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President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

For being such a short month, February has been one for the books.

With our Spring 2014 Semester underway, I want to thank everyone for helping our students succeed: from those who helped them register and purchase their books, to those who helped counsel them and build educational plans.

Student Success is our utmost goal at Rio Hondo College. It is imperative that every decision we make in the classroom, through our services and at the administrative level, is made in the best interest of the student. I would like to commend everyone who has made this a priority.

It was with great honor and enthusiasm that we opened our door to nearly 70 high school counselors and staff from around the Southern California region to our Second Regional Counselor Breakfast on Feb. 21. There, we showcased the innovative programs Rio Hondo College offers students, immediately upon enrollment. We provided a grand tour of our state-of-the-art Physical Education

Complex and highlighted some of our groundbreaking programs geared toward Student Success, including the new Freshman Success Center.

It is our hope that the counselors take back what they learned about our Student Success Initiative and student support services to their high schools, and encourage students to give our campus a strong consideration as they seek institutions of higher education.

We also hosted the Los Angeles County Schools Trustees Association (LACSTA) K-12/California Community Colleges (CCC) Collaborative Adult Education Roundtable No. 3 on Feb. 3. There, many CCC and K-12 trustees and representatives provided important information and input as we applied for the Chancellor's Office planning funds, which will go toward programs for adults continuing their education. It was a very productive and insightful meeting that will no doubt aid the College in achieving its No. 1 priority: Student Success.

Superintendent/President Honors Councilmember at Annual Breakfast

Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss had the honor to present the Whittier Area School Administrators (WASA) Community Service Award to Pico Rivera City Councilmember Gustavo Camacho at Pico Park Community Center on Feb. 27.

Councilman Camacho, who was elected to the Pico Rivera City Council in November 2009, has served as a true partner and leader to the College in multiple capacities, from councilmember and former mayor of Pico Rivera, to member of the Rio Hondo College Citizens Oversight Committee (COC).

The College was well represented at the breakfast. Those who attended included: Vice President of Student Services Henry Gee, who also serves as the Treasurer of WASA; Interim Vice President of Finance and Business Philip Luebben; Director of Government and Community Relations Russell Castañeda-Calleros; Director of Marketing and Communications Ruthie Retana; Dean of Kinesiology, Dance and Athletics and Athletic Director Steve Hebert; Dean of Career and Technical Education Mike Slavich; and Director of TRiO Programs Dr. Zolita Fisher.



Board Update

The men's and women's soccer teams were honored at the Feb. 20 Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees meeting after completing a successful season that included championships and athletic accolades.



Men's Soccer Team

The men's team, which was introduced by Coach Orlando Brenes, finished the season as Foothill Conference champions. Brenes was also honored as the conference's Coach of the Year.



Women's Soccer Team

The women's team finished the season placing second in the Foothill Conference and was selected for a Team Academic Award from the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA), making it one of only three community college teams in the nation to receive the honor.

Following the presentations of the awards, English Professor Angela Rhodes presented her Sabbatical Report, titled "Skyping with Students." The program, which allowed Rhodes to have face-to-face conversations with her students over the Internet using Skype software, had many benefits and results, she reported.

While Skyping with students who may not have had the time to meet with her in person, Rhoads said she could use computer applications and read their work, give them feedback and answer questions in real time. The students who participated in the program were overwhelmingly positive about the project.

"Skype has made me a better teacher," she said.

Accounting Professor Jeannie Liu then gave a presentation on the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), which kicked off in February and will run through April 11. Currently, 10 student volunteers who have been certified by the IRS and three faculty members are offering tax-preparation services, free of charge for qualified taxpayers.

Based on the success of last year, which yielded \$119,000 in IRS income tax returns, Liu said she anticipates preparing about 150 returns this year.

The meeting concluded with updates from staff, including those in the areas of construction, accreditation, student services and academic affairs.

College Hosts Adult Education Roundtable

Rio Hondo College hosted the Los Angeles County School Trustees Association (LACSTA) K-12/California Community Colleges (CCC) Collaborative Adult Education Roundtable No. 3 in the Administration of Justice Building on Feb. 3.

Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss provided welcome remarks and explained the genesis for this roundtable.

