

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

COVERING MARCH 2017



President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

Spring is always a busy time for all of us at Rio Hondo College, but for our students it can be an especially wonderful time. They are nearing the completion of their school year, and their accomplishments begin to bring significant rewards.

Standing front and center again this year is the generosity of our community partners – members of the surrounding neighborhoods who step up repeatedly to help us complete our mission of providing educational opportunity to our students, regardless of their challenges.

Soroptimist International of Whittier, for example, has awarded a series of scholarships to Rio Hondo College women who have overcome extraordinary

challenges to pursuing college degrees while ensuring they meet significant obligations as single mothers.

These women are a shining example of how community college can make a difference in our lives – as are the Soroptimists who are supporting them.

We are also gearing up for our fifth annual "A Taste of Rio." This festive event brings together supporters from across the Rio Hondo College community, including our own faculty and staff and community partners. In one entertaining night, we help raise thousands of dollars for student scholarships and other student support programs.

In just five years, the event has made a tremendous impact in providing assistance to students as well as offering an incredible opportunity to spread the message of Rio Hondo College's role throughout the region.

College Vets Advocate for Service Centers

Five Rio Hondo College students – all veterans – traveled to the state Capitol in March to join a campaign for funding veteran centers at California's 113 community colleges.

The veterans – Veterans Club President Matthew Keels, Daniel Ramos, Emilio Driscoll-Delavega, Schiller Auguste and Paulina Lemus – shared their experiences and challenges while pursuing higher education. They met with legislators throughout the day to present their stories.

More than 200 veterans met with more than 100 legislators during the March 8 event. An event fact sheet indicates that at most colleges, veterans resource centers are understaffed, consist of a small room with no support services and are inadequate in assisting veterans who return from the stress of war for an education.

The effort sought \$25 million to fully fund the resource centers at all community colleges.



Rio Hondo College unveiled a one-stop service center for veterans in 2015. Services include counseling, a Veterans Administration education benefits-certifying official; a financial aid adviser; tutoring services; computer lab; information on community programs and services for veterans; and a graduation cap and gown loan program.



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Board Report

Rio Hondo College trustees in March selected the “unstoppable” Yolanda Ramirez, a secretary in the Math & Science Division, as the College’s Classified Employee of the Year.

Ramirez has served as the division secretary since 2008 and, for 2016, as the 2016 secretary to the executive board of the College’s chapter of the California School Employees Association. She is a member of the CSEA Scholarship Committee and a delegate to the central labor Council and AFL/CIO.

Ramirez is a frequent participation in CSEA political and community activism, including food drives, a homeless walk and immigration reform issues. She also serves on collegiate communities, including the basic math skills, professional development, grant writing and library planning.

Trustees also heard a sabbatical report from Associate Professor of Drawing and Painting Margaret Griffith, who dedicated her time away from the classroom to developing digital skills to augment her classroom instruction.



Griffiths, who holds a BFA in painting and an MFA in sculpture, learned the fundamentals of AutoCAD for Mac, Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator and learned to draw on a Wacom Tablet. She plans to help expand Rio Hondo College’s Visual Arts Department.

Trustees also approved an agreement with Rancho Santiago Community College that will bring \$2 million to Rio Hondo College to strengthen the regional workforce. The project, called the Strong Workforce Program, is a collaboration among area community colleges and work sectors. It includes programs in career technical education, cooperative work experience, health pathways and bio-science.

The health effort, for example, is designed to create a K-16 pathway that guides students into the health field, including curriculum, work-based learning, employer engagement, recruitment and professional development.

The grant funding runs through 2017-18, and more funds will be available to Rio Hondo College starting in July.

College Students Sweep Scholarship Contest

Soroptimist International of Whittier has named five Rio Hondo College students as winners of \$15,000 in Live Your Dream scholarships, which helps single mothers pursue their higher education dreams.

This year’s winners, who were honored at a March 14 lunch, are Charlotte Banister, Heather Estrada, Sofia Tortoledo, Lorena Roknipour and Leah Nolan. Banister will receive \$5,000 and advance to a regional competition; the others will each receive \$2,500.

Each of the women participates in Rio Hondo College’s Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOP&S) and Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE) programs, which assist students who have language, social and economic disadvantages.

In addition, anonymous donations of \$11,000 made it possible for the women’s support organization to award \$500 each to 10 additional CARE students who applied for a scholarship.

