.

Lori Alturo, BS, RRT, RRT-NPS is the Clinical Coordinator for the Respiratory Care Program at Valencia College. She obtained her BS degree in Respiratory Care/Health Sciences from West Chester University in 2002. Lori provided care for neonatal and pediatric patients throughout her career with Nemours Children's Health for over 20 years, serving in roles such as: Charge RT, BLS & PALS Instructor, Patient/Family Educator, Clinical Instructor, PFT lab and RT Department Manager. In 2012, Lori was responsible for developing and training the initial team of RRT's to open a brand-new Nemours Children's Health hospital in Orlando, FL. She also cared for the Central Florida community by providing asthma and tracheostomy training to Osceola and Orange County school nurses, paramedic/EMT training in respiratory emergencies as well as volunteering with

the American Lung Association in DE and FL, Special Olympics, Second Harvest Food Bank and Give Kids the World. She is a Registered Respiratory Therapist, Neonatal/Pediatric Specialist, member of the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC), National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC), and Florida Society for Respiratory Care (FSRC). Lori joined the Adjunct Faculty of the Respiratory Program at Valencia College in 2024, then accepted the full-time position of Clinical Coordinator in 2025.

Sharon Shenton, MA, RRT, RRT-ACCS, RRT-NPS is a tenured Professor and Program Director for the BS Cardiopulmonary Sciences program at Valencia College in Orlando, Florida. She has more than 40 years of experience in the Respiratory Care profession, as a clinical respiratory therapist, manager and educator. She received her BS degree in Respiratory Therapy, and MA degree in Education from the University of Central Florida. Sharon was responsible for the initial development and implementation of the BS in Cardiopulmonary Sciences at Valencia College. Her management experience includes serving as a Respiratory Care Department Director at Advent Health Altamonte Springs, Florida. Prior to that, Sharon served as Director for two AS degree Respiratory Care Programs, at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison, NJ, and at the Rutgers University School of Health- Related Professions in Newark, NJ. She has been an active member of the AARC for the span of her career, is a past president of the New Jersey Society for Respiratory Care and a former member of the AARC House of Delegates. Sharon's professional goals include promoting baccalaureate-level education for respiratory therapists, providing professional education to optimize the respiratory care provided to patients, and help encourage and facilitate the recognition that respiratory care professionals have earned in our health care system.

Contact Information

If you would like to learn more about Valencia College's associate degree in Respiratory Care Program please contact Program Director Kimberlee Harvey at kharvey9@valenciacollege.edu or Clinical Coordinator Lori Alturo at lalturo@valenciacollege.edu.

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For questions regarding Valencia College's bachelor's degree in cardiopulmonary science please contact Sharon Shenton at sshenton@valenciacollege.edu.

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