

# PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

COVERING JULY AND AUGUST 2015



## President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

I'm overjoyed to welcome all of our new and returning students, our dedicated faculty and staff and my fellow administrators to the 2015-16 academic year.

I can tell already, with school just starting, that this fall promises to be another amazing experience as our dedicated faculty begin to guide students along their higher education journeys.

Indeed, it hardly feels like we took a break – Rio Hondo College was so busy over the last two months, you'd hardly even know it was summer.

First, students enrolled in our five summer sessions while our incoming freshmen attended a series of four-day Summer Bridge orientation

programs, four Freshman Welcome Days and even a new student Family Night event.

Next, our TRIO/Student Support Services Program received a pair of U.S. Department of Education grants – nearly \$1 million over five years to continue offering basic services and \$1.1 million over five years to help support science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education efforts.

Finally, there was the night we lit up the sky with the first of our blazing, five-story high illuminated signs proclaiming the opportunities of Rio Hondo College to everyone within miles.

Now, as I visit with students, staff and faculty, I'm inspired by the passion we all share for this educational mission of ours. I look forward to getting to know all of those who are joining us for the first time and to renewing relationships with those returning.

## Campus Offers Array of Programs in 2015-16 to Promote Student Success

Rio Hondo College is offering a broad array of programs in the 2015-16 academic year to promote student success, including its new four-year bachelor's degree, Pathway to Law School Initiative, 21 degrees that guarantee transfer to California State University and premier fire, police and nursing training programs.

The academic offerings work hand-in-glove with the community college's equally deep range of student support services, which include priority enrollment for targeted student groups, support for new students and programs to promote successful transfers to four-year institutions.

"There's never been a more exciting time to attend Rio Hondo College," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "Our campus is a hive of activity as we continue to find innovative new ways to ensure our community receives the greatest possible opportunities for pursuing higher education and acquiring the hands-on skills needed to compete in our highly technical, highly demanding 21<sup>st</sup> century marketplace."

The College's spirit of student-centered innovation was recognized by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges' Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, which reaffirmed Rio Hondo College's accreditation in January after a comprehensive evaluation.



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# Campus Offers Array of Programs in 2015-16 to Promote Student Success

(Continued)

## Highlights:

- ▶ **21 Degrees for Transfer:** Rio Hondo College is among 39 community colleges to offer 20 or more associate degree programs that guarantee graduates enrollment at a California State University campus and priority placement into programs for their field of study.
- ▶ **Transfer Pathway Success:** In 2014-15, more than 200 Rio Hondo students transferred to popular California four-year institutions as well as those with national profiles in other states.
- ▶ **Underrepresented Minority Transfers:** The College consistently ranks in the top 10 of all community college campuses for the high percentage of underrepresented minorities among students who transfer to UC campuses.
- ▶ **Four-Year Bachelor Degree:** The College began offering lower-division courses this fall for its historic Bachelor of Science degree in automotive technology. Rio Hondo is one of 15 community colleges in the state and the only one in the San Gabriel Valley chosen for a pilot program.
- ▶ **Pathway to Law Schools Initiative:** Rio Hondo is one of 24 community colleges in the state and the only one in the San Gabriel Valley to offer a unique initiative that prepares students for a continuum of educational programs leading to a degree from one of six top California law schools.
- ▶ **STEM Opportunities:** The College offers instruction in multiple science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) subject areas valued by four-year universities as well as employers.
- ▶ **Fire Academy:** Rio Hondo College's Fire Academy offers some of the most comprehensive training available to beginning and advanced firefighters across the nation. The Wildland Fire Academy posts a 100 percent placement rate for its graduates.
- ▶ **Police Academy:** This historic institution has trained hundreds of police officers across the state from more than 200 student classes. Revamped in 2014, the academy's training program is considered one of California's most rigorous.
- ▶ **Nursing:** Rio Hondo College's nursing students have posted 100 percent passing rates on the last five state certification tests. The College offers advanced nursing training and a nursing assistant program.
- ▶ **Personal Care Aides:** The College launched a pilot program this summer that offers free training to become a personal care aide, with on-the-job training and assistance in securing a job provided to those completing the course. Personal care is an entry-level health care field.
- ▶ **First-Year Success Center:** The center is home to a network of student support services, designed to ensure all students begin their college journey with a firm understanding of what they need to do to succeed.
- ▶ **Student Success and Support Program:** In 2014-15, Rio Hondo assessed nearly 7,000 students in English and math, advised about 10,000 and created 12,700 educational plans to help guide students in their pursuit of degrees and career goals.
- ▶ **Student Equity Plan:** This plan, adopted by the Board of Trustees, targets College services to ensure all students have their greatest possible chance to succeed.
- ▶ **MESA:** The Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Program is nationally recognized by Excelencia in Education for increasing academic opportunities and achievement for its students.
- ▶ **TRIO/Student Support Services:** Rio Hondo College this summer secured its fourth, five-year Department of Education grant to continue offering its TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program to disadvantaged, low-income college students, first-generation college students and students with disabilities.
- ▶ **Disabled Students Programs & Services:** Rio Hondo provides services to support students with disabilities, including note-taking, sign-language interpreters, specialized furniture, registration help, counseling, computer lab access and assistive technology.
- ▶ **Veterans Service Center:** Opened July 1, the Veterans Service Center offers a one-stop shop for counseling services, Veterans Administration benefits help, financial aid, tutoring, a computer lab and even a graduation cap-and-gown loan program.



