

FOCUS ON RÍO

September 2020

President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

Río Hondo College's commitment to its students was celebrated in September when the College received significant federal grants to support its efforts to strengthen instruction in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields as well as expanding student support services.

These grants will build on efforts underway for more than a decade to ensure our students have every opportunity to pursue their dreams of a college education. It's an incredible validation of the dedication of our educators

and staff at every turn to stand by our students.

These innovations are especially important now, as we prepare for a continuation of our online instructional program in spring 2021 – a move that is designed to ensure the safety of our students, staff and faculty. We are eager

to have our community back on campus but know that the first priority is to combat the virus that has disrupted so many lives.

I would also like to highlight other commendable events in September, including the graduation of our latest cohort of Tesla START technicians. Part of a historic collaboration with the well-known car company, our program provides graduates with an instant entry into a high-paying career field.

Finally, our dedicated graduates of the College's Fire Academy and Wildland Fire Academy have been hard at work throughout the month as part of Roadrunners Hand Crew 77. The Río Hondo team was called up early in the month to help fight the Bobcat Fire – an effort that continues even now. They are a model for us all.

In closing, let me thank our faculty, staff and administrators for their dedication to our students and mission during these trying times. Your efforts are what make the Río Hondo College experience so strong for our students!

\$2.8 Million Grant to Fund Intensified STEM Program, Student Research

The College will launch an intensive program to support science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) field studies for students, including scientific research experiences for Río Hondo students, thanks to a \$2.8 million, five-year Department of Education Title V grant.

The Title V grant, announced Sept. 3, is the latest in a series of STEM-focused grants secured by the College to support its largely Hispanic student

population. Other recent STEM-focused funding from the Department of Education include a \$1.3 million TRIO-STEM grant and a \$1 million National Science Foundation S-STEM grant that have strengthened the College's STEM instructional program.

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RIO HONDO COLLEGE



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RÍO IN THE NEWS: Read about the grant in the [Whittier Daily News](#), the [Pasadena Star-News](#), the [San Gabriel Valley Tribune](#), [MyNewsLA.com](#), and the [Mercury News](#).

\$2.8 Million Grant to Fund Intensified STEM Program, Student Research

(Continued from page 1)

The new Title V grant will fund Enlace, a pilot student success program that will provide services to all enrolled STEM students with a focus on low-income, first generation, Hispanic students. Fields of study include biology, chemistry, computer information technology, computer science, engineering, environmental science, math and physics.

More than 56% of Río Hondo students are high-need, low-income, first-generation college students. More than 80.25 percent are Hispanic. Enlace is Spanish for weave.

"The Enlace program will provide a tremendous boost to our already strong STEM programs," Acting Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "We are positioned to provide our students with unheralded and unprecedented STEM research and workforce experience opportunities."

For example, the program fills a gap in community college instruction for student independent research opportunities, which are typically more prevalent at four-year colleges and universities.

Río Hondo College will partner with Oak Crest Institute of Science, LA Bioscience Hub and the UCLA/RHC Scientific Exchange Program to provide real-world science research and lab experience starting in the second summer of STEM students' education program.

"These partnerships will provide rigorous academic laboratory programs that allow community college students to learn to solve real-world problems while participating in important environmental and biomedical research," Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Laura Ramirez said.

"I have had the honor of working alongside a wonderful research group. They've been very welcoming and knowledgeable. I've learned new lab techniques, met many brilliant people and made lifelong friends."

-Lucia Cabrales

Enlace will provide innovative advising and support structures to create enriching academic opportunities that foster STEM success. These include a STEM Early Summer program that will offer an academically focused head start to first-year students; a Discover STEM Conference that will introduce students to emerging technologies; a STEM Student Success Team to support students with counseling and other academic support; and a STEM Leadership Academy with a financial literacy component; work experiences, internships and research opportunities; and faculty professional development.

"Equal in importance to the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom is

the relationship that is created between the student and the mentor," said Dr. Vann Priest, dean of mathematics, sciences and engineering. "All scientists and engineers can point to one person and say that's the person who turned me from a student into a professional. Our partners can provide that opportunity."

