

# PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

COVERING NOVEMBER 2016



## President's Message



**Teresa Dreyfuss**

is quite clear: provide access to the best possible education and support for all students as they pursue their learning and life goals.

This mission is affirmed by our Board of Trustees' decision to stand together with our diverse student body, to let them know we support their goals in pursuing their education.

Rio Hondo College students, faculty, staff and administrators all stepped forward this November to celebrate longstanding values of our community – support for our students, from every walk of life, every ZIP code, every language and every capability.

These values are part of our basic commitment to promoting success for all students to pursue their learning and life goals. They stand independent of political shifts and cultural concerns. Our mission

Our Student Equity Plan and Student Success Scorecard, for example, both presented during our Nov. 9 Board of Trustees meeting, show our steady and ongoing progress toward assuring students can achieve their educational goals.

Those same successes are seen in our communications with our community partners during our State of the College presentations, as well as in the comments we received during our annual lunch for area school district superintendents.

Finally, they are evidenced by the amazing turnout to our recent theatrical production, "The Laramie Project," which challenges ignorance in relation to sexual identity, and in our outreach to middle and elementary school students during our second annual Discover Rio Day.

All of it bears witness to a truth we state every day – if you start Rio, you can go anywhere – and along the way, you will be supported by our faculty, staff and administrators.

## College Stands in Solidarity with Students

On Nov. 17, Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss emailed a letter to all students that she co-signed with Board President Mary Ann Pacheco assuring all students that Rio Hondo College stands in solidarity with them.

As an expression of the College's steadfast and longstanding support of diverse and undocumented students, the letter explains that the College will do everything within the law to protect undocumented students, Muslim students, LGBTQI students, and all of the College's vulnerable students because it is the right thing to do.

This letter was a direct result of the District's Board of Trustees meeting on Nov. 9. The letter, which is available on the homepage of our website, was referenced in a [Whittier Daily News](#) article on Nov. 18. Rio Hondo College was also mentioned in the [New York Times](#) on Nov. 20

as a result of Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist Jose Antonio Vargas speaking to a standing-room only audience of students, faculty, staff and community members in the Wray Theater.



Photo by Melissa Myers

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# Board Update

Board of Trustees members awarded a construction contract for “L” Tower seismic upgrades on Nov. 9, received updates on Student Equity programs and the College’s Student Success Scorecard, and acknowledged retiring faculty member and staff members.

Trustees voted 4-0 to award a \$28.7 million contract for seismic and code upgrades for the College’s “L” Tower to Pinner Construction Co. of Anaheim. The company submitted the lowest responsive and responsible bid of three received for the role of general contractor.

The College’s student equity funding rose to \$1.7 million in 2016-17, up from \$1.6 million in 2015-16, when the program sponsored 34 activities and programs for students, ranging from math and science support and the college’s Transfer Academy to a new Veterans Services Center and financial aid workshops.

Student Equity leaders also conducted a financial wellness service campus wide, learning about issues related to financial security among students.

The funds target students who are disproportionately impacted by challenges in access, course completion, basic skills, degree/certificate completion and transfer. In addition to Hispanic students, who face challenges across the board, student groups differ in each category. For example, foster youths struggle with course completion and transfers, veterans and women are challenged by access, and men and students with disabilities have difficulty completing degrees and certificates.

This year, the group has already sponsored a talk by Jose Antonio Vargas, who speaks about immigration issues from the perspective of an “undocumented American.” Vargas, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, came to the U.S. from the Philippines as a minor and did not know he was here illegally until he tried to obtain a driver’s license.

Next up: Rio Hondo College’s inaugural Student Equity Summit at 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 13 at the Whittier Grand Hotel.

Rio Hondo College also saw strong performance on its Student Success Scorecard, which measures success rates on several fronts for students who entered college prepared (331 students) and unprepared (1,775 students) in the six years leading to 2014-15.

Rio Hondo College’s strongest performance was in persistence – students enrolling in their first three consecutive terms – achieving a 71.1 percent for the two groups combined. Some 62.2 percent of prepared students and 32.3 percent of the unprepared obtained degrees, certificates or other transfer-related outcomes in the six years.

