

# FOCUS ON RÍO

June 2021

## President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

As Superintendent/President of Río Hondo College, I am accustomed to seeing unparalleled amounts of achievement from students, teachers, staff members and community members because I believe this College fosters innovation.

Each member of our Río Hondo community goes above and beyond in their work and philanthropy, doing their best to not just better themselves but also the world around them. We have community

members devoting their time to improve the College atmosphere, teachers helping students achieve their dreams and students aiming to make an impact on humanity.

In this issue of Focus on Río, we offer a glimpse into how our College equips individuals with the tools they need to succeed and the inner strength to turn their dreams into reality.

## Kinesiology Alumnus is Bound for Harvard University

Río Hondo College alumnus Joel Ramirez loves learning – a passion he hopes to spark in others by becoming a full-time professor and mentoring students, providing valuable research to the study of human movement and improving his community.

Ramirez's determination has carried him through family problems, financial burdens and personal ailments. As a first-generation college student, Ramirez has earned a bachelor's degree in exercise science and a master's in kinesiology from Cal State University Los Angeles (CSULA). Now, the 36-year-old is setting his sights on Harvard University, where he will pursue a Ph.D. in human evolutionary biology in fall 2021.

Ramirez is the first in his family to be born in the United States; his mother and grandmother immigrated from Mexico. When his mother was injured and lost her job, the family's only source of income, Ramirez supported his family by getting a job at a bank while in high school.

However, the bank operations began inflicting physical and psychological distress on Ramirez and he developed post-traumatic stress disorder and fibromyalgia. His diagnosis forced him to leave his job, and he was placed on long-term disability.



Yet, Ramirez never faltered; he enrolled in Río Hondo College's fitness specialist program in the kinesiology department so he could learn about

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RÍO HONDO COLLEGE



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# Río Hondo College Receives Aspen Institute Grant to Support Student Success

Río Hondo College Latinx students will receive increased support to complete transfer level math courses in their first year of school, providing a pathway for more Latinx students to complete their degrees and transfer to four-year universities, thanks to a \$65,750 grant from the Aspen Institute.

The Río Hondo College Excellence Program's primary beneficiaries will be students enrolled in Math 130 Statistics courses. During the 2020-21 school year, nearly 1,600 students were enrolled in the course. The grant allows Río Hondo College to hire additional math instructors to facilitate an increased participation of students. The program is expected to begin in Fall 2021.



The Aspen Institute is a partnership between the Washington D.C.-based nonprofit that promotes equity in education, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, and the Foundation for California Community Colleges. The award is the product of the CA Trustee Fellowship Intersession Project, of which Río Hondo College Board of Trustees President Rosaelva Lomeli and Trustee Oscar Valladares are fellows.

To enhance the math program, the faculty will develop specific practices aimed at bolstering student engagement in the classroom and establishing rapport between the students and their instructors by reflecting on culture and life experiences, while being flexible on assignment deadlines. Contextualized learning will build on student experiences to create engaging lessons, assignments and assessments.



**RÍO IN THE NEWS:**  
Read more about [Advanced Clean Tech News](#)

## Next Generation of Truck Technicians Graduate from Two Southern California Colleges

The U.S. electric truck market is seeing incredible momentum, with major manufacturers commercializing an array of new medium- and heavy-duty models, including the Volvo VNR Electric Class 8 truck.

The Volvo VNR Electric entered commercial production this year and is being delivered to businesses from coast to coast to help reduce both their fleet operating costs and emissions.

Achieving widescale deployment of medium- and heavy-duty battery-electric vehicles (BEV) will require a highly skilled and specialized workforce to support, maintain, and repair advanced electric drivetrains and their increasingly sophisticated technology.

Through the Volvo LIGHTS project – a unique collaboration between Volvo Trucks North America, South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD), Río Hondo College, San Bernardino Valley College (SBVC), and 10 other organizations to design a blueprint for successful BEV deployment – the two Southern California community colleges are taking the lead in meeting this demand.

In Fall 2020, Río Hondo and SBVC launched comprehensive electric truck technician training programs to help train and support the next generation of maintenance technicians. This month, the first students to have completed the programs are preparing to graduate and enter the workforce.

