

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

APRIL 2018



President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

As our 2018 spring semester draws to a close, we find ourselves celebrating some of our notable accomplishments for the year while already exploring options to further strengthen the climate of student success.

A highlight of these recent honors are the Gold, Silver and Bronze Stars awarded to Rio Hondo College's career and technical education (CTE) programs – a ringing endorsement of the effectiveness of so many workforce ready programs to help students find jobs in their career fields with competitive salaries.

In some cases, these salaries more than double our graduates' past earnings; in several cases, our employment rates are at or near 100 percent. These awards stand as a testament to our commitment to ensure students are pursuing their career goals, no matter what challenges they face along the way.

In April, we also celebrated Rio Hondo College's mission with our community during our annual "A Taste of Rio" event. This program has become a hallmark of the College community's deep connection with supporters across the region. Once again, the event posted record attendance and raised a record amount of funds to support our students.

Meanwhile, Rio Hondo College is taking an exciting next step to support our students through a three-year partnership with six other Los Angeles area community colleges. The partnership supports College Promise programs such as Rio Promise, launched in 2017 to fund first-year tuition for recent graduates of high schools in our service area. The program also provides priority registration and a menu of support services for those students after they enroll.

Taken together, these achievements and our continuing exploration of additional support services offer us a window into the dedication and focus of our College community on behalf of our students.

Los Angeles Partnership to Boost Student Success

Rio Hondo College and six other Los Angeles area community colleges will partner with the California College Promise Project (CCPP) to strengthen student support programs that boost graduation rates.

The seven colleges will form a Community of Practice (CoP) within the Los Angeles County *Promises That Count* initiative, an effort to support college Promise programs that waive first-year tuition and offer comprehensive programs of support services for new students.

The initiative is a project of WestEd, a multi-state research, development and service agency that works with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity and improve learning. The effort is funded by the California Community Foundation.

"Rio Hondo College is excited to launch this three-year partnership as part of the *Promises That Count* initiative," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "We have worked vigorously for years to create an extensive menu of support services for our students. This partnership will expand and strengthen those efforts, all to benefit our students."

Rio Hondo College launched its Rio Promise program in fall 2017. The College also offers a Summer Bridge program to orient new students and help them boost placement in basic skills classes. The College uses



multiple measures to assess basic skills, which has accelerated student placement in both math and English courses.

The College's Avance program serves low-income and Latino students; the effort includes counseling courses that focus students on their individual pathway to graduation, transfer to four-year universities, and careers. A First Year Success Center serves as a central location for student support services. The College also runs a tutoring center, among other academic services.

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Board Report

Rio Hondo College's Board of Trustees recognized Fire Academy cadets and graduates, newly tenured faculty and promoted faculty, as well as Dr. Adam Wetsman, one of four 2018 Hayward Award recipients across the 114-campus California Community Colleges system.

The board honored more than 20 cadets and graduates of the College's Fire Academy and its Wildland Fire Academy for helping to battle multiple wildfires in 2017.



Trustees also recognized promotions for professors Patricia Ann Luna, health science and Nursing; Doralí Pichardo-Díaz, counseling; Gilbert Puga, Jr., communications and languages; Jennifer Tanaka-Hoshijo, kinesiology, dance and athletics; associate professor Amelia Ortiz, health science and nursing; and assistant professors Angela Cheung, health science and nursing; and Irene Truong, library.

Recognized for achieving tenure were Joe Arroyo, DSP&S, Angela Cheung, health science and nursing; Raquel Flores-Olson, communications and languages – reading; Scott Jaeggi, public safety – fire; Dr. Denna Sanchez, psychological services; and Irene Truong, library.

Trustees congratulated account clerk III Carol Rice, who has been with Rio Hondo since October 1989, on her retirement after 29 years of service.

Dr. Wetsman, an anthropology professor, received the Hayward Award in recognition of his excellence in teaching, professional activities and



commitment to students. The award is named for former California Community College Chancellor Gerald C. Hayward.

Dr. Wetsman has served as president of Rio Hondo College's Faculty Association and Academic Senate, as well as serving in other roles with both groups. He is currently the negotiation chair for the faculty association.

The board also received a detailed update on its three regional educational centers, including the recently opened Rio Hondo Educational Center at Pico Rivera.

