

# PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

COVERING MARCH 2015



## President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

If I were to pick a theme for this month's President's Update, it would be student success.

The idea leaps out from the news of a student's acceptance to a prestigious music program – thanks in large part to the guidance he received from his Rio Hondo College professors.

It characterizes the tremendous effort on the part of our outreach team to expand our high school Senior Preview Days, drawing more than 1,100 students – almost 500 more than in the past.

It is also celebrated in the College's securing of NASA grants for science students, the No. 20 national ranking of our women's soccer team and the income-tax preparation help our business students provide for free to community members, saving them more than \$30,000.

Now, let me add one more element that is a striking statement of our strength of community and student focus: the student-driven idea to create a memorial for veterans on our campus, thanking them for their service and acknowledging our deep commitment to their community.

Rio Hondo College justly prides itself on being centered on students and focused on their success. All of these achievements – individual, team and community – reflect wonderfully on our campus community.

## Rio Hondo College Holds Groundbreaking Ceremony for Veterans Memorial

Campus leaders held a groundbreaking ceremony on Feb. 24 for the Rio Hondo College Veterans Memorial, a tribute to the contributions of America's armed forces and a celebration of the relationship between the College and the veterans in its student body.

The memorial comprises several elements: A roughly six-foot-by-three-foot concrete monument topped by a brass plaque and bearing discs for each of the five branches of the U.S. military; a bench where students and guests may sit and reflect on the contributions of the nation's veterans; and three flags – the U.S., California and Rio Hondo College.

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

The monument was designed by a campus task force formed in fall 2013 after members of the College's Veterans Club raised the idea. After a wide-ranging

discussion, the task force settled on the monument and location within Rio Hondo's mid-quad area. An architect was brought in to help develop those ideas.

"The task force had great discussions and ideas regarding the location, the physical elements of the memorial, the final configuration, and the meaning of each element," said committee chairman Jim Poper, Rio Hondo's Director of Facilities Services. "We wanted it to be in a location where it would be highly visible to all members of the campus community."



Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said the memorial's message reflects the values of the College community.

"Rio Hondo's veterans are part of our family," Dreyfuss said. "This monument not only acknowledges their service, but honors their relationship to the campus, to the learning environment we strive to create both in class and in our community as a whole."

The monument's construction is expected to take about two months. Rio Hondo College will hold a ceremonial ribbon cutting once it is complete later this spring.

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## Board Update



Rio Hondo College's Board of Trustees split into three groups during its March 11 meeting to visit a series of evening classes to touch base with the College's instructional efforts. Groups attended classes on auto service, English composition and research, chemistry and math during the visits, which lasted for about 20 minutes.

Board members also received a presentation from Associate Professor of Nursing Katherine B. Lopez-Alvarado on her recent sabbatical. Lopez-Alvarado used her time to take training in grant writing and then put that training into action, helping a group that benefits students secure a \$1.2 million, five-year grant.

In other significant actions, the trustees:

- Approved a revised policy on academic freedom;
- Expanded the GoRio program that gives discounted access to public transit to include the College's summer session;
- Signed a pact with Los Nietos School District that allows Rio Hondo to teach two non-credit classes in computer classrooms at the district; and
- Bumped classified staff salaries by 1.8 percent retroactive to July 1, 2013 and provided classified staff with a one-time boost of up to \$600, depending on hours worked.

## Rio Hondo College Adds Security Measures



Rio Hondo College is adding new measures to ensure the campus, known for its high safety standards and low crime activity, continues to provide the

best security possible for its students and staff. The new cameras will be located in Rio Hondo's parking lots, at the perimeter of buildings and in the quad areas, as recommended by a security consultant who evaluated the main campus and satellite centers. In addition, signs will be posted alerting the community to the cameras – to ensure they serve as an effective deterrent.

## Rio Student on Path to Music Industry

Music student Alfred Moreno has coaxed a crescendo of success from his years of focused study in piano, musical theory, musicianship and music history at Rio Hondo College, earning entry into a highly popular Music Industry Studies program at Cal Poly Pomona.

In fact, Moreno rocked Cal Poly recruiters during his audition for the impacted program, demonstrating deep knowledge and skill in each area – an incredible accomplishment for a student who never picked up an instrument or took a music class before arriving at Rio Hondo.

"Alfred is representative of the kind of success all students at Rio Hondo can achieve when they focus on their studies and collaborate with their professors and the staff that is here to guide them," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "We are proud of Alfred's accomplishment and grateful to the teachers who helped him along the way."

