President’s Message

With the arrival of the holiday season, I am reminded of my first days at Rio Hondo more than 30 years ago. I arrived to find a community that supports each other in a shared mission to deliver the promise of higher education to residents across the region.

Today, that promise is a daily reality, with a rich menu of services that support our students even before they formally begin their college careers.

I’ve seen a lot of change at Rio Hondo over the years, and my time here has profoundly changed me as well. As I grew in my understanding of our many relationships across the community, so too did my appreciation of the potential of Rio Hondo College as a critical component of our broader community’s success.

That knowledge led directly to many of today’s connections across Whittier, El Monte, South El Monte, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs and Los Nietos – elements of partnerships that range from our tutoring programs in local schools to our high school concurrent enrollment programs, from our inspiration of STEM exploration through summer programs to the creation of a food pantry for students and our veterans support services on campus.

That’s because we are all stronger together.

Now, as I write my final holiday message before retiring on June 30, 2019 from this incredibly special institution, I would like to thank our community partners for collaborating, time and again, with Rio Hondo College.

We have done so much together to transform this campus and the educational opportunities we offer; yet, more is attainable. We must continue to strive to discover new ways to inspire our students to success, to ensure more students are able to achieve their goals and dreams despite financial struggles or other barriers.

I am confident that, together, our community and our College will step up to these opportunities.

Thanks again, Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

Students Donate Funds for Cancer Survivors

Rio Hondo College’s CARE and Student Life & Leadership students held their first-ever walkathon in fall, raising $1,905 to support awareness of breast cancer survivors’ needs. The funds will benefit Presbyterian Community Hospital’s wigs bank, which provides no-cost wigs to survivors.

The event, which received support across the campus community, is intended to become an annual program.
Board Report

Rio Hondo College’s Board of Trustees, at a special meeting on Nov. 28, selected seven goals for the 2018-19 year:

I. The Board will strengthen and enhance the College’s commitment to a campus culture that integrates equity, diversity, and inclusivity at all levels in an effort to close the achievement gap among disproportionately impacted student populations.

II. The Board will actively engage with student leadership.

III. The Board will continue its yearly review of its roles and responsibilities in areas such as accreditation, board policies, protocols, professional development, and budget.

IV. The Board will spark an ongoing and meaningful College-wide conversation about the definition of effectiveness.

V. The Board will participate in the College’s institutional planning process with the long-term goal of integrating the Board and Institutional Goals.

VI. The Board will engage stakeholders with the transition into Guided Pathways.

VII. The Board will oversee the College’s financial sustainability, during the implementation of the Student Centered Funding Formula.

The Board also hired Shawn Smith as the executive director of human resources. Smith worked as senior director of human resources, labor and employee relations, and compliance officer for Pomona College for three years after serving as a human resources chief for several area businesses. He holds an MBA from Cal Poly Pomona.

At its Dec. 12 meeting, newly elected and re-elected trustees took the Oath of Office and the board selected officers to serve through Dec. 10, 2019.

In addition, the board hired Catherine Page as dean of health science and nursing, Wendy Huang Jimenez and Andrea Kirton as full-time nursing instructors and Brenda Harlow as a full-time computer information technology instructor.

Page, who has served as interim dean of the program for more than a year, holds a Master of Science degree in nursing from the University of Southern California. She has been an educator with Rio Hondo College since 1990.

Jimenez holds a Master of Science in nursing from Grand Canyon University and joined Rio Hondo College as an adjunct instructor in August 2016. Kirton received a Master of Science in nursing from University of Phoenix and has been an adjunct instructor for Rio Hondo College since 2014.

Harlow holds a Master of Science in education from California State University, Long Beach. She has worked with Rio Hondo College since January.

Trustees also congratulated Gail Biesemeyer, a professor of health science, and classified employees Robert Marsh, Suzanne Frederickson and Teresa Perez on their retirements.