The analysis showed growth in attendance at the center, with students attending a mix of classes at the three centers and Rio Hondo College's main Whittier campus. The number of students served at the centers rose from 2,516 in 2015-16 to 4,133 in 2017-18.

The analysis showed correlations between class popularity at the main campus and at the centers. In addition, the centers' most popular classes are in English and math. College leaders will continue to track center education trends to ensure they are offering the most effective roster of courses.



Los Angeles Partnership to Boost Student Success (continued)

In fall 2017, Rio Hondo College augmented its array of services to socioeconomically disadvantaged students by adding a food pantry and resource hub called the RioSource Room.

The Communities of Practice effort will include cross-sector teams from the seven college Promise programs with representation from K-12 and postsecondary education, as well as local civic, nonprofit and business leaders. They will work for more than 15 months to guide the continuous improvement of the student support features of each college's program.

WestEd and other state and national partners – including the Campaign for College Opportunity and UNITE-LA – will provide technical assistance with cross-sector coordination, aligning Promise programs with existing student support programs, initiating and improving “just-in-time” interventions, strengthening mentoring and tutoring programs, and using data to inform program improvement.

On a broader level, all Los Angeles County community college Promise programs – including those not in the seven – will be invited to join an alliance to share best practices and strategies.

Career and Technical Education Programs Honored for Boosting Wages, Employment

Rio Hondo College is receiving acclaim for the ability of its career and technical education (CTE) programs to boost earnings and employment in desired career fields for students who earn certificates or degrees.

The Strong Workforce Stars program, an annual recognition given by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, awarded a Gold Star, Silver Star and seven Bronze Stars to Rio Hondo College programs that advanced social mobility for students.

"These awards recognize one of the strengths of Rio Hondo College – the ability of our programs to help students discover careers that not only meet their personal goals, but also provide them with a substantially higher standard of living," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said.

Programs were assessed on improvement in earnings by 50 percent or more by former students, attainment of the regional living wage by 70 percent or more and employment of 90 percent or more in jobs similar to their field of study. Gold Stars went to programs that boosted all three metrics, Silver Stars went to those that boosted two metrics and Bronze Stars to those that boosted a single metric.

Rio Hondo College's highly regarded registered nursing program received a Gold Star. Graduates' earnings rose 192 percent, 77 percent attained the regional living wage and 100 percent are employed in a job similar to their field of study.

The College's innovative automotive technology program received a Silver Star for boosting earnings by 104 percent and helping 100 percent of graduates find employment in jobs similar to their field of study. The automotive technology program is one of the nation's premier programs. The program includes partnerships with major auto firms, including a new training initiative with Tesla, as well as a stellar Bachelor of Science program.



Bronze Star programs ranged from accounting to geographic information systems:

- ▶ Accounting: 66 percent increase in earnings
- ▶ Management Development and Supervision: 100 percent employed in jobs similar to their field of study
- ▶ Marketing and Distribution: 58 percent increase in earnings
- ▶ Drafting Technology: 73 percent attained regional living wage
- ▶ Licensed Vocational Nursing: 101 percent increase in earnings
- ▶ Geographic Information Systems: 73 percent attained regional living wage
- ▶ Fitness Trainer: 53 percent increase in earnings





Speech and Debate Team Finishes Third in National Tournament; Coach Honored

Rio Hondo College's Forensics Speech and Debate Team placed third at the 2018 Phi Rho Pi National Competition, one of the program's strongest showings in recent years.

The team competed against 30 other schools in its division during the April 9-14 event in Daytona, Florida, sponsored by Phi Rho Pi, the national forensic association for two-year colleges. More than 60 schools from 28 states took part in the entire program of competitions.

Rio Hondo College's third-place finish is based on points earned by its nine competing students across three styles of debate.

"Overall, this was a very strong year for us," Rio Hondo College professor and debate coach Grant Tovmasian said. "That stems from our approach – our goal isn't focused on awards, but on pushing each other to succeed and to be better."

Tovmasian, who has coached at Rio Hondo College for seven years, was surprised that he also received an award. He received the Collie-Taylor Coach Fellowship Award, which goes to the tournament's most outstanding coaches.

"It's gratifying, but mostly it's humbling," he said.

Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss praised Tovmasian and the students.

