

# PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

COVERING FEBRUARY 2016



## President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

February may just be the busiest month of all at Rio Hondo College, a stream of events that spotlights the remarkable people and programs who make our institution so successful.

We hosted visits from more than 1,100 local high school students in addition to a delegation of potential students from China, a testament to the shining reputation of our faculty and our strong academic program.

To underscore those strengths, honors and achievements are pouring in for our students:

- ▶ Speech and debate team members collected another round of awards at February's Cerritos College competition;
- ▶ Theatre Arts students were lauded for their skills during a national festival in Hawaii;

- ▶ El Paisano reporters secured an exclusive interview with legendary labor activist Dolores Huerta;
- ▶ Two extraordinary scholar athletes on the women's soccer team received scholarships to UC Irvine; and
- ▶ Five students were recognized with Live Your Dream awards from Soroptimist International of Whittier.

And we show no signs of letting up.

We have added three new associate degree programs since the fall, we will open our new soccer field on March 23, we are preparing for the launch of classes this fall at our Pico Rivera Educational Center and we promise an even more engaging A Taste of Rio.

The message behind all of this activity couldn't be much clearer: Rio Hondo is a College on the move, a dynamo of energy focused on finding ways to help our students pursue their dreams.

## College Adds Degrees in Economics, Social Work and Dance

Rio Hondo College will begin offering three new associate degree programs in fall semester 2016, including one that brings a guarantee of admission to California State University (CSU) campuses.

Associate of Arts degrees will be offered in Social Work, Dance and an Associate of Arts for Transfer in Economics.

**RIO IN THE NEWS!** Read more about the degree programs in the *Whittier Daily News*.

"At Rio Hondo College, we are always looking for new ways to serve our students," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "Part of that is an ongoing effort to increase the number of higher education paths students can pursue – options that now include social work, dance and economics."

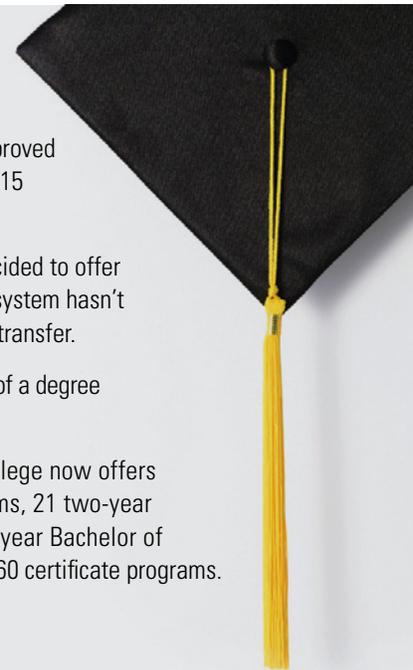
The economics degree, approved in August, is part of the growing system of two-year degrees for transfer, which guarantee students CSU admission to pursue further studies.

The California Community Colleges approved the social work degree in December 2015 and the dance degree in January.

In both cases, Rio Hondo educators decided to offer local AA degrees because the college system hasn't finalized the elements for a degree for transfer.

Both programs mirror the requirements of a degree for transfer.

With the new degrees, Rio Hondo College now offers 50 two-year associate degree programs, 21 two-year associate degrees for transfer, a four-year Bachelor of Science in automotive technology and 60 certificate programs.



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# Board Report

A program of support services for adult re-entry students has begun to bear fruit even as organizers are preparing to expand its slate of benefits, members of the Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees learned on Feb. 10.

Adult re-entry students are those who start college after age 25 or who return after a five-year absence. The group, which constitutes about a quarter of all Rio Hondo students, had experienced a dip in recent years, prompting the college to create a customized suite of services tailored to adult student needs.

Those services, promoted during community forums, range from individualized counseling to longer service hours to accommodate students with a greater number of responsibilities, such as full-time jobs and families.

Just a year after launching the program, Rio Hondo has recorded a 51 percent leap in re-entry students in summer 2015, as compared with summer 2014.

Now, program organizers are working to create a one-stop shop for support services, extending service hours to 8 p.m., organizing support groups and providing tips for dealing with stress. The College is also considering providing counseling online to assist students whose schedules may not allow them to spend the extra time on campus.

## Building Program Projects

Trustees also received an update on ongoing building program projects, including the nearly complete renovation of the campus soccer field. The project was launched March 30, 2015, and will open on March 23, 2016.

Artificial turf has been added, landscaping has been installed and new lighting is in place. A synthetic track – the final element – is nearly complete.

The College is in early stages for several other projects, including a renovation of its bookstore and print shop, construction of a new entry plaza, construction of the Pico Rivera Educational Center, and seismic upgrades for the L Tower.

