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## President's Message



*Teresa Dreyfuss*

There are just a handful of notable moments throughout the year that are as special as this one – the end of the academic year. It's this time of year that we say "Congratulations" to our graduates and wish them the very best on their new adventures, whether it is transferring to a four-year university or joining the workforce.

The 2013-14 academic year was filled with much celebration and achievement. More than 1,100 of our students petitioned for their associate degrees and a record 524 graduates walked through commencement. I congratulate and thank our entire Rio Hondo College community for playing an important role in helping our students succeed.

Rio Hondo College's 51st Annual Commencement Ceremony showcased this year's graduates and highlighted students whose road to earning their degrees was long and arduous. These students were nominated by faculty and classified staff for their tenacity and eagerness to learn and graduate despite life challenges: Paola De La O, David Rios and Sandra Lucero.

We also had the pleasure to welcome back Los Angeles County Supervisor-elect Hilda Solis, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, Congresswoman, State Senator and Assembly member whose career in public service started as a trustee for the Rio Hondo Community College District. Her commencement address, filled with inspiration and practical advice, was poignant and powerful. I am so pleased that our students were moved by such encouraging words from such a motivational woman.

I would be remiss, however, if I didn't thank everyone who made commencement a success. I want to thank the Commencement Ceremony committee for planning and executing such a magnificent event, and the extraordinary help and support of our classified staff volunteers. Their extraordinary dedication and support shined throughout the ceremony.

This update issue provides snapshots of the many end-of-year events and accolades, including highlights from the Fire Academy graduations, the Division of Health Science and Nursing Pinning Ceremony, and a profile on the women's soccer team, which hit its goal of having 100 percent of its sophomores transferring to four-year institutions in the fall.

It has been a notable school year. Congratulations to all!

## Nearly 1,000 Attend Fire Academy Graduations

The Rio Hondo College Fire Academy graduated 67 cadets in uniform at the fire academy's headquarters in Santa Fe Springs during back-to-back weekend ceremonies in the spring.

The Wildland Fire Academy, Class 16 graduated 46 firefighters, including one female cadet. The Basic Fire Academy, Class 82 graduated 21 firefighters, with two female cadets.

Sixteen of the Wildland firefighters have already reported for jobs in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Nevada and Wyoming. The other 30 were hired for duty with Crew 77 Roadrunners, assigned to the U.S. Forest and the Angeles National Forest.

"We are proud of our cadets for not only successfully graduating and completing the fire academy curriculum and training, but for also securing positions as firefighters," said Wildland and Fire Coordinator Tracy Rickman. "Many of them were hired and reported to duty before and shortly after graduation."



**Rio in the News!** Click here to read more about the two Fire Academy Graduations in the Los Angeles Wave.

## Board Update

The Rio Hondo Community College District Board of Trustees meeting on May 14 was bittersweet as it marked the last meeting for a few familiar faces.



Dr. Linda Brown, voice professor for the Division of Arts and Cultural Programs was honored for her 12 years of service to Rio Hondo College as she prepares for retirement. Chris Guptill, the division's dean, said Brown's contribution to Arts and Cultural Programs has been invaluable and replacing her will certainly be a challenge.

"I always dreamed of teaching at a college," Brown said. "Rio Hondo College has been a wonderful place to work."



The Board also honored the graduates of the Leadership Academy: Joaquin Duran, Steve Hebert, Carolyn Gonzales, Teresa Gonzalez, Katherine Lopez, Sheila Lynch, Christina Riboni, Veronica Rodriguez, Barbara Salazar, Lisa Sandoval and Van Vuong. The fourth cohort of the Leadership Academy spent the last year enhancing their capacity to become leaders on all levels. Some graduates of the academy in the past have received promotions, earned graduate degrees or found off-campus employment opportunities.

Dr. Jeanette Duarte, public speaking professor for the Division of Communications and Languages, also gave her sabbatical report in which she ventured to look at public-speaking instruction across disciplines. In her research, she found several ways to teach public speaking to those who don't traditionally take such classes, including students in engineering, fire technology and accounting.

In response to her research, she wrote a book that includes a chapter on how to teach public speaking to students whose area of study falls outside communication studies.

At the end of the meeting, Dr. Adam Westman, president of the Academic Senate, and Valeria Guerrero, president of the Associated Students of Rio Hondo College, said their goodbyes to the Board. After serving two years as president of the Academic Senate, Westman is stepping down, and Guerrero is graduating and transferring to the University of California, Berkeley in the fall.

# Former U.S. Labor Secretary Inspires Rio Hondo College Students with Message of Adversity and Triumph

Rio in the News! Read more about commencement in the Los Angeles Wave.



