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President's Message



Dr. Ted Martinez, Jr.

Congratulations to our entire Rio Hondo College community for the important role everyone plays in student success. Our 49th annual commencement ceremony showcased this year's graduates. Our efforts encouraging students to petition for associate degrees, even if they plan to transfer, paid off, with a 13 percent increase in petitions. The results were evident at the commencement ceremony, where we witnessed a parallel increase in student participation.

Thanks to speakers Eric Rodriguez and Mary Ann Pacheco for their heartfelt remarks, to Angela Rhodes and Dr. Walter Jones for skillful reading and pronouncing graduates' names; and to Dr. Mike Munoz and his committee for skillful planning and execution of the ceremony itself. I would also like to commend the staff of the President's Office for their continuing efforts and support. The ceremony would not be possible without the extraordinary help and support of our Classified staff volunteers.

This issue of Update provides snapshots of the many end-of-year events and accolades, including the Outstanding Student Awards and the Student Success Celebration. In addition, we presented certificates and pins during the Health Science and Nursing Pinning Ceremony, which provides a pipeline for these 151 new ADN, LVN, and CNA graduates to become essential employees for our community's healthcare providers.

Special thanks to Martha Carreon and her committee for organizing a 'memorable' end-of-year luncheon for our College community to help usher in the 50th anniversary celebration. Participants included many emeriti, and a graduate of the first class.

The Memorial Day Holiday provided time to reflect upon our collective gratitude to those who have served in our country's Armed Forces. We are honored to have so many military veterans among our student population. I am pleased that our Veterans Service Center is so robust that it has earned the coveted "Military Friendly School" designation for Rio Hondo College. Please be sure to see the article in this issue of Update about the \$10,000 gift to our Foundation, from the Vons Foundation (which is funded entirely by Vons employees) to help provide emergency loans for veterans awaiting their benefits as they enroll at Rio Hondo College.



Commencement



The 49th annual Commencement Ceremony took place May 24 and featured one of the largest graduating classes in Rio Hondo College history. An increase of

nearly 13 percent over last year was a result of focused efforts to help students complete their programs more efficiently, and to encourage them to recognize the importance of seeking an associate degree, even if they plan to transfer.

Alumnus Eric Rodriguez provided the commencement address. Rodriguez, 28, told a compelling story of his own teen years spent homeless and in poverty but that his perseverance and passion to gain an education took him from Rio Hondo to Brown University on scholarship. Rodriguez currently is a graduate student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University on full scholarship.

Rodriguez relayed how his failures taught him as much and even more than his successes, and that it's how we learn to deal with failure that defines our character.

Rodriguez has also served in Iraq (2003-2004); worked on constituent affairs and policy analysis for US Senator Jack Reed; and was selected as a Public Policy and International Affairs Fellow at the UC Berkeley Goldman School of Public Policy. He has received an Arthur Liman Public Interest grant from Yale Law School and a California Executive Fellowship from the Center for California Studies at CSU Sacramento and the Office of the Governor.

English and Literature Professor Mary Ann Pacheco, who retired this year, was honored as Fellow of the College. "I stayed for 37 years because Rio Hondo students are the best in the world," she said.



Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees honored retirees Barry Dineen, professor of Administration of Justice, Ned Lazaro, professor of History, and Mary Ann Pacheco, professor of English and Literature, at its May 9 board meeting. The College, its students and faculty, benefited greatly from the dedication and excellence in education provided by each during their careers. Congratulations.



Farewell to JoAnna Downey-Schilling



Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. JoAnna Downey-Schilling was honored at a bittersweet farewell on May 22, as she will depart on June 30 to Cerritos College to serve as vice president of Instruction. Downey-Schilling came to Rio Hondo in 2006 to serve as the dean of the Arts & Cultural Programs. The College wishes JoAnna the best in her new endeavors.

Outstanding Students and Spotlight on Student Success

Rio Hondo hosted its annual Outstanding Student Awards, honoring 53 students from across all disciplines and programs on campus on May 16.



This year each honored student was presented a small stipend, provided by the Library Scholarship Fund.

On May 18 Student Services shined a Spotlight on Student Success, recognizing students who've been accepted to a four-year university and/or are graduating with their AA/AS and/or certification. CalWORKs, DSP&S, EOP&S/CARE, Honors Program, MESA & TRiO SS STEM, Transfer Center, TRiO SSS and Veterans Service Center hosted the event.

Congratulations to all!



National Science Foundation Awards \$600,000 Grant to College

Students who are trying to balance working with full-time studying in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs can get a break.

The National Science Foundation has awarded Rio Hondo College \$600,000 to provide scholarships to academically talented but financially disadvantaged students in its STEM programs. The "Scholarships to Aid Rio Hondo STEM Students," or STARRS program, aims to reduce financial barriers that prevent student from achieving success in challenging STEM classes. The program will provide about 20 students annually with up to \$6,000 for the academic year to eliminate or reduce the need to work. The first group of STARRS scholars will be chosen in early summer for the 2012/2013 academic year.