## Kinesiology Alumnus is Bound for Harvard University

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human movement, and use that knowledge to help in his recovery.

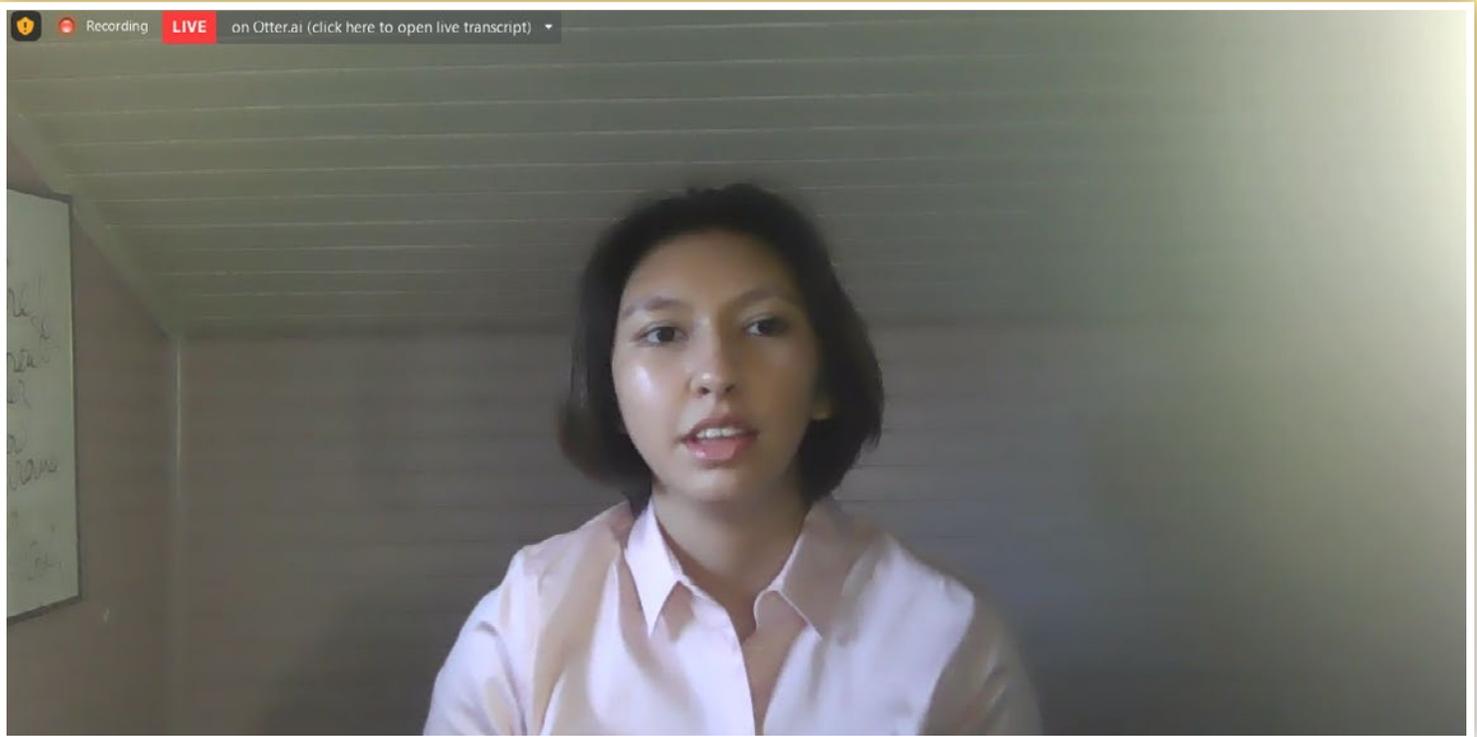
"Joel is a highly motivated student who may have one of the highest levels of persistence of any student I have known," Professor of Kinesiology Dr. Jodi Senk said. "He goes above and beyond what is asked from him whether it's projects, research, or participating in our advisory group."

Before COVID-19, Ramirez was a regular motivational speaker for Senk's classes, sharing his research and personal accomplishments to help others aspire to achieve their goals.