## Soccer players

The Board of Trustees also recognized Rio Hondo's women's soccer team, a 2015 California Community College Athletic Association state finalist and regional champion. The team was ranked third in the state and eighth nationally.



The team includes: players Liz Miramontes, Christina Holguin, Marissa Lara, Cortney Gonzalez, Rhosie Ceniceros, Alexis Marinero, Erika Lizarraga, Andrea Sanchez, Maritza Acuna, Genesis Patino, Sabrina Gonzalez, Destiny Garcia, Kelly Richardson, Jenny Garcia, Janeth Acuna, Cassie Duran, Nicole Contreras, Krystal Vega, Crystal Mendoza and Melissa Gonzales; team manager Angelica Holguin; assistant coaches Will Lopez, Amanda Krukow, Armando Gutierrez, Erika Garay, Marco Lopez and Nancy Gandarilla; and head coach Jennifer Tanaka-Hoshijo, who was named Foothill Conference Coach of the Year.



# Scores Turn Out to Receive Financial Aid Help



Rio Hondo College's inaugural Cash for College financial aid workshop and application lab on Feb. 6 drew 78 attendees, including 51 students, who received an overview of the benefits of financial aid as well as hands-on help in filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the California Dream Act aid application.

The California Student Opportunity and Access Program and Assembly Member Ian C. Calderon, D-Whittier, co-sponsored the free, public event.

Many students are unaware of the benefits of applying for financial aid, and often make decisions without the necessary information they need to fund their

education. Moreover, the financial aid application process can be challenging for many individuals, which deters some from attending college.

Rio Hondo College's Interim Project/Grant Manager of TRiO Programs Jasmine Mageno and Director of Financial Aid, Scholarships and Veterans Services Yvonne Gutierrez-Sandoval served as the event's co-chairs.

As the event proved to be successful and met a great need, the College plans to host it annually.



# Twins' Path to Success Leads Them to Rio Hondo College

Twins Maritza and Janeth Acuna almost didn't come to Rio Hondo College.

The inseparable Downey teenagers were prepared to give up their dream of playing college soccer in exchange for attending a top-notch, four-year university, even though it meant carrying significant debt without help from sports scholarships.

"But something kept bothering us. It just felt like the wrong decision," Maritza said. "We decided we should give soccer another shot and see if we could land a scholarship."

So the teens enrolled at Rio Hondo College: the soccer program had shown interest in them as athletes and as students. They also liked Rio Hondo's top-notch nursing program and general education program.

"We didn't really know much about college; we are the first ones in our family to go to college," Janeth said. "But we quickly learned that coming to Rio Hondo was the better choice for us."

Indeed, the 19-year-olds describe a program of support services that engaged them from the moment they arrived on campus, a soccer coach who urged them to excel on and off the field, and a network that has encouraged them continually to seek higher goals.

Now, after two years as Roadrunners, the Acuna sisters are known across the nation for helping their soccer team shine in the 2015 California state playoffs, an accomplishment on par with their stellar GPAs.

The icing on the cake? UC Irvine, the school where they were accepted out of high school, has offered sports scholarships that will pick up where grant aid leaves off, essentially making their final two years of college free and allowing them to continue pursuing the sport they love.

The Acuna sisters are quick to name Rio Hondo College head soccer coach Jennifer Tanaka-Hoshijo as one of their biggest supporters.

"She believes in us," Janeth said. "If we have a goal, she helps us meet it. She always pushes us to do better. She thinks education is really important. If we don't do our best in our classes, she makes us reflect on ourselves, to think about the future."

Maritza (who boasts a 4.0 GPA) was named Junior College Scholar National Player of the Year by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America. Janeth (with a 3.93 GPA) was named to the Scholar All-American second team.

Part of their success, say the sisters, is their support for each other. At Rio Hondo College, they've taken all the same classes, are pursuing the same career goals and, yes, are even known for dressing identically.

As much as the twins love soccer, their studies have always come first.

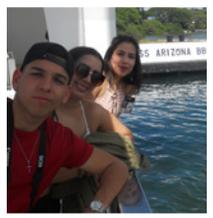
Rio Hondo College's support services helped them in that arena, providing support services that included counseling, aid in buying books and participation in the Summer Scholar Transfer Institute, a 10-day program hosted by UC Irvine in summer 2015.

During the institute, professors echoed a message the sisters had heard from nurses while volunteering at a local hospital: Don't limit yourselves. Explore all medical careers. Consider becoming doctors.

"So I'm aiming for that, now," Maritza says. "I think it would be great if someday, we could run a medical practice together."



