

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

COVERING MARCH 2016



President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

Community connections characterize Rio Hondo College's March efforts as members of the campus linked with local schools, political leaders in our neighborhood and Washington, D.C., and we caught up with alumni who are achieving success built upon their experiences at Rio Hondo.

Perhaps the biggest moment of the month was the grand opening of our new soccer complex, culminating a yearlong effort to create a world-class facility worthy of our extraordinary student-athletes.

As we know, the path to excellence and opportunity takes many forms, and academic success often pairs with athletic accomplishments.

The celebration was just one of many opportunities we had to showcase our robust academic program.

Rio Hondo College professors joined Read Across America activities, inspiring students to read; our student leaders advocated for Rio Hondo to legislators in Washington, D.C.; a local Assembly member visited our campus to learn about our programs and I had the privilege of serving as Principal for a Day at a local school.

Further enriching the month was the news of a music student's acceptance into a prestigious university program and the return of two alumni to direct a pair of spring theatrical productions on campus.

Taken together, this is a great example of how our efforts in the classroom are so closely connected with the life of our community and how our community supports and enriches our campus.

▲ \$3.8 Million Soccer Complex Offers NCAA-Regulation Field, Six-Lane Track

Rio Hondo College's new \$3.8 million soccer complex provides a world-class venue fitting for its nationally ranked student-athletes as well as a facility that will serve the campus community in a variety of ways, speakers announced at a grand-opening celebration on March 24.

RIO IN THE NEWS! Click here to read more about Rio Hondo College's new soccer complex in the *Whittier Daily News*.

"I am thrilled that this fine soccer field will be appreciated by our campus community," Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss told a crowd of students, faculty, staff and administrators at the event. "I would also like to thank our community for supporting our Measure A Bond, which made this close to \$4 million project possible."

The complex includes an NCAA-regulation, artificial turf pitch, a six-lane synthetic track, three-stage lighting system, pedestrian walkway, ADA-accessible bleachers, scoreboard and landscaping. A new restroom building arrives in May.

The project was launched in March 2015, one element of a broader facilities improvement effort that includes expansion of the campus bookstore, seismic retrofitting of the College's L Tower and other upgrades.

The three-stage lighting system can be adjusted to provide the brilliant shine needed for night games, a less intense setting for night practices and

yet another setting to illuminate folks walking the track.

The complex will be home to the College's extraordinary soccer teams. The Rio Hondo College women's soccer team finished second in the state this year, helping two scholar athletes win national recognition and scholarships to pursue medical studies and soccer at UC Irvine. Rio Hondo College's men's team also had a successful season, qualifying for the state playoffs.



Rio Hondo student Erika Lizarraga, a first-year soccer player who played in 21 games this past year, became the first Lady Roadrunner to set foot on the new soccer field followed by several of her teammates.

Lizarraga shared her pride in the team's accomplishments and thanked the Rio Hondo College faculty for helping her achieve her goals. She hopes to transfer to a four-year university, where she will play soccer for a Division I team while studying to become a physician's assistant.

RIO IN THE NEWS! Click here to read more about Rio Hondo College's new soccer complex in the *The Downey Patriot*.

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Board Report

The Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees honored the men's soccer team and nominated a faculty member and community member for special awards during the group's March meeting.

The soccer team, which ended the season ranked 17th in the nation.

The men's team finished third in the Foothill Conference with a 14-2-5 record and was ranked sixth in the state as it entered the playoffs. The team played to a 1-1 tie in its first playoff game, ending its season.

Forward Sergio Becerra and defender Jordan Gutierrez made the 2015 California Community College Athletic Association All-Southern California Men's Soccer Team, and Gutierrez also made the 2015 All-State Team.

Other players on the team include Ivan Barranco, Luis Beltran, Luis Bonola, William Castillo, Joshua Cuevas, Edwin Elizarraraz, Edgar Gomez, Alex Granados, Moses Gutierrez, Carlos Jimenez, Victor Joya, Nicholas Knapp, Luis Marquez, Fernando Martinez, Thomas Mejia, Hector Munoz, Luis Munoz, Ezequiel Pena, Angel Romo, Alex Saenz, Samuel Semanda and Jose Valdivia.

"We are one of the top schools in the United States in the sport of soccer," coach Orlando Brenes said. "We are going to win the state title next year."

Board members also named emeritus professor of sociology and economics Maurice Meysenburg as their 2016 Fellow of the College. Meysenburg will receive the honor at Rio Hondo's commencement ceremony on Thursday, May 26.

The board also awarded Les Howard, a community supporter and emeritus professor of sociology at neighboring Whittier College, the 2016 Distinguished Service Award. Howard will be presented the honor at an upcoming board meeting.



Alumni Duo Returns to Direct Male, Female Versions of 'The Odd Couple'

A pair of Rio Hondo College alumni will direct male and female versions of Neil Simon's "The Odd Couple" this spring, a culmination of their community college theatre arts training and the final production at the Campus Inn Theatre before the venue goes on hiatus.