*Hon. Hilda Solis as Rio Hondo Community College District Trustee in 1989 speaking at Commencement.*

For the more than 500 students who graduated on May 22 from Rio Hondo College, and the 1,193 who petitioned for degrees, commencement day was a milestone that culminated years of hard work. And while each student may continue to face obstacles throughout their journeys, the goal is to strive ahead and not to let them stand in the way.

That was the message that hundreds of Rio Hondo students received during the 51<sup>st</sup> Commencement Ceremony from Los Angeles County Supervisor-elect Hilda Solis – whose own journey includes being advised to pursue a career as an office clerk by a high school counselor, to becoming the first Latina to serve in the United States Cabinet as the 25<sup>th</sup> U.S. Secretary of Labor.

"Yes, our dreams are possible," Solis said during her commencement address. "Your journey will continue, and you will continue to learn and overcome obstacles. Do not let them get in the way of your goals."

Thousands of parents and family members attended the event to congratulate students who received their associate degrees and to welcome back Solis, a former Rio Hondo College District Board of Trustees member.

"I feel right at home here at Rio Hondo College," said Solis, who is currently serving as a Scholar-in-Residence at her alma mater, Cal Poly Pomona. "To the graduates out there, let me officially welcome you to the alumni family of Rio Hondo College."

Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss also delivered an inspiring welcome address to the Class of 2014.

"Graduates, as you move onto the next chapter in life, remember to dream big no matter your life's situations," Dreyfuss said. "Pursue your goals, regardless of the unexpected obstacles that may come your way. It has been a long road for many of our students, and Rio Hondo College is proud to have been a second home to them."

Serving as student speaker was Valeria Guerrero, outgoing president of the Associated Students of Rio Hondo College. Inspired by her undocumented status, the El Monte resident and first-generation college student will pursue her dreams of becoming an immigration lawyer, with plans to attend UC Berkeley in the fall.

"Although I will miss my professors and friendships I formed, I am graduating from this institution that supported me in reaching my goals, overcome all adversity and pursue my dreams," Guerrero said. "I thank you Rio Hondo, for all the resources and support groups that you provided to students like me. And I thank you, fellow graduates of 2014 for trusting me to be your voice."

See more photos from the commencement ceremony in the Whittier Daily News!



## Rio Hondo College to Offer Law School Pathway

Rio Hondo College will be one of the first community colleges in the state to offer a smoother pathway to six of California's top law schools by participating in the Community Colleges Pathway to Law School initiative.

The Community Colleges Pathway to Law School initiative, which will begin at Rio Hondo College in the fall, is designed to enhance opportunities and advancement in the legal profession for diverse populations, particularly those who have been underrepresented.

Rio Hondo College was chosen by the State Bar's Council on Access and Fairness for its leadership and student success indicators, which will be critical in providing meaningful experiences for students interested in pursuing a career in law.

"It is a great honor for Rio Hondo College to have been selected as a community college to partner with the top law schools in California," said Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "Many of our students can use this opportunity to achieve the 'American Dream' as they become the first attorneys in their families."

The Community Colleges Pathway to Law School initiative will establish agreements with Rio Hondo College, six law schools and their respective undergraduate institutions.

Students in the program will receive assurances that credits in prescribed courses will transfer; early exposure to the law school experience; individual advisement and mentoring from law school advisors; financial aid counseling; LSAT preparation; and waived application fees for admission to the participating law schools.

Participating law schools are the University of Southern California Gould School of Law; University of San Francisco School of Law; University of California, Davis School of Law; UC Irvine School of Law; Santa Clara University School of Law; and Loyola Law School.

## A Taste of Rio Serves Up Scholarships

The Rio Hondo College Foundation's *A Taste of Rio* on May 2 was a tremendous success with more than 200 participants, grossing more than \$45,000.

Guests participated in over 37 classic drawing items, 11 premium drawing items and a grand prize Fund-A-Need Drawing. The Fund-A-Need drawing itself funded two \$750 scholarships for entering and transferring students.

"This evening was a time to celebrate the dedication of the faculty and staff of Rio Hondo College for playing an integral role in our students' success, as seen in the great gains in student achievement," said Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss.

Dreyfuss encouraged attendees to take the time to read the "Faces of Rio" displays highlighting exceptional students and their individual story of struggle, persistence, commitment and determination to reach the "American Dream."

Dignitaries and community members who attended *A Taste of Rio* included: Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia from the 58th Assembly District; Pico Rivera Councilmember Gustavo Camacho; South El Monte Councilmember Joseph Gonzales; Bell Councilmember Ali Saleh; El Monte Treasurer Jerry Velasco; Valle Lindo School District Board President Ruth Gonzales; and Whittier Union High School District Superintendent Sandra Thorstenson.

Rio Hondo College Foundation Executive Director Howard Kummerman would like to thank the *A Taste of Rio* committee, student and employee volunteers, and everyone who supported the event to make it a success, especially the divisions who donated a basket or an item for the drawings.

