

# FOCUS ON RÍO

April 2023

## President's Message



**Dr. Marilyn Flores**  
*Superintendent/President*

Hello Río Hondo College community,

This month, I would like to highlight how our College is creating a brighter, supportive future for the entire community – through academic programs, extracurricular activities, public school outreach programs and more.

First, I would like to congratulate our Forensics Speech and Debate team, which was recently ranked 10th overall in the nation among all community colleges and universities. While this milestone gives us cause for celebration, I believe the true accomplishment of this program is the number of students it has shaped into confident and skilled professionals and civic leaders.

Río Hondo College hosted a meeting on campus for city managers to address homelessness in Los Angeles County. This is yet another way the College is supporting the community. This meeting provided city managers a

safe space to exchange best practices with respect to addressing homelessness.

We also regularly host field trips for local high schools – giving students insight into different career opportunities. Our professors and staff participate in these activities as they know that these students will be the next wave of great innovators.

At Río Hondo College, we truly care about our students. Every degree and certificate we award represents a commitment to fostering inclusivity, patience, hope and prosperity in our communities. As you read these stories, I encourage you to reflect on the impact of our students' achievements, and the role that Río Hondo College has played in their success.

Thank you.

## Río Hondo College Speech/Debate Team Ranked 10th in Nation Among Colleges, Universities



Río Hondo College's Forensics Speech and Debate program has been ranked 10th in the nation overall among community colleges and universities, a milestone that recognizes the hard work, dedication and persistence of the College's students and faculty over the last 50 years.

The honor was announced during the National Parliamentary Debate Association Championship from March 25 to 27. The Forensics Speech and Debate program, which was formed in 1970, has steadily climbed the ranks over the years – placing 17th in 2022, 21st in 2021 and 27th in 2020.

"It is very gratifying to feel part of this, primarily since it validates the enormous amount of work our students put in," Forensics Coordinator and Debate Coach Grant Tovmasian said. "Forensics Speech and Debate correlates with success for students. We draw our students from political sciences, English and math, just to name a few. In all careers, having the skills to be

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# Río Hondo College Speech/Debate Team Ranked 10th in Nation Among Colleges, Universities

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an effective communicator sets our students apart and gives them tools necessary to navigate academia and life.”

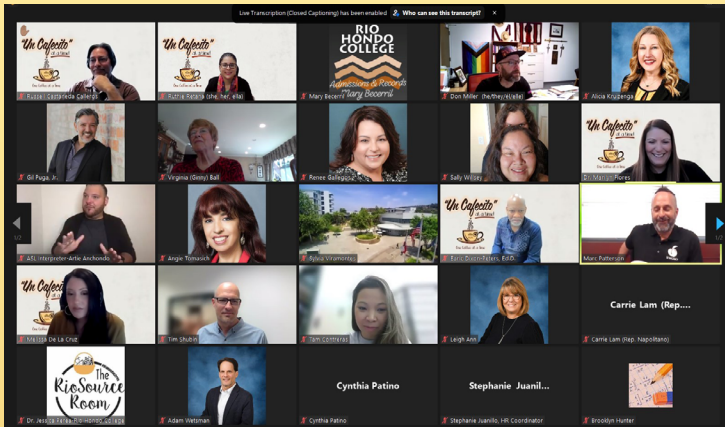
Tovmasian, who has led the program for six years, said the win is due to the team’s regular practices with coaches Patricia Hughes, Alex Cadena and Edgar Minasyan and the team’s desire to continually better their speaking skills.

“I am incredibly proud of the team’s efforts throughout the season – it is excellent for the team to have all their hard work recognized nationally,” Forensics Speech and Debate Co-captain Ethan Sepulveda said. “Río Hondo College’s Speech and Debate team has had an extremely positive impact on my life, both in and out of college. Being able to analyze the

world and how it functions and having the tools to advocate for myself has equipped me to excel both in studying English and establishing connections with people of all perspectives on an every day basis.”

The 10th place national ranking has been just one of the program’s highlights of the year. The program also placed sixth overall in the Large School Division both Speech and Debate at California Community College State Championships in March and earned second place sweeps in the Community College Division at the Gaske Championship in February.