Biesemeyer joined Rio Hondo College as a part-time faculty member in August 1990 and became a full-time professor in 1995. She has served the College for more than 23 years.

Marsh, a heating air conditioning and plumbing journeyperson, has worked for Rio Hondo College since January 1989. His posts have included general maintenance worker. He has served the College for nearly 29 years.

Frederickson, an instructional high-tech access microcomputer lab technician, was hired in September 1996. She has also served as a senior instructional assistant. She has worked for the College for more than 22 years.

Perez, an instructional assistant communications South Whittier Educational Center, was hired in March 2001. She has also worked as an instructional assistant in the Public Safety Division. She has worked for Rio Hondo College for nearly 18 years.

RIO IN THE NEWS! Read more about the retirement ceremony in the Mid-Valley News.
College Touts Police Programs

Rio Hondo College will graduate its 207th class of cadets on Jan. 10, 2019, a day before the storied institution hosts an academy reunion.

The milestones occur as the Police Academy and related public safety academic programs enjoy a surge of growth, including the adoption of new courses and a major in homeland security that targets one of the highest-growing job market sectors in the nation.

Billboards noting the strengths of the program are now visible across the community promoting the program expansion and the successes of the Police Academy, which frequently places a majority of its students with local law enforcement agencies even before graduation.

“Our public safety instruction is among the strongest, most enduring elements of the Rio Hondo College legacy and our policing programs – now stronger than ever – are a significant part of that history,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said.

In addition to the upcoming graduation date, the Academy’s Class 208 will begin instruction on Feb. 12 with a planned graduation date of July 25.

Pathway to Law School Program Holds Mentor Mixer

Rio Hondo College students and legal professionals from across the Southland braved torrential rain and lightning on Nov. 29 to gather together in the Administration of Justice Building for the Pathway to Law School Mentor Mixer.

The mixer – traditionally, the first meeting between Pathway to Law School students and mentor attorneys provided by Ferias Legales – was organized by Pre-Law Society Club and Pathway to Law School students. The event also served as an opportunity to thank attorneys who have participated in program and club events.

In attendance that evening were Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss and Vice President of Student Services Henry Gee, who welcomed attendees and took part in an ice breaker activity run by the students, as well as attorney and Pathway to Law School advisory board co-chair, Ricardo Perez and Maria Torres of Ferias Legales.

Members of the Pathway to Law School team – Counselor/Co-Faculty Champion Angelica Martinez, Coordinator/Co-Faculty Champion Young Lee and Clerk Aracely Tamayo – assisted students with organizing the event and provided support throughout the evening to help things run smoothly.
RIO IN THE NEWS! Read more about the tutoring program in the Mid-Valley News.

College Provides Free Tutoring Program for Area Public Schools

Rio Hondo College has launched a free tutoring program for area public schools in its Adopt-A-School program, providing college students who are studying child development and related fields to assist students during and after school.

The program was piloted in spring at Scott Elementary in the East Whittier City School District and is now offered there and at Dean Shively Middle School in the Valle Lindo Elementary School District. It is expanding to encompass others among the Adopt-A-School partners.

“Our tutoring program builds on the relationships our College has built among our local schools over the last several years as part of our Adopt-A-School program,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said.

The Adopt-A-School program started with providing information on College programs during Back-to-School Nights, offering campus tours and connecting students with cultural programs at Rio Hondo. Now, it is taking a leap forward with the tutoring program.

“This effort is all about making a difference in the lives of students in the community – whether that’s when they arrive at Rio Hondo College or ensuring that college is an option when the time comes,” Dreyfuss said. “Rio Hondo College considers it our mission to make higher education a reality for every member of our community.”

On a recent day, Rio Hondo College students Carolina Castillo, Samantha Martinez and Angela Yerena worked with Scott Avenue Elementary students on writing projects and math support.

An in-class session included helping fifth-graders brainstorm arguments for why the school would benefit from longer recess or a vending machine and what arguments they might hear against those plans.