"Each year, our Speech and Debate Team distinguishes itself with its strong performances at local, regional and national competitions," Dreyfuss said. "This year, they've outdone themselves. We are so proud of all they have accomplished."



Tovmasian said the true power of debate is that it empowers students.

"Students discover that they possess not only the right but the ability to express what they believe in. Once that happens, they are driven to express themselves better."

The three styles of debate featured at the contest include a one-on-one debate featuring a topic established at the beginning of the season and requiring competitors to support arguments with research and citations.

A second one-on-one debate gives students topics chosen on the day that can range from policy statements, value questions or even arguing the truth behind metaphors or song lyrics.

The final format, parliamentary debate, is a two-on-two challenge in which one side presents an argument and the other opposes it.

Two students received honors for their performance in individual debates based on policy statements. Jonathan Kaldas won a silver and Edward Minasyan earned a bronze based on their overall performance.

Minasyan, who took part in 13 debates during the competition, said this is his first year competing in debate.

"It's fun," said Minasyan, 21. "You get to outsmart your opponents. Everybody has to listen to you and what you have to say. That's the best part, in my opinion."

A returning student who is studying business administration, Minasyan said debate has made him a stronger student.

"It really benefits my academics because it helps me with researching and putting together coherent arguments and statements when it comes to writing any sort of essay or paper. It really helps with putting your thoughts together," he said.

Minasyan plans to transfer to UC Irvine to complete a four-year degree, but not before competing on debate for another year – this time in search of his first gold award.



'A Taste of Rio' Tops All Previous Years in Attendance, Funds Raised



Nearly 600 community members, administrators, staff and faculty attended "A Taste of Rio" on April 27, raising an estimated \$107,000 to support students with scholarships and other aid – achievements that once again outpace all earlier events.

The evening – which featured food from 20 local restaurants as well as select libations, entertainment and more than 60 opportunity drawings – has become the Rio Hondo College Foundation's signature event since it was first held in 2012.

This year's event was held as a Silver Anniversary Edition, marking the Foundation's 25th year of assisting students.



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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.

Save the Date



10 a.m. Thursday, May 24:

Commencement Breakfast, Campus Inn

6 p.m. Thursday, May 24:

55th annual Commencement Ceremony with Assembly Majority Leader Ian Calderon as keynote speaker, Lot A

Monday, June 4:

Summer sessions begin

4 to 6 p.m. Wednesday, May 23:

TESLA Start Program Graduation and Recognition, Auto Tech Shop

5 p.m. Wednesday, May 23:

Nursing Pinning Ceremony, Lot A

6 p.m. Wednesday, June 13:

Board of Trustees meeting, Rio Hondo College

Students to Explore Taiwan's Culture

Rio Hondo College students will have three opportunities in 2018 to participate in cultural and education experiences as teacher aides in Taiwan.

In May and over summer, students can participate as teacher's aides and teach English to middle school students. The program runs from May 28 to June 18 in Tainan City and from July 9 to Aug. 10 in New Taipei City.

In fall, students can participate as aides to teach English at Taipei elementary schools. Students can also take classes at Taipei University during this time. The deadline to apply for this program is July 1.

During each program, students will lodge with a host family, receive free Chinese language lessons, attend free cultural classes and take free local trips.

Student cost includes air fare and personal expenses. For more information, go to shinliu.wordpress.com/taiwan/.



Soroptimist International of Whittier Awards Scholarships to Students

Five Rio Hondo College CARE students received scholarships from Soroptimist International of Whittier during the group's annual Live Your Dream Scholarship Luncheon on April 17.

The contest recognizes female students for overcoming life challenges in pursuit of their education.

This year's scholarship winners are Valentina Higgins, \$5,000; Krystal Galarzo, \$2,500; Stephanie Saenz, \$2,500; Charlene Pena, \$2,500; and Linda Pedroza, \$2,500.

In addition, 10 other CARE students who applied for the Live Your Dream Scholarship but were not selected as finalists also received awards at the lunch – thanks to an anonymous donor who awarded each student with a check of \$500 to encourage them to keep trying.

CARE is the Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education program created in 1983 to assist low-income, single head-of-household individuals overcome challenges in pursuing their educations.

The lunch was attended by Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss, Interim Dean of Student Affairs Alisia Kirkwood and English Professor Dr. Angela Rhodes.

