

# PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2018



## President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

In September, Rio Hondo College recorded yet another historic achievement – we launched an expansion of our Rio Promise program that provides students across the state with free tuition during their first two years of college.

This kind of pledge is quickly becoming a hallmark of Rio Hondo College as our team of educators devotes itself to stripping away barriers to success and providing our students with a diversity of opportunity as they pursue their higher education and career dreams.

And, even as this progress occurs, we have been hard at work during the fall semester in classrooms, auto shops, dance studios and science labs across campus, guiding students through their journeys. Rio Hondo College students have earned a notable distinction as part of a nationwide NASA program and are exploring our community's cultural roots through a series of fall arts and cultural programs.

We also stepped back in September to commemorate the tragic events of 9/11, offering tribute to the heroes and victims of that day.

As always, it is with pride and humility that I count myself as part of this very special community.

## College Expands Rio Promise, Offers Free Tuition for First Two Years

Rio Hondo College launched a significant expansion of its Rio Promise program on Sept. 25, offering free tuition for two years to all first-time students who enroll full-time.

Rio Hondo College is the first college in Los Angeles County to implement a second year of free tuition for all California students.

The program began in 2017-18 with 456 first-year students from local public and some private high schools participating. In 2018-19, those numbers have nearly quintupled, with 2,215 first-year students participating after the College opened the program to all first-time college students in the state.

An estimated 443 students qualify for the second-year program.

"Part of our mission as a community college is to eliminate barriers that prevent students from realizing their academic and career dreams," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "This expansion of the Rio Promise helps us to deliver on that mission and to retain our students to continue their educational journey at Rio Hondo College."

**RIO IN THE NEWS:** Check out coverage of the launch:

- ▶ ABC News
- ▶ ABC Facebook
- ▶ Univision
- ▶ Epoch Times
- ▶ World Journal
- ▶ Whittier Daily News

The Rio Promise is funded by philanthropic donations and by leveraging Pell grants, California Promise grants and California Promise waivers.

Rio Promise Scholar Cesar Arciniega, the first in his family to attend college, said the Rio Promise program drew him to Rio Hondo College.

The support he received before starting college and during his first year helped him discover a passion for English, which he plans to pursue at a four-year university.

"There is no place I'd rather be than at Rio Hondo College because of the Rio Promise," said Arciniega, a Whittier High School graduate who earned 31 units and a 3.61 GPA in his first year at Rio Hondo College. "Thanks to the Rio Promise I am on track to transfer to my dream school next year – UCLA."

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# Board Update

Rio Hondo College's Board of Trustees adopted a balanced budget for 2018-19 on Sept. 12 even as it expands an ambitious free-tuition program to boost student success. The budget, with an apportionment of \$74 million, is up from \$69 million under the state's previous formula.



"This budget shows Rio Hondo College to be strong and solvent," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "We are delivering on our promise to the community to provide a sound fiscal foundation as well as opportunities for success and increasingly positive student outcomes."

Student success numbers are also looking up for Rio Hondo College. Completion rates hit 73.4 percent for college-ready students who earned at least 30 units and 60.4 percent for college-ready students who completed a degree, certificate or transfer related outcome, according to the 2018 Student Success Scorecard. Persistence rates are at 78 percent for college-ready students who enrolled during their first three consecutive terms, according to the Scorecard.

Meanwhile, the College has seen a sea of change in the number of degrees and certificates earned by students.

From 2013-14 to 2017-18, degrees and certificates rose by 234 percent, from 1,263 to 4,224. Degrees alone rose 84 percent during the time period, from 982 to 1,824; certificates alone increased by 785 percent, from 271 to 2,400.

[Click here to read more.](#)

The Board of Trustees also hired Brenda Beza as a project manager for the PASS (TRIO) program and presented certificates of commendation to Chair Fernando Centeno, Jr., Dr. Francisco Hidalgo and Albert Lopez of the RHC Citizens Oversight Committee for their years of dedicated service and committee to the oversight committee. Trustees also recognized staff, faculty and managers who are members of the 2018-19 Rio Hondo College Leadership Academy, Cohort 7.



