

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

COVERING MAY 2018



President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

Our 2017-18 academic year came to a beautiful close in May, with celebrations across our campus for our extraordinary students along with the dedicated staff, talented faculty and committed administrators who worked so tirelessly to help them achieve their goals.

This spring, we graduated a record number of students with a record number of degrees. We held our first graduation for our groundbreaking Tesla training program and marked the accomplishments of students who overcame staggering obstacles to not only succeed but thrive.

These are the moments that reveal the true power of the community we have created at Rio Hondo College.

I would like to take this moment to thank all of those who have given so much for our students. You are incredible – your passion, your commitment, your belief that no barrier should stand in the way of those who want to create better lives for themselves and their families.

Enjoy this moment that is so well earned before we catch our collective breaths and prepare to begin the cycle anew.

▲ Inspiring Commencement Celebrates 2017-18 Graduates

California State Assembly Majority Leader Ian Calderon congratulated graduates at Rio Hondo College's 55th annual Commencement Ceremony on May 24 and urged them to "make a difference."

"We have to look out for each other," Calderon said during the event's keynote speech. "You've all killed it to get here today, but the work doesn't stop here. The fight always goes on. . . . Now go out there, make a difference and remember that if you can do this, you can do anything."

The ceremony recognized 1,399 students who earned an estimated 2,001 academic degrees, including 653 degrees for transfer, which guarantee admission to the California State University system. Both figures top the College's numbers for 2016-17.

Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss told students that the sacrifices they made to achieve their degrees were worth it. She said she understood the sense of accomplishment that comes from achieving their degrees, comparing it to her journey as an immigrant to the U.S. from Taiwan to becoming the College's president.

"Our faculty, staff and administrators are here to honor and salute you," Dreyfuss said.

The College honored the 2018 Fellow of the College, Dr. Jennifer Fernandez, who retired after serving 42 years as an educator. Over 31 years, Fernandez served Rio Hondo College as a counselor, professor, director of student development, coordinator of the College's South Whittier Educational Center and interim dean of student affairs. She helped develop plans for the Child Development Center and for the redesign of Student Health Psychological Services.

Associated Students of Rio Hondo College (ASRHC) President Martin Covarrubias – who helped develop Rio Hondo College's food pantry program, the RioSource Room – said students faced many challenges during their time at Rio Hondo College. For him, that moment came when his grandfather died.

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"My world came crashing down, so fast, I couldn't snap out of it and be the positive person I am 24/7," he said. "But, I finally did because I remembered my dream as a little boy: that of always wanting to do big things, things like this."

In fall, Covarrubias will transfer to UC Riverside as a liberal studies major.

The ceremony honored three outstanding students who overcame challenges en route to earning their degrees: Brenda Coronel, Yarisma Rocha and Jason Hoang.

Rio Hondo College leaders also paid tribute to the many veterans and active duty military who attend the College.

Valedictorian Bailey Garcia received the College's Marie I. Pellissier Award. Garcia, who was raised by a single mother and other family members, graduated from the Applied Technology Center in Montebello with a low GPA. He came to Rio Hondo College to prove to himself and to his high school teachers that he could succeed.

He earned a 4.0 GPA while taking part in the Extended Opportunity Program & Services (EOP&S), Guardian Scholars and Peer Advisory Leaders and serving as ASRHC treasurer. He will study philosophy at UC Berkeley in preparation for attending law school and pursuing his dream of starting a nonprofit.



Also among the graduates honored were 18 students who completed the first stage of the Pathway to Law School program. The program guides students from Rio Hondo College, through four-year degrees and into law school. Rio Hondo College's program was honored with the 2018 Diversity Champion Award from California LAW, which coordinates the Pathway to Law School program for the state.



On May 24, the College also recognized its nursing students with a pinning ceremony. Of the 151 students pinned, 55 were in the certificated nursing assistant program, 25 were in the vocational nursing and 71 were in the Associate Degree in Nursing program.



Board Report



Board of Trustees members awarded the Distinguished Faculty Award to Professor Katie O'Brien, recognized retirees, celebrated student scholarship recipients and noted classified staff employment milestones during their May meeting.

