

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

FEBRUARY 2018



President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

February marked new milestones for Rio Hondo College, with a grand opening celebration for our beautiful new bookstore, honors for our fire academy, a new partnership that will allow our students to conduct research at UCLA and revisions in our math curriculum that will speed students to success.

It's a collection of events that reflects the depth of programming that is a hallmark of Rio Hondo College: excellence flows from our academic programming, our career training and from the educators who are so dedicated to ensuring our students achieve their education and career goals.

Such changes have become a monthly habit for Rio Hondo College, although one could never call them routine. Instead, our team of educators has become proficient at making extraordinary achievements a commonplace occurrence, becoming part of our College culture.

It is a fitting note as we prepare for our annual "A Taste of Rio" fundraiser, which each year reaches new heights in generating support for our students. This event represents a true collaboration between the College and community in service to our students.

Once again, I would like to thank all the staff, administrators and faculty who dedicate their energy on behalf of Rio Hondo College toward student success.

Fire Academy Lauded by LA City Fire Department

Los Angeles City Fire Department formally recognized Rio Hondo College Fire Academy graduates from Class 89 during a special lunch on Feb. 20 for their critical help during the recent historic wildfires in Los Angeles and the surrounding areas.

Class 89 established base camps, assisted with supplies and provided logistical work that freed up firefighters so they could continue battling the wildfires on the front lines.

The graduates provided meals, assisted picking up thousands of feet of hose, fueled vehicles, patrolled for spot fires and helped extinguish those fires.

The following graduates of Rio Hondo Fire Academy Class 89 were

recognized: Eric Agliozzo, Robert Amaya, Quinn Dorman, Isaiah Escoto, Seth Jones, Giovanni Mendez, Spenser Nail, Michael Tettleton and Cameron Velasco.

"The team members' willingness to perform community service of their own free will, without receiving monetary compensation, speaks highly of the Rio Hondo College Fire Academy," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said.

In addition to the members of Class 89, the city firefighters also recognized the Los Angeles Fire Department Community Emergency Response Team, Veterans Affairs Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System and Notre Dame High School.



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Board Report



Members of the Board of Trustees on Feb. 21 reviewed the Math Department's ongoing revision of its basic skills program and praised members of the 2018 Forensics Speech and Debate Team for its successes.

The math revisions, presented by Dean Vann Priest, are designed to speed students through a simplified series of basic skills classes, improve placements and boost student retention.

In the fall, the team rolled out a newly designed statistics pathway and a pathway in business, science, technology, engineering and math, called B-STEM. The pathways streamline courses, eliminate overlap and enable courses to explore topics with greater depth. For example, classes on arithmetic and pre-algebra were combined into one course titled Mathematical Foundations. In addition, overlap in beginning and intermediate algebra classes was eliminated.

Department members are now working on ways to meet a state directive to improve the probability that students can complete transfer-level coursework within a one-year time frame.

During the meeting, trustees also commended members of the forensics team for its performances in the 2018 Round Robin and Sunset Cliffs Tournaments at Point Loma St. Nazarene University in San Diego.

The team coached by Forensics Coordinator Grant Tovmasian, includes Saul Garcia (captain), Jonathan Kaldas (co-captain), Felix Rodriguez, Alberto Sampieri, Melisa Gonzalez, Dylan Logas, Edward Minasyan, Edgar Minasyan, Gabriela Rodriguez and Rodolfo Juarez-Pineda.



Forensics Speech and Debate Team members Felix Rodriguez, left, Jonathan Kaldas and Saul Garcia

Rio Hondo College Students Conduct Research at UCLA

Professors at Rio Hondo College and UCLA launched a partnership in February that is allowing six Rio Hondo College students to conduct research at the UCLA Center for Biological Physics this spring.

Dubbed the UCLA-RHC Scientific Exchange Program, the partnership is the brainchild of Rio Hondo College physics Professor Christian Vaca and UCLA Professor Alex Levine.

"This partnership demonstrates the commitment of Rio Hondo College's faculty to continually stretch the boundaries of opportunity for our students," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said.

Dreyfuss praised Vaca for collaborating on the program with Levine, his graduate faculty adviser. The dynamic duo mapped out a pact to allow

students to research soft condensed matter and biological physics. The students will present their work at a conference in June.

Levine outlined the program – the first such partnership between the two institutes of higher learning – in a talk at Rio Hondo College to 42 students in December.

UCLA will help cover the costs of travel and parking, as well as provide some research funds. The program meshes with UCLA's mission to connect with local colleges and extend academic opportunities to students, especially first-generation students and those from immigrant families.

Vaca said Rio Hondo College and UCLA are co-writing a proposal to the National Science Foundation to boost funding for the program. They hope to expand the effort to provide additional resources to the students.



Professor Alex Levine outlines the RHC-UCLA Scientific Exchange Program for Rio Hondo College students in December.



Anthropology Professor Receives Community Colleges' Hayward Award

Rio Hondo College anthropology Professor Adam Wetsman, Ph.D., has received a 2018 Hayward Award from the California Community College system in recognition of his excellence in teaching, professional activities and commitment to students.

The Board of Governors award, which is sponsored by the Foundation for California Community Colleges, goes annually to four faculty members who are nominated by their peers across the 114-campus system.

"Winning the Hayward Award is a great honor, one that would not have been possible without Rio Hondo's great students, supportive staff and administration, and dedicated teaching colleagues," Dr. Wetsman said.

The award is named for former California Community College Chancellor Gerald C. Hayward. Winners are presented with the award at the California Community College's Board of Governors meeting in March, with the system's president, chancellor and Academic Senate president.