Michael Garcia directs the classic version of the play on May 6, 12 and 14 while Julianna Stephanie Ojeda helms a 1986 female version on May 7, 13 and 15, guiding casts of students as they discover the tale's contemporary relevance.



The sets and casts mirror each other, but even though the storylines are the same, the directors say they expect the resulting performances to be very different.

"Both these plays are at the core about two friends," Ojeda said. "But the dialogue differs and we've found there's a lot of female empowerment in the female version that's not in the male version."

"Ultimately, they're going to be very different productions," Garcia said. "The male version is about brotherhood in a sense, but in both plays, we have to find what's real about each of these relationships so the story connects with the audience."

Both students came to Rio Hondo after considering other college and career options, and enrolled in theatre arts as an elective without intending to pursue careers in the field. Each quickly fell in love with aspects of the program – Garcia with directing and the technical side, Ojeda with acting, directing and producing. Both have since enrolled as transfer students in UC Irvine's theater program.

"I'm so glad I found Rio Hondo," said Ojeda, who had planned to study math at Cal State Long Beach en route to becoming a teacher. "I've found something that I'm passionate about that excites me every day. I've seen a lot of growth in myself. I love it here."

Garcia enrolled in Cal State Fullerton and planned to study political science, but withdrew when he realized he didn't know what he wanted from college.

This is Ojeda's first professional job as a director and Garcia's second. He directed Alfred Lugo's "Roll Call," a look at how young Latino veterans cope with war experiences, at Rio Hondo College in fall 2014.

"It's a thrill to be a part of Rio Hondo College's rich history of theater," Garcia said. "This department has truly fostered our growth in this industry."

He said he learns new lessons with every rehearsal.

"I'm definitely learning a lot in this rehearsal process. Something Julianna is really good at that I'm still working on is building ensemble spirit and making ourselves all accountable to each other – total transparency. It's really important, because if the cast loses trust in you as a director, the work on stage is going to fail," he said.

Ojeda said Garcia has taught her the importance of always being prepared. She's also had a chance to incorporate lessons learned from classes and internships, including one with a clown company, into her directing.

"All those bits and pieces of your training and your education help really guide you along," she said.

The duo meet at lunch at UC Irvine to compare notes. For example, Ojeda said she was struggling with a key scene in the play until Garcia shared his interpretation.

"Really just talking and discussing where we are in our processes, just opens up your perspective," she said.

Assemblymember Ed Chau to Spread Word about College Programs



Assemblymember Ed Chau, D-Monterey Park, visited Rio Hondo College on March 23, reviewing the College's 21 associate degrees for transfer, the honors program, new bachelor's degree in automotive technology, the Pathway to Law School initiative and emergency medical responder training.

Chau said his office would help spread the word about Rio Hondo College's innovative slate of programs.

Annual Women's Conference Draws 280 Students

About 280 female students from Whittier Union's seven high schools packed into Rio Hondo College's Wray Theater for the 21st annual Women's Conference, a collaborative effort between the District, Rio Hondo College and Soroptimist International of Whittier in celebration of Women's History Month.



The March 4 event, themed "Courage to Dream," aimed to inspire participants through a series of workshops that provided resources and helped strengthen young women's wellness in mind and body. The program featured three sessions of workshops on topics such as establishing healthy relationships, interviewing tips, financial literacy, college 101 and using art and physical exercise to improve one's well-being and outlook on life.

ABC7 Eyewitness News traffic reporter and Rio Hondo College alumna Alysha Del Valle gave the keynote address, sharing her experience as a Latina in the broadcast journalism industry, an elected board member of the East L.A. Weingart YMCA, a mentor for at-risk high school students, and as a volunteer for VotoLatino, Reading to Kids, Adelante Mujer and The Sierra Club.

"When I was growing up, I was always trying to find women on TV who looked like me," Del Valle said. "Our thoughts about ourselves are powerful and help us achieve great things, so don't worry about other peoples' dreams and worries for you. We make our own luck by dreaming and investing in ourselves."

RIO IN THE NEWS! [Click here to read more about Rio Hondo College's 21st annual Women's Conference in the *Whittier Daily News*.](#)

In the relationships workshop, Project Sister Family Services Outreach Specialist Christina Jimenez helped attendees how to discern the differences between health and unhealthy relationships. The girls had the opportunity to

create their own Relationship Bill of Rights. In another session, participants received tips on how to behave online and how to prevent cyber harassment.

Professors Join Read Across America Activities at Local School

Rio Hondo College professors Raquel Flores-Olson and Wells Sloniger led engaging literacy activities on March 3 as part of Read Across America at Scott Avenue School in East Whittier. Their presentation incorporated themes of health, wellness, sports and reading, featuring the Dr. Seuss book, "Oh, The Things You Can Do That Are Good for You!"



