

FOCUS ON RÍO

March 2022

President's Message



Teresa Dreyfuss

Hello Río Hondo College community,

As we enter spring and begin celebrating our future graduates ahead of commencement, it is a great time to remember that achievement is the product of hard work. We have seen firsthand that when you put in the work, you can achieve your highest aspirations.

When difficulties arise and you want to quit, that is the time to double on your efforts and move forward. By making the effort to reach out to others and by working to find solutions

to your problems, you can continue on an upward trajectory to success.

Here at Río Hondo College, I believe we cultivate a strong work ethic that fosters innovation, self-reliance and growth. We know at the end of the day, knowledge is power, and hard work is the road map that leads us there.

By continuing to work above and beyond expectations, completing important tasks and pursuing new challenges, you can reach your goal and achieve your dreams!

College Welcomes Secretary of Education, Congresswoman to Campus to Hear Student Stories

Río Hondo College students had the opportunity to converse face-to-face with U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona and Congresswoman Linda Sánchez on March 29, relaying their own personal stories about housing and food insecurity and discussing what elected officials can do to provide further assistance.

Cardona and Sánchez met with six current and former Río Hondo College students, Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss and the College's Board of Trustees, then went into a roundtable discussion with students and Dreyfuss about topics such as the Hope Scholars Program, transportation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hope Scholars is a Río Hondo College program that provides food and housing support to unhoused and transitionally unhoused students.

RÍO IN THE NEWS:

To read or see more about Secretary of Education Cardona and Congresswoman Sánchez's visit to Río Hondo College, visit:

[EdSource](#), [Chancellor's Office Today](#), [KFI AM 640](#), [CBS News LA](#), [ABC7 News](#), [Telemundo](#), [Telemundo TV \(Video\)](#), [Whittier Daily News](#), [San Gabriel Valley Tribune](#), [Pasadena Star News](#), [Press-Telegram](#), [Los Angeles Daily News](#), [The Daily Bulletin](#), [The Sun](#), [The Daily Breeze](#), [Redlands Daily Facts](#), [The Press Enterprise](#), [Spectrum News 1](#), [Spectrum News TV \(Video\)](#)



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College Welcomes Secretary of Education, Congresswoman to Campus to Hear Student Stories

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"We look to our community colleges for our future workforce. These students can succeed at anything they can dream and imagine – if they're given the proper support system," Sánchez said.

Cardona said his main goal in visiting Río Hondo College and talking to students was to bring the stories back to Washington, D.C. and advocate for more funding for programs like Hope Scholars.

"In my visits to different states, I am always inspired by the stories of our students as well as their resilience, their drive to continue to succeed despite whatever challenges they might face," Cardona said. "I think it's really important that our higher education institutions evolve to make sure they can meet our students where they are."

Martin, Río Hondo College Hope Scholar success coach and Azusa Pacific University student, said meeting with Cardona and Sánchez was exciting, because it was an opportunity to talk directly with the people who can make the changes that will help millions.

"I hope that you take back our hearts with you to show others what we're doing here at Río Hondo College," Martin said, addressing Cardona and Sánchez. "Housing and homelessness will always be an issue so we need to talk about it together, but we're not going to get there without stability."

Río Hondo College alumna and Hope Scholar housing peer navigator Brianna said talking with Cardona and Sánchez was a chance to advocate for countless future Hope Scholar students.

Río Hondo College Selects Dr. Marilyn Flores as New Superintendent/President



Río Hondo College and the Board of Trustees has appointed Dr. Marilyn Flores as its new Superintendent/President to continue leading the College on the path of prosperity, achievement and success.

The Board unanimously appointed Flores on March 24. Flores will begin her tenure once contract negotiations are finalized and will succeed Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss, who will retire on June 30, 2022.

Flores is currently the vice president of academic affairs at Santiago Canyon College in Orange County and previously served as interim president for Santa Ana College.

Flores holds a master's degree in education from the University of California, Los Angeles as well as a Bachelor of Arts in liberal studies and doctorate of philosophy in institutional leadership and policy studies from the

University of California, Riverside.