This is the third year in which applicants from Rio Hondo College swept the group’s Live Your Dream awards.

“We are incredibly grateful to Soroptimist International of Whittier – they are true supporters of Rio Hondo College and its students,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. “Their generosity is helping our students achieve their goals despite significant challenges.”

Banister, a nursing major, plans to earn a bachelor’s and master’s degrees en route to becoming a nurse practitioner. She has overcome challenges that include abuse, homelessness, heavy family responsibilities and severe financial stress. She is fiercely determined to provide the best care she can for her son in the future – and for her future patients.

Nolan is majoring in drug studies and social work. She plans to continue her education, earning bachelor’s and master’s degrees in social work. Nolan said she will draw on her experience surviving domestic violence and fighting for custody of her two children to help others turn their lives around. She wants to become a school counselor, drug and alcohol counselor or an advocate.

Tortoledo, a corrections major, plans to transfer to a California State University campus to pursue a career in juvenile probation. She said she wants to show youth that there are people who care about them and that they have a chance to change their lives for the better. Having faced family and financial instability while growing up, Tortoledo is committed to making a better future for her son and herself.

Estrada, a psychology major, is transferring to California State University, Fullerton. She hopes to eventually earn a master’s degree in social work. The mother of two said her struggles with domestic violence and abuse have prepared her to become a voice for women who have lost their way.

Roknipour, a business administration major, plans to transfer to Cal State Fullerton. She wants to open a business that will provide services to the needy. Roknipour has overcome health and financial challenges. Her highest priority is to break the cycle of domestic violence and emotional neglect for her two daughters.



Fifth Annual 'A Taste of Rio' Nears

The fifth annual "A Taste of Rio" restaurant and wine tasting will take place at 6 p.m. Friday, April 28 on the Rio Hondo College campus.

The festive event, produced by the Rio Hondo College Foundation, will bring together more than 350 guests for an evening of food, fine wine and beer, entertainment and opportunity drawings. The evening raises funds to support scholarships, programs and equipment that promote student success at Rio Hondo College.

This year's event will feature about 20 restaurants and chefs offering samples of their gourmet dishes, as well as fine wines and craft beers. Live music by Trio Nacimiento will add to the atmosphere. Guests will vie for more than 120 opportunity drawing prizes.

Featured restaurants include Portsmouth Oyster Bar, Fiesta Adobo, Clearman's Steak and Stein, Simply Southern Cuisine, Setá Dine-Lounge, Herach and Ara Catering, California Grill, Doubletree by Hilton Whittier, Tepeyac Restaurant and Tequila Sports Bar, Forkin' Good Café, Frantone's Pizza and Spaghetti Villa, Auntie's Bakery and Café, Lift Coffee Roasters, Juan Great Fiesta, Zapien's Salsa Grill and Taqueria, Sodexo, La Costa Fine Mexican and The Green Leaf Thai Cuisine.

Del Terra and WestbergWhite Architecture will serve as presenting sponsors once again. Ongoing supporters of "A Taste of Rio" also include Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo, Bank of the West, Keenan & Associates, RBC Capital Markets, Rose Hills Memorial Park and Don and Marta Hannah.

Additional sponsorships are now being accepted from \$500 to \$10,000, each with complimentary VIP admissions to the event and other benefits.

Click here <http://www.riohondo.edu/foundation/a-taste-of-rio/> to access the website.

Admission to "A Taste of Rio" is \$75 for VIP access (including exclusive tastes of special beers and wines, and a VIP gift to take home); \$50 general admission at the door; \$35 with advance purchase.

Opportunity drawing items and ticket sales will be available April 25-27 on campus. Winners need not be present to win.

Rio Hondo College Foundation is an independent nonprofit organization whose mission is raising funds to promote student success at Rio Hondo College.

For further information, call 562-908-3476, email foundation@riohondo.edu or visit <http://www.riohondo.edu/foundation/a-taste-of-rio/>.



College to Hold Final Two Community Forums

Rio Hondo College will showcase transfer and career pathways, honors programs, financial aid, adult re-entry programs and student support services on 6 to 8 p.m. Thursdays, April 20 and May 11 at the final two in a series of five community education forums.

The next session will be at Santa Fe High School, 10400 S. Orr and Day Road, Santa Fe Springs, and the final will be at the Rio Hondo College Educational Center at Pico Rivera, 9426 Marjorie St., Pico Rivera.

