President’s Message

Greetings to our entire Rio Hondo College community! Community colleges offer university and technical studies to our community at little to no cost. In my first monthly President’s Update, please allow me to introduce myself and share a bit about my hopes for this extraordinary educational institution.

First, a little about me: I am a long-time educator who has served at many levels of education, including K-12 and the community college system. As an administrator, I have served as a dean, vice president and, for the last seven years, as a superintendent/president. For many years, I was a Spanish professor and soccer coach, so I am also familiar with the needs of our faculty and the institution. I have been married for 33 years, and both my sons have attended community college while pursuing advanced degrees.

Now, about my educational philosophy: Not surprisingly, it closely matches that of our Board of Trustees. To me, it is all about the students. Our job is to provide access to an impressive array of educational opportunities. These include paths to four-year universities, journeys of self-improvement and programs that launch careers or boost socio-economic opportunities.

My expectations for our students, college, faculty and staff are high. I believe that when our students strive and really put their heart into reaching their goals, they will succeed.

This doesn’t happen in a vacuum – all of us contribute to ensuring students understand the path they need to follow and receive the appropriate support to overcome barriers to succeed. Already, in just my first few weeks at Rio Hondo, I can see this is a view shared among our trustees, faculty and staff.

Since my arrival, I’ve met with our College’s leadership team and various faculty and staff to better understand the culture of Rio Hondo and to seek ways to strengthen our College. I look forward to working with the College community to find innovative solutions to the challenges our students face.

To our students, allow me to add: Rio Hondo College is committed to serving you. Our exceptional faculty and staff value each of you and take pride in offering meaningful educational instruction and programs to prepare you for the future. Rio Hondo College values diversity, equity, student access and success. Our educational community cares about all students and supports you in achieving your goals.

We embrace all students, including dreamers (undocumented), first-generation and traditionally underrepresented students. Whether a student is enrolling for the first time or is a returning student, I encourage you to explore career paths, engage in extracurricular activities and take advantage of all student support services, including counseling and tutoring.

From first year through transfer to a university, certificate completion or graduation, we are here to help all students realize their academic and career goals. As a distinguished Hispanic Serving Institution, we can make Rio Hondo College a pillar of support for all members of our community as they embark on their journeys of self-discovery and personal realization.

Mensaje del Presidente

¡Saludos a toda nuestra comunidad del Colegio Comunitario Rio Hondo! Los colegios comunitarios ofrecen estudios universitarios y técnicos a nuestra comunidad sin costo o a muy bajo costo. En mi primer mensaje mensual como presidente, permítame presentarme y compartir un poco sobre mis esperanzas para esta extraordinaria institución educativa.

Primero, un poco sobre mí: soy educador desde hace mucho tiempo y he participado en varios niveles de la educación incluyendo la primaria, secundaria, preparatoria y el sistema de colegios comunitarios. Como administrador, he trabajado como decano, sub rector y durante los últimos siete años, como rector ejecutivo. Durante muchos años, fui profesor de español y entrenador de fútbol por lo cual también conozco la experiencia del profesorado y la enseñanza. He estado casado por 33 años y mis dos hijos han asistido a un colegio comunitario camino a sus estudios universitarios.

Ahora, sobre mi filosofía educativa: no les sorprenderá que coincida con la de nuestra Mesa Directiva. Para mí, lo que más importa son los estudiantes. Nuestro trabajo es proporcionar acceso a una impresionante variedad de opciones educativas. Estas incluyen la transferencia a universidades de cuatro años, superación personal y programas de preparación para carreras cortas o clases que aumentan las oportunidades socioeconómicas.

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Board Report

Rio Hondo College, at its two recent general Board of Trustee meetings, presented the College’s Distinguished Service Award to veterans advocate Jake I. Alarid, approved new employees, recognized retirees, commended students, reviewed presentations on student services and arts and cultural programs and welcomed a new student trustee.

Alarid, a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, served during the Korean War. After the war, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in aeronautical engineering and joined the U.S. space program. For more than 34 years, he worked as a test engineer on Apollo 11 and was a member of the Space Shuttle Launch Operations Team.