Río Hondo College chemistry student Lucia Cabrales, who has participated in the UCLA/RHC Scientific Exchange program, called the experience "unique and motivating."



**Río Hondo College Chemistry Student
Lucia Cabrales**

"I have had the honor of working alongside a wonderful research group. They've been very welcoming and knowledgeable. I've learned new lab techniques, met many brilliant people and made lifelong friends," Cabrales said. "There's a real difference between working in a research group and working solely in a classroom setting. Everyone is so motivated and enthusiastic to reach a common goal."

As part of the Enlace program, the College also will generate an annual State of STEM Report to maximize the impact of STEM program strategies and inform College policy decisions. The State of STEM Report will be presented to the president and Board of Trustees and made available on the Río Hondo College website.

Ultimately, The Enlace program will be scaled campus-wide as part of Río Hondo College's Guided Pathways framework, which guides students through their academic goals toward careers and four-year universities. The College already partners with area employees to help guide students to gainful employment, including STEM. Río Hondo is in the state's second largest workforce area, and STEM fields are in high demand. At the institutional level, Enlace will improve Río Hondo College by creating stronger linkages between faculty-led academic departments and staff-led student and academic support programs, and by creating a model for improved efficiency.

College leaders say Río Hondo College, a Hispanic-Serving Institution, is positioned to lead in addressing state and national STEM education needs and workforce diversification. The College's student population mirrors the state's socio-economic diversity. The College's STEM program is recognized nationally by Excelencia in Education, an organization that accelerates Latinx student success in the workforce and the economy.



Tesla Technician Program Celebrates 6 New Graduates

Río Hondo College has selected the graduation of six students from its Summer 2020 COVID-19 Class of Tesla START technicians.

Even with the COVID-19 impact, students completed 12 weeks of training with a modified schedule.

The technician training program – the first of its kind in California and the

second in the U.S. – was launched in 2018 and has graduated more than 60 technicians, who are guaranteed employment by the globally recognized innovative electric car company.

Pictured above (left to right): Tim Olesjuk (trainer), Jake Kleine, Bryant Ortiz-Avila, Jose Rizo, Bryan Pierce, Erube Chirino, John Frala (trainer) and Jorge Camacho.

District Update

Río Hondo College's Board of Trustees voted 4-0 during a Sept. 23 special session to hold an election in spring 2021 to fill a board seat left vacant by the July resignation of Norma Edith García.

The election will fill the seat through the end of García's original term, December 2022.

The special election would be held with the state's spring election, on Tuesday, March 2, 2021.

Also in September, trustees received a detailed update on enrollment, showing a fall enrollment of 14,238, including 4,643 full-time equivalent students attending for credit.

Trustees were also updated on the College's building program, which is currently focused on

the seismic upgrade of Río Hondo's iconic L-Tower. The project is nearing 60 percent completion with a number of the structural reinforcement efforts nearly finished. The project is in the first of two phases.

The board also recognized and commended outgoing members of the Citizens Oversight Committee (COC) that oversees facilities bond spending: COC Chair Dr. Monica Sanchez, who represented Trustee Area 2 from September 2016 through September 2020; COC Vice Chair Josefina Canchola, who will serve Trustee Area 4 from May 2015 through November 2020; and COC Member Margie Rodriguez, who will serve Trustee Area 4 from July 2016 to November 2020.

The board also recognized child development teacher Dawn Smith, who retired Aug. 12.

College Maintains Online Instruction for Spring 2021

Río Hondo College Acting Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss announced on Sept. 22 that the College will continue with online instruction in spring 2021. The decision, which was made out of an abundance of caution, is designed to ensure the safety of students, staff and faculty as the nation continues to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

RÍO IN THE NEWS:

Read more about the grant in the [Whittier Daily News](#), [MyNewsLA.com](#), [La Opinión](#), the [Mid Valley News](#), and hear more on [KFI](#).

\$2.68M TRIO Grant to Assist Low-income, 1st-generation Students Overcome Barriers

Río Hondo College has received \$2.68 million in federal grants to expand coaching services that encourage persistence and retention of low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities who face significant barriers to higher-education success.