Moreno, of El Monte, began Rio Hondo in summer 2011 – hardly waiting for the ink to dry on his diploma from Mountain View High School. He learned in high school that community college could be used as a path to a four-year degree and chose Rio Hondo after learning through his school about the programs the College offered.

He hadn't been at Rio Hondo very long before deciding to pursue his passion for music.

Moreno started with a music fundamentals class and beginning piano. Then, in addition to algebra, English, psychology and science classes – he added a medley of advanced piano, rock 'n roll history, musicianship and even beginning guitar.

His dream: to become a music producer.

**"I am so grateful for all of the guidance I received from Rio Hondo College. It just confirms what I knew when I started here – Rio Hondo was the right place to begin my higher education journey."** - Music Student Alfred Moreno

"I want to work with artists and bands and help them create their sound," Moreno said. "I want to help bring out their creativity and inspire new ideas."

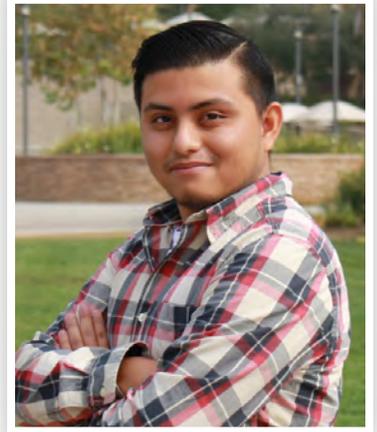
Moreno's passion drove him to excellence, as he added classical music to his mix of musical loves.

In fact, for his audition, he performed "The Spinning Song" by German composer Albert Ellmenreich and "Prelude in C Major" by Johann Sebastian Bach to demonstrate his technical facility and understanding of lyrical presentation. All applicants were required to sing the opening phrase of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." He surprised the reviewers when, instead of simply singing the lyrics, he rendered the song in the solfège style – the practice of using syllables such as "do-re-mi" to indicate the pitch of each element.

Moreno said he was helped along his journey by a duet of talented teachers: Associate Professor of Music Jannine Livingston and Professor of Music Steve Moshier. Livingston taught all five piano classes Moreno took. Moshier taught him fundamentals of music, musical theory and musicianship.

Livingston also coached him before his audition and advised him on his piano selections.

"Their help was critical to my success," Moreno said. "I am so grateful for all of the guidance I received from Rio Hondo College. It just confirms what I knew when I started here – Rio Hondo was the right place to begin my higher education journey."



# More Than 1,100 High School Seniors Attend Preview Days

Rio Hondo College hosted 1,159 area high school seniors Feb. 25-26 during its largest-ever Senior Preview Days, a program highlighting College programs, student life and academic options.

**RIO IN THE NEWS!** Click here to read more about the Senior Preview in the *WHITTIER DAILY NEWS*.

Students were bused in from 27 high schools in Whittier, Pico Rivera, El Monte, La Puente, Montebello, Bell Gardens, Baldwin Park, Downey, San Gabriel and Los Angeles for three, three-hour sessions on Wednesday, Feb. 25 and two sessions on Thursday, Feb. 26.

"We expanded our focus this year so we could share information with as many students as possible," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "Rio Hondo has so much to offer to students, whether they're starting on the path to a four-year degree or taking career and technical education classes such as nursing or public safety."

Roughly 3,800 graduating high school seniors from across the region choose Rio Hondo College each year to start their higher education journeys.

Senior Preview Day, an annual tradition at Rio Hondo College, typically has focused on schools within the College's immediate service area, drawing about 750 students each year for a one-day event. In 2014, the College began expanding the program to provide more students with the opportunity to learn about Rio Hondo. This year, the numbers exploded into what has become a two-day affair.

"We provide the students with a great preview of the College," said Vanessa Chavez Almena, Interim Project Manager of Student Success and Support Programs. "They get a chance to visit classrooms, meet students and learn about our clubs and student life."



## Students Lobby Sacramento Lawmakers

A trio of Rio Hondo students and two College leaders discussed the governor's budget and other legislative proposals with five California lawmakers during a whirlwind March in March lobbying trip.

Associated Students President Alejandro Ramirez and senators William Ashby and Leslie Gutierrez took part in the March 2 trip, accompanied by Vice President of Student Services Henry Gee and Director of Government and Community Relations Russell Castañeda-Calleros.