# Theatre Arts Students Lauded at Hawaiian Festival



Twenty-two Rio Hondo Theatre Arts students attended the American College Theatre Festival in Honolulu this February, earning accolades as they competed in auditioning, acting and playwriting.

Organizers selected a play written during the event by student Paula Arellano to be read before a full house with feedback from four national playwrights.

In addition to the four-day festival, students also attended a traditional Hawaiian luau and toured the Pearl Harbor memorial.



# Five Students Win Soroptimist Scholarships

Five Rio Hondo College students who have survived challenges ranging from domestic violence to being homeless have been recognized by Soroptimist International of Whittier with 2016 Live Your Dream Awards.

The students – Oralia Lopez Alcorta, Natasha Rubalcava, Lorraine Montano, Reylene Priego and Ruth Noemi Rodriguez – were honored at a Feb. 23 lunch at the Radisson Hotel in Whittier. The students are all single mothers who participate in Rio Hondo College's EOP&S/CARE program, and all five have big dreams of giving back to the community.

The Live Your Dream Awards, established in 1972, has awarded \$30 million in scholarships since its inception.

During the lunch, scholarship judges shared inspirational messages with the scholarship recipients, telling them they are now on a journey to becoming role models. CARE Specialist Laura Verdugo, who also served on the Live Your Dream Committee, thanked EOP&S Director Heba Griffiths for her support and CARE Faculty Ambassador and Club Adviser Angela Rhodes for her efforts on behalf of the CARE program and students.

The event was attended by community leaders, including Whittier Union High School District Superintendent Sandra Thorstenson and Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss.

## The award winners

**Oralia Lopez Alcorta:** The mother of six children ages 6 to 16, she is studying sociology and social work. Her goal is to transfer to a four-year college in 2017. She would like to become a parent advocate and eventually run an organization that supports women faced with domestic violence and drug abuse. Alcorta will also be considered for a regional award.

**Natasha Rubalcava:** Mother to Alexa, she is studying social work, drug studies and social science. She plans to transfer to USC and pursue a master's degree in social work. She would like to one day run a non-profit community center helping domestic violence victims or at-risk youths.

**Lorraine Montano:** A full-time nursing student and parent of a 3-year-old boy, she will graduate with her LVN certificate in May. She plans to work toward her RN, a bachelor's and possibly a master's degree.

**Reylene Priego:** Mother to Matthew, she is pursuing an associate for transfer degree in psychology. Her goal is to obtain a master's degree in psychology and become a social worker.

**Ruth Noemi Rodriguez:** Mother to Jazmine and Samuel, she is seeking an associate degree in business administration with plans to seek a bachelor's degree in human resources and management. She hopes to continue her schooling through a Ph.D.



# 1,125 High School Seniors Attend Preview Day

Rio Hondo College welcomed 1,125 high seniors on Feb. 23 and 24 for its annual Senior Preview Day – an event that has expanded to include a second day to ensure all students have a chance to explore the College's academic options and engage in Discover Rio activities.

Students traveled to Rio Hondo from high schools in Whittier, Pico Rivera, El Monte, La Puente, Montebello, Bell Gardens, Baldwin Park, Downey, San Gabriel and Los Angeles.

The event began with an inspiring welcome speech by Dean of Counseling and Student Success Dr. Mike Munoz, followed by workshops on academic programs and services, including child development, dance, speech and debate, career technical education, the First-Year Success Center, fire academy, police academy, nursing program and the Pathway to Law School Initiative.

Discover Rio activities allowed students to see the range of club options and other elements of student life available at Rio Hondo.



## Forensics Team Posts New Awards in February Contest

Rio Hondo College's Forensics Speech and Debate Team competed at the Tabor Venitsky Tournament held in mid-February at Cerritos College.

Senior National Parliamentary Debate Association team Sam Recinos and Patricia Hughes took bronze and Recinos earned the second top speaker award. In International Public Debate Association individual competition, Chris Pinkstaff earned fourth speaker honors and Michelle Arroyo was ranked as fifth speaker. Recinos earned bronze and received top speaker honors.

## College Hosts Fourth Annual Family Resource Fair

Rio Hondo College hosted its fourth annual Free Tax Preparation and Family Resource Fair on Feb. 24, featuring comments from College leaders and state tax officials, as well as assistance to families in filing their 2015 income taxes.

Speakers included Board of Equalization representative Alfred Kono, Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss and Franchise Tax Board District Director Christopher Armenta.

Dreyfuss gave credit for Rio Hondo's partnership with the state in providing the tax help to Interim Dean of Business Dr. Ygnacio "Nash" Flores and his staff, and to accounting instructor Jeannie Lui, who has headed the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program for each of the four years.

