

DEEP RIVER

A Newsletter of the Rio Hondo College Academic Senate & Faculty Association

News from the Senate

- The Senate and its committees, Distance Education and Student Learning Outcomes, have been working hard to address the recommendations from ACCJC.
- On March 17 and 26, the Senate sponsored a Taskforce on Student Success in the Classroom. The conversations generated many ideas and suggestions, some of which may be included on the Title V proposal due on May 19.
- Elections were held on March 17. The 2015-2016 Senate Officers are Robert Bethel, President; Kevin Smith, 1st Vice-President; Katie O'Brien, 2nd Vice-President; Michelle Bean, Secretary; Sheila Lynch, Parliamentarian; and John Frala, ASCCC Representative.
- The Chancellor's Office informed the college that the Auto Tech Baccalaureate Degree will not be on its March agenda. The Chancellor heard concerns from some area CSUs. However, we are encouraged that Steve Tomory, John Frala, and Dean Mike Slavich are talking with their CSU counterparts and trying to find solutions.
- Congratulations to the following on their academic rank promotions: Eugene Blackmun, Professor; Jeronimo Ribaya, Associate Professor; Michelle Bean, Associate Professor; Ted Preston, Professor; Jeannie Liu, Assistant Professor.

The Question of Academic Freedom

Vann Priest, President Academic Senate

The Board of Trustees recently approved a revised policy on academic freedom. The revision was the result of collaborative efforts among every campus constituency. This is its story.

I began pondering about academic freedom in 2010, when I came across the book *No University is an Island: Saving Academic Freedom*. Written by Cary Nelson, a former president of AAUP, the book lays out a case for vigilance and action against the threats to academic freedom. I highly recommend this book to those interested in the danger of outcome-based instruction, the increasing dependence on contingent faculty, and the intersection of academic freedom and shared governance.

Academic freedom exists, because “the common good depends on the free search for truth and its free expression.” (AAUP) Now some people outside of academia often misconstrue the notion of academic freedom. Some claim that professors use it to inculcate impressionable minds with dangerous political ideas or that we use it to excuse rude and boorish behavior, but it primarily guarantees that we are free to discuss our discipline, especially when that discussion involves controversial topics.

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The Question of Academic Freedom

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For example, I have the credibility, responsibility, and right to rail against politicians who ignore the vast scientific consensus on climate change when I discuss thermodynamics.

We must remember, though, that we do not take class time to discuss the last Dodgers' game or abortion rights in a course in which such discussions are not cogent, such as an electricity and magnetism course.

Then in the summer of 2013, I read an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education describing the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decision in *Demers v. Austin* stating that professors in public institutions can speak to matters of public interest, particularly in areas of governance. What impressed the Senate Exec most in this article was the call by the authors, both high level administrators, to recognize the additional need for the freedom to also address matters in college governance. It was then that the Senate Exec began a discussion on academic freedom.

Senate Exec crafted a draft that explicitly covered participatory/shared governance in the policy. After the Senate approved the suggested revisions, we forwarded the draft to the President's Office so that it could begin the review process. It was in the Planning and Fiscal Council (PFC) that the collaboration of the campus constituencies began to improve the draft.

PFC named a subcommittee to look at the draft and suggest changes based on the conversation in

committee. This subcommittee consisted of Vice-President of Student Affairs Henry Gee, then-Dean of Student Affairs Darryl Foster, CSEA President Sandra Rivera, ASRHC President Alejandro Ramirez, and yours truly, the Academic Senate President. It was there that two substantive changes occurred. Henry suggested the inclusion of language from the AAUP that reminds us that we should be accurate, exercise judiciousness, and show respect for the opinions of others. But perhaps the most radical change happened because Sandra asked a simple question: "Why shouldn't the policy guarantee academic freedom for all campus members."

"... the common good depends on the free search for truth and its free expression."

The newly revised draft became a subject of a special session of the Board of Trustees. A lawyer for the college provided a comprehensive history of academic freedom, as well as the relevant case law. I reviewed the draft for the

Board and explained the rationale behind each change. Trustee Mary Ann Pacheco related, somewhat passionately, an example of her classroom days when the subject matter invited emotional and energetic discourse to illustrate why the policy encourages intense discussions.

The college now has one of the strongest and most forward-thinking board policies on academic freedom, one that strongly mirrors the principles of Rio Hondo College. The policy can and should be used by other colleges as a model.

