President’s Message

Hello Río Hondo College community,

The year 2022 is already off to a great start – and I am sure it will continue to be filled with achievement, perseverance, goodwill and equality, all qualities that our College is known for.

It is easy to be optimistic when you are a part of Río Hondo College, because our students are consistently improving themselves and going above and beyond in their studies and personal lives to create a brighter future for everyone.

I would also like to note that Río Hondo College is aware of the surge of COVID-19 variant cases and that we are being very cautious for the benefit of our community. We are following all county guidelines to ensure the safety of our students and staff members.

In this issue of Focus on Río, I am proud to showcase the many ways our community is improving – including alleviating housing issues, ensuring our students’ voices are heard, providing new opportunities to interact with different cultures and preparing our students for their future careers.

Thank you for your continued partnership in support of our College. Together, we will make 2022 an amazing year.

College Boosts Fire Academy Learning with Donated Fire Engine

Río Hondo College has been gifted a 2002 American La France fire engine to further enhance its Fire Academy training program and provide additional support for emergency services in neighboring areas.

The engine, which pumps 1,500 gallons per minute, was donated by the City of Montebello’s Fire Department to the College on Dec. 22 at the City of Montebello Community/Civic Center. The ceremony was attended by Montebello Mayor Kimberly Ann Cobos-Cawthorne, Mayor Pro Tem Angie Jimenez, Montebello Fire Chief Fernando Pelaez, Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss, Río Hondo College Public Safety Dean Mark Yokoyama, Río Hondo College Board of Trustees members Rosaelva Lomeli and Oscar Valladares and the city’s fire crew.

Yokoyama said the additional fire engine will bring the fleet of emergency vehicles at the College to four, expanding opportunities for its cadets to learn skills including hose handling, basic pump operations and use of other emergency tools and equipment.

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RÍO IN THE NEWS: Read more about the Fire Academy Donation from ABC7.
Río Hondo College Partners with Whittier College to Solve Student Housing Issues

Río Hondo College solidified a partnership with Whittier College, which allows Río Hondo College students to stay in the Whittier College residence halls in exchange for rehousing vouchers, during the Dec. 8 Board of Trustees meeting.

The partnership between Río Hondo College and Whittier College aims to alleviate the housing issues faced by some socio-economically disadvantaged students. This partnership was approved to start in Spring 2022 and end June 30, 2026.

“My professional mission as a Latina educator is to pay it forward,” Whittier College Interim Vice President and Dean of Students Deanna Merino-Contino said. “Over time, Whittier College has worked to strengthen and streamline our CARE resources to support students with basic needs and housing insecurity. So, it was a natural partnership with Río Hondo College to provide this opportunity. Realizing that community is so important to achieving academic goals, we are pleased to partner with Río Hondo College in offering these students meaningful transformational experiences.”

The partnership will operate at little-to-no cost to Río Hondo College, other than the basic needs of staff to identify and refer students for housing.

This new partnership will allow any Río Hondo College student with rehousing vouchers from third-party providers, such as Jovenes Inc. Center, the Salvation Army and Volunteers of America, to gain residence at the Whittier College dormitories. Whittier College will also provide reduced rates to students who run out of rehousing vouchers, in order to provide housing stability.

Redistricting: How You Can Provide Feedback on Río Hondo College Trustee Districts

Río Hondo College will hold a virtual public hearing 6 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 12, 2022 to allow community members to provide public input on which redistricting map to adopt for the College.

Every ten years, after the U.S. Census count, the District must review and, if necessary, adjust trustee area boundaries to reflect population changes to ensure equal distribution in each area.

Members of the public can examine the four draft maps by visiting the Río Hondo College website. The virtual public hearing will be held on Zoom at https://cccconfer.zoom.us/s/6341288934.

College Boosts Fire Academy Learning with Donated Fire Engine

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“Equipment like this enhances training for our fire cadets that in turn are the ones who come to our aid in our local communities,” Yokoyama said. “Having such equipment provides real life experiences and training for those who will be coming to our rescue.”

Yokoyama said the engine is being readied for the next Fire Academy class in February.

“We appreciate the cooperation and dialogue among Montebello City Administration and Río Hondo College that enabled us to make this happen,” Pelaez said. “I would like to thank Captain Castillo and Drillmaster Beckman for their contributions in turning this vision into a reality.”

Yokoyama said the donation further solidified the longstanding partnership between Río Hondo College and the City of Montebello – many of the College’s fire and police academy graduates go on to serve in the City of Montebello.

“We are deeply appreciative of this donation from the City of Montebello – it means so much to our Fire Academy, College and our community,” Dreyfuss said. “This additional fire engine will provide our Fire Academy with yet another avenue for success.”
Río Hondo College students, staff and administrators gave firsthand accounts of how studying abroad can expand one’s mind, provide language immersion and teach cultural diversity during an experience exchange forum, hosted by the Indo-Pacific Research Center on Nov. 30.

The forum, held at the Courtyard by Marriott Los Angeles Monterey Park, featured Río Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss, Computer Science Professor Dr. Shin Liu and 10 students to talk about the College’s partnership with the Taiwanese government for its study abroad program.

The event also featured government and business partners, who are in support of global cultural exchange programs.

During the forum, Dreyfuss announced a new study abroad partner for the College, the Global Federation of Chinese Business Women, Greater Los Angeles chapter (GFCBW-GLA). The GFCBW-GLA will provide Río Hondo College students with career mentorship, by connecting them with industry professionals, to make them more competitive in the job market.