The grants are provided by the Department of Education's TRIO programs, a collection of eight programs that serve student groups with high needs. Río Hondo received two grants: A TRIO-Regular grant that will provide \$1.42 million over five years to serve 165 students and a TRIO-STEM grant that will provide \$1.26 million over five years for 124 students.

"First-generation students often lack a role model equipped to guide them through the complex process of becoming a college student," Acting Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "These students often don't know how to advocate for themselves and are more likely to be derailed by barriers. TRIO programs bridge the gap as students pursue their goals."

Both grant programs are focused on individualized student coaching, which includes helping students create educational and personal success plans, academic advising, academic excellence workshops, study skills, time management, tutoring, financial literacy education, support for transfer applications and financial aid.

In addition, students may participate in group study and faculty interactions and receive support for applying to summer internships. All services are geared to enable students to graduate from Río Hondo College and transfer to four-year universities.

"Students who qualify for the TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program really benefit from a helping hand as they navigate this new world. We have their back from day one until they cross the stage at graduation," said Lisa Chavez, dean of counseling.

The TRIO-STEM grant allows Río Hondo to provide a dedicated STEM counselor and other personnel who are familiar with the work needed for STEM courses and who can provide the necessary guidance and support for the College's growing number of STEM majors.

"Students who arrive at Río Hondo as STEM majors are usually strong students. However, the expectations in STEM courses at the College are not comparable to those at the high school level. One calculus course takes up to 16 hours a week," said Dr. Gisela Spieler-Persad, director of the College's MESA/TRIO SSS STEM. "This funding supports students where they need it the most."

TRIO support helps students overcome personal and academic challenges.

Melissa Concepcion – a recent graduate of Río Hondo who attends Cal State University, Los Angeles – was an active participant in Río's TRIO program.

"When I first started at Río Hondo College, I was fearful of change. I also didn't have the tools that I needed to be successful in college. I did not have internet at home, so this was a barrier to getting my homework done. I started to lose self-confidence," Concepcion said. "Being a part of TRIO allowed me to receive the added support that I needed to graduate and transfer regardless of these challenges."

RÍO IN THE NEWS:

Read more about the Vote Center in the [San Gabriel Valley Tribune](#).

College to Host Vote Center for Nov. 3 Election

Río Hondo College will host a Vote Center in the Campus Inn from Friday, Oct. 30 through Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 3 as part of a program designed to ensure maximum community access to voting opportunities.

Río Hondo College is one of multiple community partners hosting the centers as part of the Voting Solutions for All People (VSAP) program. VSAP enables voters to cast ballots with new, accessible ballot marking devices.

"Río Hondo College is committed to ensuring access and equity for our community of students, staff and faculty in all matters – not only education," Acting Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "We are pleased to provide this civic service to our community."

Río Hondo College's Vote Center will offer same-day registration, voting

support in multiple languages, replacement ballots for vote-by-mail voters and ballot drop-off. The spacious venue allows for physical distancing as required by the Los Angeles Department of Public Health. Masks will be required for all Vote Center visitors.

The 5-day period will be the second time the College has served as a Vote Center this year; it previously hosted voting from Feb. 29 to March 3 for the California 2020 primary election.

The Campus Inn is on the College's main campus, 3600 Workman Mill Road, Whittier. The center will be open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Oct. 30 to Nov. 2 and from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Nov. 3.

For more information, go to: <https://www.riohondo.edu/tcr/vote-center/>.

Roadrunners Hand Crew 77 Battling Bobcat Fire

Río Hondo College's Roadrunner Hand Crew 77 was activated for the third time in recent months to assist in fighting the Bobcat Fire, which has scarred more than 113,000 acres since it was sparked on Sept. 6 in the Angeles National Forest north of Arcadia, La Cañada Flintridge and Glendora.