Board members recognized the services of Lorraine Castellanos, who served the District for 22 years, and professor Irene Huang, who served the District for 35.5 years. Castellanos started as a clerk typist in 1994 and rose to become a curriculum-articulation specialist. Huang was hired in 1981 as a full-time chemistry professor.

**RIO IN THE NEWS!** Click here to read more about Jose Antonio Vargas in *The Whittier Daily News*.

## Former Vice President Receives French Legion of Honor Medal



A former Rio Hondo College vice president and long-time artist was honored for his World War II service with the French Legion of Honor Medal during a Nov. 22 ceremony at the Residence de France in Beverly Hills.

Yoshio C. Nakamura, 91, was one of five World War II veterans honored at the ceremony, held in the Residence garden and attended by Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. (Ret.) Robert Johnson served as master of ceremonies. The awards were presented by Consul General of France Christophe Lemoine.

The Legion of Honor medal was established by Napoleon in 1802 to commend civilians and soldiers, including those of other countries, for outstanding achievements. It is France’s highest award.

“I can think of no one more deserving of this honor than Yosh Nakamura,” Dreyfuss said. “He embodies so much of what is great about America – from his courage in war to his contributions in the many years since. It is a privilege to know him and call him a friend.”

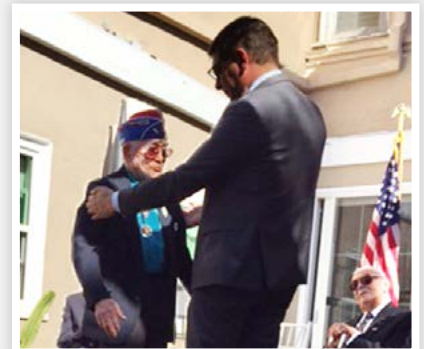
Nakamura was born in Rosemead in 1925. At age 16, he was interned with other Japanese-Americans at the Tulare Assembly Center,

**RIO IN THE NEWS!** Click here to read more about Yoshio Nakamura in *The Whittier Daily News*.

a converted racetrack near Fresno. He was later relocated to a camp in Arizona, where he reported for duty in the U.S. Army in 1944.

Nakamura was deployed to southern France in March 1945 as part of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a unit made up of Japanese-Americans. He was assigned to a heavy weapons group, using deafening mortars and machine guns to wage war. He saw combat in the Rhineland Campaign and later, in Italy, achieving the rank of staff sergeant.

He received the Bronze Star, two Presidential Unit Citations, the Combat Infantryman Badge and the EAME Campaign Medal with three battle stars. In 2011, he joined other members of his unit at the U.S. Capitol to receive the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest U.S. civilian honor.



After the war, Nakamura received degrees in fine arts from USC, embarking on a career as an artist and art teacher. He was among Rio Hondo College’s first faculty in 1963, and served as fine arts chairman. Over the next 29 years, he added a series of administrative duties to his teaching role, becoming a dean and eventually a Rio Hondo College vice president.

# 260 Middle, Elementary School Students Visit for Discover Rio Day

Rio Hondo College hosted about 260 students from nine middle schools and one elementary school on Nov. 17 for its second annual Discover Rio Day, an event launched in fall 2015 to spark early interest in college and careers among area students.

The students attended an opening session in the Wray Theater, where they met College mascot Rex the Roadrunner, toured the campus and attended workshops on college programs, such as renewable energy and graphic information systems.

Vice President of Student Services Henry Gee delivered welcoming remarks and Dean of Counseling and Student Success Dr. Mike Muñoz served as the energetic master of ceremonies during the opening program.

Rio Hondo College Jazz Dance Performers led by professor Dr. Alyson Cartagena and student speaker Summer Gomez also participated in the opening program.

The day culminated with a pizza lunch and a group photo with Rex the Roadrunner.

Students hailed from Scott Elementary School, Kranz Intermediate School, the STEAM Academy @ Burke as well as Dean Shively, Graves, Hillview, Columbia, North Park, Dexter and Los Nietos middle schools.

Grant Manager of Student Equity Programs Cecilia Rocha and the members of the planning committee organized a successful, educational and fun conference.