The panelists who presented – all members of the Rio Hondo Adult Education Consortium – were as follows: El Monte Union High School District Superintendent Nick Salerno; Interim Director of Adult Career & Technology Education at Hacienda La Puente Adult Education Matthew Smith; and Principal of Adult Education Solutions Alan Helfman. The panelists representing Rio Hondo College were: Director of Government and Community Relations Russell Castañeda-Calleros; Interim Director of Grant Development and Management Maria Elena; and Interim Director of Continuing Education Chris Guptill.



Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss, left, Mt. San Antonio College Trustee Laura Santos, Los Angeles Community College Trustee Mike Eng, and Director of Government and Community Relations Russell Castañeda-Calleros.

The participants who attended represented a well-balanced audience from K-12 schools, community colleges, adult school administrators and trustees. Many of the attendees expressed that the roundtable was worth attending as it provided valuable information about the collaborative process to apply for the planning funds that have been pre-allocated by the Chancellor's Office. They also said they look forward to taking the next steps that will most effectively impact funding for the 2015-2016 programs for adults, and are grateful to Rio Hondo College for hosting this much-needed roundtable.

On Feb. 20, the members of the Rio Hondo Regional Adult Education Consortium submitted the Planning Grant Proposal to qualify for the AB 86 Adult Education Consortium funding during the March 2014-June 2015 planning period. Included in the proposal were the Project Narrative, the Budget and the Intent to Participate Forms. There are four member districts (El Monte Union High School District, El Rancho Unified School District, Whittier Union High School District and Rio Hondo College) and three partner districts (Bassett Unified School District, Hacienda-La Puente School District and Tri-Cities Regional Occupation Program) that comprise the Consortium. It is expected that the first portion of planning grant dollars will be disbursed in March.

Regional Counselor's Breakfast a Success

Rio in the News: [Click here to read about the Regional Counselor Breakfast in the Whittier Daily News!](#)

Nearly 70 counselors and staff from 21 high schools throughout the region learned more about Rio Hondo College's innovative academic and student services programs during the Second Regional Counselor Breakfast on Friday, Feb. 21 at the Rio Café.

The breakfast event, geared toward counselors and staff from 21 high schools, was designed to create a direct pipeline to the College's largest student group: recent high school graduates.

"We wanted to go to the source of our largest student demographic and highlight the programs and services that will benefit the students these counselors serve," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss.

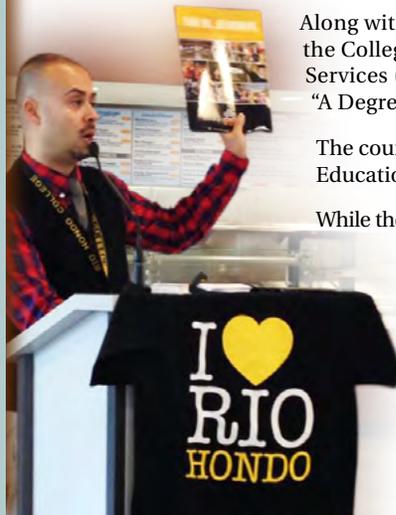
Along with hearing academic updates, counselors also learned more about the College's new Freshman Success Center, Extended Opportunity Program & Services (E.O.P.&S.), Athletics and Associate Degrees for Transfer, also known as "A Degree with a Guarantee."

The counselors also took a grand tour of the new state-of-the-art Physical Education Complex and learned more about the Student Success Initiative.

While the College has a strong relationship with high schools within the District area, counselors from other high schools in the east and west San Gabriel Valley, East Los Angeles, gateway cities and Orange County also had an opportunity to see why Rio Hondo College is a great option for students.

Such high schools included: Downey, San Gabriel, Alhambra, Baldwin Park, Los Altos, Garfield, Roosevelt, Bell Gardens, La Mirada, La Habra, Wilson, Sierra Vista, West Covina and La Puente.

Dr. Mike Muñoz, Acting Dean of Counseling and Student Success, addresses nearly 70 high school counselors and staff at the Second Regional Counselor's Breakfast on Feb. 21.



Forensics Coach Leads Students to Victory



Grant Tovmasian

The seeds of speech and debate were planted early for Grant Tovmasian, one of the Rio Hondo College Forensics Speech and Debate Team coaches and a speech instructor.

As a student in Yerevan, Armenia, Tovmasian had always shown academic promise. However, it wasn't until he was 14 that his leadership skills began to flourish as he headed a daring protest to fight for student rights at school.

"I would say I was more of a rebel than a leader," Tovmasian said with a chuckle.