# Student Support Services Receives \$1.1 Million Federal Grant to Support STEM Education Effort

**RIO IN THE NEWS!** Click here to read more about Rio Hondo College's STEM Education Effort in the *Mid Valley News*.

Rio Hondo College will receive \$1.1 million in grants over the next five years from the U.S. Department of Education to help low-income, first-generation and underrepresented college students pursue transfers to four-year universities in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) majors.

TRIO will receive \$220,000 annually to serve 120 program participants.

"STEM skills are a primary focus for Rio Hondo College as we seek to prepare our students for their future college goals or for our increasingly demanding 21st century marketplace," said Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "This grant will help us to build on our strong foundation of leadership in this area."

Rio Hondo College has been a leader in STEM skills advocacy since 2008, when it created its Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) program. MESA provides SSS-eligible students with a supportive peer group and enrichment activities as they pursue STEM studies.

With the funds, the college will continue to increase the number of STEM students who graduate from Rio Hondo and transfer to four-year institutions as STEM majors. In addition to MESA's peer-facilitated Academic Excellence Workshops – where students engage in problem-based learning – the program offers a broad array of services triggered by students' specific needs.

Services include personal coaching and success plans, comprehensive counseling, time-management guidance, community building and financial literacy education.

## Board Update

Members of the Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees and other campus leaders were treated to a light show at the August meeting when the College premiered a new five-story, illuminated sign showcasing the Rio Hondo logo, which promoted registration for our fall semester.

Cast brilliantly against the side of the Library Tower, the sign is visible to drivers along the 605 Freeway and for miles around the hilltop campus. It will be cast from 7 p.m. to midnight daily, and the College can sculpt the message to promote different programs.

"Rio Hondo has always strived to be a beacon of opportunity for our community," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "Now, literally, we are creating a beacon that lets our community know about all of the amazing opportunities available at the College."

The sign was the brainchild of Dean of Arts and Cultural Programs Chris Guptill.

Also during the meeting, the board commended Lupe Scianni, who retired from the Child Development Center after 35 years of service.

At July's meeting, the board bid farewell to Alan Cutler, a senior program analyst in the Information Technology Department, and conducted one of its regular walking tours of campus programs. Board members and administrators stopped by a college composition class, an introduction to computer information technology class and a theater rehearsal.



