

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

COVERING DECEMBER 2015



President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

Rio Hondo College concluded 2015 with a flourish of academic success, athletic achievement and community engagement – setting just the right tone as we prepare for the new tasks and challenges of 2016.

Our Forensics Speech and Debate Team once again demonstrated the skill and tenacity that has become its hallmark, chalking up numerous individual and team prizes during the fall championships.

Our own Kellori Dower, director of choral and vocal music, was recognized for her passion and dedication as Outstanding

Music Educator of the Year for the California Music Education Association's Southeastern Section.

And, also on the arts front, our Rio Hondo Dance Collective stunned community audiences with its family-friendly adaptation of "The Nutcracker," a show that also included 40 children from local schools and our Child Development Center.

Our sports teams also sparked. Our women's soccer team recorded its best season ever. Two players – twin sisters who are both A students – also earned recognition as All-Americans. Men's soccer made the state playoffs as well and had two players named to the 2015 NSCAA Junior College Men's Scholar All-America Team. In addition, four of our wrestlers finished in the top 10 during this year's extraordinarily fierce state competition.

Rio Hondo's devotion to community was also seen in other ways.

Professor John Frala and his automotive technology team were the latest faculty members to volunteer their time running workshops at local K-12 schools, showing elementary students how paper airplanes can demonstrate aerodynamic principles.

Meanwhile, campus groups from the Associated Students of Rio Hondo College and Foster Guardian Program to our faculty, staff and administrators gathered and donated gifts for community members. Because of their efforts, children in Whittier, the children of our CARE students and local foster children and youths all had an extra reason to smile this season.

Once again, I have been moved by the passion and dedication demonstrated by our Rio Hondo College family.

Rio Hondo Women's Soccer Team Achieves Best Season Ever

Rio Hondo College's women's soccer team placed second in this year's California Community College Athletic Association's State Championship, the furthest it has ever advanced in playoff competition.

It was a season replete with firsts.

First, the Roadrunners amassed a 16-1-4 season to secure a No. 2 seeding in Southern California and return to the playoffs for the first time since 2014, when it advanced to round two.

Then, the team won its first-ever regional finals in round three of the playoffs, edging past Moorpark College in a 1-0 game on Nov. 28 to be awarded its first-ever CCCAA State Final Four invitation.

In the team's semi-final matchup, Rio Hondo trounced Northern California's No. 2 seed, Modesto Junior College, 3-0. **Continued on page 2**

RIO IN THE NEWS! Click here to read more about the Rio Hondo women's soccer team in the *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*.



- Board Report.....2
- Two Men's Soccer Team Players Named All Americans.....2
- Director of Choral Music Named Educator of the Year.....3
- Four RHC Wrestlers Place in State Finals3
- Land Purchase Doubles Footprint for Firefighting Training Facility3
- Student Government Tops Contribution Goals with Annual Toy Drive.....4

- Six Nursing Students Near Graduation.....4
- Automotive Technology Professors Use Paper Airplanes to Teach Elementary Students Aerodynamics.....4
- Debate Team Scores Victories in Fall Championships5
- Dance Collective Wows Community with Family-Friendly 'Nutcracker' Performance5

- Foster Children, Youths Receive More than 150 bags from Case of Hope Drive.....6
- Campus Community Creates Holiday Memories at CARE Celebration6
- Faculty, Staff and Administrators Donate Toys to South El Monte Chamber....7
- Save The Date7
- Third Annual Regional Counselor Breakfast to Highlight RHC Opportunities, Services7

IN THIS ISSUE

Board Report

Rio Hondo College trustees adopted a new student equity plan, reviewed bond-funded facility improvements and bid farewell to five retiring staff members during their Dec. 9 meeting.

Equity plan

The student equity plan – presented to and reviewed by the Board in November – includes \$1.6 million to help students who need assistance with specific challenges, such as access, course and degree completion, basic skills and English mastery, and transfers. Specific student target populations differ for each group, but include Hispanics, foster children, veterans and students with disabilities.