After he retired, he joined several veterans advocacy organizations and served the country on fact finding missions in Europe and the Middle East. He served for four years on the board for the California Department of Veterans Affairs.

New employees include Aditi Sapra, a full-time sociology instructor and Lizette “Lucha” Arevalo, a full-time Chicana/o Studies instructor.

Retirees included: public safety range master Michael Henley, who served the College for more than eight years; math, sciences and engineering Professor Faye Daryoush, who served the College for 19 years; senior administrative assistant, finance and business Teresa Buell, who was hired in 2006, and Disabled Students Programs and Services interpreter Ethel Battles, who served the College for more than 23 years.

Trustees also commended state one-meter dive champion Aaron Augustine and his coaches, Stephen Smith and Charley Collins, and administered the oath of office to 2019-20 Student Trustee Carolina “Lina” Campillo.

Hear Rio Hondo College leaders discuss their battle against student hunger on the California School News Report podcast:

$100,000 Grant to Strengthen Services For Students Facing Food Insecurity

A $100,757 grant will bolster Rio Hondo College efforts to support students who struggle with food insecurity, quadrupling a previous grant for food, resources and counseling.

The funds are part of a 2018-19 California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office grant of $10 million that will be divided among college campuses based on attendance.

In June, art history professor Cynthia Neri Lewis offered a presentation on her sabbatical project, which focused on the California Missions, building off of exhibits on Latino art in Los Angeles. Lewis traveled to Spain, offered talks at area colleges and conferences, wrote a chapter for “The Worlds of Junipero Serra,” conducted research at the National Gallery of Art and Archives of American Art in Washington, D.C., helped assemble a database of art images and worked with the San Gabriel Mission to develop an internship.

In July, trustees received an update on services from the Extended Opportunity Program & Services/Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education from EOP&S/CARE Director Heba Griffiths. The programs work together to support students who face socioeconomic barriers to success, including single heads of households with young children.

The programs offer counseling services, priority registration, academic monitoring, textbook services, laptop/voice recorder and calculator loan program, meal vouchers, career assessments and supplemental aid for single parents.

The programs have seen the number of students served swell from 991 in 2015 to 1,606 in 2019, with a population that is predominantly Latino and mostly female. Students who engage with the program’s push for three contacts with counselors achieve stronger academic results and are retained longer by Rio Hondo College.

In 2018, 190 of the program’s students received associate degrees and 223 earned certificates — up significantly from 2015. Also in 2018, 161 students in the program transferred to four-year universities, almost double the number from 2015.

Río Hondo College’s share of a $2.5 million grant in 2017-18 totaled $27,405, funds that were coupled with $25,000 pledged in each of the past two years by the College’s President’s Office to operate the RioSource Room, a combination of a food pantry and a resource hub launched in fall 2017.

Surveys show that nearly half of all U.S. community college students struggle with food insecurity – the limited or uncertain availability of adequate, safe food or inability to obtain nutritious food in a socially acceptable manner.

College leaders are developing their plan for the funds, which were provided in May. Officials anticipate expanding counseling services for students in need, adding services to connect students to resources — including CalFresh, the state’s food assistance program for needy individuals — and obtaining additional food items for the RioSource Room.

Río Hondo College now partners with the L.A. Food Bank, but faces greater demand for meat, milk and bread items than can be supported by its biweekly shipments. The College will also boost its outreach efforts to ensure students know about the resources available.
Veterans who have earned degrees and certificates from Río Hondo College praise the College for its support services, including the Río Hondo College Veterans Service Center (VSC), as a critical element in their success.

“I truly enjoy my time here at Río Hondo College,” said U.S. Navy veteran Hayden McCord, who recently graduated with an Associate of Science in fire technology. “Río is by far the most veteran friendly college I’ve ever attended. The VSC takes the time to assist with any issues that arise. I am happy to be part of the Río family.”

Río Hondo leaders say the College’s goal is to ensure access to higher education for all students and to guide them to success. This includes ensuring veterans obtain their educational benefits and receive the specific services they require in balancing their educational goals with other needs.

The VSC provides an extensive selection of educational and vocational opportunities combined with a wide range of support services designed to support veterans students with their transition into higher education. The Center helps to facilitate orientations, holds application process clinics and workshops, all while connecting the students with Veterans Administration resources within the community.

