

Life lessons in the cadaver lab

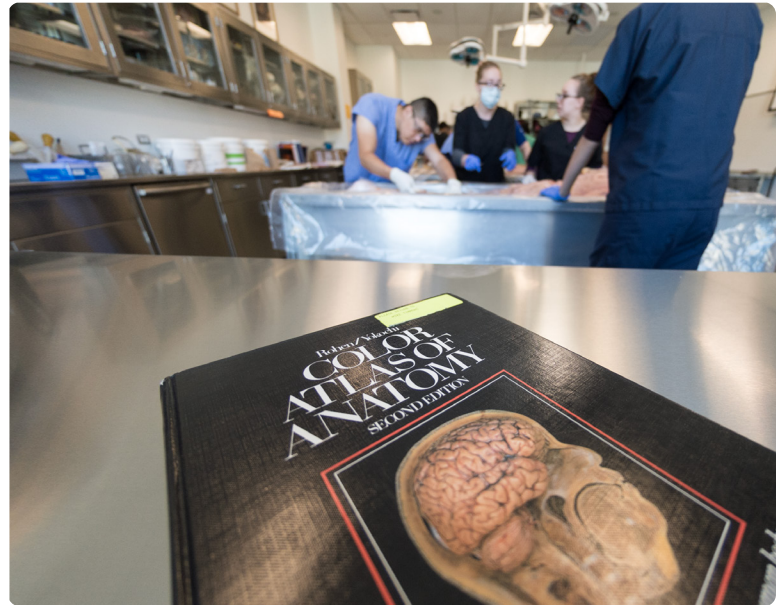
Students looking for a unique hands-on learning experience can find it in the cadaver lab at Moraine Valley. One of only a few in the region and an especially exclusive resource on a community college campus, the space offers students lessons beyond traditional academia.

The large lab holds up to six cadavers, each stored in sealed metal tanks to protect and preserve them. Samuel Chen, professor of biology, and Dr. Peter Porter, professor of anatomy and physiology, said other community colleges in the Chicago area have modeled their cadaver labs after Moraine Valley's.

One of the unique aspects to Moraine Valley's cadaver lab is the hands-on dissection element offered via two cadaver dissection courses per academic year. These courses can provide opportunities for health care workers, instructors, first responders and other practicing professionals to enroll as a supplement to their professional development.

Although some may find the concept of a cadaver lab off-putting, learning in such an environment is a vital part of training for students pursuing a career in which knowledge of human anatomy is paramount.

"For the most part, reactions are very positive. With students, you can just see them light up; this is a hands-on experience for them to see something that very few people really get to see in life," Porter shared, adding that when students are uncomfortable with the experience, accommodations are made to ensure they feel safe.



Chen added the cadaver lab provides an integrative experience, where students can touch, feel, see and interact with systems that cannot be simulated. "That's what a cadaver is — it's the entire body, all at the same time," he said. "The skin is influenced by muscles and connective tissue and bones underneath and the vasculature with the nervous system — it's all together. So, my main goal is to have them [students] have an integrated perspective."

Cadavers are donated through the University of Iowa's Deeded Body Program, which allows individuals to donate their bodies to learning, with their identities protected by



HUMAN ANATOMY CADAVER DISSECTION BIO-185

Health care workers, including nurses and EMS professionals, often enroll in this course to increase their knowledge and familiarity. This course provides students with a unique opportunity to gain a better understanding of the structure of the human body through student dissection of a human cadaver, observation of anatomical models, lectures, guided review sessions and self-directed learning. Practical for all students in medical and allied health fields desiring knowledge of the human body.

Prerequisites: BIO-115 or BIO-180 and evidence of current tetanus vaccination.



Professors Samuel Chen (left) and Dr. Peter Porter teach students to embrace life through a deeper understanding of the human body.

privacy laws. After Moraine Valley students complete their labs, the cadavers are returned to their families.

"We take it really seriously. We appreciate what these people have done to help us and our students learn the human body," Porter added.

Beyond the physical, Chen and Porter shared that their students often contemplate deeper concepts after experiencing the cadaver lab. Chen shared of the cadavers, "All they have now is nothing," and explained that regardless of our status, demographic information or earthly possessions, each of us spends a temporary amount of time on Earth. This motivates him to encourage his students to make wise choices and be good citizens.

"I think it's one of the most unique classes at any college campus," Porter shared. "To me, that is a very powerful message: You get to see the sameness of us." 

