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## President's Message



*Teresa Dreyfuss*

In late March, Rio Hondo College was well represented at the signing of the El Monte Promise Agreement, a document that states the College will partner with the El Monte community and its K-12 schools to help children reach their full potential.

By signing the Promise Agreement, the leadership of Rio Hondo College pledged to play an active role in helping more students from El Monte succeed and pursue higher education. Specifically, students who graduate from the El Monte Union High School District are guaranteed to be the first in line to register for classes if they complete an assessment, orientation, and meet with a counselor to develop an educational plan. This promise also extends to the students who are already enrolled at Rio Hondo College. If they meet the Transfer Guarantee Requirements, Rio Hondo College students are assured admission to UC Irvine.

Students from all walks of life – whether they are recent high school graduates, veterans returning from deployment or professionals looking to increase their knowledge – are all guaranteed a top-notch education at Rio Hondo College.

Every day, our faculty, staff and administrators are finding new and innovative ways to enhance the college-going environment.

While it is always important to look ahead to see how the College can conform to the needs of the 21st century learner, it is also implementing tried-and-true methods to bolster student success, including motivation.

For many students, role models provide motivation, and often those role models have walked in their shoes on a path that led to great success. With this in mind, we are pleased to announce the Honorable Hilda Solis as our keynote speaker for the 2014 Commencement Ceremony.

Secretary Solis has an extremely long list of accomplishments: member of the California State Assembly, State Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Labor Secretary under President Barack Obama. Hailing from the city of La Puente, Solis' background reads a lot like the students who attend Rio Hondo College. In fact, her first elected office was a Board of Trustee member of the Rio Hondo Community College District, a position that catapulted her career in public service.

We all look forward to welcoming back Secretary Solis to Rio Hondo College on May 22. I have full confidence that her words will truly inspire and motivate the students of Rio Hondo College.

## Student Artists Show at Prestigious Exhibit

**Rio in the News:** [Click here to read more in the Whittier Daily News about art students working to help the homeless.](#)



*Jared Chavez, left, Alexandro Vergara, Professor Robert Miller, Arturo Vazquez, Danielle Cansino and student Minghwei Carol Sun who is not pictured, are showing their artwork at the American Museum of Ceramic Art through June 1.*

Five art students from Rio Hondo College are showing and selling their work at the annual "Kilnopening.edu 2014" exhibition at the American Museum of Ceramic Art (AMOCA) in Pomona through Tuesday, June 1.

Jared Chavez, Alexandro Vergara, Arturo Vazquez, Danielle Cansino and Mingwei Carol Sun are showcasing and selling their art pieces at the exhibit, which is designed to underscore the importance of college-level ceramics programs. This is the first year all Rio Hondo students who applied got accepted.

"Kilnopening.edu 2014" features the work of 122 artists, 76 of whom are students. The pieces were chosen through a comprehensive process that took into account the pieces' aesthetic value, technical proficiency and the selection committee's intuitive response.

Thirty-five academic institutions from across the state are represented at the show, which celebrates the role of college instructors and recognizes their guidance and influence on the next generation of artists. The show is also doubling as a fundraiser to support the artists and AMOCA's ceramic educational programs.

## Board Update

The Rio Hondo College Board Room was filled with applause and cheers on April 9 as the Board of Trustees honored several instructors who received tenure and were promoted in academic rank.

Katherin Brandt, an associate professor in the Division of Health Science and Nursing (HSN), was honored at the meeting for obtaining tenure. She was also commended for being promoted in academic rank, alongside Professor Kelli Florman from Public Safety; Professor Gail Modyman from HSN; Professor Kathleen Hannah from HSN; Associate Professor Cynthia Lewis from Arts and Cultural Programs; Associate Professor Robert Miller from Arts and Cultural Programs; Associate Professor Dorali Pichardo-Diaz of Counseling and Student Success; Assistant Professor David Lindy from Career and Technical Education; and Assistant Professor Angela Rhodes from Communications and Languages.

Anthropology Professor Jill Pfeiffer then presented her Sabbatical report to the Board. During her Sabbatical, Pfeiffer accomplished several goals that benefit other instructors within the Anthropology Department, as well as the students.

Pfeiffer successfully applied for a Distance Education Captioning and Transcription (DECT) grant to have films donated by Documentary Education Resources in closed-caption for use online and in traditional classes. More than 25 anthropology films are now available for students online via Dropbox.