California student equity programs have existed since 1992, but deep funding cuts were handed down during the recent recession. In 2014, the governor and legislature pumped \$70 million into the program, a figure that grew to \$137.5 million in 2015-16.

Soccer field

The College's soccer field renovation is nearing completion. Workers have tested out the new lighting system, which has three settings depending the field's use – event, practices and for community walks along the track.

Landscaping is being planted and the field is being prepared for installation of turf. The field includes a fence to separate the crowds from the track and separate walkway that allows people to circumnavigate the field.

Upcoming projects include the Rio Plaza entryway for the College and the Pico Rivera Educational Center.

Retirements

Board members also celebrated the contributions of classified employees Audrey Boyce, William Fox, Diana Gutierrez and LaVonne Hirabayashi, and management retiree Timothy Connell.



Rio Hondo Women's Soccer Team Achieves Best Season Ever (continued)

That victory earned the Rio Hondo College women a chance to face perennial state champion Cerritos College in the championship game. The Roadrunners came up short in that final matchup as Cerritos claimed its fourth straight title, but the team's performance secured it a second-place standing in the state tournament.



Throughout the season, the Roadrunners were praised for their tenacious defense and lightning quick offense.

"The women were focused throughout our season, and it showed with the discipline and determination that brought them to the finals," coach Jennifer Tanaka-Hoshijo said. "I am so proud of them for achieving an amazing season."



Tanaka-Hoshijo was named Foothill Conference Coach of the Year for her efforts.

Twin sisters Janeth Acuna, a midfielder and Maritza Acuna, a defender, were designated All-Americans by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America. Janeth, a sophomore, was named to the Division III First Team and Maritza, a co-captain, was named to the Division III Second Team.

The team finished the season ranked eighth in the nation, its second consecutive top-20 ranking.



Two Men's Soccer Team Players Named All-Americans

Two players from Rio Hondo College's men's soccer team have been named to the National Soccer Coaches Association of America's **2015 Junior College Men's Scholar All-America Teams**.

Samuel Semanda, a psychology major, was named to the first team. Joshua Cuevas, a Spanish major, was named to the second team. To qualify, student-athletes must maintain grades above 3.0, start at least half of all games and be significant contributors to their teams.

The men's soccer team had a great season this year, qualifying for the state playoffs.



Director of Choral Music Named Educator of the Year

Rio Hondo College
Director of Choral and Vocal Music
Kellori Dower
has been named
Outstanding
Music Educator
of the Year for
the California
Music Education
Association's Southeastern Section.



Dower, known as Mama D, has directed award-winning high school and college choral music programs for 16 years, as well as serving as an arts high school vice principal and district administrator.

She is a choral composer whose ensembles have performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and Orchestra Hall. Dower also helped the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing create a test for new music teachers, and serves as a choral adjudicator and clinician across the U.S.

Choir performs: Rio Hondo College's choir performs during a celebration for re-elected trustees who were sworn into office in December.



Four RHC Wrestlers Place in State Finals

Four wrestlers from Rio Hondo College placed in the highly competitive state finals, capping another outstanding season for the team.

Daniel Romero (141 lbs.) contended for the state championship, but was edged out 5-4 in overtime. He placed No. 2 in state.

Roger Arce (165 lbs.) and Joshua Escobedo (197 lbs.) each placed fifth while Elias Mercado (141 lbs.) placed eighth.

The state competitions are fierce, and it is almost as challenging to qualify for a chance to wrestle in the event. Two additional Roadrunners achieved that status this year: Preston Gannon (133 lbs.) and James Schmidt (149 lbs.).

The team is coached by Mike Tellez.



Rio Hondo College wrestlers: (L-R) Coach Elvis Arce, Roger Arce, James Schmidt, Joshua Escobedo, Coach Pedro Gomez, Daniel Romero, Coach Andrew Madrigal, Preston Gannon, Coach David Bernal, Elias Mercado, Michael Robles and Coach Mike Tellez.

Land Purchase Doubles Footprint for Firefighting Training Facility

Rio Hondo College is doubling the size of its Santa Fe Springs training facility for firefighters and homeland security programs, acquiring three acres previously leased.