Liu, who created the College’s Taiwan study abroad program, said the new additions to the program will continue transforming Río Hondo College students into global citizens who are ready and able to enter the workforce, thanks to their rich cultural experiences.

Río Hondo College student Jing Chen, who visited New Taipei City in 2018, said her study abroad trip improved her Chinese-speaking skills and fully immersed her into a new culture.

In addition to the study abroad program, in 2022, the GFCBW-GLA will arrange an educational tour for Río Hondo College students to visit Novotech Nutraceuticals, Inc., a Ventura-based manufacturer that specializes in functional chelated minerals and patented Omega-3 power on nutritional ingredients. This tour will provide students with a chance to build professional connections with an established international business.

Río IN THE NEWS:
Read more from the Mid Valley News.

The construction of the L Tower (Phase I) is projected to be substantially completed by the end of 2021.

We will start working on the design of Phase II, which will include the administrative building and board/events room. The views will be magnificent from the L Tower with many windows to enjoy from several stories.
On behalf of the EOP&S/CARE team, we would like to express our deepest gratitude for your support to the CARE “Adopt a Child” Holiday Event, where these children received presents to brighten their holiday season. We had approximately 75 children of our CARE students “adopted.” It was truly heartwarming how our campus came together from all areas (faculty, classified, administrators, board members and the community) to make our event a success. The children were overjoyed with the generous gifts they received and our students were beyond thankful.

College EOP&S/CARE Team Spreads Holiday Cheer
Río Hondo College welcomed Assemblymember Lisa Calderon onto campus, acknowledging her ongoing efforts to boost funding for education and her work to improve surrounding communities.

Calderon, who represents the 57th State Assembly District, has been a key figure for allocating additional state funds to schools and community colleges, which Río Hondo College plans to use for capital construction projects. During her visit, Calderon delivered a check from the state for $6.6 million.

Assemblymember Calderon, who was invited to the College by Board of Trustees member Rosaelva Lomeli, met with a variety of representatives from the College, including Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss, the Board of Trustees, the Associated Students of Río Hondo College and other administrators.

“One of my top priorities is to bring resources back to the 57th Assembly District. That is why, during this legislative year, I worked to secure funding in this year’s historic state budget for Río Hondo College’s capital construction projects,” Calderon said. “This funding will go a long way to support Río Hondo’s infrastructure and bring much needed improvements, which supports the campus’ facilities and fire system.”

“I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to tour the Río Hondo College campus and meet with a dedicated team of students, faculty, and staff that helped highlight the importance of my role in bringing much needed resources to my district,” Calderon said. “Río Hondo College provides some of the highest quality programs to students in the community and enables them to gain real-world knowledge in state-of-the-art facilities, all but ensuring their success upon completion of their academic journeys. For that, I am eager to continue to collaborate with the College and advocate for the needs of our students.”

“Since you became elected as our assemblymember, you and your staff have been accessible and responsive to all of our inquiries,” Dreyfuss said during Calderon’s visit. “I want to extend a special thanks for the State Allocation in the 2021-22 State Budget that you secured for Río Hondo College – these funds will go a long way in ensuring our students continue receiving the best education possible.”

Calderon was also given a tour of the College’s Kinesiology, Dance, and Athletics building and the Tesla START Training Program and met with men’s basketball Coach and Athletic Director Steve Johnson.

Students Win Big with Bus Stop Design Challenge

Río Hondo College was part of an intercollegiate design competition during the fall 2021 semester, in which students worked with the County of Los Angeles and Metro to “Reimagine Bus Stops in The First Supervisorial District.” The purpose of the project was to engage students with real-life, hands-on experiences that connect classroom learning to real problems when it comes to design.

Under the guidance of Associate Professor Farrah Nakatani, Graphic Arts Major Jasmina Elysayed and Architecture Majors Fatima Barajas Serrano, Remberto Candelario, Joseph Ryan George, Lycette Moran, Jacob Perez and Marco Rodriguez were divided into two groups; each group came up with their own designs to present to the judges.

Group 2, which consisted of Candelario, Perez and Rodriguez, won third place and received a $1,500 prize for their design.
College Bids Farewell to Retiring Employee, Alumnus

Río Hondo College professor, playwright and alumnus Josh Gallegos is bidding the College farewell after more than 50 years of memories in athletics, speech and debate, performing arts and overall excellence.

Gallegos has served as an adjunct professor for Río Hondo College’s Division of Communications and Languages since 1981, but his longstanding relationship with Río Hondo College began as a student. He played on the College's inaugural football team in 1966, earned third place in expository speaking at the Phi Ro Pi National Championships in 1973, earned fifth place in expository speaking at the Phi Ro Pi National Championships in 1974, participated in numerous stage plays and was a member of the Ballet Folklorico in 1975.

Gallegos earned his Associate of Arts degree from Río Hondo College in 1975 before transferring to UCLA to earn his bachelor’s degree in 1977 and master’s degree in 1979.

“I also taught at Riverside City College and California State University, Dominguez Hills – but that was nothing compared to the joy and satisfaction I got from teaching and being a forensics coach at Río Hondo College,” Gallegos said. “I will miss it.”

Gallegos left the College briefly in the late 1960s to serve in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War, where he rose to the rank of E5 petty officer. Gallegos also appeared in numerous films and TV shows over the years, including “The Three Amigos,” “Star Trek: The Motion Picture,” “Charlie's Angels,” “Knight Rider” and “Death Wish 2.”

In his retirement, Gallegos said he will continue writing plays for the enjoyment of the community.