O'Brien is a professor and Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOP&S) counselor who also serves as coordinator of the College's staff development and FLEX

program. She was praised for her "student-focus" for more than 20 years as a Rio Hondo College faculty member.

O'Brien was described as a "caring, knowledgeable and empathetic counselor" who is always at the forefront of new initiatives that benefit students. Among her accomplishments, O'Brien co-wrote the curriculum that re-established counseling as a teaching department, designed summer readiness curriculum for first-time college students, crafted a training program for peer advisers and created a learning community that paired basic math and Counseling 101.



The board honored retiring librarian/professor Judy Sevilla-Marzona, business instructor Jon Whitford and executive assistant to the President/Board of Trustees Sandy Sandello.



Sevilla-Marzona started with Rio Hondo College in August 1998. Sevilla-Marzona was tenured in March 2002. She also worked as an adjunct as a psychology instructor in 2013.

Whitford was hired in August 2000 as an assistant professor of computer information technology.

Sandello was hired in July 1975 as an intermediate typist clerk for admissions. She was promoted to become secretary for the president's office in 1979 and to serve as secretary for the superintendent/president in 1982. She has served in current role since 1997, giving a total of 42 years of service to Rio Hondo College.

The board also recognized winners of the Live Your Dreams scholarship awards from Soroptimists International of Whittier and Soroptimists International of El Monte-South El Monte.

Winners from the Whittier club: Valentina Higgins, \$5,000; Krystal Gallarzo, \$2,500; Stephanie Saenz, \$2,500, Charlene Peña, \$2,500; Linda Pedroza, \$2,500. Winners from the El Monte-South El Monte club: Sally Hernandez and Tatiana Flores.

The board also recognized the following new classified employees: Darrell Brad Chirrick, custodian Maria Mercado and clerk/typist III Eliana Valdes.



College Leaders Celebrate Student Success



Coordinators of several Rio Hondo College programs designed to support student success celebrated graduating students during a special gathering on May 18.

The event, attended by Superintendent/

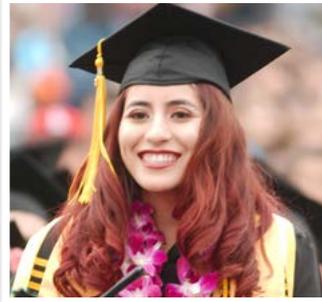
President Teresa Dreyfuss and other campus leaders, included individual recognition of students, the degrees they earned and their transfer plans. A reception was held in the Campus Inn before the program began, with live musicians, a taco dinner and aguas frescas.



The event was staged in collaboration with: the Adult Re-Entry Program; CalWORKs; Disabled Students Programs and Services; El Monte Pledge; Extended Opportunity Program and Services/Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (EOP&S/CARE); Guardian Scholars; Honors Transfer Program; Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Program and the TRIO Student Support Services STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) Program; Pathway to Law School; Puente Project; Student Life and Leadership; Personal and Academic Support Services (TRIO-PASS) Program; the Transfer Center; and Veterans Service Center.

College Honors Outstanding Graduates

Rio Hondo College has recognized three outstanding graduates who overcome significant challenges in their pursuit of degrees that will pave their way to the stellar four-year universities. The students, selected by university leaders, were honored during the College's May 24 commencement.



Brenda Coronel

Brenda Coronel overcame an abusive relationship and the birth of her daughter during her first year at Rio Hondo College. She briefly dropped out of the college to tend her daughter, Zoey, but returned and redoubled her effort to obtain a degree in psychology.

She has maintained a 3.66 GPA in addition to maintaining a part-time job and serving as a student leader on campus. She is actively involved in multiple clubs and programs on campus, such as Students

Without Borders, Mothers of Color in Academia, CalWORKs, and the Extended Opportunity Program and Services/Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (EOP&S/CARE). She also works part time as a work-study student in the First Year Success Center.

Coronel, who earned her associate degree in psychology, was accepted into both UCLA and UC Berkeley, with a full-ride scholarship to UC Berkeley.



Yarisma Rocha

Yarisma Rocha is a single mother whose 5-year-old daughter was diagnosed with leukemia when just a baby. The traumatic diagnosis forced Rocha to juggle hospital visits and treatments. With her daughter now in remission for two years, Rocha has focused her efforts on obtaining an associate degree in business.