"I am thrilled and excited to serve as the next Superintendent/President of Río Hondo College," Flores said. "I firmly know that through the support of the Board of Trustees, the staff and administration, Río Hondo College will continue to thrive, excel and serve its community with excellence. I believe the work that I have done over the course of my career in community colleges has led me here to this College and this community. I could not be more excited to join you and serve our students."

RÍO IN THE NEWS:

To read more about Dr. Flores' appointment to Río Hondo College, visit [The Mid Valley News](#).



Student Success!

Degrees, Certificates and Transfer Rates

DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES

Rio Hondo Total:

Year	2021	2020	Change
A.A.-T and A.S.-T Degrees	1,388	5,964	2,576 185%
A.A. & A.S. DEGREES	298	878	580 194%
A.A. & A.S. DEGREES	865	1,351	486 56%

CERTIFICATES (CCCCO APPROVED)

	225	1,726	1,501 667%
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Baccalaureate of Science (B.S.) degree

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TRANSFER
Includes In-State-Private, Out-of-State, CSU, and UC

Rio Hondo Total:

Year	2021	2020	Change
	1,146	1,360	214 19%

Río Hondo College Welcomes Accreditation Team for Visit

Río Hondo College rolled out the red carpet for the accreditation team during its 2022 visit, which showcased the College's many accomplishments, future goals and leadership team. The visit took place week of March 14, during which a meet and greet was held for more than 70 participants and an open forum for more than 30.



Daily Pre-Screening

- Each time a student comes to campus, are required to complete a daily pre-screening survey to inform the College of any symptoms they may have before accessing campus for the day.
- Depending on the student's responses, they will either be cleared to come to campus, or restricted.
- If restricted, they will be given further instructions on how to have their pass updated and safely re-enter campus.
- When they receive a green pass, they are cleared to enter campus for any in-person courses and services.

RHC Student Mobile App

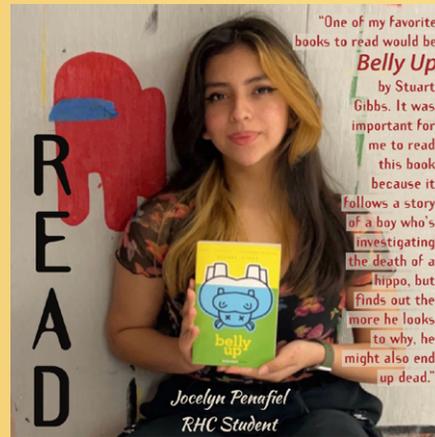
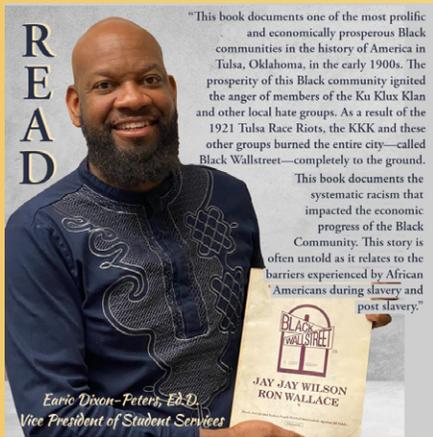
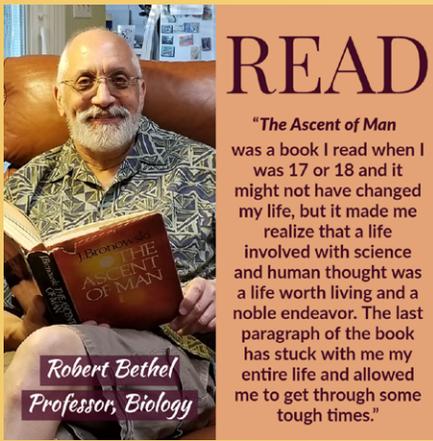
- Launched RHC App on 1/28/22
- Total App Downloads since launch (as of February) = 4995
- Total App Opens = 42,124
- Average unique active users = 1428
- Average form completions = 1343

Strong Workforce Updates

Mike Slavich, Dean
Career Technical Education &
Instructional Operations
March 9, 2022