## TRIO Program Wins Five-Year Student Services Grant Effort

Rio Hondo College has secured a five-year U.S. Department of Education grant that will allow it to continue offering its TRIO/Student Support Services program to students who face significant challenges in post-secondary education, including first-generation students, low-income students and students with disabilities.

Rio Hondo competed with 1,400 other applicants for a share of nearly \$290 million in federal grants – the fourth such grant it has secured since 2000. The College will receive \$247,584 annually.

"This new grant is an affirmation of all the hard work our Student Support Services team does to help our students succeed in completing programs of study at Rio Hondo College," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "Now, they will be able to continue their mission for five more years."

Jasmine Mageno, Interim Director of TRIO Programs for Rio Hondo, said the group continually refines its approach to services based on data collected about its efforts. In the coming year, the agency will adjust how it offers tutoring services, hold more workshops to support students holistically and revise its marketing approach to ensure students know about the opportunities available to them through TRIO.

**RIO IN THE NEWS!** Click here to read more about Rio Hondo College's TRIO Program in the *Whittier Daily News*.



# One-Stop Service Center Opens to Help Veterans with College Needs

Rio Hondo College's Veterans Service Office launched a one-stop service center this summer that will allow veterans of the U.S. armed forces to conveniently obtain a host of critical services that range from counseling and tutoring to financial aid and loan assistance.

**RIO IN THE NEWS!** Click here to read more about Rio Hondo College's Veterans Service Office in the *Mid Valley News*.

Veterans make up a small, but growing percentage of Rio Hondo's student population.

"Our veterans are returning to college after making significant sacrifices on our behalf," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "As such, they have special needs that go beyond those of the typical student – and we want to be sure we meet all of them to ensure their success at Rio Hondo College and beyond."

Yvonne Gutierrez-Sandoval, Director of Financial Aid, Scholarships and Veterans Services, said the center was inspired by a desire to provide veterans with a place where they would feel most comfortable getting the services needed for their education.

"Our veterans share unique experiences – many of them traumatic – and it creates a level of comfort for them to be around other veterans who understand that," Gutierrez-Sandoval said.

Services for veterans include:

- ▶ Counseling
- ▶ A Veterans Administration education benefits certifying official
- ▶ A financial aid adviser
- ▶ Emergency student loans
- ▶ Tutoring
- ▶ Computer lab
- ▶ Information on community programs and services for veterans
- ▶ Graduation cap and gown loan program

"The transition to civilian life can be a difficult one," added Arely Castaneda, Rio Hondo College's Interim Veterans Service Center Coordinator/Counselor.

"Providing a convenient location that meets all of a veteran's needs helps eliminate unneeded stress. It also promotes their efforts to complete their courses and make the transition to a four-year college or new career."



## Alumnus, Marine Named 2015 Recipient of Veterans Award



Rio Hondo alumnus Schiller Auguste has been named a 2015 recipient of the Ernest T. Hamilton, Jr. Memorial Scholarship, a \$500 award given annually to veterans with disabilities who are pursuing higher education.

Auguste, 58, of Whittier, served in the U.S. Marine Corps for 20 years. Since his honorable discharge in 2001, Auguste has struggled with painful spine displacement issues that hinder him physically.

Still, the challenges haven't stopped him from pursuing higher education opportunities and volunteering with such groups as the United Way, Los Angeles Urban League and Rio Hondo Veterans Club.

In spring, Auguste completed his Associate of Arts degree in general studies, with an emphasis on social sciences. He plans to attend California State University, Los Angeles, where he hopes to complete a bachelor's degree in rehabilitation administration and a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. His goal is to help returning veterans transition to community life.

# Rio Hondo College Joins National Effort to Boost Success Rates for Men of Color

Rio Hondo College has joined a consortium dedicated to advancing success of men of color in community colleges – the Minority Male Community College Collaborative (M2C3) National Consortium on College Men of Color.

The M2C3 Consortium, launched in February 2015, facilitates an exchange of ideas and strategies among community colleges across the nation to boost the success of historically underrepresented and underserved students.