Pfeiffer also catalogued, organized and stored the department's extensive fossil collection and other physical anthropology lab class resources. Lastly, Pfeiffer created 15 new physical anthropology lab lessons and provided other teaching resources for part-time faculty.

Dean of Counseling and Student Success Dr. Mike Muñoz, Vice President of Student Services Henry Gee and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Kenn Pierson then gave the Board an update on Rio Hondo College's progress in fulfilling the Student Success Initiative.

Muñoz said the College is making enormous strides in the areas of assessment, by implementing multiple measures to clear prerequisites for students to ensure they are taking math, reading and English courses on par with their skills; orientation, by looking to adopt an online orientation

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## Former Labor Secretary to Offer Commencement Address



Hilda Solis

Recently, the Honorable Hilda Solis met with President Barack Obama in the Cabinet Room of the White House as the U.S. Labor Secretary and roamed the halls of the Capitol as a member of Congress. Now she will be warmly welcomed with open arms to the place where her career in public service all began: Rio Hondo College.

Solis, a former member of the Rio Hondo College District Board of Trustees, will deliver the Commencement address at the 51st Rio Hondo College Commencement Ceremony at 6 p.m. on Thursday, May 22 at the Soccer Field.

"It is an honor to welcome back Hilda Solis to Rio Hondo College and to have her deliver the commencement address to our graduates," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "Not only is she a role model to our students, she is also a trailblazer. Secretary Solis' return to the Rio Hondo Community College District will certainly inspire thousands."

Solis was born in Los Angeles to immigrant parents and grew up in the city of La Puente. The first in her family to attend college, Solis earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Cal Poly Pomona and a master's of public administration from the University of Southern California.

Early in her career, Solis worked for the President Carter Administration in the White House Office of Hispanic Affairs, and in 1985 served on the Rio Hondo Community College District Board of Trustees.

"As a trustee, Ms. Solis worked tirelessly to increase the number of minorities and women in tenured faculty positions, as well as improving vocational job training at the College," Dreyfuss said.

Solis then went on to serve in the California State Assembly and the State Senate. In 2000, Solis was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where she served until 2009 when Obama appointed her to serve as his Labor Secretary, making her the first Latina in history to serve in the U.S. Cabinet.

## 'Writes of Spring' Inspires Students

It was a packed house at the Wray Theater for two back-to-back days as the annual "Writes of Spring" festival celebrated the written word and the literary work of students and faculty, published in the *River's Voice* journal.



Dr. Kenn Pierson, left, Deo Niyizonkia and Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss.

This year "Writes of Spring" welcomed author and OC Weekly editor Gustavo Arellano, famous for his nationally syndicated column, "¡Ask a Mexican!"; Poet Brendan Constantine, whose first book, "Letters to Guns," is now taught extensively in schools across the nation; humanitarian and victim of genocide in Burundi Deo Niyizonkia, founder and CEO of Village Health Works; conceptual artist Yanira Cartagena; award-winning writer, director, producer and acting coach Anthony Meindl; and Zohreh Ghahremani, author of "Sky of Red Poppies," "The Moon Daughter" and "The Commiserator."

"Each year the 'Writes of Spring' festival attracts many writers, artists and entertainers from a wide range of success and genres," said Rio Hondo College Dean of Communications and Languages Dr. Robert

Holcomb. "But most importantly, our speakers always seem to spark within our students a desire to read and write."

Additionally, the speakers who attended the Writes of Spring from April 23-24 were impressed with the students' passion to learn as they engaged in book signings, and with the beauty of the campus. "The Rio Hondo College Library is one of the most beautiful libraries I've ever seen," said Niyizonkia, a medical doctor who spent many sleepless nights studying in a myriad of libraries.



program similar to that of Santa Barbara Community College; education planning by offering Counseling 105, six one-week sessions designed to assist students in mapping out an educational blueprint for their time at Rio Hondo; at-risk follow-up, by revamping the probation system to include mandatory workshops with counselors; and Student Success Initiative student tracking.

Pierson also said on the academic side, the Classroom Impact Committee (CIC) was formed to review ideas from subcommittees, discuss how these ideas relate to academic theories and how they can be applied in the classroom. The CIC will also develop strategies to implement faculty ideas in the classroom, synthesizing student services with academic affairs.

## Nursing Students Take Part in Lobby Day



In order to learn more about the nursing industry and its role in state government, 13 Nursing Program students attended the American Nurses Association/California (ANA/C) Lobby Day on April 8 in Sacramento.