College Updates

- During the March 9 Board of Trustees meeting, Río Hondo College welcomed two new administrators to its ranks. Maria Andrade-Hernandez was announced as Interim Grant Manager for the Strong Workforce Program and Sunny Okeke was announced as the Director of Accounting.
- Vice President of Student Services Dr. Earic Dixon-Peters gave a presentation about the Río Hondo College's Student Mobile App during the March 9 Board of Trustees meeting – outlining safety measures taken during the College's safe reopening. The app was created to track daily COVID-19 symptoms and pre-screening measures before students come onto campus.
- Mike Slavich, Dean, CTE/Instructional Operations shared an outline on the College's Strong Workforce Updates during the March 9 Board of Trustees meeting. The presentation covered topics such as guiding principles leading to student success, funding, specific programs and highlights from the Tesla START program and CTE Career Exploration boot camp.
- During the February 16 Board of Trustees meeting, Río Hondo College announced the names of the professors who would be receiving tenure during the 2022-2023 academic year. They are as follows: Dr. Tanja Baum Low – health science and nursing; William Curington – communications and languages/English; Melanie Fierro – mathematics, sciences and engineering/biology; Veronica Holbrook – mathematics, sciences and engineering/mathematics; Shirley Isaac – mathematics, sciences and engineering/ biology; Michael Koger – communications and languages/English; Young Lee – library; Claudia Rivas – library; and Brian Young – library.



Read across America

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
Celebrating A Nation Of Diverse Readers

RHC Celebrates Read Across America

In honor of Read Across America, Río Hondo College students, staff, faculty and administrators volunteered to share their love of reading by putting the spotlight on their favorite books.

RÍO IN THE NEWS:

To read more about Río Hondo College's partnership with ASU, visit [The Mid Valley News](#).

Río Hondo College Partners with Arizona State University

Río Hondo College has established a Universal Articulation agreement with Arizona State University (ASU), providing students with a reliable and rigorous academic preparedness transfer program to guide them toward earning bachelor's degrees.

“Through our new partnership with Río Hondo College, we are committed to developing supportive environments for transfer students to achieve their academic goals seamlessly.”

College's Dean of Counseling. "With ASU online, students don't have to worry

The agreement was approved in the fall of 2021 and launched on February 23. The program, called [MyPath2ASU™](#), provides students with course-by-course guided pathways, course applicability for transferable credits, personalized communications with ASU and guaranteed admission to ASU if all requirements are fulfilled.

"The impact of this partnership can be far reaching. Most of our students transfer to California public universities, but private and out-of-state universities are very viable options," said Lisa Chavez, Río Hondo

about paying out-of-state tuition. Also, the newly opened ASU Local center in downtown Los Angeles offers students the opportunity to connect with other ASU students and receive services such as career coaching, study groups and more."

A major feature of the MyPath2ASU™ program will be the Business Administration degree from the W.P. Carey School of Business. This pathway will enable students to gain a breadth of knowledge and skills needed for managing business operations.

"Through our new partnership with Río Hondo College, we are committed to developing supportive environments for transfer students to achieve their academic goals seamlessly," said Cheryl Hyman, ASU Vice Provost, Academic Alliances. "MyPath2ASU™ offers new guided pathway options through transfer navigation technologies that help students maximize their transfer credit to achieve associate and bachelor degree completion."

Chavez said this pathway is perfect for guiding students through their associate and bachelor's degrees and into careers in management, equipping them to step into jobs such as administrative services manager, business manager, sales manager and development manager.

Overdue Tuition and Fees — As Little As \$41 — Derail Hundreds of Thousands of California College Students

In the spring of 2021, \$600 stood between Endele Wilson and his dream of achieving a teaching credential from Long Beach City College.

Wilson, 47, started taking courses in 2019, a few months before the pandemic hit and just before he lost his job as an elementary school music teacher. He took on multiple jobs as a musician, and an overnight shift at a gas station, to support his eight children.

When he was about 18 units away from completion, he got the bill that stopped him in his tracks. He didn't qualify for financial aid, he said, because of low grades years ago at another community college. He was confronting \$600 in unpaid enrollment fees – and couldn't register for classes until he settled the balance.

The college would, effectively, force him to drop out.

"I didn't know what to do," Wilson recalled. "Even working two jobs, I don't make enough money to do anything but survive."