The VSC is also a designated area where students can network, use the computer lab, receive tutoring, obtain career goals as well as an area where veterans can congregate. The VSC offers a safe space where veterans can find that missing element of camaraderie and esprit de corps from their active duty lives and apply it in their new student life.

“Many of Río Hondo College’s service members thrive during their higher educational endeavors, earning degrees and transferring to four-year institutions such as UCLA, UC Irvine, Cal State Fullerton, Cal State Los Angeles, Cal State Long Beach and San Diego State University,” Superintendent/President Dr. Arturo Reyes said.

In spring, the VSC reported 50 veterans graduated or transferred, including Kevin Skinner, a former Marine sergeant who maintained a 4.0 GPA throughout his Río Hondo College career. Skinner, who will attend Harvard University, mentored fellow veterans at Río Hondo College and served as president of the Veterans Club. He organized Veterans Week activities and spoke at community events, including the College’s 9/11 Memorial.

Skinner earned an Associate of Science in general studies with an emphasis in science and mathematics. He will study environmental science and engineering at Harvard.

In addition, U.S. Army veteran Sergio Tamayo was among the first cohort of students who earned Río Hondo College’s Bachelor of Science degree, offered as part of a historic California program.

Veterans are also among those who receive scholarships from the Río Hondo Foundation, including Brennen Robbins, Alexander Foskarino, Nicolas Kiyohara, Felipe Aceves and Eric Stone.

Alumni Mark Tavera, who served 30 years in the U.S. Army, continues to give back to the local community.

Tavera, who is from El Monte, leads Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10218 of Greater El Monte. He provides Thanksgiving baskets with all the trimmings each year to 50 families. He works to ensure that the veterans and their families are thanked for their sacrifices they have done for our country.

Channel 7 Spotlights Nursing Program

Eyewitness News at Channel 7 recently highlighted Río Hondo College’s partnership with Beverly Hospital to recruit nursing students as the region struggles with a nursing shortage, including bilingual nurses. Río Hondo College’s highly respected nursing program offers multiple levels of training in the field. For more information on the College’s nursing program, visit Río Hondo College’s Health Science and Nursing Department.

Foundation Thanks Donors

The Río Hondo College Foundation hosted its President’s Circle and Friends Reception on June 6, celebrating efforts to support student scholarships. The event was attended by past and present board members, donors and College leaders. Student speakers included Celene Perez Pacheco, Erik R. Stone, and Luisa Mesones – all 2019 graduates who overcame significant life challenges to come back to college. All three are transferring to top University of California campuses this fall.
College Enrolls First Cohort in Groundbreaking Homeland Security Degree Program

Rio Hondo College will be expanding presentation of its core and elective classes for its groundbreaking Associate of Science and Certificate of Achievement program in Homeland Security.

The program, approved in 2018 by the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, builds on Rio Hondo College’s nationally recognized public safety programs.

Classes offered this fall in the interdisciplinary degree program include Introduction to Homeland Security, Hazard Mitigation in Emergency Management and Cybersecurity: Policy and Practice.

“Homeland security expertise has never been in such high demand as it is today – a fact sadly reinforced by frequent violent incidents across our country,” Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Dr. Arturo Reyes said. “This degree program will help prepare students and a new generation of public safety officials who understand the issues, tactics and options necessary for ensuring our safety.”

The program was designed by Rio Hondo College faculty with deep knowledge of public safety needs in collaboration with experts in law enforcement, fire services and homeland security. Besides the core classes in homeland security and emergency management, the program incorporates courses in fire technology, wildland fire technology, administration of justice and geographic information services.

Rio Hondo College’s program is the only one in the region that offers dual emphasis on Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

As part of the program, Rio Hondo College has established a Regional Training Center on par with the College’s Police Academy, Fire Academy and Wildland Fire Academy, creating a fundamental framework for responding to threats posed daily by manmade and natural risks and hazards.