The forums will provide community members with a chance to meet faculty from Rio Hondo's academic and career programs, including nursing, public safety, business administration and automotive technology.

The College most recent forum, held in March at Whittier High School, drew an enthusiastic crowd.



Students Assist Community with Taxes

IRS-certified students from Rio Hondo College provided their final day of free basic income tax return preparation for individuals and families who earned \$54,000 or less in 2016 as part of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program on April 14.

The program was run from the Administration of Justice Building. VITA volunteers helped prepare Form 1040, 1040A and 1040EZ, including standard and itemized deductions and earned income tax credit.

VITA volunteers have assisted community members since Feb. 10 as part of the annual outreach program.

RIO IN THE NEWS! Click here to read more about Rio Hondo's students in *The Whittier Daily News*.

Save the Date



8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, April 19 and Thursday April 20: Writes of Spring, Wray Theater

6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, April 20: Community Education Forum, Santa Fe High School, 10400 S. Orr & Day Road, Santa Fe Springs

6 p.m. Friday, April 28: A Taste of Rio, Rio Hondo College

6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, May 11: Community Education Forum, Rio Hondo College Educational Center at Pico Rivera, 9426 Marjorie St., Pico Rivera

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#iLoveRioHondo

Serving the communities of

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

and portions of:

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

*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 degrees, certificates, transfer, career and technical pathways, basic skills proficiency, and lifelong learning.

College Announces New Men's Basketball Coach

Steve Johnson, formerly head coach of the Rio Hondo College's women's basketball team, will step in as head coach of the men's team after the departure of coach Mike Lowe, according to Dean of Kinesiology, Dance and Athletics Steve Hebert.

Johnson recently wrapped up his eighth season as head coach of the Rio Hondo women's program and will be shifting his duties to the men's team beginning with the 2017-18 season.

RIO IN THE NEWS! Click here to read more about Rio Hondo's new head coach in *The Whittier Daily News*.

"We are excited to have Steve Johnson take over the reins for the men's program," Hebert said. "He has done a terrific job running our women's program and we anticipate Steve will excel with the men's team."

Over eight seasons, Johnson compiled a 68-144 overall record at the helm of the women's program. He most recently led the Lady Roadrunners to the 2016 Southern California Regional Playoffs after finishing tied for second place in the Foothill Conference with a 7-3 record.

Johnson will be making the return to coaching men for the first time since 2002. He previously served as an assistant coach for three years at Cal State Dominguez Hills under former head coach Larry Hauser.

"I'm really excited about the opportunity to coach the men's program at Rio Hondo College," said Johnson. "I feel like it's an opportunity for me to continue growing in my coaching and people skills. It's not every day that you get an opportunity like this so I am humbled by being allowed this situation."

Johnson's previous women's coaching experience includes one season as associate head coach at Long Beach City College (2008-09), three seasons as an assistant coach at Cerritos College (2005-08), two seasons as head coach at St. Lucy's Priory High School in Glendora (2003-05), and three seasons as an assistant at Cal State Dominguez Hills (2000-03).

One of Johnson's main goals has nothing to do with wins or losses, but developing players' skills. Academic accountability to improve matriculation is also high on his list. Four members of his 2015-16 Lady Roadrunners squad moved on to play at four-year programs.

The College will now begin a search for a new women's head coach. Interested individuals should contact the Rio Hondo College Human Resources Department at 562-908-3405 for more information regarding the application process.

Lowe took over as men's head coach in 2013. Over four seasons, he compiled a 48-65 overall record and went 15-25 in conference play.

"We want to thank Coach Mike Lowe for his dedicated service and the tremendous job he did for the past four years with our men's basketball program," Hebert said. "Our teams were always well prepared and played great team basketball, he will be missed as the coach of the Roadrunners."

Lowe's finest season came during the 2014-15 campaign when he led the Roadrunners to a 17-13 overall mark. That season, Rio Hondo qualified for postseason play and advanced to the second round of the Southern California Regional Playoffs.

"I'm stepping down to spend more time with my family, especially my aging father, and to pursue other non-basketball related interests," Lowe said. "I've loved my time coaching at Rio Hondo and would like to publicly thank Steve Hebert and Margie Munoz for their support and friendship over the last four years."

He plans to stay at Rio Hondo and continue teaching in the kinesiology department.