Additionally, the program took home first place in the top two-year school division in October 2022 during a tournament at Point Loma Nazarene University.



## Virtual Coffee Talk with Superintendent/President Draws Big Crowd

Superintendent/President Dr. Marilyn Flores welcomed nearly 50 guests to her latest “Un Cafecito” or virtual Coffee Talk event, where she spoke about Río Hondo College’s highlights, answered questions from attendees and unveiled a new program to boost the skills of budding new inventors.

### Event highlights:

- The Forensics Speech and Debate team ranking 10th place in the nation.
- Río Hondo College will be hosting many activities to celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month.
- This year’s commencement speaker will be Superior Court Judge Jorge Hernandez.
- Río Hondo College is currently in talks to assess a remote work program for work flexibility.
- Río Hondo College will also be celebrating Class 100 for the Fire Academy, the Nursing Pinning Ceremony and Police Academy Graduation.
- The Río Hondo Math Academy was announced, which is a summer program designed to prepare middle and high school students for college level math through noncredit courses and assistance from tutors.
- Río Hondo College will be offering an Associate of Arts in business administration at El Rancho High School – the College already offers a pathway for automotive and child development at the school.
- Bridge to Invention Río was announced – a two-week summer program hosted by the College and in partnership with Lemelson-MIT, to allow budding inventors to work together to identify and solve problems within their lives and community.
- Dr. Flores said she plans to host more Un Cafecito meetings in the next academic year after hearing the positive responses.



## Río Hondo College Lends Hand, Bikes in Fundraiser

Río Hondo College Board of Trustees member Rosaelva Lomeli and Clerk Oscar Valladares participated in the Tour de Greats Futures Fundraiser on Saturday, April 1 for the Boys & Girls Club of Whittier/Pico Rivera. The event saw guests ride stationary bikes to high-energy music to raise money to support the Club and its activities. A special thank you to Division Secretary Teresa Martinez, Coach Mike Hinze and Dean of Kinesiology, Dance and Athletics Nedra Brown for loaning the stationary bikes necessary to make the event possible.



## Forensics Speech and Debate Win Array of Awards at National Championships

Río Hondo College's Forensics Speech and Debate team won a series of team and individual awards at the 2023 Phi Rho Pi National Championships, held from April 8 to 15 in Bethesda, Maryland. The team would like to thank Superintendent/President Dr. Marilyn Flores and Communications and Languages Dean Dr. Alice Mecom for their tireless support of the team, and Coach Patricia Hughes for her guidance during a stellar year of achievement.

### Bronze NFA-LD

Ethan Sepulveda

### Degree of Highest Honor

Dulce Santana

### Degree of Associate

Cassandra Molina

### Top Speakers in Parliamentary Debate

Miguel Castro

Brand Torres

Ethan Sepulveda

### Top Speakers in IPDA

Matthew Montero



## Río Hondo College Hosts Meeting to Address Homelessness

Río Hondo College hosted a meeting in association with the Los Angeles Alliance for Human Rights and Tzunu Strategies for local city managers to address the issue of homelessness on March 21.

This meeting, the first of its kind in Los Angeles County, provided city managers, deputy city managers, police chiefs, and city representatives from nearly 30 cities in the county with the opportunity to be briefed by attorneys and city managers involved in a legal settlement in Orange County. At the meeting, city managers had the opportunity to exchange best practices for addressing homelessness in a safe and supportive environment.

Superintendent/President Dr. Marilyn Flores and Dean of Public Safety Mark Yokoyama provided welcoming remarks. Río Hondo College student representatives interested in issues of homelessness and public policy also attended the event.

This meeting was made possible through a collaboration between Tzunu Strategies, the Administration of Justice Division, and the Río Hondo College Office of Government and Community Relations.



## High School Students Learn Career Direction from Río Hondo College Professors

Río Hondo College hosted Mark Keppel High School's automotive students for a day of learning and activities in the Career Technology Education (CTE) department on March 17.