She has maintained a solid 3.85 GPA since fall 2013, after joining EOP&S/CARE and CalWORKs. She was

also a student ambassador and a member of the Alpha Gamma Sigma Honor Society.

Rocha has been accepted into UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business on a full scholarship and USC's Marshall School of Business.



Jason Hoang

Jason Hoang's parents were refugees after the Vietnam War who have struggled financially. Hoang accompanied his mother to a grueling job in sweatshop as a child.

In 2008, the family lost its home during the housing crisis of 2008 and spent months moving from house to house. Then, Hoang's mother's eyesight deteriorated, forcing his family to scrape by on about \$20,000 a year.

The challenges pushed Hoang into a depression, but also awoke in him a burning desire to leave poverty behind.

After high school, Hoang attended the Culinary Institute of America and became a chef. He worked at a number of top restaurants but could no longer live paycheck to paycheck.

So he enrolled at Rio Hondo College, earning a perfect 4.0 GPA while serving as a Peer Advisory Leadership mentor. He also worked as a student success coach for three middle schools.

Hoang will attend UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business.



Tesla START Program Graduates First Cohort of Students



One of just two Tesla service technician training programs currently operating in the United States graduated its first cohort of students from Rio Hondo College during a special ceremony on May 23.

The students – three women and seven men – completed the 12-week **Tesla START** program that included an average of 50 to 60 hours of training per week, providing them with the skills necessary to be hired as service technicians at Tesla service centers across North America.

The graduation and recognition ceremony took place in the Rio Hondo College Automotive Shop. The event featured remarks from Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss, Tesla North American Service Senior Manager Michael Ojaghian and Tesla START graduate Natalie Dovalos-Flores. Representatives of local, state and federal officials also honored the students.

“This is a historic moment for Rio Hondo College and Tesla,” Dreyfuss said. “Rio Hondo College is well known for the quality of our automotive and alternative fuels programs. Our students are educated with the most current transportation technology and are workforce ready when they complete the program. Our new partnership with Tesla deepens and strengthens this already prominent program.”



Rio Hondo College is the second program created in the entire nation and the first in California; its inaugural training session ended May 23, the same day as the ceremony. Tesla provides the curriculum, instructors, equipment and job opportunities so students can smoothly transition from the College program to full-time employment.

The graduates are: Tanya Aili Castro, Jose Chavez, Dennis Davila, Natalie Dovalos-Flores, Steve Escobar, Ignacio Guzman, Alyssa Jimenez, David Mojica, Gabriel Rojas and Steven Vigil.

They have already been hired by Tesla service centers in Costa Mesa (three techs), Buena Park (two techs), Scottsdale (one), Torrance (one), West Los Angeles (one), Centinela (one), and Burbank (one). Starting salaries range from \$21 to \$27 an hour.



RIO IN THE NEWS: These new Tesla service grads already have jobs lined up!

First-Year Seminar Students Showcase Projects

Students of Rio Hondo College's inaugural First-Year Seminar (FYS) program wrapped up their first year at Rio Hondo by showcasing the results of their semester-long projects from seminars in the arts, business, sciences and social sciences.

Working in teams, the FYS students designed, researched, managed and produced their own projects. Each FYS team explored a variety of topics and concerns inspired by their FYS course, including healthy eating, artificial intelligence, campus parking issues, racism, safety and the future of human civilization.

The "Seminar Showcase" series gave FYS students the opportunity to share the culmination of their intensive work. Concepts were unveiled for innovative products, such as Buddy, a holographic home security system and Retrocase, a cell phone retrieval accessory.

Results of surveys conducted at Rio Hondo on racism, safety and food-service satisfaction were analyzed and discussed. Finally, a screening

of futuristic films made by FYS students in a variety of genres including speculative science-fiction, comedy horror and apocalyptic thrillers represented their visions of the future fate of mankind.

As a result of their FYS course experience, the FYS students surveyed indicated a high level of course satisfaction in increasing their understanding of the range of discipline areas, engaging their creativity, promoting teamwork, thinking critically and solving challenging problems as well as developing skills such as public speaking, research and media literacy, self-sufficiency and goal-setting.