RIO IN THE NEWS! Click here to read more about the Santa Fe Springs purchase in the *Whittier Daily News*.

The expanded 6.1-acre footprint gives the College greater flexibility in its development of what many already consider

to be the area's top center for teaching new firefighters and training first responders in advanced techniques for natural disasters, hazardous material spills and terrorist attacks.

The College has used the land under a lease agreement for nearly nine years, constructing \$2.1 million in training props and infrastructure. In 2012, the College worked in collaboration with the Santa Fe Springs Fire Department to open a regional Homeland Security Training Center to serve Los Angeles County on the property.

"This purchase is a natural evolution of our use of the land, cementing our role as a regional training center and ensuring we have the control needed to continue providing superior training services for our students and our community," Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said.

Rio Hondo Fire Academy Coordinator Tracy Rickman said the center is used non-stop by area firefighters and public safety agencies, including area SWAT teams.

"There's always something going on here, some kind of training, seven days a week," Rickman said. "This purchase is going to make it easier for us to configure the property any way we need."

The center includes a rail car and a tanker truck that are used to simulate hazardous material spills, a replica of a home and garage, and other tools for training firefighters, emergency medical technicians and SWAT teams.

Much of the development was funded by grants – which Rickman noted are easier to obtain when the agency seeking funding owns the land where the funds will be spent.

One of the newest programs is the California State Training Institute, which conducts the hazardous materials training.

Graduates of the six-week course are certified as hazmat specialists, the highest level of training possible. The skill set includes training for handling weapons of mass destruction.

RIO IN THE NEWS! Click here to read more about the Santa Fe Springs purchase in the *Downey Patriot*.

Student Government Tops Contribution Goals with Annual Toy Drive

Student leaders have outdone themselves once again, collecting more than 200 toys for area children as part of an annual holiday drive and continuing a pattern of success most recently seen in a November canned-food drive.



The Associated Students of Rio Hondo College (ASRHC) filled more than five boxes of toys in just three weeks for Whittier Interfaith Food Center – the same group that benefitted from the group’s food drive.

“We had a great turnout,” said Herzon Alfaro, the ASRHC senator for community service.

The student government drive had aimed to collect 150 toys – itself a 50 percent boost over its 2014 effort. Similarly, its food drive generated more than 1,400 cans of food – a 400 percent leap in two years.

The group launched its annual toy drive on Nov. 23, seeking new, unwrapped toys, gift cards and even clothing, with an emphasis on the need for children ages 9 and older. It offered as an incentive a \$150 prize to the campus club that generated the most donations. The funds can be used to support activities, buy T-shirts or even send students to conferences.

RIO IN THE NEWS! Read about the ASRHC’s record-setting canned-food drive in the *Mid Valley News*.

Six Nursing Students Near Graduation

Six Rio Hondo College nursing students are set to graduate in May 2016 and will complete their clinical rotations at White Memorial Medical Center: Camille Artech, Taylor Colacion Samantha Garcia, Lorena Martinez, Raquel Pulido and Michael Zapata. The students all received scholarships through The East Los Angeles Community Union (TELACU) and will have jobs as registered nurses upon passing their board exams.

Automotive Technology Professors Use Paper Airplanes to Teach Elementary Students Aerodynamics

Paper planes looped-the-loop, soared for long distances and perform acrobatics when Rio Hondo College auto experts held a series of aerodynamics workshops for 120 fourth- and fifth-graders at East Whittier City School District’s Scott Avenue Elementary School on Dec. 11.

Professor John Frala, Professor Steve Tomory, PACT Coordinator Mike Dighera and Instructor Marius Dornean guided the excited students as they used five color-coded plane designs to explore how different configurations generate spectacularly different flight patterns.

Frala said the team chose paper airplanes as a fun way to introduce concepts integral to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields – areas of increasing demand for careers and of increasing focus at colleges.

“This is a great way for us to reach out to the kids, to get them excited about STEM topics,” Frala said. “And the kids were great – they paid careful attention during our talk about what to do, and then assembled their planes. We flew them outside because a nice breeze meant we’d get even more air time. It was a lot of fun for us and them.”

