

# PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

APRIL 2019



## President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

It is a season of celebration at Rio Hondo College this spring, with our third cohort of Tesla technicians graduating, the fast-approaching graduation of our first cohort of Bachelor of Science students in automotive technology, and a slew of honors for our faculty and students.

It's an impressive flow of positive affirmations about the power of Rio Hondo College to

change lives and to help students discover and pursue their talents and dreams.

Those honors include our own Steve Hebert being selected as a CCCADA Athletics Director of the Year, dancer David Bernal being featured at a national dance gala, and the founder of our volunteer tax assistance program being celebrated by the Faculty Association.

Congratulations to all those who are seeing their labors bear such tremendous rewards!

## College Hosts 2nd Annual Dreamers Conference

Rio Hondo College hosted its second annual Dreamers Conference, themed "Together We Dream," in April to educate and empower undocumented students to continue their education regardless of their immigration status.

The conference began with the First Year Success Center/Dream Success Center coordinator, Edward Henderson, introducing Dean of Student Success Dr. Melba Castro, who affirmed the support Rio Hondo College has for undocumented students.

A panel of Dreamers shared their experiences as undocumented students navigating the educational system, which gave an opportunity for attendees to learn about issues as well as how to overcome them as they continue their education.

Attorney Yesenia Acosta offered a presentation on immigration rights and a resource fair featured assistance organizations and four-year universities.

Rio Hondo College's financial aid office provided information on how undocumented students can afford college and psychologists Glenn Heap and Daniela Chavez discussed how undocumented students can tend to their mental health.



**RIO IN THE NEWS:** See coverage of the Dreamers Conference on *Telemundo Channel 52*

Lastly, the conference closed with an address from Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights California Dream Network Statewide Youth Organizer Melody Klingenfuss. Klingenfuss was born in Guatemala and grew up on the frontier with El Salvador. She holds a master's degree in nonprofit leadership and management from USC.

She emphasized the importance of advocacy for political change that can lead to a pathway for citizenship.

The conference concluded with an Undocumented and Unafraid rally on campus.



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# Board Report

Rio Hondo College's Board of Trustees received an update on student equity efforts, bid farewell to a retiring staff member and promoted two employees to new jobs during its April meeting.

Faculty Coordinator Dr. Juana Mora and Student Equity Grant Manager Cecilia Rocha presented board members with information on student equity planning. The planning effort, which will unfold over the next two months, focuses on eliminating achievement gaps for students from traditionally underrepresented groups.

The plan is intended to take the College from data analysis to actionable practices that will help all students – and especially those who face the greatest challenges – on the path to success.

The effort will identify causes of low success in course completion and basic skills, offer constructive ways to discuss race and ethnicity and increase campus involvement in equity-focused change. The plan, which will be submitted at the end of June and cover 2019-22, includes services that assist students in making informed decisions as they develop an educational plan.

The effort is informed, in part, by the College's 2018 Equity Summit, which revealed student frustrations about the approachability of professors, the



challenges of hunger for students and the impact of criticism on students who struggle in classes.

The board also thanked retiring El Monte Educational Center secretary Gloria Reyes-Luera for her service. Reyes, who was hired in April 2001 as an account clerk, served the College for 18 years.

In addition, the board promoted Lisa Chavez to dean of counseling and hired Consuelo Gutierrez as the new director of Disabled Student Programs and Services. Both appointments took effect in April.

Board members also congratulated the following faculty members on achieving tenure (pictured below): Irene Vu, Viviana Villanueva, Joseph Rhee, Abbie Perry, Ea Madrigal, Jupei Hsiao, Yunior Hernandez, Maribel De Leon, Alex Gardos, Janet Cha.



## Dean Steve Hebert Honored as CCCADA Athletics Director of the Year



Steve Hebert, dean of the Division of Kinesiology, Dance and Athletics and athletic director, has been named Athletics Director of the Year by the California Community College Athletic Director's Association (CCCADA).

The award is a recognition of Hebert's "tremendous impact" on the association, according to a letter by CCCADA President Dan Clauss announcing the honor.

Hebert received the award at the group's Honoring Our Own Luncheon on March 28.

"I'm deeply touched by this recognition from my peers across the community college system's athletic association," Hebert said. "It's an incredible group of educators who are committed to ensuring our students reach their potential in the field of play and in the classrooms, so they can achieve their dreams."