The National Science Foundation award underscores the College's commitment to supporting a student population that is 70 percent Hispanic pursue studies in the STEM fields where Hispanics have been historically underrepresented, and helping them to pursue advanced degrees.

"Rio Hondo College is making great strides in improving the numbers of Hispanics who are getting science degrees," says Vann Priest, Ph.D., professor in the Physical Science Department. The National Science Foundation grant is another critical piece in this effort that already includes the highly-regarded MESA, the Math, Engineering, Science Achievement program, which enables educationally disadvantaged students to prepare for and graduate from a four-year college or university with a math-based degree in areas such as engineering, the sciences, computer science, and mathematics.

"Our students are often torn between trying to help out their families and completing majors that are extremely time-intensive, says Gisela Spieler-Persad, Ph.D., program director, Math & Science Division "They want and need to help pay bills at home, but working and studying is challenging for anyone."

Applicants must be full-time students with a STEM major, show financial need, and demonstrate academic merit and potential. The scholarships don't necessarily go to students with the highest GPAs; instead, the aim is to help students who may have lower GPAs become top students.

STARRS scholars must attend school full-time, work no job or fewer hours at jobs, meet regularly with faculty mentors, and participate in the college MESA and/or TRiO Student Support Services STEM (SSS) programs. These students will have access to advising to support their personal educational plans. They will work with a faculty mentor in their field of study.

"The National Science Foundation awards don't often go to a community college," says Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President, Ted Martinez, Jr., Ph.D. "This distinction speaks highly of the rigor of our STEM program, the dedication of our staff, and the depth of our commitment to our students."

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is an independent federal agency created by Congress in 1950 "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense.

Board Trustee Angela Acosta- Salazar Elected to California Community College League Board



Rio Hondo College board member Angela Acosta-Salazar was elected to serve as a trustee of the Community College League of California (CCLC), a nonprofit public

benefit corporation whose voluntary membership includes 72 community college districts in California. Her three-year term as a California Community College Trustee begins June 15, 2012. Acosta-Salazar was elected to this position by the 72 governing boards, or community college trustees, in the California Community College system. With just eight seats open on the 21-member board, six were filled by re-elected incumbents; the only other new trustee besides Acosta-Salazar is Ann Ransford from Glendale Community College District.

"I am honored by this opportunity to serve at a statewide capacity," says Acosta-Salazar. "The board's involvement in policy making will allow me to help influence legislative direction concerning all our community colleges."

Acosta-Salazar has served as a member of the Board of Trustees for Rio Hondo College since 2005. An adjunct instructor in the Los Angeles Community College District for the last decade, Acosta-Salazar has also served as the community leadership mentoring coordinator for Puente, as director of the HOPE Leadership Institute, as director of public relations for Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, and as a deputy director for the William C. Velasquez Institute, a research and policy institute.

A graduate of Colton High School, Acosta-Salazar has a bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of California at Irvine and a master's degree in Community and Regional Planning from the University of New Mexico. She is currently earning a doctorate in education, with an emphasis on leadership in higher education, at California State University, Long Beach.

Vons Foundation Gives \$10,000 to Veteran Students

Representatives from the Vons Foundation presented \$10,000 to the Rio Hondo College Foundation to benefit veteran students through the Veterans Emergency Loan Program.

"Supporting the men and women who have served in the armed forces is something we are deeply committed to," said Vons spokesman Carlos Illingworth. "We are proud to partner with Rio Hondo College and their center for veterans to help our military personnel pursue a college education and transition back into the civilian workforce as smoothly as possible."



In 2011 alone, the company's foundation donated more than \$285,000 to programs that help veterans. Foundation funds come through employee contributions.

Since its establishment in 2008, the Rio Hondo College Veterans Service Center has served more than 4,000 veterans and eligible dependents from five branches of the United States Armed Services annually. Temporary loans from the Veterans Emergency Loan Program are a critical source of support for students in the process of securing their veteran Financial Educational Benefits. Emergency funds made possible through the Vons Foundation contribution will enable veteran students to begin classes and purchase books and supplies until benefits arrive.

Leadership Academy



In early May new campus leaders graduated from the second-annual 2011-2012 Leadership Academy. Participants, drawn from Rio Hondo administration and staff, spent the academic year gaining knowledge about leadership theories, conflict resolution, communication, project development and implementation, and more topics. They explored innovative ways to help new students better navigate the college matriculation process. This resulted in the development of a "flip book" that will be placed on the website to help students and faculty move step-by-step through the process of registration. The RHC Leadership Academy has already welcomed 16 new members for the 2012-2013 year.



Storytelling Demonstrations

The Library invited students, faculty, staff, and community members to two storytelling demonstrations presented to the Child Development Center preschoolers in honor of Teacher Appreciation Week and Mother's Day. Students in Child Development classes were invited to observe the storytelling techniques of our two narrators that included Monique Delatte, former Children's Librarian, County of LA Public Library, and Rio Hondo College adjunct librarian and Michael D. McCarty, master storyteller. McCarty has served as co-director of the Los Angeles World Storytelling Festival, and is a member of the Storytelling Network's board of directors.