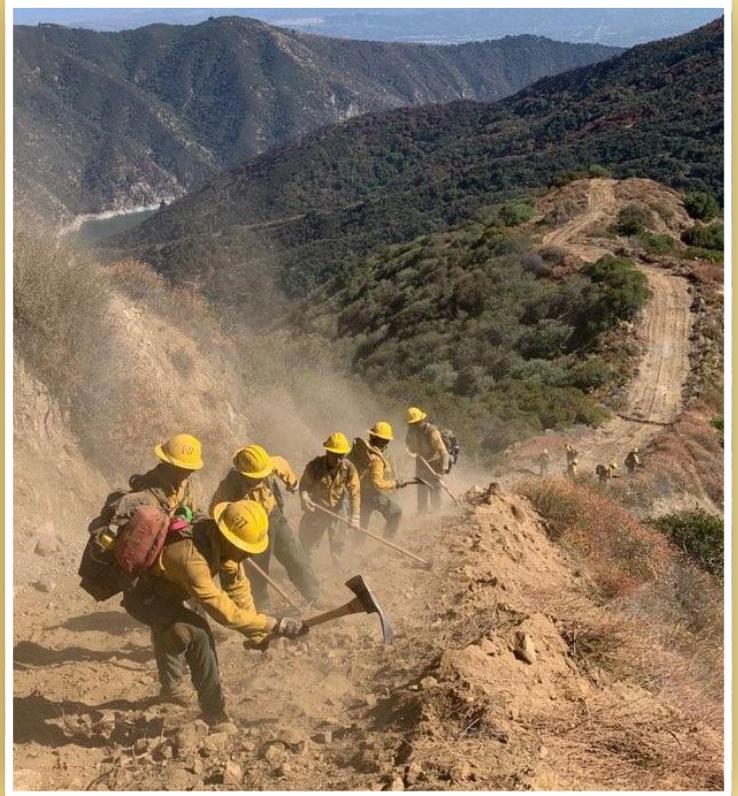
The crew was previously activated in June and August to assist the U.S. Forest Service with what has become another record-breaking fire year in the state. Normally called up for 14-day shifts, the crew has been active for 21 days and is expected to return to duty yet again after taking a short break.

The crew, created by the College's Wildland Fire Academy, is staffed by a team of graduates from recent cadet classes, including Victor Apodaca, Nicholas Casimiro, Nicolas Demonte, Evan Espinoza, Yulfiano Gerwynaldo, Daniel Ingelmo, Jesse Jimenez, Marcus Manty Ortiz, Ilunga Mulonga, Diego Rodriguez, Alan Perez, Eduardo Reyes, Hector Samayoa and Andrew Salinas.

"These young men and women exemplify the best of Río Hondo College," Acting Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "Their commitment to our community never ceases to inspire us all."

A Type II hand crew, the team assists with all aspects of fire monitoring, suppression and control, including digging fire containment lines. In past years, the crew has been called up multiple times a year to assist with firefighting across California. The crew has battled fires in Yosemite National Park and helped fight the devastating Ferguson Fire.

Each crew member must meet or exceed U.S. Forest Service requirements for seasonal wildland firefighters. Students also must pass an arduous physical fitness regime. Río Hondo College, which has fielded the crew since 2002, is well known for its Wildland Fire Academy, which typically places every graduate from every class.



"We are all proud of the dedication to serve demonstrated by our extraordinary graduates," said Chief Andy Grzywa, academy director. "This year has tested our firefighting resources in California like no other, and we are honored to be a part of the team protecting our communities."

RÍO IN THE NEWS:

Read more about Garcia in the [Los Angeles Times](#).

Wildland Fire Alum Leads Bobcat Fight

Río Hondo College Wildland Fire Academy graduate Jerry Garcia has been profiled by the Los Angeles Times for his commitment to his craft and his devotion to the mountains where he spends his time as an ultra-marathon runner.

