

# FOCUS ON RÍO

July 2023

## President's Message



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

Dear Río Hondo College community,

I am pleased to present our latest issue of Focus on Río, highlighting our efforts to prepare students for lasting accomplishments in their academic, professional and personal endeavors.

Philanthropy is a deeply valued practice at Río Hondo College. It plays an immense role in strengthening our academic programs, providing opportunities for achievement and enriching the community. "A Taste of Río," our signature fundraising event, raised more than \$100,000 in donations for our student scholarships and support. We also recently accepted more than \$817,000 in grants to support the Child Development Center to provide more childcare opportunities, boost our career and technical education program in the electric vehicle industry

and strengthen our science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs.

This issue of Focus on Río showcases the role Río Hondo College is proud to play in our community – not only as an institution of learning, but as a main source of support for the public. We encourage students to better themselves, reach for new opportunities, advance their career goals, and embrace creativity.

This work is made possible thanks to the ongoing support of our local donors, partnering agencies and our government, as well as dedicated students, faculty, staff, administrators and alumni who display a deep commitment to ensuring the lasting success of our College. Your support is appreciated and I am personally humbled to be part of such a welcoming and generous community.



## 'A Taste of Río' Dazzles Río Hondo College Patrons, Brings in More Than \$100,000 for Scholarships and Direct Support

The Río Hondo College Foundation's signature fundraising gala, "A Taste of Río," dazzled guests with an impressive array of artisan cuisine, craft beer and wines, exquisite gift baskets and lively entertainment on June 9. This year's event brought in the highest amount in the history of the fundraiser and raised \$107,603 for scholarships and student support services.

On a cool and breezy spring evening, the Foundation hosted more than 350 Río Hondo College (RHC) patrons, who enjoyed freshly prepared culinary delights and curated spirits provided by nearly two dozen local vendors, including La Crosta Pizza, Tepeyac Sports Grill, The Crooked Gaff, JDO

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## 'A Taste of Río' Dazzles Río Hondo College Patrons, Brings in More Than \$100,000 for Scholarships and Direct Support

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Mediterranean, Whittier Brewing Company, Mi Burrito, Clearman's Steak & Stein, and the College's own Roadrunner Brewing.

Among the esteemed dignitaries who attended "A Taste of Río" were Assemblymember Lisa Calderon, Whittier Mayor Joe Vinatieri, South El Monte Mayor Gloria Olmos, Pico Rivera City Councilmember Dr. Monica Sanchez, as well as a host of representatives and elected officials from the Río Hondo College Community College District and its K-12 partner districts.

Río Hondo College Superintendent/President Dr. Marilyn Flores presided over her first-ever "A Taste of Río" fundraiser, mingling with guests, and marveling over the extraordinary community support for RHC students.

"What makes 'A Taste of Río' such a special event is that all who attended gathered for the primary purpose of ensuring our students have the resources necessary to attend college and graduate," Dr. Flores said. "This is our primary fundraiser to provide scholarships and support services for students. The enthusiasm shown by those who donated helped to propel us to our biggest year ever. We are extremely thankful for this heartfelt support."

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, "A Taste of Río" continued its popular tradition of conducting a silent auction, which featured 54 items and raised more than \$15,000 for the Foundation as guests vied for the chance to win Dodgers tickets, see live performances at the Pantages Theater and Musical Theatre West, or take a weekend getaway to Palm Springs.

"Resources generated from this event will help continue increase graduation rates, close the achievement gaps and provide basic needs, food and housing, to our students," Board of Trustees Clerk Oscar Valladares said.

**RÍO IN THE NEWS:** Read more from the [Norwalk Patriot](#).



## Río Hondo College Showcases Career Pathways to Boys & Girls Club of Whittier

Río Hondo College's Career and Technical Education Department hosted the Boys & Girls Club of Whittier on June 14, where they learned about the future of EV programs and automotive technology. Professor John Frala showcased the College's programs and future opportunities regarding Tesla and other electric vehicle programs. Students also learned about the College's admission process and degree offerings and witnessed a welding demonstration.





**RÍO IN THE NEWS:** Read more from the [Whittier Daily News](#).

## A Río Hondo College ‘Healing Circle’ Draws Memories of Beloved Counselor and Advocate

Tears and smiles were shared among students, alumni, faculty, staff and family at Río Hondo College on July 20, in Whittier as they remembered Julius B. Thomas, a popular counselor and professor.

Thomas, who was known for his advocacy on behalf of Black educators and social justice issues, died on July 9 at age 61, after a career that won accolades for his work.

The College had organized a healing circle and offered grief counseling for students, faculty, staff and alumni as the impact on campus had been evident in the days since Thomas’ death.

About 60 people were present throughout the two-hour healing circle, which began with a sound bath led by Siraa A. Muhammad, head athletic trainer at Río Hondo College. After a moment of silence, Deborah Holland, a grief counselor, led a conversation on grief and encouraged people to share their feelings and memories of Thomas.

Among those attending were Thomas’ daughter, Valencia Jenkins, and her fiancé, Larry Davis.