**Rio in the News!** Read more about *A Taste of Rio* in the Whittier Daily News.



*Thank You*

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Zapien's Salsa Grill

and Taqueria

## Leadership Academy Members Graduate from Program

Eleven members of Cohort 4 graduated from the Rio Hondo College Leadership Academy on May 4. Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss was on hand to give congratulatory remarks and present certificates of recognition to each of the graduates.



Dreyfuss commended Leadership Academy Coordinator Dennyse Clark for her service not only during the 2013-14 year, but also during the entire three years she served as Leadership Academy coordinator. Graduates were also presented nine different certificates of recognition from local, state and federal elected officials by the members of the Leadership Academy steering committee.

In her remarks, Dreyfuss thanked the members of Cohort 4 for drafting a new "Spirit 4 Rio" initiative, the campus improvement project that will be reviewed and implemented next year.

## Staff Says 'Aloha!' at Luncheon



The end-of-the-year luncheon, Tropical Rio Luau, sponsored by the Rio Hondo College Faculty Association (RHCF) and the President's Office, was great fun with Polynesian dancers, hula entertainment and shish kabobs catered by Juan Great Fiesta.

RHCF President Kathy Pudelko acknowledged Angela Rhodes for 10 years of service and James Chandler for 30 years of service; Tenured Faculty Katherin Brandt; 2013-14 Retirees Ray Esquivel (1975-2013), Nilsa Rivera (1999-2013), Dr. Linda Brown (2002-2014), and Richard Stein (2001-2014); and presented the 2014-2015 RHCF Executive Officers.



A great big thank you to the planning committee members and to all who assisted: Martha Carreon, Jennifer Burchett, John Parra, Dennyse Clark, Margie Muñoz, Sylvia Viramontes Bunday, Custodial and Facilities Staff, Carlos Monteros of audio visual, printing services and student volunteers.

## Fun Fact: Did You Know?



Did you know that the Foundation Scholarship Awards Reception held at the Rio Café on May 21 awarded more than \$70,000 in scholarships to 95 students, many of whom received multiple scholarships?

## Rio Hondo College Students React to 'Crisis'

**Rio in the News!** Click here to see TV coverage from the Collaborative Crisis Scenario aired by NTD Global TV Network.

Rio Hondo College students within the nursing, public safety, arts and communications and languages divisions used the skills they have learned in class and applied them to a staged accident on campus May 9 in the Administration of Justice building annex.



More than 100 students were involved, including those studying to be nurses, emergency medical technicians, police officers, firefighters and journalists. Only the performing and visual arts students knew the facts about the scenario beforehand.

"The Collaborative Crisis Scenario allows all of these entities to work with real people in real situations," said Pam Boyd, assistant director for the Division of Health Science and Nursing at Rio Hondo College. "It gives them hands-on experience and encourages them to work as a team, as it would be in the real world."

Click here to see more photos of the Collaborative Crisis Scenario in the Los Angeles Daily News.

This is the second year the Division of Health Science and Nursing and the Division of Public Safety teamed up for the Collaborative Crisis Scenario, which included nursing, fire and emergency medical technician students. However, "this year's event is on a larger scale and involves more students," Boyd said.

The event included an officer with the Whittier Police Department who was on hand to "arrest" the person who caused the "accident." The College utilized an ambulance to transport "victims" to the "Roadrunner Hospital" emergency room, which was located on the third floor of the L Tower.

"The Collaborative Crisis Scenario is exactly the type of innovative program that propels our students toward success," said Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "I applaud all the divisions and departments involved in this simulated real-life crisis scenario and their commitment to our students."

## All Women's Soccer Sophomores to Transfer

One hundred percent of the Rio Hondo College Women's Soccer Team sophomores are transferring to four-year institutions for Fall 2014.

"One of the goals of the program for the past seven years was to achieve a 100 percent transfer rate for our sophomores and we are so proud of our student-athletes," said Head Coach Jennifer Tanaka-Hoshijo.

The transferring sophomores include:

- Selena Quezada, women's soccer captain who committed to play soccer at Lesley University in Boston;
- Karina Meza, women's soccer captain who committed to play soccer at Southern Vermont College and was named a scholar-athlete by the California Community College Coaches Association;
- Natalie Preston, who is transferring to Cal Poly Pomona to pursue a bachelor's degree in real estate, finance and law, and was named a scholar-athlete by the California Community College Coaches Association;
- Tatiana Carrillo, who committed to play soccer at Whittier College; and
- Vanessa Carlos, women's soccer leading goal scorer for 2013 who committed to play soccer at Webster University in St. Louis.