Later, the three college students offered small group tutoring in math and one-on-one assistance in reading during a pull-out session. Some tutors also stayed until after school to assist students with their homework.

Yerena, who is studying child development, began volunteering during the pilot effort in spring.

“I’m going to be a preschool teacher, so I thought it would give me experience before I went into the career. I wanted to see if teaching was what I really wanted,” she said. “Now, I know I can do it. I really enjoy working with the kids and seeing them learn.”

Tutors are paid through the Federal Work-Study program, which allows them to combine financial aid commitments with career training. The students may work up to 20 hours a week; in all, five students are assigned to Scott Avenue.

Teachers at Scott Avenue Elementary say the students are an invaluable resource, enabling them to offer direct aid to a greater number of students during class.

“My students always look forward to working with the tutors and they seem to connect well with them,” fifth-grade teacher Jennifer Lee said.

Next, the program is expected to expand to Dexter Middle School in Whittier City School District and Graves Middle School in South Whittier Elementary District. Kranz Intermediate in Mountain View School District, Columbia School in El Monte City School District, the STEAM Academy at Burke and North Park Academy of the Arts in El Rancho Unified School District, New Temple Elementary in Valle Lindo School District and Los Nietos Middle School in Los Nietos Elementary School District are completing the on-boarding process.
Rio Hondo College will receive $664,220 in federal grant dollars over the next four years to remove financial barriers to childcare that can prevent students with children from attending college.

The Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grant will provide the College with $166,055 annually to subsidize up to 75 percent of the cost of childcare for parents who are Pell Grant recipients or Pell Grant eligible.

When added to state funds received by Rio Hondo College for its on-campus Child Development Center (CDC), the grant provides the opportunity to eliminate costs for childcare for parents in need. The federal dollars will be provided on a sliding scale, depending on family need.

“The Rio Hondo College is deeply committed to providing the promise of a higher education to all members of a community as a pathway to a more fulfilled life,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. “Childcare costs are a significant barrier to achieving that dream.”

CDC Director Shireetha Gethers, Ed.D., said the College is committed to serving as many parents as possible. Already this year, the CDC expanded its service to 2-year-old children. The service means parents no longer need to wait to potty train their children before taking advantage of the College’s stellar facilities.

With a capacity to serve 105 children, the CDC currently has openings available in classrooms serving all ages.

“Rio Hondo College’s CDC offers a range of preschool and transitional services to children from ages 2 to 5,” Gethers said. “This grant will expand our ability to provide parents with not only the convenience of childcare on campus, but top-level services to ensure their children get the best possible start on their own educational paths.”

The grant will fund a new administrative position to manage CCAMPIS programs, which include a slate of parenting classes and regular visits with a counselor for parents.

The CDC — which provides care from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Friday in coordination with the College’s academic schedule — is also applying for accreditation by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The accreditation, which will take more than a year to complete, is a voluntary step that will signify the high-quality early-learning services Rio Hondo College’s CDC offers.

Steven Villegas Jr., former Rio Hondo Forensics Speech and Debate competitor, and Phi Rho Pi National Champion, gave a TEDxFargo Talk in July 2018, describing how one small change in our conversations with people who are different from us can turn the tide on false stories and rebuild trust.

Today, Villegas is a graduate student in communications at the University of Southern California.

Graduate Gives TED Talk on Bees and Communication

Student Equity Offers Finals Week Food Breaks

Rio Hondo College’s Student Program funded Finals Food Breaks from Dec. 3-6, with more than 120 administrators, faculty, staff and students serving 5,696 hot meals, 3,650 pieces of fruit, 135 gallons of coffee and 20 gallons of hot chocolate.

Food breaks were provided at the main campus, South Whittier Educational Center, El Monte Education Center and the Fire Academy.