To see the new policy, click on the Board of Trustees link under the Faculty & Staff tab, go to Board Policies and Administrative Procedures, and look for BP 4030.

News from the Faculty Association

Welcome to our new faculty hired this past academic year:

Jose Arroyo • Angela Cheung
Raquel Flores-Olson • Scott Jaeggi
Irene Truong • Alexander Gardos
Jose Gutierrez • Sean Hughes
Ea Madrigal • Abbie Perry • Joseph Rhee
Kirsten Rich • Irene Vu • Maribel de Leon
Nellie Hernandez • Yunior Hernandez
Vicenta Maffris • Viviana Villanueva
Rosa Prado.

Congratulations to our newly tenured faculty, for the academic year 2015-2016:

- **Alan Archambault** - Mathematics & Sciences
- **Michelle Bean** - Communications & Languages
- **Libby Curiel** - Communications & Languages
- **Marius Dornean** - Career Technical Education
- **Juan Fernandez** - Communications & Languages
- **Song Graham** - Counseling & Student Success
- **Steve Johnson** - Kinesiology, Dance & Athletics
- **Jeannie Liu** - Business
- **Moises Mata** - Communications & Languages
- **Gregory Miller** - Mathematics & Sciences
- **Tyler Okamoto** - Communications & Languages
- **Mariano Zaro** - Communications & Languages



You & the Faculty Association

Katby Pudelko, President Faculty Association

Some thoughts to consider when you look at the value of our Rio Hondo College Faculty Association. What do we all get as members?

Here are just a few things that the Association does for its members: Employment stability, contract security, due process, a voice on issues, health insurance benefits, work load, liability protection, and collective bargaining power.

The Association I am talking about is you. You, the members, make it strong. It is that strength that has made all of those protections our contract provides a reality.

When you look forward into 2015, become an advocate for your Association. Get involved and help shape the Association in the direction that you would like to see us all move.

Join us for our next luncheon and meeting:

Thursday April 16 at 12:45 pm in the Board Room and in May join us for the end-of-the-year luncheon.

Teachers Helping Students

FA Scholarships

- ✦ The Faculty Association awarded five scholarships of \$333 each to students attending the Fall '14 London Study Abroad program. Congratulations to: Alex Esnayra, Justine Hine, Francisco Saucedo, Tatiana Acosta, and Briana Corona.
- ✦ The Association's new scholarship fund has raised over \$4,500 and is now in the process of reviewing applications to be awarded this Spring. Your holiday luncheon tickets, tee shirt sales (they are coming soon), and individual donations have made it all possible.
- ✦ Join us on Friday May 1, 2015 for a *Taste of Rio*. The Association will be supporting this fundraiser with the purchase of a table and you can help by purchasing tickets at www.riohondo.edu/foundation

Thank you for your continued support!

Writers' Resource Center

The WRC, an interdisciplinary writing center, located in LR 126A, is up and running! Open Monday - Thursday from 8 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. and Friday 8 a.m. to noon.

We have the funding; we have the room; we have the software (SARS); we have the tutors; we have clerical staff, and now we have the students--more each day.

Faculty requiring writing assignments--art, history, biology, math, sociology, psychology, and the list goes on--are recommending students go to LR 126A for one-on-one tutoring from English teachers. Students can make appointments at the front desk of the Writing Center or drop in if the faculty member on duty does not have a scheduled appointment.

We encourage all faculty, from all disciplines, to make their students aware of the WRC for additional help with writing assignments.

CLIC•ERS for Success!

Facilitators can come to your classroom if you are going to be out or if you just want a presentation given. They will talk to your students about topics that you choose including those relating to important dates, achieving success, and others. All you need to do is go to the CLIC•ERS link from the Rio Hondo home page and complete a short form. Please take advantage of this program designed to enhance student success.

For Spring 2015, CLIC•ERS has the following presentations • Help! Where do I go? A General Overview of RHC Student Services • Dang Deadlines! A Recap of Upcoming Important Due Dates at RHC • I'm On What? Keys to Avoiding Academic Probation • Wanna Get an "A" Tips for Student Success.

Presenters may also share their journeys in reaching college success and personal stories on how and why they ended up in their disciplines or majors.

The CLIC•ERS committee is also looking for any faculty member who would like to join in presenting to classes when available. Please email clicers@riohondo.edu, if you are interested in joining this vital student success effort.