Enrollment at California Community Colleges has plummeted nearly 20% during the pandemic to about 1.3 million students from fall 2019 to fall of 2021, according to state data, leaving campuses worried about their future and potential students with fewer of the opportunities offered by higher education. Pandemic-related hardships have propelled many students to choose jobs over education and online classes have been barriers for low-income students without digital resources.

Officials at Río Hondo Community College in Whittier decided to pause participation in the tax-offset program for current students before the start of the pandemic and will not restart for at least three more years, said Stephen Kibui, vice president of finance and business. The campus typically gets back about 40 percent of what it's owed after allowing for a 25 percent administrative fee, he said.

The college also previously worked with a debt collector, but scrapped that when the 33 percent fee was too high and students' credit was being damaged.

For now, Río Hondo is using federal relief money to waive current student debt, which Kibui says benefits both students and the college. The campus has lost more than 8,000 students since 2018-2019, with enrollment dropping from 33,500 to 25,000.

Several other community colleges and universities across the state have used their federal relief funds to forgive student debt, in hopes that students will stay enrolled or dropouts will return.

Long Beach City College, for example, has forgiven \$2.1 million in debt for 7,990 students from spring 2020 to summer 2021, according to the interim executive vice president of student service, Dr. Nohel Corral. Individual debts forgiven ranged from \$100 to \$5,000.

The decision meant thousands were able to continue with their education. Endele Wilson was one.



T-shirt Design Contest Winners

The Marketing and Communications Department would like to thank all Río Hondo College students who entered the 2022 T-shirt Design Contest. They appreciate all the hard work and creativity that went into all the designs submitted. After much deliberation, it is with great excitement that they announce the top three winners.

- 3rd Place: Joy Jacks (\$50 bookstore gift card)
- 2nd Place: Natalie Tafoya (\$100 bookstore gift card)
- 1st Place: Caleb Fiala (Chromebook and Río Hondo College backpack)

To view the winners' reactions, captured on TikTok when they received the news, go to: <https://vm.tiktok.com/TPdPorYLM/?k=1>



RÍO IN THE NEWS:
Read more from [CalMatters](#).

The Collapse of Community College Enrollment: Can California Turn it Around?

After community college enrollment collapsed in late 2020, California lawmakers last year gave the system of public two-year colleges \$120 million to help stem the tide of departing students and bring them back.

So far, progress has been uneven. Through last fall, just 17 of California's 116 community colleges have seen the number of students they enroll grow since fall of 2020. At 42 colleges, more students left in the fall of 2021 than in fall of 2020, according to a CalMatters analysis of system enrollment data.

Officials acknowledge that the number of students attending continued to sag systemwide. "Fall 2021 headcount is down approximately 7% from fall 2020 and down 20% overall compared to fall 2019," a cratering of more than 300,000 students over those two years, said a March memo from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

While \$120 million may be a rounding error in the state's \$47 billion commitment to higher education for the current budget year, it's still a large chunk of change.

Río Hondo College, in a suburban pocket of eastern LA County, saw its number of students inch up from 16,292 to 16,370 since fall 2020. That's still well short of the more than 21,000 enrolled in fall 2019, but makes it one of the very few

community colleges that managed to actually grow in the past year.

Signing up students for financial aid has been key, Río Hondo officials said.

The college used \$200,000 of its \$1.2 million in re-enrollment money to hire 10 part-time staffers who coached students through applying for federal and state financial aid. All that money came from last year's smaller March allotment of re-enrollment funding.

The goal at the start of last fall was to increase the number of new and current students applying for financial aid by 5%, a target the school hit, said Eric Dixon-Peters, vice president of student services at the college. With state or federal dollars in hand, more students remain in school.

Río Hondo is also setting aside \$4 million in federal COVID-19 relief to pardon students' campus debt, such as from unpaid tuition bills. Before the pandemic, if a student owed the campus any amount of money, that student could not register for classes. Now, registration is open to students with outstanding balances. So far 4,000 students took up the college on that offer, leading to \$1.7 million in fee forgiveness, said Stephen Kibui, vice president of finance at Río Hondo.