Assistance was provided by volunteers, Rio Café, Pamore Pizza and Juan Great Fiesta.
College Provides Gifts, Bags to Area Foster Youth

Rio Hondo College provided suitcase and backpacks for children in foster care as part of the fifth annual Case of Hope Drive. Sixty-five area children received backpacks with school supplies, toys and a suitcase at a special gathering on Dec. 15, followed by a special performance of selections from the recent holiday production of “The Nutcracker” by the Rio Hondo College Dance Collective.

In addition, 20 Guardian Scholars – students who have been in the foster system – received presents. The Saturday event included more than 100 guests and featured arts and crafts, face painting and a photo booth. Guests also enjoyed a performance of “We Wish You A Merry Christmas,” performed by student Charinamae Blank on violin.

Volunteers and supports included: SPIRITT Family Services (Norma Yoguez); Wayfinder Family Services (Ana Zimmer); Rio Hondo facilities and custodial staff (Jason Dwyer, Sergio Cabral, Don Vo, George Lopez, Eva Cabral); security (Anthony Chavez), Associated Students of Rio Hondo College (Shaina Phillips); Dr. Alyson Cartagena and Rio Hondo Dance Collective; Charinamae Blank, violin player; Robert Diaz, Santa Claus; CARE Program (Laura Verdugo); Karla Bermudez, CTE; volunteer (Marcie Valenzuela); Foster care office staff (Marisela Saenz, Deborah Lopez, Jendi Samai, Kim Aceves, Dominique Romero and Karina Hernandez).
Alternative Fuels Program Receives 2018–19 Exemplary Program Award

Rio Hondo College’s Alternative Fuels Program features a host of training programs that span fuel-cell technology, electric vehicles and autonomous vehicle technology. The program is connected with a historic Bachelor of Arts degree in automotive technology as well as the nation’s second Tesla START training program. The TESLA program is also recognized with a chancellor-approved Certificate of Achievement that is a first in the United States.

CDC Hosts Annual Snow Day

Rio Hondo College’s Child Development Center (CDC) hosted its annual Snow Day on Dec. 13 with 60 children and their families enjoying a snow slide, making snowballs and winter crafts that included drawing and designing a snowman, Playdough and winter stories. Families enjoyed snacks and a visit from Santa Claus. This annual event is sponsored by a See’s Candy fundraiser sponsored by the CDC’s Parent Advisory Committee.

“Rio Hondo College continues to push the edge of the envelope in innovation when it comes to our instruction for careers in automotive technology,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. “Our programs continue to glean honors from the state that stand as a testament to the impact we are having on our students’ futures.”
Rio Hondo College’s Dance Collective once again hosted its holiday favorite, “The Nutcracker,” in association with local schools, at 2 and 5 p.m. Dec. 9. The contemporary version of the show was created especially for children. Guest performances included students from local high schools, middle schools and Rio Hondo College’s Child Development Center. All proceeds go to support the Dance College’s participation in the American College Dance Association.
College Hosts ‘La Posada’ Staff Holiday Luncheon

Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss opened the All Staff Holiday Luncheon with a warm welcome on Nov. 29. The event was themed “La Posada” holiday luncheon, and featured tamales, a vibrant ballet folkloric dance performance and a piñata breaking festivity.

RHC Faculty Association (RHCFA) President Jill Pfeiffer thanked all those who donated money for the Teachers Helping Students Foundation Scholarship. The holiday luncheon serves as a fundraising event for the scholarship.

Pfeiffer also mentioned a General Fund Scholarship that comes directly out of faculty dues for students going through financial crises. She encouraged faculty to turn in applications for students in need by the deadline of Feb. 9, 2019.

Pfeiffer also mentioned that she received a heartfelt thank you from Butte Community College faculty, staff and students for the generous donation by the RHCFA to support the victims of the recent fires in Northern California. She recognized the Health and Science Division’s Gail Biesemeyer, who is retiring from Rio Hondo College after 23 years of service. She ended her remarks by thanking audio/visual, facilities, lunch chair Martha Carreon, Yolanda Ramirez and the entire Luncheon Committee for an “awesome” luncheon. Carreon also thanked the Organizing Committee and those who donated door prizes.
Rio Hondo College’s Forensics Speech and Debate team claimed the third-place sweepstakes prize at the Pacific Southwest Collegiate Association’s Fall Championships, as well as honors for 16 students in categories ranging from individual and team debate to poetry and impromptu speaking.