The objectives of the program were to understand the role the association plays in nursing advocacy and the legislative process; learn about the Board of Registered Nursing and its role in nursing practice; and navigate legislation through the Capitol and meet with legislators.

The students met with several ANA/C officials, including the Honorable Tricia R. Hunter RN, MN; Director and Legislative Advocate Monica Weisbrich BSN, RN; President Dr. Liz Dietz; and Legislative Director Patricia McFarland.

The students also met with the healthcare staff for Sen. Ed Hernandez, as well as assembly members Ed Chau and Ian Calderon. The students provided the legislators with information regarding the role of the registered nurse and the purpose and the importance of the ANA/C.

## Rio Hondo College Fellow Has 'Not Stopped' Serving Community



Martha Carreon

For 39 years, Martha Carreon spent her days teaching Humanities at Rio Hondo College. When she was out of the classroom, however, she was never really "off the clock."

"I became involved in all the various activities of Rio Hondo College the minute I was hired," Carreon said. "I have not stopped."

Carreon began her career as a Spanish teacher at Whittier Union High School and soon moved on to teach Spanish at Rio Hondo College. She later became a Humanities professor. She also served as chairwoman of the Humanities Department, coordinator of the Amnesty Program and Title V Coordinator.

Meanwhile, she loved working with students as a faculty sponsor for a variety of campus clubs, including Hispanic Students, MEChA, Dance Club and Latinos United for Voting (L.U.V.), to name a few.

"I feel that it is very important to give back to the community whenever possible," Carreon said. "I loved working with the middle schools in Pico Rivera and Santa Fe Springs giving parent education programs and sixth grade assemblies at a variety of schools and coordinating 'I'm Going to College' programs."

Carreon also served on several advisory boards, such as the Task Force on Minority Students, Speaker's Bureau and Accreditation Committee. However, her involvement didn't stop at the bottom of the hill – she took the community by storm, as well.

Carreon, a prolific traveler and belly dancer, also served as consultant to the Los Angeles Children's Museum, the Los Angeles County Multicultural Task Force and the California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) Teacher Education Program.

"I believe it is important to be involved because we are creating our future," Carreon said. "The students we teach, we inspire, and whose success we support will be there for us in our community. I encourage them to get involved. They are our future leaders."

Although currently retired, Carreon is still very involved at Rio Hondo College and works with the Faculty Association.

For her tireless efforts, the Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees awarded Carreon with its Distinguished Fellow of the College award for 2014, which is reserved for those who have made outstanding contributions to the progress and development of the College. As the 2014 Distinguished Fellow of the College, Carreon will be acknowledged during commencement.

"Martha is the epitome of a Rio Hondo College Fellow," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "She spent nearly four decades committed to the excellence of our students, inside and outside the classroom."

## National Denim Day at Rio Hondo College

**Rio in the News:** [Click here to see more about Rio Hondo Denim Day!](#)



Jasmine López, left, and Marta Muñoz speak at National Denim Day at Rio Hondo College.

The Rio Hondo College community wore jeans to support National Denim Day on April 23, as part of its Sexual Assault Awareness Month event.

As a campus community, students and staff came together to make a visible statement about the fact that sexual violence is neither accepted nor tolerated.

National Denim Day began in 1999 in Los Angeles as a worldwide protest against the Italian High Court overturning a case that released a 45-year-old driving instructor who was originally convicted of raping his 18-year-old driving student. The court declared that "because the victim wore very, very tight jeans, she had to help him remove them... and by removing the jeans... it was no longer rape but consensual sex."

This educational and empowering event was sponsored by CalWORKs, Associated Students of Rio Hondo College (ASRHC) and RioSource with the goal to educate and "Erase the Stigma" on sexual assault and rape.



# The Associated Students of Rio Hondo College President Makes Strides in Office

When Valeria Guerrero came into office as the Associated Students of Rio Hondo College (ASRHC)

President for the 2013-14 year, she had many

goals: to help create a meaningful and productive environment for students; host various culturally diverse events; and encourage students to take part in their own advocacy.

For Guerrero, the year has been a success.

"We were able to empower, engage and educate the student population on different levels this year, while also complying with the Student Success Act," Guerrero said. "All of our events were meant to have an educational component, whether that was at our cultural diversity events led by Hiram Castro or directly meeting with legislators in Sacramento, led by our Legislative Affairs Committee."

Guerrero sees her greatest accomplishment as helping student government members become more involved in direct participation in campus-wide committees and learning about the "behind the scenes" work that are crucial for the betterment and development of the student population.