After immigrating to the United States as a teenager, Tovmasian continued his education at John Burroughs High School and graduated with honors and was accepted into several prestigious universities. However, he was denied higher education due to his non-permanent resident status.

However, after working to help support his family and eventually obtaining permanent status, Tovmasian continued his education at Glendale Community College and later transferred to California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA), where he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in history.

It was at Glendale Community College that Tovmasian found his calling in the world of forensics. After taking a public speaking course, he was courted by the Speech and Debate Club. After some encouragement from his wife, he gave it a shot. As a member of the team, Tovmasian eventually captured silver and bronze medals at the speech and debate state championship tournament, and won bronze at the Phi Rho Pi National Tournament in St. Charles, Ill.

"It seemed like a natural progression for me," Tovmasian said. "I was so passionate about history, and I wanted to learn how to avoid being one of those drone history teachers."

For the past several years, Tovmasian has worked as a speech and debate coach for Glendale Community College, CSULA and now Rio Hondo College.

"I receive great satisfaction when I see my students have those 'a-ha' moments," Tovmasian said. "We all talk, and we all argue, but being able to comprehend an argument and come to a realization takes time. It is the most rewarding thing to see students benefit from that."

Forensics Showcase Highlights Student Success



John Peel

John Peel, CEO for adoption and foster care agency Concept 7 and Rio Hondo College alumnus, was the special guest moderator at the Fourth Annual Forensics Showcase on March 6 at the Wray Theater.

This year's showcase, themed "Beyond De'Bate Cave," featured performances by students on the Forensics Speech and Debate Team who are being considered for the 2014 Phi Rho Pi National Tournament, as well as a panel discussion that featured Rio Hondo College Forensics alumni and an audience question-and-answer session.

"The theme is always student success," said Forensics Speech and Debate Program Coordinator Libby Curiel. "The panel discussion is centered on how forensics speech and debate intrinsically supports the Student Success Initiative."

The showcase, was opened to the public, was designed to highlight the hard work of the Forensics Speech and Debate Team, as well as celebrate their success, Curiel said.

Some highlights included a performance by last year's gold award-winning national speaker, Steven Villescas, as well as Peel acting as moderator.

Peel, a former member of the Rio Hondo College Forensics Speech and Debate Team, serves on several local, regional and state boards, including the Rio Hondo College Foundation Board and the California Alliance for Child and Family Services. He is a past elected Trustee for the Whittier City School District, and has provided keynote addresses and motivational presentations internationally and even once on a cruise ship.

Curiel said the annual showcase benefits both the students and the community: It provides an example for what students could aspire to be and the community gains a better understanding of the program.

"We hope that the entire community gained a better understanding of the value that forensics speech and debate classes bring into the lives of our students, our entire campus and the community as a whole," Curiel said.

Forensics Opens Doors for Student

Steven Villescas has been on the Rio Hondo College Forensics Speech and Debate Team for less than two years, yet his rising star is already shining.

The Communications and Languages student has won many accolades in his tenure on the team, including placing first for his "After Dinner Speech" at a tournament in San Diego in the fall, as well as first for prose interpretation at the Pasadena City College Lancer Tournament, and performing at the 2013 Phi Rho Pu National Tournament.

"Being blessed enough to have the opportunity is a privilege in and of itself," Villescas said. "And that is why I work each and every day to make sure I do the absolute best that I can."

Villescas started his forensics career after taking Argumentation and Debate (SPCH 14) with Professor Gil Puga. He said he was drawn to the team because he enjoyed the concept of digging deeply to articulate his thoughts, who he is and finding truths to questions or notions.

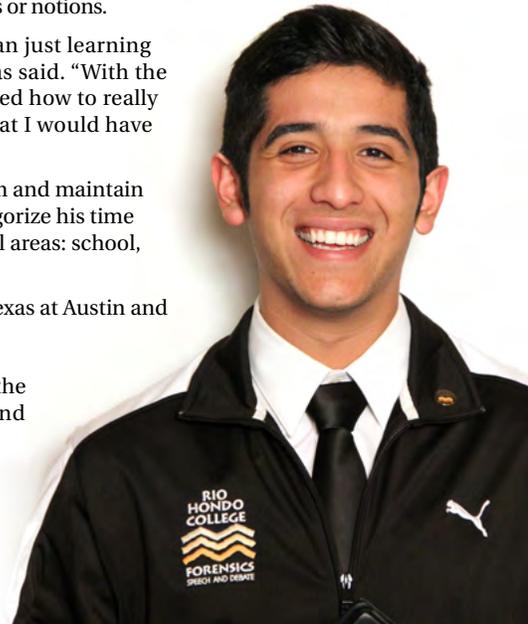
"Forensics provides something so much more profound than just learning how to speak to a group of people and not fumble," Villescas said. "With the coaches I have been fortunate enough to work with, I learned how to really dig deep and use my life experiences to articulate things that I would have never been able to understand."