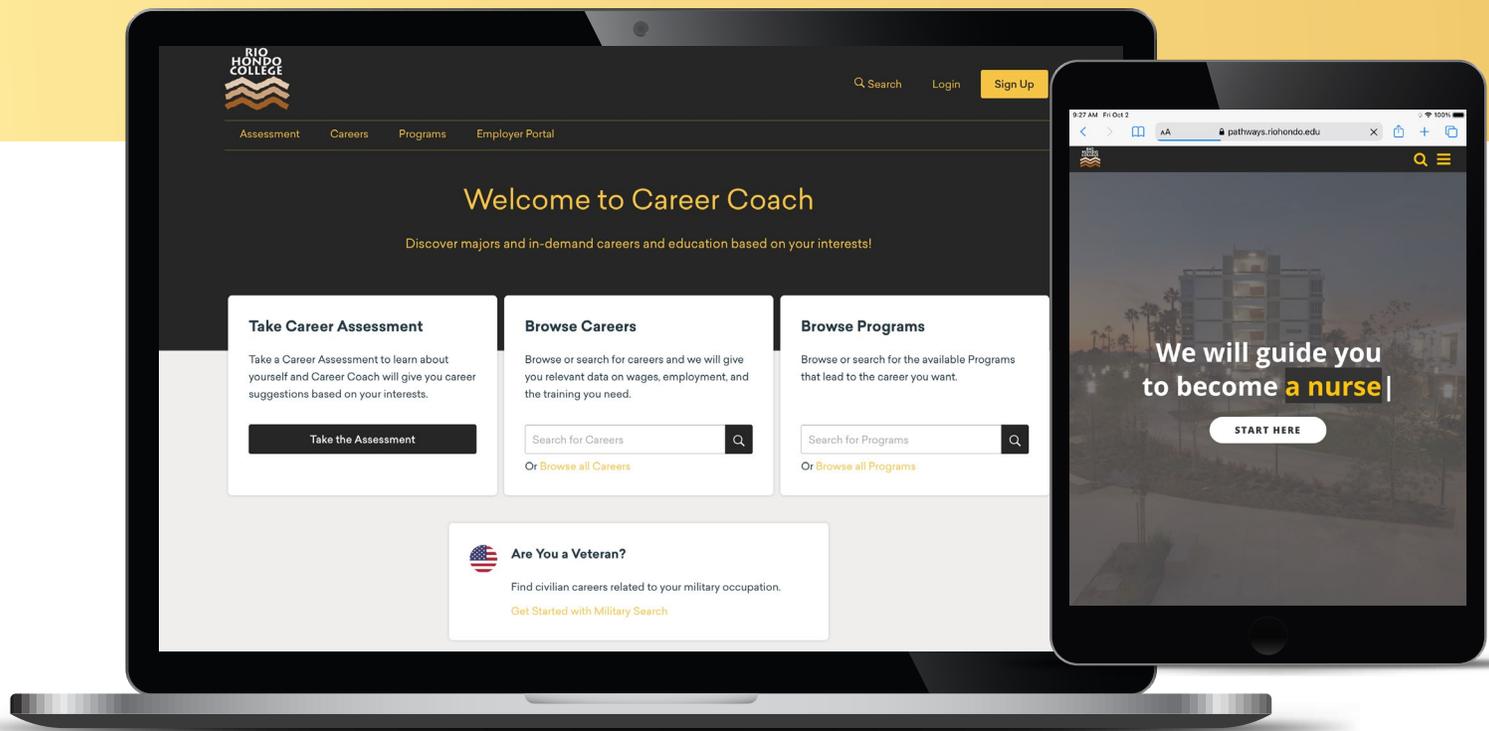
Garcia is a crew boss for the U.S. Forest Service who pursued a passion for running that evolved into ultra races, including those along the trails in the Angeles National Forest. So when his team - Crew 63 - was called up to fight

the Bobcat Fire, the fight was personal.

"It was like watching your house burn down," he told the Times.

His crew fought the fire daily for two weeks, putting in 16-hour shifts. Then, when their stint ended, they agreed to go for another week of grueling work to contain the blaze, and eventually helped to save the Mt. Wilson Observatory.

The crew took a few days off after that but is now back on the fire lines.



College Expands Student Career Support Tools

Río Hondo College this fall kicked off a Student Success Teams (SST) initiative to provide students with support as they pursue their academic goals, an element of a Guided Pathways framework that aims to boost student success.

The initiative gives students access to online [Career Coach](#) and [Programs of Study](#) sites to guide them through their academic journeys.

The Career Coach offers a self-paced personal survey to help students make choices about their academic and career choices that align with their strengths and interests. The Programs of Study site provides information about the array of certificates and degrees offered at Río Hondo.

The College's SST personnel are trained to support students within their Areas of Interest in making decisions about their class schedule, financial aid, transfer application(s), work readiness and counseling support.

"These two new tools will help students discover careers that match their passions and develop a specific pathway to achieving those career goals," Acting Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "It's a terrific new tool in the toolbox of success."