Hebert, who holds a master's degree in education with an emphasis on physical education from Azusa Pacific University, taught and coached at area high schools from 1985 through 2001. He taught science and health courses

while coaching football, basketball, golf, and baseball at schools in the San Gabriel Valley and Chino, where he also served as athletic director.

Hebert joined Rio Hondo College in 2001 as head basketball coach and P.E. instructor, but also taught numerous health and wellness and activities courses. He also served on the Academic Senate and the Curriculum Committee. He was a voting representative and president for the Foothill Conference and served as an athletic coordinator and as the California Community College Men's Basketball Coaches Association as a board member and president. He has chaired the Southern California Regional Playoffs seeding meeting for men's basketball since 2011.

In 2013, Hebert became dean of the kinesiology, dance and athletics, and athletic director. He presided over the opening of several kinesiology and dance facilities, including new tennis courts, swimming pool, softball field and soccer stadium.

"Steve Hebert is an example of the deeply talented and incredibly committed team of educators who set Rio Hondo College apart," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "As his host of scholar athletes can attest, he puts students at the center of all he does. We are all fortunate to work with him."

## College Dancer Featured in Gala Concert



A solo performance by Rio Hondo College Dance Collective member David Bernal was selected for the 2019 American College Dance Association Gala Concert, held in March at the University of California, Irvine.

This was the third time in the last four conferences that Rio Hondo was selected for the gala by a panel of national adjudicators.

All twelve Rio Hondo Dance Collective members also performed during the event.

In the most recent round of university dance program auditions, seven Rio Hondo Dance Program students successfully passed the audition process and will matriculate. Transferring Dance Program students include:

- ▶ Edwin Pena: Berkeley
- ▶ David Bernal: CSU Long Beach
- ▶ Jessica Luevanos: UC Riverside
- ▶ Luisa Cardenas: CSU Los Angeles
- ▶ Tiffany Ramirez: Cornish College of the Arts
- ▶ Jewel Ramos: CSU Fullerton
- ▶ Rivka Villanueva: CSU Long Beach

## Advocate for Marginalized Communities to Give Commencement Keynote



A former Rio Hondo College student who has long advocated for the homeless and other marginalized communities will give the keynote speech at Rio Hondo College's 56th annual Commencement ceremony, set for 5:30 p.m. Thursday, May 23.

Dr. Luis S. Garcia serves as director of programs and services for the Weingart Center in Downtown Los Angeles, where he helps chronically homeless men and women transition to permanent housing.

Garcia attended the Hacienda La Puente Unified School District and began attending Rio Hondo College as a high school student. Along the way, he dropped out of high school and was incarcerated, but returned to Rio Hondo College. He transferred to Loyola Marymount University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in theology. He earned a Master of Social Work from the University of Southern California and returned to Loyola for his Ed.D. in educational leadership for social justice.

He is active in efforts to assist formerly incarcerated men and women and other marginalized communities. He is a resident of Whittier.

The ceremony will celebrate 1,828 graduates and candidates for Associate of Arts, Associate of Science and Associate Degrees for Transfer. In addition, 16 students are expected to receive Bachelor of Science degrees in automotive technology – a historic first for the community college.

## Public Safety

Wildland Fire, Police, Fire and EMT Academy classes stand at attention for the first-ever group picture together.



# Rio Hondo College Draws Record Crowd for 7<sup>th</sup> Annual 'A Taste of Rio'

More than 700 guests sampled artisan cuisine, fine wine and craft beer during the Rio Hondo Foundation's seventh annual "A Taste of Rio" event on April 26, breaking records yet again for attendance and for funds raised to support students.



The event, which supports Rio Hondo student programs and scholarships, was the largest in the program's history. It featured more than two dozen local restaurants, music and over 100 opportunity drawings.

Final estimates for funds raised are not yet in, but organizers say they are sure to have topped their \$100,000 goal.

The Rio Hondo Foundation launched 'A Taste of Rio' in 2012. The event has become a significant component of the Foundation's fundraising efforts, with the 2017 and 2018 events selling out. All money goes to fund student scholarships and support services.

The event included banners featuring students who represent "The Face of Rio" – those who have been assisted by the funds raised during the annual event. This year, the banners featured Bailey Garcia, who earned an associate degree in philosophy and transferred to UC Berkeley; Justin Chow, who earned an associate degree in arts and transferred to Cal State Long Beach; Yarisma Rocha, who earned an associate degree in business and transferred to USC; and Brenda Coronel, who earned an associate degree in psychology and transferred to UCLA.