Groundbreaking Ceremony for Pico Rivera Educational Center Set for May 4



Rio Hondo College will hold a groundbreaking ceremony at 4 p.m. Wednesday, May 4 for its new Pico Rivera Educational Center, 9426 Marjorie St., Pico Rivera.

The \$1.3 million center, created through a partnership with El Rancho Unified School District, is the third satellite site established by Rio Hondo College since 2010.

The center, which will open in fall, sits on 2.4 acres across the street from El Rancho High School. The College will upgrade seven buildings spanning 6,720 square feet to create a collegiate identity and integrate digital learning tools into six classrooms and an office. The site will include a shaded campus quad and 1.3 acres of parking.

Pico Rivera Educational Center

Providing Educational Opportunities to the Community



Groundbreaking
Wednesday, May 4, 2016 at 4:00 p.m.

Pico Rivera Educational Center
9426 Marjorie Street • Pico Rivera, CA 90660
(across from El Rancho High School)

Please RSVP by April 29 to Michelle Yriarte at (562) 908-3403 or email myriarte@riohondo.edu

Rio Hondo Student Leaders Advocate in Washington, D.C.

Members of the Associated Students of Rio Hondo College (ASRHC) joined more than 250 community college students from across the nation in discussing higher-education legislation in mid-March at the American Student Association of Community College's National Student Advocacy Conference in Washington, D.C.

"I appreciated the conference deeply as our voices, hopes, dreams and desires were heard and taken seriously," ASRHC Senator at Large Han Pham said.

The conference focused on six issues, including the federal Higher Education Act, America's College Promise, Pell Grant, Dream Act and veteran benefits. Participants also explored other issues in-depth during workshops, learning about innovative ways of handling issues college students face – such as the high cost of textbooks.

ASRHC President William Ashby said he was inspired by a workshop on open-source textbooks.

"I am going to present this technique to our students in our next town hall meeting," Ashby said.

Students also met with U.S. Rep. Linda Sanchez, who was welcoming and excited to hear about Rio Hondo College. The College delegation also met with representatives of Sen. Barbara Boxer and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, and received a surprise visit from U.S. Rep. Grace Napolitano.

The conference was a great experience for these student leaders, ASRHC Senate Chair Marilyn Fregoso said.

"Traveling to D.C. opened my eyes to so many more possibilities that my educational path can lead me to," Fregoso said. "D.C. can use more Roadrunners to help create change."

President Dreyfuss Shares Rio Hondo Programs while Principal for a Day

Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss served as Principal for a Day at Grandview College Preparatory Academy in Valinda on March 16.

The theme of the day was "Educating Tomorrow's Leaders, Today."

Principal Jorge Ronquillo, his staff and students warmly welcomed Dreyfuss with a personalized marquee announcement and a big banner with her name in the main hallway. Dreyfuss shared information with her hosts about the College's four-year degree program in automotive technology, the Pathway to Law School Program, its 21 associate degrees for transfer and ranking on the list of the nation's Top 25 Community Colleges for Hispanics.

She visited several classrooms and computer labs, observed teachers, toured the campus and met parents during their parent meeting.



Alumnus Accepted into Prestigious Music Program

Rio Hondo College music alumnus Jose Maldonado, Jr. has been accepted into the master's program at Boston Conservatory for fall 2016. Maldonado, a baritone, is awaiting word from the Manhattan School of Music and the USC-Thornton School of Music.

Connect with Us on Social Media

 **RHCRoadrunners**

 **RioHondo_College**

 **RioHondoCollege**

 **#iLoveRioHondo**

 **bit.do/riohondocollege**

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



2 p.m. Wednesday, April 20:
Ribbon cutting for Hydration Station,
Rio Hondo College Student Union

Wednesday, April 20, Thursday April 21:
Writes of Spring, Rio Hondo College

4 p.m. Wednesday, May 4
Groundbreaking ceremony for Pico Rivera
Educational Center, 9426 Marjorie St., Pico Rivera

6 p.m. Friday, May 6:
A Taste of Rio, Rio Hondo College

8 p.m. May 6, May 7:
Male and Female versions of 'The Odd Couple'
on respective evenings, Campus Inn Theatre

6 p.m. Wednesday, May 11:
Board of Trustees Meeting, Rio Hondo College

9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday, May 18:
Student Art Show, Rio Hondo College Art Gallery

Tuesday, May 24:
State of College address, Whittier

Thursday, May 26:
Commencement Ceremony

Thursday, June 9:
State of College address, Santa Fe Springs

A Taste of Rio to Raise Support for Students

The Rio Hondo College Foundation will hold its annual A Taste of Rio event at 6 p.m. Friday, May 6, featuring food tastings from local restaurants, wine, craft beer and spirits tasting and prize drawings.

The popular annual event raises thousands of dollars for student scholarships and other support. In 2015, the event collected \$56,000 in donations, sponsorships and sales.

For details on registering for the 2016 event, purchasing drawing tickets and sponsorship opportunities, go to www.riohondo.edu/foundation/a-taste-of-rio.