"Rio Hondo College is committed to ensuring the success of all of our students," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "We provide services especially tailored to help those who face the greatest challenges, but we can always do more. This consortium will help provide us with new tools in this campaign."

Nearly seven in eight male students at Rio Hondo College – 86.8 percent of men who declared ethnicity – identified themselves in 2014-15 as men of color. The group is more than 80 percent Latino, 8 percent Asian, and 4 percent African-American.

In the United States, only 17 percent and 15 percent of African-American and Latino men, respectively, earn certificates, degrees or transfer from a

**RIO IN THE NEWS!** Click here to read more about Rio Hondo College joining the minority men's consortium in the *Whittier Daily News*.

community college to a four-year institution in six years, despite programs designed to enhance outcomes for men of color.

Figures for men from other ethnic groups (e.g., Native American, Southeast Asian) also indicate a significant need for improvement.

While Rio Hondo College's graduation rate for men of color exceeds those national averages, College educators believe targeted support services can help students significantly improve their success rates.

The College offers a rich array of programs tailored to its high-needs student groups. In spring, it held its first-ever Men of Color Conference. It is also planning a Women of Color event in 2015-16 and is launching a diversity committee to help coordinate efforts.

- ▶ As an M2C3 member, Rio Hondo College will benefit from
- ▶ Access to M2C3 webinars on men of color;
- ▶ Access to the M2C3 virtual discussion board;
- ▶ Sharing information on promising practices with other community colleges; and
- ▶ An annual working group meeting hosted in San Diego.

In its first few months, the M2C3 has already seen much success in information-sharing between community colleges. On average, more than 1,000 consortium members participate in each webinar.

## 26 Students Benefit from UC Irvine Summer Scholars Transfer Institute

Twenty six Rio Hondo College students attended the 2015 Summer Scholars Transfer Institute at UC Irvine, earning course units and receiving counseling and support during the intense 10-day program.

Rio Hondo educators played a prominent role in the transfer support program, with professor Juana Mora teaching a political science class, counselor Sergio Guzman offering counseling, and Student Services administrators Dr. Mike Munoz, Loy Nashua and Vanessa Chavez, and Transfer Center staff member Yicel Paez providing program support.

Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss attended the program's closing ceremonies on Aug. 2, as did Vice President of Student Services Henry Gee and Dean of Communications & Languages Dr. Robert Holcomb.



# Mass Communications Advisory Board Discusses Social Media, Internships



Members of area radio, television, print and online media discussed the evolving nature of the news media, internships and the rise of social media with Rio Hondo scholars during a Mass Communications Advisory Board meeting on Aug. 4.

The event was organized and led by Dean of Communications and Languages Dr. Robert Holcomb and El País adviser John Francis. Media representatives included Los Angeles Times reporter Broderick Turner and KLOS radio personality Frankie DiVita, a Rio Hondo alum who received the diploma she earned 20 years ago from President Dreyfuss at the meeting's commencement.

## Save The Date



**6 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 23:** Board of Trustees special meeting

**Thursday, Oct. 15:** Rio Hondo College Fall 2015 Lecture Series presents an advanced screening of the animated series "Bordertown" with opening remarks from cartoonist/writer Lalo Alcaraz, Wray Theater

**Thursday, Nov. 5:** Rio Hondo College Fall 2015 Lecture Series presents a screening of the documentary "Letter to Anita" with remarks and discussion with Dr. Ronnie Sanlo, Wray Theater

**5 to 7 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 7:** Career Success Conference for Adult Re-entry Students, Mid Quad

**6 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14:** Board of Trustees meeting

**8:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. Friday, Nov. 6:** Discover Rio Day for elementary and middle school students, Rio Hondo College

**6 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 11:** Board of Trustees meeting

**6 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 9:** Board of Trustees meeting



## Hundreds of Students, Families Turn Out for Freshmen Welcome Events

Two-hundred sixty students and family members attended Rio Hondo College's first new student family orientation night in more than three years, filling the Wray Theater for a series of programs designed to engage the entire family in their child's higher-education journey.