In order to do well in school, give his all on the Forensics Team and maintain a personal life, Villescas said he tries his absolute best to categorize his time and looks to find a great schedule to maximize efficiency in all areas: school, forensics and at home.

In the future, Villescas hopes to transfer to the University of Texas at Austin and join its nationally ranked speech team.

For those looking to join the Forensics Team, Villescas has the following advice: "Open yourself to the world around you and take advice from those who have experienced it. Trust your coaches and fellow teammates. They do want the absolute best from you, and for you. So do not be afraid to work as hard as you can to let that show. With a discipline in forensics, the world opens up to you."

Steven Villescas



Rio in the News: Click here to read more about the Forensics Showcase in the Mid-Valley News!

New Bus Line to Serve Rio Hondo College Students



The Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) has added a new bus line to Metro's list of bus routes. Line 577 has been created to provide faster service for Rio Hondo College students who travel to and from the College. Line 577 serves Rio Hondo College students in both directions via Workman Mill Road at College Drive. Students may ride Line 577 to and from the Norwalk Metro Green Station or to and from the El Monte Station. Please visit the link below for more details:

http://media.metro.net/eblast/eblast-rio_hondo.htm

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'Transitway' Builds Bridge Between Art and Education

Rio in the News: Click here to read more about Transitway in the Pasadena Star-News!

Transitway, the collaboration between the Rio Hondo College Art Gallery and the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), was a huge success, with a capacity audience for opening and recognition on a regional level.

The monthlong exhibition kicked off on Feb. 6 with a reception and panel discussion with the four artists in the Campus Inn. Transitway featured the original artwork of Phung Huynh, Martin Durazo, Vincent Ramos and Eloy Torrez, who were commissioned by Metro to create artwork for the El Monte Metro station. The standing-room-only audience included several El Monte community members featured in the artwork, most notably recording artist Jeanette Baker (pictured in Vincent Ramos' work of the El Monte Legion Stadium).

The panel discussion covered a wide range of topics, from the creative process of each artist, to the role of public art in our region. Many Rio Hondo students and community artists in the audience asked for advice on pursuing careers in the arts and seeking public art commissions. Discussion moderator and Metro Public Arts Director Jorge Pardo compared the way Metro commissions public art to other agencies and communities, noting that Metro is considered one of the most artist-friendly agencies in the United States.

Following the panel discussion, everyone moved into the Rio Hondo College Art Gallery, where all four artists continued to answer questions long into the evening.



E.O.P.&S./C.A.R.E Goes Above and Beyond for Students

Christine Aldrich, the new Interim Director for Extended Opportunity Program & Services (E.O.P.&S.)/C.A.R.E. and CalWORKs program walks through the halls of the Student Services building being of service. Even while rushing from one meeting to another, she stops, says "Hello!" and asks a student how he or she is doing.



"You're making a difference when you work in this office," Aldrich says. "It's a great experience to be of service to these students."

The primary goal of E.O.P.&S./C.A.R.E. is to offer services to identify and recruit educationally and economically disadvantaged students and assist them with academic supportive services to enhance college success, retention, transfer to a four-year institution and be competitive in the workplace. These students face obstacles such as: language, social, economic and educational barriers.

"We want to ensure these students get the most out of their time at Rio Hondo College, and we offer tools to help them achieve, whether it's helping them create an educational plan, assistance with financial aid or even offering a backpack full of school supplies," Aldrich said.