# Online Programs Ranked 14th among California's Two-Year Colleges

Affordable Colleges Online has ranked Rio Hondo College among the Best Online Colleges in California for 2016-17.



Rio Hondo, which has 18 online programs, is ranked 14th among two-year colleges in California with a score of 91.69 in an [online report](#), praised for its placement and counseling services. The College's offerings range from accounting to forensic science, archaeology to theatre arts.

Affordable Colleges Online provides community resources and tools related to higher education with an eye on affordability and accreditation.

Access Rio Hondo College's online program at [www.riohondo.edu/online-education/](http://www.riohondo.edu/online-education/).

# President Delivers 'State of College' Addresses

Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss has provided a series of updates about College programs, services and accomplishments to local school districts and cities, including El Monte Union High School District, Whittier Union High School District and El Rancho Unified School District.

"These 'State of the College' addresses are a great way to share the outstanding educational efforts at Rio Hondo College," Dreyfuss said. "At each of these presentations, it's been wonderful to hear from the different Districts how our work has benefited students who decided to begin their higher-education journeys at Rio Hondo College."

Among the presentation highlights are Rio Hondo College's:

- 24 associate degrees guaranteeing transfer to California State University campuses, 51 associate degree and 65 certificate programs;
- Recognition as one of the top community colleges in the state for transferring underrepresented minorities to University of California campuses;
- Ranking among the top 25 community colleges nationwide for Hispanic students;
- 40 percent boost in degrees at the 2015-16 commencement and a doubling of transfer degrees;
- Newly opened Educational Center at Pico Rivera, which offered 24 courses this fall, including evening classes;
- \$2 million and \$1.5 million grants for transforming basic skills instructions;
- Four-year degree in automotive technology;
- State's first Associate of Science degree in hybrid/electric vehicle/fuel-cell technology;
- South Coast AQMD Award for Clean Air Education and Outreach;
- Partnerships with 150 community groups in providing adult education;
- Adopt-A-School Outreach program connecting to nearly a dozen middle and elementary schools to spark college interest during Discover Rio Day;
- New soccer field complex;
- Seismic renovation of L tower to begin in January 2017; and
- Plans for Rio Plaza, a transportation hub and new entry area to campus.

# Public School Superintendents Share Challenges, Accomplishments

Leaders of area public school districts joined Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss and other Rio Hondo College leaders on Nov. 4 to share their latest accomplishments, challenges and initiatives.

The lunch gathering included school superintendents and representatives from districts within Rio Hondo College's services area.

During the event, Rio Hondo College leaders shared changes taking place at the College, including the implementation of multiple measures of data for placing students in classes, expansion of course offerings at regional education centers, efforts to promote student equity and planning underway for a K-16 education planning summit.

The superintendents and designees in attendance expressed appreciation for all the work that the College has done to visit their schools, engage their students, and prepare them for the college experience.

Joining Superintendent/President Dreyfuss were Vice President of Student Services Henry Gee, Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. JoAnna Schilling, Dean of Educational Centers Yolanda Emerson, Dean of Counseling and Student Success Dr. Mike Muñoz, and Director of Government and Community Relations Russell Castañeda-Calleros.



## Tennis Player Signs Letter of Intent

Rio Hondo College student athlete Nicole Robbins signed a letter of intent on Nov. 10 to play tennis for Ottawa University. Robbins will start at the university in fall 2017. (Photo courtesy of Crystian Mendoza)



## 100 High School Students Attend Inaugural Auto Skills Contest

More than 100 local high school students from six area high schools attended Rio Hondo College's first Automotive Skills Competition/Mini-Career Day this fall, with 25 competing for a series of prizes.

In the school competition, Rowland High School placed first with second place going to California High and third to Montebello High. In the individual competition, Workman High School took first place, Montebello second and California third.

Sponsors included: Browning Automotive Group, Jannet Malig, Deputy Sector Navigator for Advanced Transportation & Renewables, MATCO and INNOVA Electronics.

## Rio Hondo College Honors Veterans

Rio Hondo College marked Veterans Day with a week of events that began with an opening commemoration, events highlighting veteran suicide issues, including a 22 push-up challenge, resources for veterans, thanked veterans for their service, and concluded with a celebration of the U.S. Marine Corps' founding.