Restaurants participating in the event included: Angry Horse Brewing, Annette's Pizzeria, Brewjeria, California Grill, Campus Food Service, Catering by Herach and Ara, Chef Dalton Wilson, Clearman's Steak 'n Stein, Double Tree by Hilton Whittier, El Coraloense, Juan Great Fiesta, Lagunitas, Lascari's, Laura's Goodies, Masataco, Simply Southern, South Central Brewing, Starwood Brewery, Tacos El Torito, Tacos N Miches, Tepeyac Restaurant and Tequila Sports Bar, The Commoner, The Green Leaf Thai and Zapien's Salsa.

The event's Gold Sponsor was Del Terra; Silver Sponsors were L.A. County Supervisor Janice Hahn and Fairplex. More than 50 additional sponsors supported the event and promoted student success through their support.



# College Celebrates Graduation for 3<sup>rd</sup> Cohort of Tesla START Technicians



Rio Hondo College on April 24 celebrated the graduation of 11 new Tesla START technicians, the third cohort to graduate since the Whittier-based College became the globally recognized innovative car company's second training partner in 2018.

The new START program graduates, who have already been placed at Tesla service centers in Buena Park, Burbank, Costa Mesa, Pomona and San Diego, join 26 graduates of cohorts one and two.

The event included a lunch, followed by certificate ceremony attended by Tesla Field Services Director Michael Ojaghian, Tesla Technical Training Director Nana Danso, Tesla Vocational & Trade Program Manager Tony Sciarra, Rio Hondo College START Instructor Timothy Olesijuk, Tesla NAMR Center Service Supervisor Jeff Dickman, START & Service Programs Recruiter Sarah Budriunas and Rio Hondo College Professor John Frala, who also serves as an assistant START instructor.



Graduating students and their placements, included: Darren Kusmoto, Buena Park; Eli Romero, Buena Park; Erik Verdayes, Costa Mesa; Grant Byers, Costa Mesa; Jain Yu Mai, Pomona; Jorge Padilla, Burbank; Josh Alcantar, Pomona; Julio Amaya, Burbank; Octavio Ortiz, Pomona; Phil Timm, San Diego-Miramar; and Trong Dang, Pomona.

The program's strengths have been highlighted in an interview of Frala by [National Public Radio](#).



## VITA Founder Honored by Faculty

Rio Hondo College's Faculty Association has honored Accounting and Business associate Jeannie Liu for her work as treasurer for the association and her work with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.

Liu, who started the VITA program five years ago, has served more than 1,100 people from the community, saving them more than \$300,000 in tax preparation fees. She is receiving a We Honor Our Own, or WHO, award.

## Connect with Us on Social Media

 **RHCRoadrunners**

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 **RioHondoCollege**

 **Rio Hondo College YT Channel**

 **bit.do/riohondocollege**

 **rhcroadrunners**

## 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



**5 p.m. Wednesday, May 22:**  
Nursing Pinning Ceremony, Lot A

**5:30 p.m. Thursday, May 23:**  
Commencement Ceremony, Lot A

**Monday, May 27:**  
College closed for Memorial Day

**10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, May 31:**  
Foster Friendly Ally Training program on creating a welcoming environment for foster youth students, Campus Inn



**Through June 2:**  
Registration continues for Summer Semester

## Fire Cadets Highlighted in Wildfire Today Article

An article in Wildfire Today captures a dramatic lesson learned by cadets at the Rio Hondo College Wildland Fire Academy: Never underestimate your opponent.

**RIO IN THE NEWS:** Read the article in *Wildfire Today*

The article recounts how, in April, trainers took cadets to the site of the Battle of San Pasqual, where a larger squad of U.S. soldiers were tricked into an ambush by a smaller contingent of Mexican cowboys during the Mexican-American War in 1846.

As with the battle, so too goes the reasoning in combatting fire. The lesson captures the impact of poor decision-making, the need to be prepared for the conflict and how to anticipate working without direction from a superior.

Rio Hondo College's Wildland Fire Academy trains cadets each year who often fight wildfires as part of the Roadrunners Fire Crew 77, dispatched across the state when fire season threatens to overwhelm firefighters. Graduates of the program are quickly hired by agencies across the region, including the U.S. Forest Service.



Fire Apparatus Engineer Heather Thurston, CAL FIRE – Monte Vista Unit