“I love him because my father taught me so much,” she said. “He taught me persistence, and he taught me to never give up.”

Thomas’ work earned a huge accolade just two years ago, when he was awarded the prestigious National Education Association’s Higher Educator of the Year Award for championing faculty and student rights as well as the National Council for Higher Education’s James Davenport Memorial Award for his dedication to the higher education community.

He was the first African American to receive both honors, and the first educator in California to receive the Higher Educator of the Year Award.

Education was a part of Thomas’ life since it began on Sept. 22, 1961, in the Northside of Chicago. His mother taught first grade for 35 years and

he helped set up her classroom every year from grade school through high school.

Thomas began as an educator after exploring music and serving with the U.S. Air Force. After serving a tour, he enrolled as a scholar-athlete at Riverside City College in 1984. He played men’s basketball, worked in the cafeteria and was recognized as Alumnus of the Year in 2017.

He transferred to UC Riverside in 1986, where he played men’s basketball and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in psychology and in sociology in 1989. He graduated with a master’s degree in Educational Counseling and Guidance from CSU San Bernardino in 1995 and started his career in general counseling at Río Hondo College in 2001.

The healing circle ended with another sound bath and many went up to Jenkins to give their condolences.







## Río Hondo College Dance Director Selected to Serve New Term on ACDA Board of Directors

Río Hondo College Director of Dance, Dr. Alyson Cartagena, has been selected to serve an additional one-year term on the American College Dance Association (ACDA) Board of Directors, where she will continue to support both national and regional ACDA conferences and festivals for the Baja region, which includes Southern California.

Cartagena, known for her passion for dance education and for opening doors to community college students who are looking to earn a degree in dance and/or transfer to a four-year college or university, has already completed two consecutive three-year terms on the ACDA Board of Directors.

"It is an honor to continue in this role for the seventh consecutive year. Additionally, it is rewarding to represent all community colleges in our region and at the national level," Cartagena said. "I am proud to support such an honorable organization. This is especially significant as ACDA celebrates its 50th year serving dancers in education."

Cartagena came to Río Hondo College (RHC) in 2006 and a year later was appointed full-time director of the College's Dance, Yoga and Pilates program in the Kinesiology Division. Cartagena has worked to bring noteworthy advancements in dance education, including establishing an Associate of Arts program and a Dance Certificate program. She has also worked to include dance as part of the Kinesiology's Fitness Specialist and Yoga Teacher Training programs.

Cartagena created 23 new courses at RHC and revised the curriculum of several more, creating a dance program that is diverse, equitable and nurturing. Cartagena's efforts have translated into a significant increase of dance students transferring to four-year universities.

"It's so gratifying to see students come into our program, some

with little or no experience, and work their way towards a degree or transfer," Cartagena said. "Through our work with ACDA, RHC dance students can participate in regional and national performances, which has a tremendous impact on their ability to network with colleges and universities. When they step onto another campus, they can see themselves there. It allows them to dream big."

Río Hondo College's dance program has increased its profile by having peer-adjudicated, faculty- and student-choreographed performances included in ACDA regional conferences and national festivals, including the 2023 Baja Regional Conference, held in March at UC Irvine, and the 2023 ACDA National Festival, held in June at Cal State Long Beach.

In May, dance program students and faculty captivated the community with an intimate staging of solo and ensemble dances titled "Emergence," which featured RHC alumna Rivka Villanueva.

Cartagena has trained and performed with the American Dance Festival, International Ballet Competition, Ballet West, Harvard University and the Joffrey Ballet. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Dance from Florida State University and Master of Fine Arts in Dance from UC Irvine. Cartagena has also toured professionally with Contemporary Dance/Fort Worth for four years and the Loretta Livingston Dancers for 10 years.

"Dr. Cartagena is a passionate and dedicated advocate of dance education, who works tirelessly to train, inspire and educate Río Hondo College students, and allows them the freedom to create their own works, several of which have attained regional and national praise," Superintendent/President Dr. Marilyn Flores said. "Congratulations to Dr. Cartagena for continuing to serve our students and advocate as an ACDA Board member."





## Child Development Center Hosts End of the Year Luau

On June 28, the Child Development Center (CDC) celebrated the end of the semester with a special luau-themed party, bringing together CDC families, children and staff for a series of fun activities, games, and a delicious lunch. CDC staff acknowledged the Parent Advisory Committee for their dedication, collaboration, and support throughout the year. During the celebration, staff members also wished a special farewell to the children moving on to transitional kinder and kindergarten.

## Río Hondo College Foundation to Host Annual Golf Tournament

**WHAT:** The Río Hondo College Foundation will host its golf tournament fundraiser, which aims to provide financial support in the form of scholarships, programs, equipment, and other projects that will boost the achievement of the College's student population.

The Foundation first held this popular fundraiser in 2005 and has raised a net revenue of more than \$392,000 to benefit the College community.