The students met with Assemblymen Ed Chau and Ian Calderon, and representatives of Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia, state Sen. Tony Mendoza, and state Sen. Dr. Ed Hernandez.

They discussed the governor's proposal for \$200 million in student success funding as well as six proposed bills, including legislation establishing a non-resident tuition exemption for U.S. military and veterans, legislation allowing community colleges to take disciplinary action against students for off-campus conduct and legislation authorizing community colleges to partner with K-12 school boards to develop collaborative college and career pathways.



**Pictured (L-R):** Rio Hondo College Vice President of Student Services Henry Gee, Associated Students of Rio Hondo College (ASRHC) Sen. Leslie Gutierrez, ASRHC President Alejandro Ramirez, ASRHC Sen. William Ashby and Dorian Almaraz from the Office of Senator Tony Mendoza.



**Pictured (L-R):** Associated Students of Rio Hondo College (ASRHC) Sen. William Ashby, RHC Director of Government and Community Relations Russell Castañeda-Calleros, ASRHC Sen. Leslie Gutierrez, ASRHC President Alejandro Ramirez and Vice President of Student Services Henry Gee on the floor of the California State Senate.

## Students Receive NASA Research Scholarships



Twenty-five students from Rio Hondo College will receive \$750 scholarships through a NASA community college grant created to boost participation

and awareness in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) studies.

The funds are provided by the California Space Grant Consortium, which is part of the National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program, a nationwide higher education project designed to administer programs in aerospace-related fields. Twelve California community colleges, including Rio Hondo, will share in the Competitive Opportunity for Partnerships with Community Colleges and Technical Schools grant.

The money will help fund a two-year research program for students in Rio Hondo College's Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) program. One of the Consortium's goals is to enable students to gain technical skills that will ease their transfer to the California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC), where they can complete their education in related fields.

"We want to take students who are early in the program and solidify and expand their interest in STEM course studies," said Dr. Gisela Spieler-Persad, professor of mathematics at Rio Hondo College and director of the school's MESA and TRiO Student Support Services STEM Program. "We are very excited about the opportunities this program will offer our students."

Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said programs like the research scholarships contribute to Rio Hondo's focus on helping students pursue a diversity of educational paths.

"Our College is fortunate to have leadership from faculty members like Professor Spieler-Persad, who played a key role in helping to secure this fantastic opportunity for our students," Dreyfuss said.

Twelve Rio Hondo students have been chosen for the initial round of scholarships and will begin their journey by participating in a series of NASA webinars. The students will visit aerospace facilities, among them the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena. They also will design and implement their own micro-computing projects.

If the program proves successful, the colleges hope to secure additional funding sponsors once the grant has run its course.

## Business Students Help Save Community Members Money During Family Resource Fair

Rio Hondo students, as part of the College's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, helped to fill out electronic tax returns for more than 102 people during a Family Resource Fair on Feb. 27, saving taxpayers an estimated \$30,600.

The event was kicked off by Rio Hondo Interim Dean of Business and Dean of Public Safety Dr. Ygnacio "Nash" Flores and Business Professor Jeannie Liu, along with California Board of Equalization President Jerome Horton.

Horton and state Sen. Tony Mendoza let the VITA volunteers know how important their services are to the community. Also attending were representatives of the offices of Assemblyman Ian Calderon, U.S. Rep. Linda Sanchez and Los Angeles County Assessor Jeffrey Prang. Attending for Rio Hondo was Associate Dean Don Mason.

The event featured a number of services provided by more than 16 community partners.

Rio Hondo's VITA volunteers will continue to offer assistance to taxpayers on Fridays through April 11. For questions or to make an appointment contact: Business Office (562) 463-7359 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.



**Pictured (L-to-R):** Michael Vuong, from the Office of U.S. Rep. Linda Sanchez, Dean of Public Safety and Interim Dean of Business Ygnacio V. Flores, Rio Hondo College Business Professor Jeannie Liu, California Board of Equalization Chairman Jerome Horton, state Sen. Tony Mendoza, and Danny Fierro and Samantha Marquez from the Office of Assemblyman Ian Calderon.

## Women's Soccer Ranked 20<sup>th</sup> in Nation

Rio Hondo women's soccer team concluded its 2014 season as the Foothill Conference champions and secured a ranking of 20<sup>th</sup> in the nation for Junior Colleges Division III (non-scholarship) from the National Soccer Coaches Association of America. The NSCAA conducts the most widely recognized national and regional soccer ranking system in the country, a program designed to stimulate intercollegiate soccer and recognizes programs enjoying remarkable success. The team's final record was 15-2-4 overall and 7-0-3 in conference play.