"We at Rio Hondo College are exceptionally privileged to work alongside a professor who is as dedicated to his students as Adam Wetsman," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "He goes beyond all expectations in his service to students, his colleagues and our community. This is a well-deserved honor."

Dr. Wetsman has served as president of Rio Hondo College's Faculty Association and Academic Senate, as well as serving in other roles with both groups. He is currently the negotiation chair for the faculty association.

He has promoted study abroad opportunities, assisted part-time faculty become full-time professors and promoted understanding of LGBTQ+ issues. He currently serves as president of the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC).

As a teacher, he has dedicated himself to ensuring his students have all the materials they need to succeed, even writing low-cost textbooks, securing \$50,000 in funding for a student anthropology lab and creating hours of audio-video lectures that mirror class presentations to facilitate student learning.

"I am continually in awe of Adam Wetsman's impeccable reputation with students," Rio Hondo College Academic Senate President Michelle Bean said. "I am honored to work with him."

Dr. Wetsman also led development of Rio Hondo College's anthropology transfer degree and assisted in developing general education courses as part of the College's new Bachelor of Science in automotive technology.

He is also a frequent volunteer at campus events, helping to provide food to students during finals week, participating in Rio Hondo Foundation events and even establishing a scholarship for anthropology students.



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Alumnus Serves as Legislative Assistant to Assemblyman



Andrew Aldama, a former Rio Hondo College student, is working as a legislative assistant for state Assemblyman Richard Bloom.

Aldama greeted Rio Hondo College anthropology Professor Adam Wetsman on March 5 during a visit by Wetsman to the Assembly member's office.

Dr. Wetsman was in Sacramento for the annual conference of the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC). The event includes legislative visits.

"As a teacher, this is one of the most rewarding things that can happen," Dr. Wetsman said.

Aldama took Human Sexuality from a Cross-Cultural Perspective with Dr. Wetsman and Professor Melissa Rifino-Juarez in 2010.

College Holds Bookstore Grand Opening

Rio Hondo College celebrated the grand opening of the College Bookstore on Feb. 21 with prizes, games and discounts. The project added 2,573 square feet to the bookstore, bringing it to 6,682 square feet.

Assisting Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss in cutting the ribbon is Jenn Hatton, senior vice president of bookstore operator Follett Corp. Far right is Follett Vice President Ken Pegram and Vice President of Marketing and Sales Mary Perry.



Famed Seismologist Discusses Impact of Disasters

Dr. Lucy Jones, a noted seismologist for 33 years with the Geological Survey (USGS), discussed in a Feb. 21 talk how earthquakes, floods and other disasters have both benefited and beset civilizations throughout recorded history.

RIO IN THE NEWS: Click here to read more about Dr. Lucy Jones in the *Whittier Daily News*.

Jones, who developed the Great ShakeOut, an earthquake drill that has engaged 55 million participants, also addressed what such disasters

reveal about mankind's potential for humanitarian efforts and healing on a global scale.

The topics are themes addressed in her forthcoming book, "The Big Ones: How Natural Disasters Have Shaped Us (and What We Can Do About Them)."

Jones is the founder of the Dr. Lucy Jones Center for Science and Society, which aims to foster the understanding and application of scientific information to create more resilient communities. She is also a research associate at Caltech's Seismological Laboratory, a post she has held since 1984.

College Showcases CTE Programs

Rio Hondo College held its third annual open house on Feb. 24 to highlight Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, including its innovative array of programs in automotive technology.

The event included presentations about course offerings, enrollment and program requirements. Visitors toured labs and explored CTE programs.



Financial Aid Workshop Assists 140-plus Families

More than 140 students and their families were assisted in their pursuit of financial aid during Rio Hondo College's Cash 4 College event, held Feb. 3 in English and Spanish.

The event included a presentation on financial aid resources, followed by guidance in filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the California Dream Act application.

This event was sponsored by the Rio Hondo Outreach and Educational

Partnerships Office, the Financial Aid Office, Cal-SOAP and Assembly Member Ian Calderon's Office.

Dean of Student Success Dr. Melba Castro introduced Majority Leader Calderon, who gave a warm welcome. Vice President of Student Services Henry Gee also spoke briefly. Counselor/Coordinator Angela Sotelo assisted in organizing the day.

The College was able to award four \$200 Rio Hondo Bookstore book vouchers, thanks to the generosity of the Rio Hondo College Foundation.

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 **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 1 p.m. Friday, March 23 and April 13:

Free tax preparation help, Rio Hondo College, room AJ322, park in Lot 1

Monday, March 26 to Friday, March 30: Spring Break

9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Friday, April 6:

Free tax preparation help, Rio Hondo Educational Center at Pico Rivera

6 p.m. Wednesday, April 11:

Board of Trustees meeting, Rio Hondo College

9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Friday, April 16:

Free tax preparation help, Rio Hondo Educational Center at Pico Rivera

6 p.m. Friday, April 27:

A Taste of Rio. Purchase tickets at www.riohondofoundation.org

Area School Administrators Honor Whittier Mayor

Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss presented the annual Whittier Area School Administrators (WASA) Community Service Award to Whittier Mayor Joe Vinatieri on Feb. 2, during the annual WASA breakfast at Pico Park Community Center.

Dreyfuss noted Vinatieri's leadership and support for Rio Hondo College during her remarks, including the College's Police Academy and GO RIO transportation subsidy program. In addition, Vinatieri was an early supporter of the College's effort to launch a Bachelor of Science program in automotive technology and routinely supports fundraisers that benefit the College's students and programs. Sixteen Rio Hondo College administrators also attended the event honoring Vinatieri.