Frala, who worked for more than two decades in the auto industry, is recognized nationally for his work in alternative-fuels education. In 2015, he led a Rio Hondo College team that won a National Science Foundation grant to create and evaluate work-based training tools for alternative-fuels automotive technology students. He is a member of California’s Green Team, an advisory group dedicated to creating a system of hydrogen fuel stations.

Previous outreach programs include coding camps led by Computer Science Professor Dr. Shin Liu and the Rio Hondo College Computer Science Club.



Debate Team Scores Victories in Fall Championships

Rio Hondo College's Forensics Speech and Debate Team took home a series of individual and team awards at the 2015 PSCFA Fall Championship Tournament held at Mt. San Antonio College.

Twenty-seven students, led by Forensics Coordinator Libby Curiel and Debate Coach Grant Tovmasian, collectively engaged in more than twenty-four hours of competitive debating.

Volunteer tournament judges included Rio Hondo instructors Wendy Lai and Erin Crossman, among others.

Four students earned individual bronze medals in their respective International Parliamentary Debate Association (IPDA) categories:

- ▶ Sam Recinos (senior)
- ▶ Christopher Pinkstaff (junior)
- ▶ Michelle Arroyo (novice)
- ▶ Glenn Marshall (novice)

Three students earned IPDA debate speaker awards:

- ▶ Victor Wright - 14th place overall tournament speaker (senior)
- ▶ Christopher Pinkstaff - 23rd place overall tournament speaker (junior)
- ▶ Gabriel Sanchez - 22nd place overall tournament speaker (novice)

In American Parliamentary (Team) Debate, one duo landed as tournament octo-finalists:

- ▶ Sam Recinos and Patricia Hughes (senior)

Six students also earned speaker awards in their respective categories:

- ▶ Sam Recinos - 4th place overall tournament speaker (senior)
- ▶ Christopher Pinkstaff - 5th place overall tournament speaker (junior)
- ▶ Apolo Ayala - 25th place overall tournament speaker (novice)
- ▶ Michelle Arroyo - 34th place overall tournament speaker (novice)
- ▶ Lorena Gonzalez - 6th place overall tournament speaker (rookie)
- ▶ Cynthia Bentancourt - 9th place overall tournament speaker (rookie)

Before the tournament, team members participated in a group charitable effort on Thanksgiving, helping prepare and serve meals at St. Matthias Episcopal Church in Whittier. Volunteers included Jessica Rosas, Stephanie Hernandez, Tomas Morales and John Aguilar.



Dance Collective Wows Community with Family-Friendly 'Nutcracker' Performance



More than 500 community members attended the Rio Hondo College Dance Collective's performances of "The Nutcracker," a family-friendly adaptation of the holiday classic that featured 40 students from local schools.

The two shows, performed Dec. 13, were well received by community members, especially the

Collective's effort to engage students from Pioneer High School, Hadley School, Dean Shively Middle School and Rio Hondo College's Child Development Center.

The Dance Collective is an ensemble of advanced students in the Rio Hondo Dance Program who are pursuing careers as dancers, choreographers or in another aspect of the field. The group performs on campus, at area dance festivals and community concerts.

Twelve of the dancers were from the Collective, with 10 more performers selected from Rio Hondo College's ballet and modern dance programs.

This show was the Collective's fifth annual holiday production, and helped the group surpass goals for raising funds so members could participate in a national dance program.



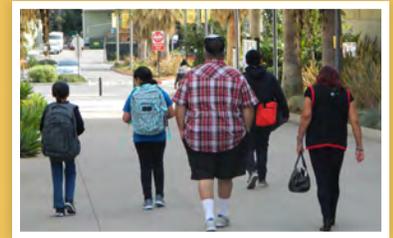
Foster Children, Youths Receive More than 150 Bags from Case of Hope Drive

Rio Hondo College students, faculty and staff contributed more than 150 backpacks and suitcases for foster children and youths as part of the College's second annual Case of Hope Drive.