The event, held Aug. 19, was planned by the College's Student Success and Support Programs (SSSP) and included a meal and opportunity drawings for \$250 book vouchers.

"We're very happy with the attendance," said Vanessa Chavez, SSSP Interim Coordinator/Counselor. "Some students brought one parent, some brought both; others brought their whole families. And that was the goal."

Chavez, whose team personally called to invite 500 incoming freshmen, said the event was designed to make the new students feel special as they begin Rio Hondo College. The students were singled out for recognition, and walked as a group across the Wray Theater stage, picking up high-fives from the SSS team and volunteers.

"Our message was that we support you, we care about you," Chavez said.

The family orientation night was the third program held this summer to engage new students. The Summer Bridge program offered a series of four-day orientation programs that reached more than 300 students – the most ever.

Four single-day Freshman Welcome Day events connected with nearly 300 additional students in late July and early August.



# Connect with Us on Social Media



## Serving the communities of

- El Monte
- South El Monte
- Pico Rivera
- Santa Fe Springs
- Whittier

### and portions of:

- Norwalk
- Downey
- La Mirada
- City of Industry
- Los Nietos\*
- East Whittier\*
- South Whittier\*
- West Whittier\*
- Avocado Heights\*

\*Unincorporated communities within our District

## Mission Statement

Rio Hondo College is committed to the success of its diverse students and communities by providing dynamic educational opportunities and resources that lead to associate degrees, certificates, transfer, career and technical pathways, basic skills proficiency, and lifelong learning.

# Wildland Fire Academy Graduates Aid U.S. Forest Service in Brushfire Battles

Rio Hondo College's Fire Crew 77 deployed twice this summer to help the U.S. Forest Service combat a slew of brushfires raging across the state.

The Roadrunners crew activated for two-week periods on July 3 and Aug. 10 to provide relief to professional crews.

**RIO IN THE NEWS!** Click here to read more about the Wildland Fire Academy at *Southern California Public Radio*.

"These deployments are a terrific way for our academy graduates to gain experience, training and earn some money while they are seeking their first jobs," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "We also are proud to have them represent us on the front lines of our state's frequent battles against destructive fires."

When summer started, the crew was short of its usual 16-person complement – because other fire agencies have been aggressively scooping up Rio Hondo graduates.

"I can't keep up with the demand," said Rio Hondo College Wildland and Fire Coordinator Tracy Rickman, who also serves as chief of Crew 77.

The academy has a 100 percent placement record, which prompted Rickman to offer a second training class in 2014-15 to see if he could provide additional graduates to meet the high demand. The effort – difficult to do since the fall fire season can sap the academy's training staff – generated a record 65 firefighters. Forty-one were quickly snagged by wildland fire agencies.

"Nineteen graduates were hired in one fell swoop to serve in the Plumas National Forest," Rickman said. "And veterans who take the training are typically hired incredibly fast."

That left 14 graduates available for the crew, prompting Rickman to supplement his team with two members of Fuego Tech's Rangers Crew 76 when it was activated July 3 for a two-week mission fighting brushfires in the Saugus River Ranger District in Santa Clarita. While not on fires, the crew performed project work, hazard reduction and general station maintenance, as well as participated in a rigorous daily physical training program.

In its second deployment, the crew spent 16 days helping to fight the Shinn Fire north of Claremont and the Rough Fire east of Fresno.

During that deployment, Rickman supplemented his crew with graduates of Rio Hondo's regular Fire Academy. Graduates from the academy typically seek posts with urban departments, but their training meets the certification standards for wildland service.

The college is considering a cross-training effort between the two academies in 2015-16 to help boost opportunities for wildland training.



**RIO IN THE NEWS!** Click here to read more about the Wildland Fire Academy in the *Whittier Daily News*.