The staff is an essential part to the success of the program. Gloria Reyes E.O.P.&S./C.A.R.E. Secretary goes above and beyond to ensure students receive delivery of services, and Irma Garcia Caballero brings 34 years of service and helps evaluate students in the program. E.O.P.&S./C.A.R.E. has several counselors who help students with three counselor contacts in the areas of personalized, vocational and academic counseling, including comprehensive educational plans. E.O.P.&S./C.A.R.E. counselors include: Dennyse Clark, Yvette Garcia, Dianna Reyes, Jose Rodriguez and Katie O'Brien, who also serves the Staff Development/FLEX Coordinator. These counselors are vital to the success of E.O.P.&S./C.A.R.E. says Aldrich.

E.O.P.&S./C.A.R.E. offers an array of services for its students including: priority registration, new-student orientation, comprehensive educational planning, tutoring, merit grants and university transfer fee waivers. E.O.P.&S. also has vouchers for books, and assists students with their graduation cap and gowns. For the 2012-2013 academic year 769 students were enrolled in E.O.P.&S., 84 of whom were in the C.A.R.E. program.

The C.A.R.E. program is a supplemental component of E.O.P.&S. program. The C.A.R.E. program provides educational support services for academically underprepared, welfare-dependent and single head of household students.

During the holidays and Easter, students enrolled in the C.A.R.E. program also attend celebrations where their children receive gifts donated by the Rio Hondo College community. The C.A.R.E. Specialist, Laura Verdugo is a leader to the delivery of services to C.A.R.E. students.

"We are committed to offering our students a comprehensive program that is both compassionate and innovative," Aldrich said. "We go above and beyond to guarantee they reach their full potential, regardless of economic or educational challenges."

The E.O.P.&S./C.A.R.E. office is located on the second floor of the Student Services building, room SS240.



Dates to Remember

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

Fridays through April 11
(except March 28)
9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
Business building, room B118

Writes of Spring

April 23-24
Wray Theater

Taste of Rio: Restaurant, Wine Tasting, Auction and Drawing

Friday, May 2
6 p.m.
Mid Quad
www.riohondo.edu/foundation

Commencement

Thursday, May 22
6 p.m.
Soccer Field

Ceremony Honors Two Fallen Officers at Rio Hondo College Police Academy

Rio in the News: Click here to see coverage from ABC7, and KVEA Telemundo 52.

The Rio Hondo College Police Academy honored two fallen heroes on Feb. 23 during the United States Honor Flag Transfer Ceremony at the Administration of Justice Police Academy Memorial, which included the Los Angeles County Airport Police, California Highway Patrol (CHP) and members of the Rio Hondo College Public Safety Division.

The solemn ceremony, known as the “tapping out” of the ceremonial flag, was in honor of CHP officers Juan Gonzalez and Brian Law, who were killed in the line of duty on Feb. 17 after a car crash in Fresno. About 10 officers from both agencies attended the ceremony in front of the Police Academy Memorial, which was televised by ABC 7 News and Telemundo.

The United States Honor Flag Transfer Ceremony was borne from the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, according to The Honor Network, a nonprofit organization dedicated to reminding Americans of the sacrifices of men and women who serve the country. After the attacks, a flag was gifted to Chris Heisler by the Texas House of Representatives. Feeling compelled to take action, Heisler organized one of the longest police motorcades in United States history as he set out for Ground Zero to honor the fallen.

Those in attendance included Assistant Dean of Public Safety Don Mason; Dean of Public Safety Academic Programs Dr. Ygnacio “Nash” Flores; Academy Instructor Sergeant Carl Jones; EMT, Homeland Security, Wildland and Fire Academy Coordinator Tracy Rickman; and Los Angeles Airport Police Lieutenant Masis Sossikian, also a Police Academy Operations Specialist at Rio Hondo College. “It was an honor that Rio Hondo College faculty and administrators came together to share in this special moment,” Flores said.



Two CHP officers receive the flag from the Los Angeles Airport Police Honor Guard while Dean of Public Safety Academic Programs Dr. Ygnacio “Nash” Flores, left, stands at salute with Homeland Security and Fire Academy Coordinator Tracy Rickman, Police Operations Specialist Lt. Masis Sossikian, Academy Instructor Sgt. Carl Jones and Assistant Dean of Public Safety Don Mason.



Rio Hondo Police Academy Instructor Sgt. Carl Jones, left, and Dr. Ygnacio “Nash” Flores honor the United States flag.



Assistant Dean of Public Safety Don Mason takes part in the United States Flag Transfer Ceremony.



Homeland Security and Fire Academy Coordinator Tracy Rickman holds the flag during the United States Flag Transfer Ceremony on Feb. 23.