More than 60 children and youths received items during a lunch on Dec. 5 that included a dance performance entitled "Nested Memories" from Rio Hondo Dance Collective's "Work in Progress." More than 75 youths and children picked up bags in the weeks following the lunch.

The baggage drive was launched in 2014 to help foster children and youths, who often have no bags when they shift homes or leave the system, forcing them to abandon their possessions.

The event was run this year by the Guardian Scholars Program and the Foster Care Education Program, in collaboration with community partner Concept 7 Foster Family Agency.



Campus Community Creates Holiday Memories at CARE Celebration

Inspiration was the theme of the annual CARE holiday celebration on Dec. 16 – as represented in moving speeches, a sharing of gifts and a celebration of community, staff and faculty for their support of students.

Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss offered a warm welcome to the CARE students, their children and families.

Guest speaker Michelle Garcia – a Rio Hondo College alumna who is Special Programs Manager for the Student Diversity Success Initiative and Incite Program at Fullerton College – gave a moving speech about not letting anything or anyone stop you from pursuing your goals.

She shared with the CARE students details of her own struggles as a college student who was in and out of a relationship with an abusive boyfriend. Thanks to the support and guidance of CARE counselors and staff, she overcame her obstacles, graduated from Rio Hondo College, earned a Master of Science, and recently began a doctorate program at Cal State Fullerton.

After Garcia's inspirational story, Santa Claus came to visit while CARE counselors and staff distributed toys donated by the Rio Hondo College family to the children of CARE students.

Community and college supporters of the CARE program were also recognized during the heartfelt event.

Director of EOP&S/CARE Heba Griffiths and CARE Specialist Laura Verdugo thanked Vice President Henry Gee and Faculty Ambassador/CARE Club Advisor Angela Rhodes for their unconditional support to CARE and presented them with gifts of appreciation.

Members of the Soroptimist International of Whittier and the Soroptimist International of El Monte Members were thanked for scholarships they have generously provided to CARE students.



Faculty, Staff and Administrators Donate Toys to South El Monte Chamber

Rio Hondo College faculty, staff and administrators donated five boxes of toys to the South El Monte Chamber of Commerce as part of their annual holiday luncheon, held Dec. 3 at Swiss Park. Roughly 112 faculty, staff and administrators attended the event, which included comments by Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss and RHCFA President Sergio Guzman.

Connect with Us on Social Media

 **RHCRoadrunners**

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 **RioHondoCollege**

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

Save The Date



6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 13:

Board of Trustees meeting; Board Room

Monday, Jan. 18:

Campus closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day

8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Friday, Jan. 22:

Regional High School Counselor Breakfast; Rio Café

Friday, Jan. 29: FLEX Day

Saturday, Jan. 30: First day of spring 2016 semester

6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 10:

Board of Trustees meeting; Board Room

Friday, Feb. 12 and Monday, Feb. 15:

Campus closed

10 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 18:

Watoto Children's Choir; Wray Theater

Third Annual Regional Counselor Breakfast to Highlight RHC Opportunities, Services

Rio Hondo College will host its third annual breakfast for about 100 counselors from 25 area high schools at 8 a.m. Friday, Jan. 22, in the Rio Café.

RIO IN THE NEWS! Read more about the Regional Counselor Breakfast in the *Whittier Daily News*.

"This breakfast is quickly becoming a tradition for Rio Hondo College and the high schools we serve," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "It's a great opportunity for us to share our latest programs and to learn about the needs of our local high school seniors."

This year's event includes discussion of the College's academic programs, including the Common Assessment initiative aimed at California's community colleges and how high school transcripts will play a role among other measures in placing students in English and math classes.

The event will also provide an opportunity to tour Rio Hondo College's Automotive Technology Department, which will begin to offer a four-year Bachelor of Science degree in fall 2016 as part of a historic state pilot program, and of the College's Career and Technical Education facilities.

A program fair will be held to provide counselors with information about Rio Hondo College's student services programs.

The breakfast is a prelude to the annual Senior Preview Days scheduled for Feb. 23-24, when hundreds of local high school seniors will visit the College.