## Rio Hondo College Students Selected to Visit NASA in October

Four Rio Hondo College students are among 319 community college students across the U.S. selected to travel to NASA's Stennis Space Center this fall to participate in the NASA Community College Aerospace Scholars (NCAS) onsite experience.

The selected students – Jashandeep Anand, Corrine Rivera, Albert Ramirez and Charinamae Blank – will participate in a five-week NASA online program, which will culminate with a four-day onsite event at a NASA Center.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for our students," Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "We are proud of their accomplishment and thrilled to discover what they learn from the program."

The program offers students the opportunity to interact with NASA engineers and others as they learn more about careers in science and engineering. While at NASA, students form teams and establish fictional companies interested in Mars exploration. Each team is responsible for developing and testing a prototype rover, forming a company infrastructure, managing a budget and developing communications and outreach.

The onsite experience at NASA includes briefings by NASA subject matter experts, information on how to apply for internships and a tour of NASA's unique facilities.

Blank, a physics major in his third year at Rio Hondo College, plans to transfer to UC San Diego as an electrical engineering major.

"The thing I'm most excited about this experience is that we're going to be collaborating with NASA and 3-D print a rover that we will be designing at the site," Blank said. "From this experience, I hope to gain more opportunities in working with NASA in the future. This is going to be the first step toward that goal, and I cannot wait for more."

Anand, also a physics major, plans to transfer next fall to UCLA and pursue a doctorate in physics. He said he is looking forward to speaking with NASA engineers and scientists.

Rivera, an engineering major, plans to transfer next year to UC Santa Cruz to continue her studies in electrical engineering.

"The thing that interests me the most is being a part of a professional environment," Rivera said. "I am hoping to meet someone who is willing to mentor me and guide me throughout my educational journey."

NASA Community College Aerospace Scholars is funded in part by the Minority University Research and Education Program, or MUREP, which is committed to engaging underrepresented and underserved students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in authentic learning experiences to sustain a diverse workforce.

"Rio Hondo College is committed to providing our students with a diversity of experiences and opportunities to guide them along their higher education journeys," Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees President Madeline Shapiro said. "I am extraordinarily pleased to see these three students selected to join an elite group of students to explore their passions."

With this activity, NASA continues the agency's tradition engaging the nation in NASA's mission.

"NASA Community College Aerospace Scholars (NCAS) not only inspires community college students to advance in STEM fields, but it also opens doors for future careers at NASA. NCAS has a legacy of alumni moving from NASA internships to and ultimately entering the NASA workforce. It is rewarding to see the progression of a student from NCAS participant to NASA colleague," MUREP Manager Joeletta Patrick said.





# College Expands Rio Promise, Offers Free Tuition for First Two Years (Cont.)

Rio Scholar Brittany Morgan, who comes from a seven-person home, said the Rio Promise tuition program is helping her complete her higher education journey to become an elementary school teacher.

"The Rio Promise has made it possible for me and my family to save up money so I can transfer to a university, knowing the financial burden will be lessened," said Morgan, an Arroyo High School graduate who earned 25 units and a 3.05 GPA in her first year at Rio Hondo College.

Morgan started her college journey as a biology major but soon discovered a love for teaching. Faculty and staff members helped her navigate the change in major and her path to transfer next year.

"I really like teaching kids," she said. "I like being able to explain something to them in a way they understand; and I like knowing I'm helping the kids on their journey, knowing I'm a part of it," she said.

To qualify for the first-year program, students must be entering their first year of college and enroll in a minimum of 12 units at Rio Hondo College; complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the California Dream Act Application; and submit all required forms from Rio Hondo College's Financial Aid Office.

To qualify for the second-year program, students must complete at least 24 units at Rio Hondo College by the end of their first year with a minimum 2.0 grade point average; enroll in 12 units a semester their second year (24 units total); complete the FAFSA or the California Dream Act Application; and submit all required forms from Rio Hondo College's Financial Aid Office.

Rio Hondo College will also make accommodations for the minimum enrollment requirement, as appropriate, for students in the Disabled Students Programs & Services.