**WHEN:** 7:30 a.m. check in; 8:30 a.m. shotgun start. Friday, Sept. 22, 2023.

**WHERE:** Candlewood Country Club, 1400 Telegraph Rd., Whittier, CA 90604.

**DETAILS:** All participants will be provided entry, access to a golf cart, a golf shirt, one gift bag, breakfast and lunch, and beverages and snacks throughout the tournament. Sponsorship opportunities are available, ranging from \$300 - \$15,000. For more information visit [rioehondo.edu/foundation/golf-tournament](https://rioehondo.edu/foundation/golf-tournament).





# College Updates



During the July 12 Board of Trustees meeting, Río Hondo College congratulated Director of Information Technology Gary Van Voorhis and Dean of Health Science and Nursing Catherine Page (pictured above) on their retirement and thanked them for their years of service to the College.

Van Voorhis worked at the College for approximately 10 years. Page served the College for 33 years, starting as part-time before becoming dean in 2018.



Río Hondo College's Performing Arts Department held rehearsals for William Shakespeare's "The Tempest."

## Grant Approvals

During the May 23 and July 12 Board of Trustees meeting, the College voted to accept four grants, totaling more than \$817,000, for various programs and student support.

- The College accepted an award from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) in the amount of \$374,772.00 for fiscal year of 2023-24. The College was given the award through the Continued Funding Application that the Child Development Center (CDC) submitted. The Board approved the Continued Funding Application in January 2023.

Prior to receiving this grant, the CDC was only able to serve and subsidize childcare for low-income families with children ages 3-5. Funds from this grant allow the CDC to offer subsidized childcare for children starting at age 2.

- The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, on behalf of the California Community Colleges Board of Governors, notified the College that it was awarded a Grant in the amount of \$50,738.00 for the Regional Equity and Recovery Partnerships Project (RERP) and required Grant Agreement No. G0592.

The grant will allow the College to establish a workforce development board to connect with and help workers impacted by the COVID-19

pandemic. The grant will fund educational programming for electric vehicle technicians that will include work-based learning opportunities, academic and career support and pathways to industry credentials or degrees.

The targeted population for the grant includes first-generation college students, those who are homeless or housing insecure, justice-involved individuals, low-income communities, out-of-school youth, residents in disadvantaged communities and veterans.

- The U.S. Department of Education notified the College it was awarded a grant in the amount of \$272,364.00 for Sept. 1, 2023 – Aug. 31, 2024 to fund TRIO STEM students and the MESATRIO Center, which will support students working toward STEM-based degrees and careers.

The Chancellor's Office Workforce and the Economic Development Division notified the College it was awarded \$120,000 in funding for the California Apprenticeship Initiative New and Innovative Grant Program. The program grant, intended to create new and innovative apprenticeship opportunities, will create a Department of Apprentices Standards Registered Apprenticeship project with the California Human Resources Department and SEIU Local 1000 for information technologies sector, IT help desk/IBM zSystems, cybersecurity, financial services and auditor.



## Beautification Award

The Río Hondo College Fire Academy was honored with a 2023 Beautification Award by the City of Santa Ana for taking pride in the upkeep of its facilities. The Academy received the award from City Council members at Santa Fe Springs City Hall on July 18.



## Connect with Us on Social Media



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## 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.

## RHC Fall 2023 Dance Concert & ACDA

### Placement Audition



Enroll now for Production classes:

DANC 162 - Dance Production (3 units) CRN 75608

DANC 180 - Performance (1 unit) CRN 73735



Scan for more info

Monday, August 21st

12:55pm - 3:00pm, Room PE 141

Located in the Kinesiology, Dance, and Athletics Complex

\*Enrollment in both courses is mandatory.

Must be available on Mondays, 12:55 pm - 2:00 pm. Other rehearsal time slots (TBD)

Any questions?

Email: [ljay@riohondo.edu](mailto:ljay@riohondo.edu) (DANC 162) and

Email: [rlopez@riohondo.edu](mailto:rlopez@riohondo.edu) (DANC 180)



Scan for more choreographic opportunity

## Fall 2023 Dance Concert and ACDA Placement Audition

Río Hondo College will host its fall 2023 Dance Concert from 12:55 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Monday, August 21 at the kinesiology, dance and athletics complex in room PE 141.

The event will also serve as a placement audition for those who would like to join the American College Dance Association. Anyone who would like to join must enroll in DANCE 162 and DANCE 180. Please email [ljay@riohondo.edu](mailto:ljay@riohondo.edu) and [rlopez@riohondo.edu](mailto:rlopez@riohondo.edu) for more information.



## Save the Date

8 a.m. – 3 p.m., Friday, August 18

Fall 2023 Convocation Day

12:55 p.m. – 3 p.m., Monday, August 21

Fall 2023 Dance Concert and ACDA Placement Audition

Monday, Sept. 4

Labor Day holiday

6 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 13

Río Hondo College Board of Trustees Meeting

Friday, Sept. 15

Río Hondo College 60th Anniversary Celebration

8:30 a.m., Friday, Sept. 22

Annual Golf Tournament. Information: <https://www.riohondo.edu/foundation/golf-tournament/>

6 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 11

Río Hondo College Board of Trustees Meeting