"Dr. Senk has been a fantastic educator and mentor; moreover, she encouraged me to do what I didn't think I could, more so than any other faculty member," Ramirez said. "Without the passion Dr. Senk possesses in the field of exercise and in being an educator, I would not be where I am today."

Ramirez said that beyond Senk, Río Hondo College's professors Mark Matsui, Raymundo Esquivel, Coralin Glerum, Juana Mora, Zachary Sharrett and Bianca Urquidi also provided profound personal and academic encouragement, and he hopes to emulate their styles once he becomes a professor.

Ramirez also said his education at Río Hondo College and CSULA has improved his quality of life, giving him better mobility and a career to aspire to.



## Río Hondo College Student Sworn In

Kayla Cruz has been elected and sworn in as Río Hondo College's newest Student Trustee for the 2021-22 school year.

In her new position, Cruz aims to improve communications between the Board of Trustees and students, ensuring the student body is informed of all the vast improvements undertaken for their benefit.

"I am very excited to be working with everyone on the Board of Trustees and giving more voice to the students of Río Hondo College," Cruz said. "Not just

people who are part of student government, but everyone who wants their voices to be heard. I want to give focus to consistency and transparency for the Board and our community as well."

Cruz is a 3rd year student, currently studying business administration, economics and political science. She has been active in student government at Río Hondo College and also serves as a student appointee on the College's Policy and Procedure Council and the Planning and Fiscal Council.



## 2021 Distinguished Service Award

Community member Josefina E. Canchola was named Río Hondo College's 2021 Distinguished Service Award winner, recognizing her years of service on the College's Citizens Oversight Committee.

Canchola accepted the award during the June 9 Board of Trustees meeting, where she was applauded for her dedication to the Río Hondo College Community.

"I always feel that it's humbling to receive something like this, especially from my own community," Canchola said.

"I just want to say that serving Río Hondo College is by choice, but I have a commitment to the College because it's within my community. It's the place where my sisters went to college. If I have a special place in my heart, it would be Río Hondo College."

Canchola was also recognized for being the Interim Director of Secondary Partnerships Puente Project at the University of California, Berkeley and for winning the Community Service Award from former President Barack Obama.

## Connect with Us on Social Media



## 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

## Mission Statement

Río Hondo College is an educational and community partner committed to advancing social justice and equity as an antiracist institution that collectively invests in all students' academic and career pathways that lead to attainment of degree, certificate, transfer, and lifelong-learning goals.

### RÍO IN THE NEWS:

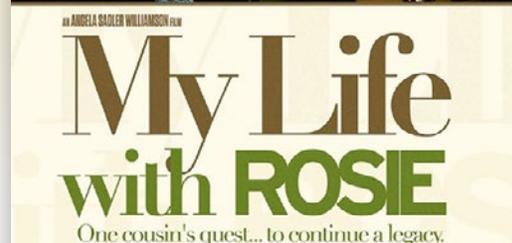
Read more from the [California Teachers Association](#).

## Río Hondo College Professor's Book Receives Recognition

Angela Sadler Williamson, associate professor at Río Hondo College and member of the Río Hondo College Faculty Association, published "My Life With Rosie: A Bond Between Cousins" last year. Voted the best children's book on Black history by Mothering magazine, it shares a different side of Rosa Parks only known to her family – the Williamson family.

Parks spent most of her adult life living in Detroit after leaving Montgomery, Alabama, in 1957, and Cousin Rosie, as she's known, formed many special relationships with young people, especially her young cousin, Carolyn Williamson Green (the author's aunt).

The book helps continue Parks' legacy and philosophy on activism by teaching young readers how to become change agents in their community.



## Save the Date

### Wednesday, August 11:

Board of Trustees meeting

### Monday, May 24 - Friday, August 20:

Open registration for Fall 2021 semester.

Info: <https://bit.ly/3a6Rj1L>

### Saturday, August 21 -

### Saturday, December 11:

Full term dates for Fall 2021 semester

### Saturday, August 21 -

### Friday, October 15:

First half dates for Fall 2021 semester

### Saturday, October 16 -

### Saturday, December 11:

Second half dates for Fall 2021 semester