## Rio Hondo College Stages Moving Production of 'The Laramie Project'

Rio Hondo College staged a production in November of "The Laramie Project," a play that chronicles the life of the town of Laramie, Wyoming in the year after Matthew Shepard, a gay student at the University of Wyoming, was beaten, tortured and left for dead in 1988.

The attack on Shepard, who died six days after the attack from severe head wounds, drew national attention to hate crimes and led to the 2009 Shepard Act, which makes crimes motivated by actual or perceived sexual orientation a federally recognized hate crime.

Director Kirk Vichengrad, a Rio Hondo College adjunct professor of theatre arts, said the play serves to awaken audiences to the damaging power of intolerance – especially relevant after the June attack in which a 29-year-old security guard killed 49 people and wounded 53 others at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. The incident is the deadliest attack against the LGBTQ community in U.S. history.

More than 20 students played some 60 parts in the play, which filled the College's Wray Theater for each of its performances. Vichengrad said he was overwhelmed with the remarkable responses from students and colleagues, including social media.

"Everyone from administration to faculty to students to friends and family have all been genuinely moved by the production and remarked how professional and accomplished every aspect of the presentation was to them," Vichengrad said. "In fact, after our opening night performance an adjudicator from the American College Theater Festival gave a glowing critique, emphasizing what an important, powerful, effective show we had."

In addition, the play raised funds for the Matthew Shepard Foundation through sales of concessions.



**RIO IN THE NEWS!** Click here to read more about "The Laramie Project" in *The Whittier Daily News*.

## Connect with Us on Social Media



RHCRoadrunners



RioHondo\_College



RioHondoCollege



Rio Hondo College YT Channel



bit.do/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



**9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 13:**

Rio Hondo College Inaugural Student Equity Summit, Whittier Grand Hotel

**6 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 14:**

Board of Trustees Reorganization Meeting, Rio Hondo College

**Thursday, Dec. 22 to Jan. 2, 2017:**

College closed for Winter Break

## Avance Students Present Research Posters

Nearly 150 students in Rio Hondo College's *Avance* program presented posters outlining educational journey research projects on Nov. 18 to an audience of family members and Rio Hondo College staff.

*Avance*, which means advance in Spanish, is an integrated success program for first-year students. Students take part in the College's Summer Bridge/Math Academy to smooth their transition to get a jumpstart on academics, receive priority registration for a prescribed first-year schedule, and are provided with academic and student service support throughout the year.

The event began with guest speakers, including Vice President of Student Services Henry Gee and *Avance* students Karen Barron and Jose Zuniga, who shared the value of their *Avance* experience. Then, 147 students showcased research project posters before the group enjoyed a catered lunch and opportunity drawings.

"The event provided a wonderful window into how well this program engages and supports our newest students, which is a critical component in ensuring they achieve success in their educational journeys," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said.

Assistant Dean of Student Success and Retention Barbara Salazar said the effort succeeded in large part because of the services of many Rio Hondo staff members, including:

- Office of Student Success and Retention clerk Elizabeth Telles;
- Summer Bridge coordinators Maribel De Leon and Michael Koger;
- Summer Bridge peer mentor Richard Santoyo;
- Staff Development Office staff Teresa Martinez;
- Dean of Counseling Dr. Mike Munoz;
- Marketing and Communications Director Ruthie Retana and MC Specialist Sylvia V. Bunday;
- Sign Production Services staff Sandra Rivera and Mark Carmona Herrera;
- Facilities staff, including George Lopez, Frank Garcia;
- AV technician Carlos Monteros; and
- Wray technician Gabe Carrasco.
- First Year Success Center Counselor/Coordinator Laura Garcia;
- *Avance* counselors Angela Sotelo, David Tieu, Jose Lara, Maribel De Leon, Katie O'Brien, Sergio Guzman, Yunion Hernandez, Lupe Alvarado and Laura Garcia;
- Success coaches Maricela Aguilera, Anthony Alvarez, Christina Anchondo, Raul Corral, Jovany Gaucin, Nestor Hernandez, Pedro Rubio, Kristina Soken;
- Student Services assistants Andreina Lucero, Angel Aguilar Garcia;