“Our newest public safety program in Homeland Security represents Rio Hondo College’s ongoing efforts to ensure our graduates receive cutting-edge instruction in high-demand career fields where they can make a real impact on our communities,” said Dr. Ygnacio “Nash” Flores, the coordinator for the Homeland Security Program. “Safety and security are concerns for everyone. We teach our students to understand their role in preparing for and responding to a wide range of emergencies and disasters.”

The Rio Hondo College Homeland Security Degree is the latest in a long line of public safety careers to offer not only an opportunity for a rewarding career at a living wage, but a chance to serve the community. Rio Hondo College’s commitment to Homeland Security is demonstrated by its efforts to have Homeland Security approved as a new Academic Discipline by the California Community College Board of Governors later this year.

Career fields open to graduates in homeland security have the potential for more than 150,000 new job openings by 2026.

Potential jobs include security management, information security, business continuity planning, biological scientist, systems engineer, hazard management, forensic science, nursing, border protection, customs, the U.S. Coast Guard, emergency management, transportation security, and law enforcement and fire careers.

College Hosts Training for Foster Youth Allies

Rio Hondo College staff, faculty, administrators and community members participated in the first Foster Youth Friendly Ally training program on May 31, learning about the impact of trauma on behavior and learning and receiving an overview of resources and services available to foster youth.

More than 55 participants from across Los Angeles County joined college College officials for the six-hour training program. The first part of the training was facilitated by California State University, Fullerton’s Guardian Scholars Team, while the second part was facilitated by partners from Los Angeles County Office of Education.

During the event, the College was recognized for its service to foster youth with a scroll from Los Angeles County First District Supervisor Hilda Solis.
Students Explore CTE Fields Through Camp Río

Río Hondo College hosted 45 members of the Boys & Girls Club of Whittier at Camp Río, a two-week exploration of College programs, science, career technical education and physical activities in July.

The program was piloted in 2016 and officially launched in 2017. In 2018, it expanded to focus on exciting project-based learning summer activities designed to inspire interest by children ages 11-13 in college attendance. This year, the College partnered with the Network for Entrepreneurship Teaching to offer a business concept/entrepreneurship component.

Students followed one of three tracks: coding, digital photography and electronic music. All students also participated in afternoon activities that include soccer, volleyball and basketball.

College Wrestlers Excel on Mat, in Classrooms

Rio Hondo College wrestlers not only excelled on the mat in 2018-19, but in the classroom as well. In June, the California Community College Wrestling Coaches Association announced that eight Roadrunner student-athletes had been named Academic All-Americans.

The eight honorees for head coach Mike Tellez broke a single-season state record. Sacramento City College also had eight named to the list to tie Río Hondo for most in the state this year.

Leading the way for Río Hondo was freshman Rudy Bojorquez with a team-best 3.70 grade point average.

In 2017-18, three Roadrunners were named All-Americans; the previous program high was five selections in 2016-17.

All-Americans
- Chris Montoya, 3.0 GPA, 174 lbs., sophomore
- Daniel Martinez, 3.13, 141 lbs., sophomore
- Andy Voong, 3.59, 197 lbs., freshman
- Daniel Park, 3.14, 184 lbs., freshman
- Marco De La Torre Campos, 3.33, 149 lbs., freshman
- Rudy Bojorquez, 3.7, 141 lbs., freshman
- Kalil Tucker, 3.12, 133 lbs., freshman
- Diego Sanchez, 3.57, 285 lbs., freshman

CDC Celebrates Children Heading to Kindergarten

Río Hondo College’s Child Development Center honored 27 preschool children for their successful transition to kindergarten in the fall at a June 28 celebration attended by about 135 children and their families. Each child received a goodie bag that contained school supplies and special treats.

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College Honors Gardena Police Officer Who Died in the Line of Duty

ABC7 Coverage of Fallen Officer Toshio Hirai

Rio Hondo Police Academy added the name of Gardena Police Officer Toshio Hirai to its Memorial Plaque in a July 10 ceremony that included members of the Gardena Police Department, Officer Hirai’s family, honor guards from Los Angeles County law enforcement agencies and cadets of the Rio Hondo Police Academy Recruit Class No. 208.

Officer Hirai died in the line of duty on Nov. 15, 2018 as a result of a vehicle accident. He was a graduate from Rio Hondo Police Academy Class No. 178.