The tools are an element of the California Community Colleges' Guided

Pathways framework for supporting student success. Río Hondo College, which expanded an already rich array of student support services after the COVID-19 pandemic began, has been recognized for the strength of its support services.

"These two new tools will help students discover careers that match their passions and develop a specific pathway to achieving those career goals...It is more essential than ever that we help students identify these pathways to their futures."

—Acting Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss

The two new tools will work in concert with those existing services, including the College's academic and career counseling programs.

"It is more essential than ever that we help students identify these pathways to their futures," Dreyfuss said. "Many of our students arrive on campus with little previous guidance or a deep understanding of how to navigate the complexities of higher education."

Connect with Us on Social Media



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

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.



Save the Date

10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Fridays, through Oct. 30: Transfer Center CSU fall 2021 application assistance, virtual

Noon to 1 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 8: Rise Program UC Underground Scholars Panel, virtual

Tuesday, Oct. 6 to Thursday, Oct. 8: Day of the Dead altar building

7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 8: Day of the Dead altar artist talk with Ofelia Esparza, streaming on Facebook and YouTube.

Noon Friday, Oct. 9: Transfer Center virtual tour of Claremont Colleges, Cal Poly Pomona

11 a.m. Monday, Oct. 12: Indigenous People's Day, virtual

10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 12: L.A. Career Connect virtual job fair

1 p.m. Monday, Oct. 12: Undocumented Student Week of Action: Get Social Mixer

11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 13: L.A. Career Connect virtual job fair

10 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 13: Undocumented Student Week of Action: You're not Alone Gallery

Noon to 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14: L.A. Career Connect virtual job fair

5 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14: Undocumented Student Week of Action: UndocuFamily Night

6 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14: Board of Trustees meeting, virtual

1 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 15: Undocumented Student Week of Action: UndocuRío Talks

1 to 3 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 15: L.A. Career Connect virtual job fair

10 a.m. Friday, Oct. 16: Undocumented Student Week of Action: UndocuScholar Student Panel

11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 16: TRIO SSS UC Santa Barbara admissions and virtual tour

Noon Friday, Oct. 16: Transfer Center virtual tour of Long Beach State, Azusa Pacific University

2 to 4:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 16: L.A. Career Connect virtual job fair

Tuesday, Oct. 20 to Wednesday, Oct. 21: Self Help Graphics Barrio Mobile Arts team and SHG Legacy artists lead consecutive lectures on the gallery and community center's tradition of celebrating Día de los Muertos, virtual

Noon to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 21: Latinos Empowered Guided and Cultivated in Education (LEGACIE) Mentor Mixer via Zoom

Noon to 1 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 22: Rise Program UC Application Workshop, virtual

Thursday, Oct. 22: Self Help Graphics Barrio Mobile Arts Team will facilitate an online Día de los Muertos workshop on the Mexican folk art of papel picado, virtual

Noon Friday, Oct. 23: Transfer Center virtual tour of USC

6 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 28: Board of Trustees meeting, virtual

Thursday, Oct. 29: Book Bash, online

Noon Friday, Oct. 30: Transfer Center virtual tour of CSU Northridge, UC Santa Barbara



L.A. Career Connect

A WEEK LONG VIRTUAL JOB FAIR

October 12th - 16th

PARTICIPATING PARTNERS



Powered By: jobspeaker™



EVENT SCHEDULE

Connect with 45+ employers with entry to experienced level positions across industries such as retail, healthcare, manufacturing and much more.

Monday: 10/12/2020
10:00am - 12:30pm

Tuesday: 10/13/2020
11:00am - 1:30pm

Wednesday: 10/14/2020
12:00pm - 2:30pm

Thursday: 10/15/2020
1:00pm - 3:30pm

Friday: 10/16/2020
2:00pm - 4:30pm

Students and Employers must register to participate in this event.

Please visit the link below for more information:

[JSPKR.LI/LAJOB-OCT20](https://jspkr.li/LAJOB-OCT20)

All participating colleges are committed to providing universal access to this event. Should you require disability accommodations to fully participate, please indicate your request on the event registration form at least seven (7) days prior to the event.