Students learned about the College's many automotive programs, including the Bachelor of Science Degree in Automotive Technology. Keppel High students engaged in hands-on activities taught by Instructor

Michael Dighera. Students were able to build and test electrical circuits with resistance.

Students were also treated to lunch and enjoyed a tour of the automotive department and the Río Hondo College campus before heading back to their high school campus.



# College Updates

Río Hondo College will host its annual Student Success Celebration from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Friday, May 12, honoring the accomplishments of the graduating students that are part of the College's special student populations and support programs. Attendance for the event, which will be held on campus, is by invitation only and for students who are confirmed to graduate for the 2023 school year.



During the April 12 Board of Trustees meeting, Dr. Stephen Kibui and Public Safety Dean Mark Yokoyama gave a presentation outlining the College's Campus Police Department in regard to safety, preparedness, accountability, certification, professional oversight and high standards. They also reported on budget, chain of command and a vision for campus police, which would see the officers on campus as guardians and models of community care.

During the April 12 Board of Trustees meeting Counselor Delmis Alvarado became tenured full-time faculty.



Río Hondo College's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program members celebrated assisting community members with their income tax filings (at no cost) from February through April. The clinic transmitted 230 tax returns this season, averaging \$250 per return, meaning a savings of \$57,000 in tax filing fees to the community.

The clinic processed \$258,000 in tax refunds, over \$71,000 in earned income tax credits and \$20,000 in education credits.



Río Hondo College was recently awarded the Equal Employment Opportunities Innovative Best Practices Grants by the Chancellor's Office Institutional Effectiveness Division and Office of the General Counsel. The grant, totaling \$299,897, is intended to enhance and expand hiring practices and faculty and staff diversity. Pending the Board of Governors' approval, the grant will take effect June 1, 2023.



Professor of Art and Art History Sheila Lynch, during the April 12 Board of Trustees meeting, gave a presentation on her one-year sabbatical, where she explored Open Educational Resources (OER) which provides teaching, learning and research materials for free. Lynch said OER would make education more accessible, affordable and equitable. Lynch is also working on a proposal to use the Chancellor's Office ZTC Planning Grant of \$200,000 to ensure a zero textbook cost degree pathway – where students can complete their degree without ever having to pay for a commercial textbook.

## Connect with Us on Social Media



RHCRoadrunners



RioHondo\_College



RioHondoCollege



Río Hondo College YT Channel



bit.do/riohondocollege



riohondo\_college

## 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.



# SUMMER & FALL 2023 REGISTRATION

Don't miss out on **SUMMER** classes.  
**NOW REGISTERING!**

**FALL Semester** starts **AUGUST 19!**  
Open registration begins **MAY 19.**

- Complete a CSU/UC General Education transferable course
- Catch up or move ahead to graduate earlier
- Complete a prerequisite for Fall
- Retake a class
- Start your career or academic goals



Scan QR code to get started.

Discover your pathway to success at  
[pathways.riohondo.edu](https://pathways.riohondo.edu)



## Save the Date

**Saturday, January 28 to Thursday, May 25:**  
Spring Semester 2023

**11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Tuesday, May 9:**  
Grad Fest in the upper quad

**6 p.m., Wednesday, May 10:**  
Regular Board of Trustees Meeting

**11 a.m. – 1 p.m., Friday, May 12:**  
Student Success Celebration

**4 p.m., Wednesday, May 24:**  
Graduation Rehearsal in Lot A

**9 a.m., Friday, May 26:**  
2023 Commencement

**6 p.m., Friday, June 9:**  
A Taste of Río

**6 p.m., Wednesday, June 14:**  
Regular Board of Trustees Meeting

**9 a.m. – 2 p.m., Monday, July 17 – Friday, July 28:**  
Bridge to Invention Río Apply here:  
<https://www.riohondo.edu/foundation/bridge-to-invention-rio/>  
[Rio Hondo College – Business Division](https://www.riohondo.edu/foundation/bridge-to-invention-rio/)

**8:30 a.m., Friday, Sept. 22:**  
Annual Golf Tournament. Information:  
<https://www.riohondo.edu/foundation/golf-tournament/>