L.A. Police Emerald Society Pipes and Drums started the ceremony, followed by an honor guard of Gardena police officers. After the National Anthem, Police Chaplain Rob Lee offered an invocation.

The event was officiated by Police Academy Director Walter Allen III. Gardena Police Chief Thomas Kang was the guest speaker.

The plaque was unveiled as Emerald Society pipers and drummers performed “Amazing Grace.”

Officer Hirai is the 26th law enforcement officer added to the academy’s Memorial Plaque.

NBC4 Covers Rio Hondo Police Academy Memorial
Rio Hondo Police Academy celebrated the graduation of 47 cadets — including 10 women — in Class No. 208 during a special ceremony July 25 at the San Gabriel Mission Playhouse.

The class is the largest since the early 2000s.

“Rio Hondo College is proud to celebrate the success of these incredible men and women, who are dedicating their lives to protect and serve our communities,” Superintendent/President Dr. Arturo Reyes said. “Their dedication underscores Rio Hondo College’s mission to provide students with pathways to living-wage careers that impact our community.”

The students underwent six months of intensive training in constitutional law, criminal law, domestic violence, procedure justice, traffic enforcement, emergency vehicle operations, tactical first aid and CPR, mental health, lifetime fitness, firearms, among other subjects mandated by Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

More than 60 cadets started the training on Feb. 12, 2019.

“These graduating cadets represent the best of the best,” Police Academy Director Walter Allen III said. “Their training is among the most rigorous anywhere. Their achievements, in light of the challenges they faced over the last six months, will prepare them for the critical task of protecting our communities.”

Allen said Class 208 performed especially well in scenario role playing, in which cadets are tested on 14 scenarios involving 11 core competencies. Cadets must connect training from throughout their courses into a holistic, effective response. The scenarios require a minimum passing score of 80%. Class 208 averaged 92.2 percent — with individual cadets scoring up to 100 percent.

Thirty-five cadets were sponsored by area police departments — a recognition of the strength of Rio Hondo College’s police training program. Sponsoring departments include Azusa, Burbank, Bell Gardens, Cal State Northridge, El Segundo, La Verne, La Habra, Monrovia, Montebello, Pasadena, San Fernando, San Gabriel, Santa Paula, Signal Hill, Simi Valley, South Gate, Vernon and West Covina.

The ceremony included a processional, a presentation of the colors and an invocation. A keynote address was given by Vernon Police Chief Anthony Miranda. In addition to receiving their certificates, cadets were also recognized for fitness, marksmanship, academics and inspiration.

Class President Lugardo Chavez, who was recognized as the class Honor Cadet, thanked the cadets’ families for their support and the academy’s recruit training officers and instructors for their guidance.

“You dedicated yourselves to strangers who came to the academy to continue the work that many of you have spent a majority of your lives in. You worked us hard and made us stronger,” he said.

Chavez said he was impressed by the commitment of his fellow cadets to their new profession.

“This class is filled with amazing people, and while they will now be police officers, please remember them for who they are, because to me, they are more than just their last names and the uniforms they wear,” he said.

“They are mothers and fathers, friends and partners, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters.”

In addition to Miranda, the event was attended by El Monte Police Chief David Reynoso, Azusa Police Chief Steve Hunt, Burbank Police Chief Scott La Chasse, Bell Gardens Police Chief Scott Fairfield, El Segundo Police Chief Bill Whalen, La Habra Police Chief Jerry Price, La Verne Police Chief Nick Paz, Monrovia Police Cpt. Health Harvey (representing Monrovia Police Chief Alan Sanvictores), Montebello Police Chief Brad Keller, Cal State Northridge Police Chief Gregory Murphy, Pasadena Police Chief John E. Perez, San Fernando Police Chief Anthony Vairo, San Gabriel Police Chief Gene Hicks, Santa Paula Police Chief Steven M. McLean, Signal Hill Police Chief Christopher Nurnley, Simi Valley Police Chief David M. Livingstone, South Gate Police Chief Randy Davis and West Covina Police Chief Richard Bell.

The 19 represented departments represent a record for a Río Hondo Police Academy graduation.