The tournament, held at Mt. San Antonio College from Nov. 30 to Dec. 2, is the last tournament of the mid-season. In all, 39 universities and colleges were represented.

**Río Hondo College honors**

- **International Public Debate Association debate:** Silver, Giovanny Rivas and Luis Licona; Bronze, Omar Arriaga, Erika Sigala and Noah Garcia; Impromptu: Silver, Frank Ramirez;
- **Parliamentary team:** Bronze, Omar Arriaga, James Montez, Deron Rouse-Wells, Anthony Valenzia, Edgar Minasyan and Alejandro Robles, Gabriela Rodriguez and Amanda Shepard;
- **National Forensic Association Lincoln-Douglas debate:** Bronze, Saul Garcia, Gabriela Rodriguez;
- **Poetry:** Third place, Diana Laureano.

Students were coached by Michael Moran, Patricia Hughes, Alex Cadena and Matt Grisat with assistance from Communications and Languages Division adjunct faculty Casey Jones and her student volunteers.

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Yoshio Nakamura, a World War II veteran honored for his service in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, served as grand marshal of the 65th annual Uptown Whittier Christmas Parade on Dec. 8.

Nakamura’s Army team — composed of Americans of Japanese ancestry — became the most highly decorated unit in U.S. military history for its size and length of service.

After the war, Nakamura earned BFA and MFA degrees from USC and began teaching at Whittier High School. When Rio Hondo College was launched, he was hired as the founding instructor and chair of the Fine Arts Department. He retired as vice president of Rio Hondo College in 1992.

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Rio Hondo College received a Bobby Salcedo Esperanza Award for supporting college success from the El Monte Promise Foundation during the 15th annual Tamalada, held Dec. 13 in El Monte.

The award usually honors individuals for supporting a cradle-to-college pathway, but in recognition of its 15th year, the Foundation selected area institutions to honor — including Rio Hondo College.

The College provides an extensive program of outreach, including summer programs for K-12 students, classes at local high schools, concurrent enrollment opportunities and tutoring for local schoolchildren.
Holiday Adopt-a-Child Program Aids 130 Children

Rio Hondo College community members adopted 130 children of EOP&S/CARE students for the holidays through the annual CARE Adopt-a-Child program. “It was truly heartwarming how our campus faculty, staff and administrators came together to make our event a success,” EOP&S/CARE Director Heba Griffiths said. “The children were overjoyed with the generous gifts they received and our CARE students were beyond thankful.”

Griffiths offered a special thank-you for the support the Adopt-a-Child program received from Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss, the Outreach Office and student worker volunteers, Professor Angela Rhodes and her student volunteers, facilities and custodial staff, audio/visual staff, theater staff and the EOP&S/CARE.
Serving the communities of
• El Monte
• South El Monte
• Pico Rivera
and portions of:
• Norwalk
• Downey
• La Mirada
• City of Industry
• Los Nietos*
• Santa Fe Springs
• Whittier
• East Whittier*
• South Whittier*
• West Whittier*
• Avocado Heights*
*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.

College to Celebrate 1st Homecoming in 22 Years
Rio Hondo College will hold its first Homecoming in 22 years on Jan. 11, 2019 with events that honor the College’s academic and sports programs.

Rio Hondo College’s nursing program and Police Academy will host tours and receptions and welcome back alumni from 3 to 5 p.m. Food and fun activities will take place at the gymnasium from 4:30 to 6 p.m., followed by a men’s basketball game between Rio Hondo College and Cerritos College from 6 to 8 p.m.

Tickets for the program, which is being staged by the Rio Hondo College Foundation, are free.

To register for the event, click here.