CONGRESSWOMAN
**GRACE FLORES
 NAPOLITANO**
 PROUDLY SERVING CALIFORNIA'S 32ND DISTRICT

CALIFORNIA'S 32ND DISTRICT:
 Azusa, Baldwin Park, Covina,
 Duarte, El Monte, Glendora,
 City of Industry, Irwindale,
 La Puente, La Verne, Monrovia,
 San Dimas, and West Covina

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Napolitano Names Carmen Mendoza as Virtual Guest to the State of the Union Address

Rep. Grace F. Napolitano (D-El Monte) is honoring Carmen Guadalupe Mendoza, a proud Dreamer, City of El Monte resident, and current Río Hondo College student, as her virtual guest to President Joe Biden's first State of the Union Address.

The State of the Union Address will highlight the achievements and work still to be done under the leadership of President Biden. While safety protocols mean this year's in-person attendance will be limited, Napolitano said inviting Carmen as her virtual guest is a critically important way to honor the immigrant community's contributions and amplify them.

"I am very proud to join my Hispanic Caucus colleagues in highlighting one of the millions of immigrants who contributes to the success of their community and our nation as a whole," Napolitano said. "Carmen is a courageous Dreamer who embodies the very best of our American ideals. She, like so many Dreamers who have had to endure much uncertainty surrounding the DACA program, deserves permanent protection and peace of mind. We must finally do the right thing for Dreamers and their families."

"I am honored to be chosen by Congressman Napolitano to be her virtual guest at Tuesday night's State of the Union address. I am grateful to the Congressman for her continued advocacy of the Dream Act, her support for Dreamers like me, and for her determination to fight for all students," said Carmen Mendoza. "I also hope that one day there will be an opportunity for Dreamers who did not qualify for DACA. It is one of the barriers that I struggle with since I am not able to work in my preferred field, which is nursing. I will continue to advocate and fight for all Dreamers alongside Congressman Napolitano."

"Our country has made tremendous strides this past year, but there is much more work to be done; we must deliver comprehensive immigration reform," Napolitano added. "Immigrants have been and continue to be vital to our economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. We have a duty to keep the legacy of our proud nation of immigrants alive, and delivering comprehensive reform will make that dream a reality for millions."

Río Hondo Receives Award to Support Unhoused Students

RÍO IN THE NEWS: Read more from the [Whittier Chamber of Commerce](#).

Río Hondo College has been awarded a nearly \$1 million grant to fund the Hope Scholars Program, a basic needs assistance project that provides holistic support services for unhoused and transitionally unhoused students.

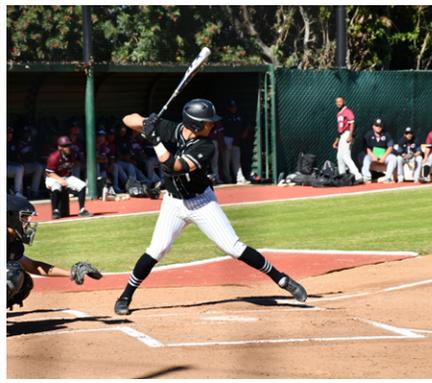
The College was one of five schools nationally to be recognized with the Basic Needs in Postsecondary Education award by the Federal Department of Education. On Dec. 29, Río Hondo College received notification of the award, which will be utilized for the continued support of unhoused and transitionally unhoused students.

The total funds, amounting \$989,798.00, will increase staffing for the Hope Scholars Program. Funding will allow the Hope Scholars program to deepen community awareness and expand holistic support services for students, such as tutoring and success coaching, academic counseling, mental health services, financial literacy programs and more. Additionally, since going remote due to COVID-19, the College has secured an additional \$2,494,293 in competitive funds to develop and increase supportive services, providing basic necessities and crisis intervention.

The project will also evaluate program effectiveness and develop a tool kit and webinar with partners from the Center for Equitable Higher Education and John Burton Advocates for Youth to support campuses across the nation in developing their own programs for unhoused students.

"The Basic Needs grant allows us the ability to scale up our efforts to support students experiencing these problems through the Hope Scholars program," said Dr. Earic Dixon-Peters, vice president of Student Services. "We believe our work changes lives."

The Hope Scholars Program at Río Hondo College supports unhoused and transitionally unhoused students in aspects such as accessing temporary housing, receiving counseling and registering for classes. Since introducing the Hope Scholars Program in the 2019-2020 academic year, Río Hondo College has seen a 184.3% increase in services provided directly to students, better ensuring their success and retention through provision of basic needs.