**College Offers Public Safety Career Prep**

Rio Hondo College will offer free classes this fall for public safety career preparation, including safety officer I and II certificates. Information sessions are held at noon on the first Wednesday of each month and at 7 p.m. the third Wednesday of each month at the Rio Hondo College Administration of Justice Office.

Officer I certificate classes include an introduction to public safety careers on Sept. 14, employment readiness seminar on Sept. 21, and lifetime wellness and stress management on Sept. 28.


For more information, call (562) 463-7724.
Mission Statement

Río 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.

Serving the communities of
- El Monte
- South El Monte
- Pico Rivera
- Santa Fe Springs
- Whittier

and portions of:
- Norwalk
- Downey
- La Mirada
- City of Industry
- Los Nietos*
- East Whittier*
- South Whittier*
- West Whittier*
- Avocado Heights*

*Unincorporated communities within our District

Fire Academy Celebrates Graduation of Cadet Class 92

Río Hondo Fire Academy celebrated the graduation of 33 cadets as part of Class 92 on June 1, with 30 students either sponsored by local fire or ambulance companies or undergoing background reviews by agencies.

The cadets completed the Academy’s 14-week training program for entry-level firefighters, a program certified by the state Fire Marshal.

Students were trained in fire service organization, personal protective equipment, self-contained breathing apparatus, communications, incident command systems, tools, extinguishers, hose evolutions, ladder evolutions, ropes and knots, salvage and overhaul, search and rescue, ventilation, forcible entry, live fire training, wildland firefighting, hazard materials/weapons of mass destruction, vehicle extrication, rapid intervention operations, low-angle rope rescue and rescue systems.

Of the graduating cadets, 15 were sponsored by CARE ambulance and have full-time jobs. Six students were sponsored by local fire agencies and nine were in background review stages.

The ceremony was attended by College leaders, including Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Laura Ramirez and Vice President of Student Services Henry Gee, as well as members of the Board of Trustees.

Mensaje del Presidente

(Continuación de la página 1)

Mis expectativas para nuestros estudiantes al igual que para el colegio, la facultad y de todo el personal, son altas.

Creo que cuando los estudiantes se esfuerzan y realmente se proponen de corazón realizar sus metas, tendrán éxito.

Este éxito no sucede en un vacío: todos contribuimos a garantizar que los estudiantes conozcan el camino que deben seguir y que reciban el apoyo adecuado para superar las barreras para lograr tener éxito. Durante mis primeras semanas en Río Hondo, he observado que esta es una opinión compartida por nuestros administradores, profesores y personal.

Desde mi llegada, me he reunido con los líderes de nuestra institución y con varios profesores y personal para entender mejor la cultura de Río Hondo y buscar formas de fortalecer nuestro colegio. Espero trabajar con la comunidad del colegio para encontrar soluciones innovadoras a los desafíos que enfrentan nuestros estudiantes.

A nuestros alumnos, permítanme agregar: El Colegio de Río Hondo se compromete a estar a su servicio. Nuestra facultad y personal excepcional valoran a cada uno de ustedes y orgullosamente ofrecen instrucción y programas significativos para prepararlos hacia el futuro. El Colegio de Río Hondo valora la diversidad, la equidad, el acceso de los estudiantes y el éxito. Nuestra comunidad educativa se preocupa por sus estudiantes y se compromete a apoyarlos en el logro de sus objetivos.

Aceptamos todo estudiante y a los soñadores (indocumentados), los alumnos de primera generación y a los estudiantes tradicionalmente menos representados. Ya sea un estudiante que llegue por primera vez a Río Hondo o un estudiante que regrese después de alguna ausencia, los animo que exploren las carreras, participen en actividades sociales y aprovechen todos los servicios de apoyo estudiantil que incluyen la consejería y asesoría académica.

Desde el primer año hasta la transferencia a la universidad, la finalización del certificado o la graduación, el Colegio de Río Hondo está aquí para ayudar a todos los estudiantes alcanzar sus metas académicas y profesionales. Como distinguida institución sirviendo a los hispanos, podemos asegurarnos que el Colegio de Río Hondo sea un pilar de apoyo para todos los miembros de nuestra comunidad en su jornada de descubrimiento y realización personal.