All participants of the program receive ongoing support to foster success. Resources include:

- ▶ Workshops on study tips, time management, financial aid, etc.
- ▶ Early alert program to provide timely intervention and support
- ▶ Student success coaches to provide resources and support for students
- ▶ Counselors to help students define educational goals and develop educational plans
- ▶ Supplemental instruction in mathematics courses
- ▶ Support with understanding career options and preparation
- ▶ Exposure to four-year universities and support in transferring

College data shows that participants in the first-year Rio Promise program passed significantly more classes and were more likely to continue on their educational journeys.



# Guardian Scholars Program Connects with Students

The Guardian Scholars Program, which is dedicated to providing services and support that meet the personal and academic needs of students who are or were in foster care, kicked off the fall semester with an August conference entitled "Creating Every Opportunity" for about 75 new and continuing students along with a retreat for about 19 students in September.

At the conference, Interim Student Affairs Dean Dr. Alisia Kirkwood welcomed students and author and USC Guardian Scholars alumni Sade Burrell, MSW, gave the keynote address. The conference focused on how to embrace all levels of opportunity and offered tips and tools for reaching goals in college and beyond.

Sade discussed the importance of positive relationships, mentors and support programs. All students in attendance received a signed copy of Sade's book, "The Opportunity Guide." Sade shared with the group how she was inspired to write the book by a Rio Hondo Guardian Scholar student in 2016 when she came to give the keynote address.

At the end of the day, students enjoyed lunch, received college supplies, important program updates and services, including John Burton Book funding for assistance of up to \$250 to purchase textbooks and emergency funding through the Pritzker Foster Care Initiative.

On Sept. 14-16, 19 Guardian Scholar students attended a retreat in Big



Bear Lake themed "Follow Your Dreams." The event including the concepts of support, connections, strength and perseverance.

Students gained valuable knowledge and tools on setting and reaching goals, their responsibilities as students, and how to identify and access valuable support resources.



Some themes shared by students included:

- ▶ Realizing that they are not alone in facing adversity;
- ▶ Letting go of unresolved issues that could hold them back from their potential; and
- ▶ Recognizing that they have the strength to overcome any hurdle in college and in life.

Students also had the opportunity to create support systems among peers while participating in individual and team-building activities, including yoga, high ropes courses, canoeing and archery. By the end of the weekend, students not only gained valuable tools but forged new friendships.

"It was awesome to see students build friendships, build confidence and challenge themselves throughout the weekend," Counselor/Coordinator Marisela Saenz said.

Organizers thanked the Pritzker Foster Care Initiative, Youth Empowerment Strategies for Success-YESS, and Student Equity for making the conference and retreat possible.



## Connect with Us on Social Media



RHCRoadrunners



RioHondo\_College



RioHondoCollege



Rio Hondo College YT Channel



bit.do/riohondocollege



rhcroadrunners

## 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



**Monday, Oct. 15 through Friday, Oct. 19:**  
Undocumented Student Week of Action

**1 to 5 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 20:**  
Rio Hondo College Fire Academy 50th Anniversary Celebration, 11400 Greenstone Ave., Santa Fe Springs

**Through Friday, Nov. 2:**  
Día de Los Muertos Community Altar Building, Learning Resource Center

**Thursday, Oct. 18 to Friday, Nov. 16:**  
Reflection and Futurity: 45 years of Día de los Muertos, Rio Hondo College Art Gallery

**7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 12:** Free public night, Gordon D. Crowell Astrophysical Observatory

**7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 19:** Free public night, Gordon D. Crowell Astrophysical Observatory

**7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 26:** Free public night, Gordon D. Crowell Astrophysical Observatory

**5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 30:**  
Día de los Muertos panel discussion, Wray Theater

**10 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 1:**  
Día de los Muertos celebration, Mid-Quad

**12:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 8:**  
Veterans Play Performance

**1 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 13:**  
Veterans Day Celebration, Mid Quad

**6 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 14:**  
Board of Trustees meeting, Rio Hondo College

### RIO HONDO COLLEGE ARTS AND CULTURAL EVENTS CALENDAR:

Check out the full list of 2018-19 events.

## College Salutes 9/11 Heroes