Baseball Coach Mike Salazar Celebrates 500th Win

His 22-season career has been filled with memorable moments.

For Río Hondo College baseball head coach Mike Salazar, career win No. 500 will likely appear near the top of the list. But it almost didn't happen.

With Salazar sitting on 499 victories, the Roadrunners put together a late-game rally to give him the historic win on the first attempt, an 8-5 triumph over visiting Compton College on Tuesday, March 1 at The Jungle on the campus of Río Hondo.

Río Hondo trailed 4-3 after six innings but tied up the ball game in the bottom of the seventh thanks to a sacrifice fly off the bat of Gabriel Rico.

Compton got that run back in the top of the eighth to go back out in front 5-4. But just like so many of his teams in the past, his 2022 Roadrunners grinded out a late comeback.

Río Hondo scored four times in the bottom of the eighth, including a two-out, two-run single from Rafael Flores to take the lead. Reliever Blake Johnson set down Compton in order in the ninth to close out the come-from-behind win and make history.

Salazar's career record currently stands at 500 wins, 302 losses, and 1 tie for an impressive .623 winning percentage.

Salazar was grateful for the contributions of so many that helped him get to this point in his career.

"I want to thank all my coaches currently on staff, and all the previous coaches that were in the grind with me day in and day out, recruiting quality student-athletes that would be a great fit in our program," he said. "I also want to thank all my current and past players for giving me their absolute all every day, on the field, in the classroom, and as a positive member of society. We all have a choice each day, to be average, or to be great. Thanks for choosing to be great and working toward something bigger than yourselves."

The congratulatory messages poured in following the game, including from one of the best to ever suit up for Salazar and the Roadrunners, current San Francisco Giants third baseman and three-time American League All-Star Evan Longoria.

"I owe Mike for taking a chance on me and letting me become the player that I believed I could be," said Longoria. "I'm proud to say I was a Dirty Bird and that I was a small part of Sally getting to 500. Congrats coach!"

Longoria played shortstop for Salazar in 2004, a member of a squad that compiled 20 wins towards his career total. He earned All-Southern California as well as All-Foothill Conference honors after hitting .430 with 7 home runs and 39 RBI over 35 games. Longoria went on to play at Long Beach State before being selected as the third overall pick in the 2006 Major League Baseball Draft by the Tampa Bay Rays.

"I'm so overwhelmed with the amount of support I received today," Salazar said. "Former Dirty Birds have been calling, sending videos, and texting."

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.

FREE TAX PREPARATION!



2022 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

IRS-Certified volunteers provide FREE basic income tax return preparation to qualified individuals & families who earn \$57,000 or less.

VITA Testimonials

Río Hondo College's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) service, which provides free basic income tax return preparation to individuals and families who earn \$57,000 or less, was a big success for the College and its students.

Testimonials on the College's VITA service includes:

"The best service! Thank you for helping someone who needed the help to figure out our taxes."

"Thank you to Alejandra for helping me out and answering my questions. Such a relief to get this done and out of the way."

"Paul was thorough and explained everything in an understandable manner."

A Taste of Río Returns to Río Hondo College

WHAT:

Río Hondo College will host the return of its popular and lively A Taste of Río event – which invites guests onto campus for an evening of delicious foods, fine wines and craft beers, live entertainment and a silent auction.

This will be the first A Taste of Río event since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

The event, which was created by the Río Hondo College Foundation, raises funds for scholarships to support students in achieving their educational goals. Presale tickets will be \$75 for general admission and \$125 for VIP passes.

WHEN:

6 p.m. Friday, June 17.
VIP preview begins at 5 p.m.

WHERE:

3600 Workman Mill Road, Whittier, CA 90601

DETAILS:

Tickets will be available from April 1 – May 13 only and will not be available for purchase the day of the event. To purchase tickets online by May 13 and to learn more about A Taste of Río, visit <https://gorio.page/atasteofrio>.



Save the Date

Saturday, January 29 – Thursday, May 26:
Spring Semester 2022

Saturday, May 21 – Thursday, May 26:
Finals week

10 am, Friday, May 27:
Commencement Ceremony

Monday, May 30:
Memorial Day

Friday, June 17:
A Taste of Río Fundraising event