Front row: Vanessa Carlos, left, Selena Quezada, Karina Meza, Tatiana Carrillo and Natalie Preston. Back: Willie Lopez, left, Jennifer Tanaka, Gil Sandoval and Marcos Gaspar

## Pinning Ceremony Celebrates Nurses



On May 21, the Division of Health Science and Nursing held their symbolic pinning ceremony on the Soccer Field. Eighty-one students graduated from the Certified Nurse Aide Programs, 19 students graduated as Licensed Vocational Nurses and 80 graduates received Associated Degrees in Nursing. More than 1,700 friends and family members attended the ceremony where each graduate received a “Lamp of Learning” and recited the “Nurse Pledge.”

## Celebration Honors Transferring Students



The eighth annual Student Success Celebration, an event that recognizes transferring students, was held on May 8 at the Clarke Estate. The event also recognized graduating students who have participated in one of the following programs:

- E.O.P&S./CARE
- Disabled Students Programs and Services
- CalWORKs
- Veterans
- MESA
- Puente
- TRiO
- Honors Transfer Program
- Summer Bridge

Each of these programs collaborated in planning this year's event. Dianne Holcomb, Transfer Center Counselor/Coordinator and Christine Aldrich, Coordinator of Cal WORKs, were the co-chairs of the event with various members from the participating programs serving on the planning committee.

Ninety students and their guests attended this festive celebration with entertainment by Chuy's Latin Jazz Band and catering by Tacos El Compadre.

## Profiles in Student Success

Each year, Rio Hondo College showcases Profiles in Student Success. This year, staff and faculty combed through the stories of many deserving students and found the three listed below exemplified success in the face of adversity and were recognized at the 51<sup>st</sup> Commencement Ceremony.



### Paola De La O

Paola De La O was a model student at Mountain View High School in El Monte. Involved in GEARUP, a college preparation program, De La O took advantage of the workshops to prepare for higher education.

Despite being a stellar and well-prepared student, she didn't have the means to head to a four-year university after high school. As an undocumented student, she could not qualify for financial aid.

“Being an undocumented student changed my perspective on life,” De La O said. “While moving to a new country was difficult, I saw that with the grace of God, my family and I were cared for.”

De La O's father died 12 years ago and left her mother to raise their children alone. She moved the family to the United States in search of a better life.

As a student who has experienced trials and has overcome obstacles, she said she feels it is her calling to work with people who also face disadvantages and a lack access to quality education and healthcare.

While De La O could only afford a couple Rio Hondo College classes at a time when she began, the passage of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act allowed her to be eligible for financial aid. She became involved in student organizations, Students Without Borders and One in Christ. As president of One in Christ, she helped coordinate trips to help serve the homeless and share the gospel on campus to other students.

She is receiving an associate of arts degree in child development and certificate to become a preschool teacher. De La O is planning to transfer to California State University, Dominguez Hills in the fall to pursue a bachelor's degree in psychology.



### David Rios

David Rios has overcome many life challenges. The 2002 Nogales High School graduate was involved in gangs and had no interest in pursuing higher education.

After high school, Rios worked in warehouse jobs and couldn't let go of his old ways. He was arrested and sent to prison. Shortly after his release, he was shot five times and became paralyzed from the chest down. Still, the streets called.

“While dealing with my disability, I spent an entire year on the streets in my wheelchair still living the gangster lifestyle,” Rios said. “After continuous trips to the hospital due to my health, I then realized I needed a new life. I knew a man in a wheelchair had no place running the streets.”

Rios enrolled at LA Trade Tech College. While he was still unclear on what major he wanted to pursue, he knew he wanted to graduate from a four-year university. With that goal in mind, Rios enrolled at Rio Hondo College and is receiving an associate of arts degree in social sciences. He will transfer to California State University, Los Angeles in the fall.



### Sandra Lucero

Sandra Lucero decided at age 47 it was time to go back to school.

For years, Lucero lived in a dark place where drugs and domestic violence cast a large shadow. To escape the abuse, she turned to drugs and unfortunately her young daughters witnessed it.

One day, her life turned around. She took a long look at herself and how her decisions affected her children.

“It was at that moment that I decided to become the best ‘me’ possible, not only for my children, but for myself,” Lucero said.

Lucero then enrolled in “Angel Step Inn Youth and Family Services,” where she picked up the tools to get sober and remain clean. She learned to love her life again and to take advantage of what it had to offer.

Soon after graduating from Angel Step, she enrolled at Rio Hondo College.

“This was one of the most intimidating decisions I've ever made in my life,” Lucero said, adding she didn't know about financial aid or other programs offered at the school, but soon joined E.O.P&S/CARE and found her dreams were much more attainable than she had imagined.

While enjoying her time at Rio Hondo, everything seemed to stop when she suffered a heart attack during the summer after her first semester. But she didn't let a little cardiac episode put her dreams on the backburner once again.

At the age of 50, Lucero is an honor roll student who received an associate degrees in drug studies and general studies with an emphasis in social behavior and self development. She credits the staff at E.O.P&S/CARE for helping her realize one of her dreams of graduating from college.