"I have learned that being part of the student government takes much time, effort and commitment, but the possibilities are endless," Guerrero said. "I have had the pleasure of working with so many bright students who are eager to see an improvement in their own lives along with their community. It has been refreshing to meet faculty, staff and administrators who are completely invested in their students while also having high standards."

Guerrero, who is completing her final semester at Rio Hondo College, is poised to transfer to the University of California, Berkeley to pursue a degree in sociology. Her intent is to study law.



Valeria Guerrero

# Rio Hondo College Makes 'Promise' to El Monte Students

The El Monte Promise Foundation, which is dedicated to ensuring El Monte students grow up healthier and better prepared for school, college and a promising career, launched on March 28 with officials at Rio Hondo College present to sign the "Promise Agreement."



Promise Foundation stakeholders, which include the boards of directors, parents, elementary students, educators, business and community leaders and elected officials, were all on hand at the Grace T. Black Auditorium in El Monte for the ceremonial signing of the agreement. In addition to Rio Hondo College, representatives from the El Monte City School District, Mountain View School District, El Monte, and the El Monte Promise Foundation signed the contract with enthusiasm as well.

By signing, the organizations pledged to collaborate and actively engage in helping El Monte children reach their full potential.

"It is truly an exciting day for the community to come together to commit to making college a reality for the children of El Monte," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "We are dedicated as a community to support our families so students have a streamlined process to attend and succeed in college, and for parents to be better prepared to finance that education."

The Promise Foundation aims to work closely with partners and the community to help make college an affordable and realistic option for El Monte students and their families. The Foundation will work with local public schools to ensure students have a clear educational path to college, have the necessary resources easily accessible, and have well-defined academic and career goals.

Parents will also be encouraged to actively engage with schools and be provided with the financial training and assistance they need to be able to afford college.

One of the Promise Foundation's main initiatives will be its Scholars Savings Program, which will launch in the 2014-15 school year with the goal of helping families start saving for their children's college education at an early age. The program will reward each monthly deposit, no matter how small, with a matching contribution.

Rio in the News: [Click here to read more about the El Monte Promise.](#)





## Dates to Remember

### Commencement

Commencement Speaker  
Honorable Hilda Solis,  
former U.S. Secretary of Labor  
Thursday, May 22  
6 p.m.  
Soccer Field

## Connect with Us on Social Media



RHCRoadrunners



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# Forensics Students Assist in Princeton Lecture

Instead of hitting a sandy beach or taking a road trip during spring break, two Rio Hondo College students made their way to an Ivy League university.

Steven Villegas and Juan Guerrero, members of the Forensics Speech and Debate team joined Forensics Program Coordinator and Communications & Languages Instructor Libby Curiel in performing a lecture on debate and critical thinking at Princeton University.

The subject of the lecture, "Representation, Context and Latino Attitudes," was given in the Latino Politics in the U.S. course, which is taught by Ali Valenzuela, a former Rio Hondo College student and member of the Forensics team.

Curiel, Villegas and Guerrero spoke to the class about the real world applications of parliamentary style debate. Later, they attended the precept portion of the class to teach the students about the process of debate and prepare them to engage in a debate.

"Our students represented Rio Hondo really well," Curiel said. "It was an incredible experience for all."

After spending the day at Princeton, Villegas and Guerrero competed in the Adlai E. Stevenson Memorial Debate Tournament, which is hosted by the Princeton Debate Panel, one of the premiere collegiate debating societies in the country.

Curiel said the whole experience, which included a day trip to New York City, benefitted the students in many ways. They were able to see themselves as belonging at a top university, they were encouraged to transfer, pursue a post-graduate education and they became confident in their efforts to pursue leadership opportunities.

"We hope this experience develops into an annual practice," Curiel said. "We should always strive to develop relationships with other colleges and universities to create pathways for our students to transfer to or continue their education at these institutions."

Curiel said Rio Hondo College staff were instrumental in making the trip a success, most notably librarians Stephanie Wells and Adele Enright for their help with research; political science professor Manuel Baca and Chicano studies associate professor Juana Mora for debate preparation; speech professor Gil Puga for alumni outreach; division Dean Dr. Robert Holcomb, Forensics coaching staff and Rio Hondo administration and classified staff for their support.



*Rio Hondo College Forensics Speech and Debate Team member Steven Villegas, center, assists students in Princeton University's Latino Politics in the U.S. course over spring break.*