Students Study Rocket Science via NASA Program

Rio Hondo College physics students built their own rockets with onboard microcontrollers in spring 2018 as part of Physics 220: Unmanned Rocket Science, a class created in consortium with the Rising Data Program.

Rising Data is a NASA program designed to boost the graduation and success rates of under-represented undergraduate science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) students, including members of the Hispanic community and female students, by encouraging students to pursue careers in STEM via project-based learning.



The students were immersed into projects and given the opportunity to build and engineer their own small, unmanned vehicles and scientific equipment, and then asked to apply the principles they learn in their courses to real-life problems in an extraordinarily fun way: by blowing things up into the air, and flying fast, long range quadcopters.

The effort culminated on April 14, when the students – under the guidance of Professors Christian Vaca and Gisela Spieler-Presad – flew their rockets and drones in the dry lake bed of the Lucerne Valley.

The rockets' onboard microcontrollers recorded scientific measurements such as temperature, the Earth's magnetic field, the rocket's acceleration and gyroscopic motion, all while traveling at blisteringly fast speeds and heights.

Students then analyzed the data in a laboratory setting and gave a scientific presentation to their fellow scientists.

In addition to this, students were taught how to build and fly their own quadcopter drones, another unmanned vehicle that allows for the collection of scientific data in remote places, many of which are unreachable by foot or ground-based vehicle.



Volleyball Players Recruited

Seven members of Rio Hondo College's volleyball team will transfer to four-year universities across the U.S. to pursue their academic and athletic dreams. The students were celebrated at an event on May 17 that featured five of the students signing national Letters of Intent.

The students include:

- ▶ Sara Harding: Ottawa University, Arizona (Beach Volleyball)
- ▶ Natalie Magallon: SUNY Potsdam, NY (Indoor)
- ▶ Bree Newton: Friends University, Kansas (Indoor)
- ▶ Michelle Hawkins: Southwestern College, Kansas (Indoor)
- ▶ Madison Mader: CSULA (Soccer)
- ▶ Michell Chavez: UCLA (Academic)
- ▶ Victoria Martinez: University of Hawaii at Manoa, (Academic)



Rio Hondo College Athletes Advance to Four-year Colleges

Three members of the Rio Hondo College women's basketball team have signed letters of intent to play basketball at the University of La Verne in 2018-19. Pictured, (l-r) are Destinee Garr, Maggie Lamas and Emily Mercedes Walters. Behind them are assistant coach Justin Marshall and head coach Rene Herrera.



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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



9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays, through July 26:

Student art show, Rio Hondo Gallery

Monday, July 2 to Thursday, July 12:

First of three Summer Bridge orientation programs to assist incoming first-year students transition to college

Wednesday, July 4:

College closed for 4th of July holiday

Monday, July 9:

Fall registration begins

8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday, July 11:

Priority registration for district high school grads

6 p.m. Wednesday, July 11:

Board of Trustees meeting, Rio Hondo College

8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday, July 12:

Priority registration for non-district high school grads

Monday, July 16 to Thursday, July 26:

Second of three Summer Bridge orientation programs to assist incoming first-year students transition to college

Monday, July 16 to Thursday, July 19:

Camp Rio hosts up to 45 students from the Whittier Boys and Girls Club for hands-on activities

Monday, July 30 to Thursday, Aug. 9:

Third of three Summer Bridge orientation programs to assist incoming first-year students transition to college

College Provides 3,900 Students with Meals during Finals

For the fifth consecutive semester, the Student Equity office collaborated with faculty, staff and administrators to distribute hot food, coffee, water and fruit to students during finals week.

Student Equity funded Finals Week Food Breaks for the first three days of finals week. More than 120 volunteers helped serve food, keep the food tables clean and encouraged shy students to come grab something to eat.

In the mornings, 500 students were served at the main campus and the Fire Academy. In the afternoons, approximately 800 students were served on the main campus. In total, 3,900 meals were provided.

The service was made possible by the support of local vendors, such as Pamore Pizza in El Monte, Juan Great Fiesta and Campus Food Services. The program will return in fall 2018.