# Student Scholarships Focus of 'A Taste of Rio'

The Rio Hondo College Foundation's annual A Taste of Rio will be held at 6 p.m. Friday, May 1 at Rio Hondo College's main quad, featuring cuisine from more than 14 area restaurants and wine tasting.

Each year, the event raises more than \$45,000 for scholarships and other programs to assist Rio Hondo students.

A Taste of Rio tickets are \$35 for pre-sale general admission and \$75 for premium admission, which includes a swag bag, bottle of wine and tequila/scotch tasting. To register or donate online, visit [rio.hondo.edu/foundation](http://rio.hondo.edu/foundation).

## Connect with Us on Social Media



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#iLoveRioHondo

## 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 associate degrees, certificates, transfer, career and technical pathways, basic skills proficiency, and lifelong learning.

## Save The Date



**7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 7:**  
Music Faculty Recital, Wray Theater

**2 p.m. Tuesday, April 7:**  
Women's Tennis vs. San Diego Mesa

**3 p.m. Wednesday, April 8:**  
Softball vs. Chaffey College

**6 p.m. Thursday, April 9:**  
Community Educational Forum, Los Nietos Middle School, 11425 Rivera Road, Whittier

**8 p.m. Friday, April 10:**  
Rio Hondo College Observatory Public Night (weather permitting)

**6 p.m. Wednesday, April 15:**  
Board of Trustees meeting

**1 to 2 p.m. Thursday, April 16:**  
Creative Writing Club, Poetry and Prose Reading, Student Union Building

**2:30 p.m. Thursday, April 23:**  
Baseball vs. San Bernardino

**6 p.m. Thursday, April 23:**  
Community Educational Forum, East Whittier Middle School, 14421 E. Whittier Blvd., Whittier

**8 p.m. Thursday to Sunday, April 23-26:**  
Spring play, "The Poor of New York," Wray Theater

**8 p.m. Friday, April 24:**  
Rio Hondo College Observatory Public Night (weather permitting)



**8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, April 29 and Thursday, April 30:**  
Writes of Spring: A Celebration of Writers

**6 p.m. Friday, May 1:**  
A Taste of Rio, Mid-Quad

**7 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, May 7-9:**  
Spring 2015 Evening of Dance, Wray Theater

**8 p.m. Friday, May 8:**  
Rio Hondo College Observatory Public Night (weather permitting)

**6 p.m. Wednesday, May 13:**  
Board of Trustees meeting

**8 p.m. Friday, May 15:**  
Rio Hondo College Observatory Public Night (weather permitting)

**7 p.m. Monday, May 18:**  
Artist reception, "Post Modern Barbecue" Student Art Show, Rio Art Gallery

**7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 19:**  
Musical performance by the Workman Mill Industrial Orchestra, Wray Theater

**7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 21:**  
Vocal Arts Ensemble, "Meet the Masters, Part 2," Wray Theater

**6 p.m. Thursday, May 28:**  
Commencement, Parking Lot A

## Los Angeles Humorist, Playwright Top Bill for 'Writes of Spring'

Lalo Alcaraz, creator of the nationally syndicated comic strip "La Cucaracha," and Evelina Fernandez, writer of the play and movie "Luminarias," top a roster of influential Southern California authors scheduled for Rio Hondo College's annual "Writes of Spring" festival.

The two-day festival celebrates the written word, theater and the arts with a focus on writers and artists who live and work in the region. It will be held Wednesday, April 29 and Thursday, April 30 at the Wray Theater.

Alcaraz is author of a compendium of political cartoons, a faculty member at Otis College of Art & Design in Los Angeles and co-host of KPFK Radio's satirical talk show "The Pocho Hour of Power." Fernandez is an actor and writer who received the Nosotros Golden Eagle Award for her portrayal of Julie in "American Me" and a Golden Eagle for writing the screenplay for "Luminarias." They will be joined by writer Michael Jaime-Becerra, poet Douglas Kearney, mystery writer Tyler Dilts and artist Katrina Kunstmann.

The free event will feature readings from the River's Voice student literary journal, as well as the River Deep Student Film Festival, featuring Jill D'Agneica, an award-winning film director and film editor for ABC Family's "Switched at Birth."