Through the program, IRS-certified students from Rio Hondo College are providing free basic income tax return preparation for individuals and families who earned \$52,000 or less in 2015. The program runs from 2 to 6 p.m. Wednesdays through April 13 (excluding March 30).

Volunteers help prepare Form 1040, 1040A and 1040EZ, including standard and itemized deductions, earned income tax credit and Schedules A and B. Last year, 30 students and two faculty volunteers processed more than 248 returns, \$430,000 in refunds and \$240,000 in education credits. The savings in tax preparation fees was estimated at more than \$67,000.

**RIO IN THE NEWS!** Click here to read more about the VITA program in the *Los Angeles Wave*.

## Discover Rio Club Rush Showcases Student Groups

Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss visits a Discover Rio Club Rush booth during the program's showcase of student clubs with Associated Students of Rio Hondo College President William Ashby.



## Ugandan Children's Choir Performs at Rio Hondo College

A Uganda children's choir raised awareness of the needs of African orphans on Feb. 18 with a free performance at Rio Hondo College's Wray Theater.

The Watoto Children's Choir, founded in 1994, made the stop on its 2015-16 "Oh, What Love" tour. The choir includes four adults and 18 children, all of whom have lost one or both parents.

The choir is part of the Watoto Church, which creates villages to care for orphaned children, providing them with stable homes and access to education and health care. The group was invited to perform by Rio Hondo College Choral Director Kellori Dower.

Watch the Watoto Choir in action



# College Begins Advertising New Satellite Campus

Rio Hondo College is beginning its campaign to let area residents know about the new Pico Rivera Educational Center, set to open for fall 2016 classes. The center will be Rio Hondo College's third satellite facility.



# El Paisano Writers Score Exclusive Interviews

*El Paisano* staff writers Noah Cervantes and Pete Escobar gained exclusive interviews with iconic labor leader Dolores Huerta, UFW President Arturo Rodriguez, CEO of Ceja Vineyards Amelia Ceja, and radio broadcasting pioneer Hugo Morales of Radio Bilingüe, among others during the annual Farmworker Justice Awards Reception on Feb. 24 in Los Angeles.

Adjunct faculty member Wendy Carrera provided guidance and direction to the promising student journalists.



# College Hosts Delegation of Prospective Chinese Students

Rio Hondo College's array of highly recognized career preparation and college degree programs were on full display Feb. 3 when a delegation of 40 Chinese students and their chaperones toured the campus.

The students, who hailed from Guangxi, were welcomed by Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. They attended a series of presentations on academic, career and student services from College deans and directors, as well as Vice President Henry Gee and International Students Specialist Ana Gonzalez. The entire visit to Rio Hondo College and throughout the United States was documented by China Guangxi TV.

Rio Hondo College has been receiving a rising amount of attention as a possible higher-education starting point and path for international students.



# Former Rio Hondo Student Juggles Classwork While Pursuing Dream

Former *El Paisano* editor Abree Dominguez interned this winter with the NFL during Super Bowl 50, helping out in the organization's media relations office. Dominguez, a student at a four-year college in San Francisco, juggled classwork and her internship during the big event.



## Connect with Us on Social Media



**RHCRoadrunners**



**RioHondo\_College**



**RioHondoCollege**



**#iLoveRioHondo**



**bit.do/riohondocollege**

## 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



**12 p.m. Wednesday, March 23:**  
Soccer field dedication, Rio Hondo College

**Monday, March 28 to Friday, April 1:**  
Campus closed for Spring Break

**Tuesday, April 5:**  
State of College address, El Monte

**2 p.m. Thursday, May 5:**  
Pico Rivera Educational Center groundbreaking  
9426 Marjorie St., Pico Rivera

**6 p.m. Friday, May 6:**  
A Taste of Rio, Rio Hondo College

**Tuesday, May 24:**  
State of College address, Whittier

**Thursday, June 9:**  
State of College address, Santa Fe Springs

# A Taste of Rio to Rally Support for Students

The Rio Hondo College Foundation will hold its annual A Taste of Rio event at 6 p.m. Friday, May 6, featuring food tastings from local restaurants, wine tasting and prize drawings.

The popular annual event raises thousands of dollars for student scholarships and other support. In 2015, the event collected \$56,000 in donations, sponsorships and sales.

For details on registering for the 2016 event, purchasing drawing tickets and sponsorship opportunities, go to [www.riohondo.edu/foundation/a-taste-of-rio](http://www.riohondo.edu/foundation/a-taste-of-rio).