MESA/TRIO Student Support Services STEM Students are Successful!



This year, 35 MESA/TRIO SSS STEM students earned Associate degrees, 27 of whom will transfer to four-year institutions, with another 10 students transferring without the degree.

Four-year institutions to which MESA/TRIO SSS STEM students were offered admission include University of California, Berkeley; Arizona State University; State University of New York, Binghamton; Biola University; Loyola Marymount University; Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology; Stony Brook University; University at Albany; University of Massachusetts, Boston, and many more.

Over the summer, students will participate in enrichment programs, internships, and research with the following institutions: California State University, Long Beach; Future Physician Leaders – Summer Shadow Rotations 2012; Kaiser Permanente; Southern Illinois University, Carbondale; University of California, Los Angeles; University of Nebraska Medical Center; and University of Puerto Rico.

South Korean Fire Officials Visit Fire Academy and Homeland Security Training Center

Director Yim Jung Ho of the Gyeonggi Provincial Fire Service Academy in Seoul, South Korea, and his training staff took a tour of the Rio Hondo Fire Academy and regional Homeland Security Training Center. The South Korean firefighters were impressed with the breadth and depth of the College's training facilities and capabilities. They came as part of a tour of fire training facilities in Southern California organized by the Los Angeles County Fire Department.



End-of-Year Staff Event Celebrated College History

The all-staff end-of-year event May 17, chaired by Martha Carreon, helped set the theme for the coming 50th anniversary year. Congratulations to faculty who received milestone longevity awards and retirement recognition during this annual event co-hosted by the President's Office and RHCFA.



Student Yan Wang Named Jet Propulsion Lab Undergraduate Scholar



Electrical engineering student Yan Wang was named Jet Propulsion Laboratory Undergraduate Scholar (JPLUS) in May. Wang was nominated by Vann Priest, Ph.D. of the Math & Science Division for this distinction.

The JPLUS honor is bestowed upon students who have attained stellar academic achievement and have demonstrated the capacity to make original contributions to their field of study. The program was developed to recognize achievement and high potential in students attending the 30 closest community colleges to JPL and Pasadena, majoring in engineering, mathematics, computer sciences or the physical sciences.

Wang will be acknowledged at a ceremony in June at the Jet Propulsion Lab. Throughout the year-long program he will participate in activities such as seminars, workshops and conferences that will help him to become aware of and prepare for undergraduate research fellowship opportunities.

"It feels good to be acknowledged," says Wang, who was also nominated as a 2012 Outstanding Student in Chemistry and Mathematics. "It's a personal achievement." Wang, 24, a graduate of El Monte High School, came to Rio Hondo in fall 2009.

Rio Hondo College Doubles Safety Efforts with Campus-Wide Evacuation Drills



In an effort to test and further improve its emergency preparedness, as well as increase student participation in drills, Rio Hondo College executed two campus-wide evacuation drills on May 2. A morning drill was held at 10 a.m. and the first-ever drill for evening classes took place at 7 p.m. In both cases, buildings were completely evacuated in less than seven minutes.

Volunteers who serve as Building Emergency Coordinators (BEC) and Building Emergency Leaders (BEL) quickly and safely led participants to the designated emergency assembly areas. Emergency messages were sent to all staff and students via text messages, voice mail and email at the beginning of the evacuation drill and at the "all clear" signal.

Rio Hondo has about 150 Building Emergency Leaders and Coordinators who regularly meet and train around various emergency scenarios. Campus-wide emergency evacuation drills provide a real opportunity to measure and improve response systems.

According to the College's Alliance of Schools for Cooperative Insurance Programs (ASCIP) consultants, Poms and Associates, Rio Hondo is 'light years ahead of another client, a nearby college that has greater staffing resources in emergency management.'

The College's commitment to providing resources to emergency preparedness comes directly from its Superintendent/President Ted Martinez, Jr., Ph.D., who has made emergency responses and drills a high priority, says John Ramirez, interim facilities director who coordinates the volunteers. "Not all colleges do this."

Sports Round Up

Rio Hondo Baseball Team Winners – Coach Mike Salazar and the Rio Hondo Baseball Team played an outstanding season. The Roadrunners were the California State Championship runner-ups, losing only in the finals to Cosumnes River 8-6 in a 12-inning game. Congratulations to coaches Mike Salazar, Tom Fenton, Oscar Herrera and Matt Smoley and the players for their accomplishments and stellar representation of Rio Hondo College.



Women's Tennis Team – The Women's Tennis Team were co-champions of the Foothill Conference and Karen Unger received the Coach of the Year award for the sixth time in 11 years. This was also our 7th championship in the 11 years that Coach Unger has been coaching at Rio Hondo. Three players made the All-Conference First Team for Singles and four for Doubles. Congratulations!