

# FOCUS ON RÍO

August 2023

## President's Message



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

Dear Río Hondo College community,

A sense of excitement and optimism can be felt across campus as our students have returned for the start of the 2023-24 academic year. It was rejuvenating to see so many of our faculty, staff, Board of Trustees members and student leaders at our Fall Convocation, which set the tone for what promises to be another incredible year.

Río Hondo College continues to make headlines in the region and across the state, thanks to our innovative programming and dedication of our students and faculty. It is inspiring to see all the success and achievements within our community.

I would like to personally invite everyone to join us for an unforgettable day at Río Hondo College's 60th anniversary celebration on Friday, September 15. It will be an incredible opportunity to celebrate our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and look forward to what the future holds for us all at Río Hondo College.

The 2023-24 academic year will be a year like no other at Río Hondo College, as we continue our commitment to advancing social justice as an anti-racist institution. There will undoubtedly be challenges to overcome, but I am eager to face them with all of you and see what new history will be made by students, staff and faculty this year.

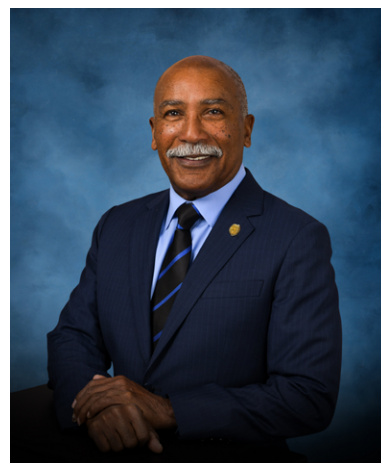
Thank you.

## Río Hondo College Police Academy Director Receives Leadership Award for Anti-Hate Work

Río Hondo College Police Academy Director Walter Allen III has worked to combat prejudice and stamp out pro-hate tactics during his more than four decades in law enforcement, an effort that has earned him the inaugural Huff Strategies – ACT Against Hate Alliance (AAHA) Leadership Award.

The first-ever Huff Strategies-AAHA Leadership Award was presented to Allen and eight others during an August 17 ceremony in Rowland Heights. Allen has fought against implicit bias throughout his personal life and storied career in law enforcement, which includes his tenure at the Río Hondo College Police Academy and across California's criminal justice and correctional systems.

The AAHA has engaged in statewide collaboration to make identifying solutions against hate crimes in California an immediate priority since it was established by former California State Senator Bob Huff and Mei Mei Ho Huff in August 2022. Allen has shared his expertise as a speaker at AAHA's monthly media events, which focus on solutions to stop the rise in hate crimes.



**RÍO IN THE NEWS:** Read more from [The Los Angeles Post](https://www.losangelespost.com/story/news/2023/08/15/rio-hondo-college-police-academy-director-receives-award/12848480001).

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## Río Hondo College Police Academy Director Receives Leadership Award for Anti-Hate Work

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“Walter has articulated a vision for selecting, training and retaining police officers that helps ensure they will be effective advocates for the communities they serve,” Bob Huff said. “He has made a difference in law enforcement programs in California and has identified education as one of the most important factors in stopping the rise in hate crime.”

Allen has also served as a state-wide leader in law enforcement, with more than 46 years of experience in the field. He is the former California Youth Authority director and chief of the State Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Law Enforcement Office of Correctional Safety. He has participated on the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training and served as deputy commissioner for the Board of Parole Hearings.

Allen has spent the last 10 years as the Río Hondo College Police Academy director, and was a graduate of the Academy’s Class No. 36 in 1976. The Academy follows a teaching philosophy known as Principled Policing, which addresses cultural diversity, prejudice, discrimination, hate crimes, investigative profiling vs. racial profiling, as well as the tenets of procedural justice.

“It has been a privilege to serve as Río Hondo’s Police Academy director,” Allen said. “As I continue serving in this role, we will continue utilizing cutting-edge cultural diversity and procedural justice training to ensure that we are producing the guardians of society, who will be our champions of fairness, transparency and impartiality.”



## Fall Semester Commences with Convocation Day Festivities

Río Hondo College commemorated the start of the 2023-24 academic year during its Fall 2023 Convocation Day and explored the theme of “Sustaining Well-Being, Vibrancy and Excellence within the Río Hondo College Community” with its faculty, staff, administrators and student leaders on August 18.

Superintendent/President Dr. Marilyn Flores, Board President Kristal Orozco, campus constituency presidents and the four vice presidents delivered inspiring speeches, welcomed new staff to the Río Hondo family and discussed department goals for the new academic year. The day’s

festivities included an all-staff photo, breakout workshops, department meetings and complimentary breakfast and lunch for everyone in attendance.

Dr. Flores thanked the Río Hondo College community for their support, hard work, dedication and student-centered focus in her welcome speech. She also highlighted achievements during the past year and encouraged everyone to “soar higher” and pursue continuous improvement in the College’s commitment to student success and anti-racism.







## USC Move-Ins: Emotions High as Students Begin On-Campus Life

**RÍO IN THE NEWS:** Read more from [USC](#)

Whether they traveled from near or far, families arrived on USC's campus and quickly focused on checking out bins and dollies and unloading suitcases and duffle bags from their vehicles. But as they got their students settled into their new homes for the next year, emotions never seemed far from the surface.

For junior Solana Marquez of the USC Viterbi School of Engineering, moving into Troy Hall this week is a dream come true. She has had her eyes on USC "since I figured out what college was" and was able to transfer after attending Río Hondo College near her family's home in L.A.

"I feel like I will be able to find out more about living in the community by living in the dorm, and it will be easier to get settled and to make friends," she said. "I didn't have to overpack because our house is less than an hour away from campus."

Her father, Lou Marquez, graduated from USC in 1999 and could barely speak when asked what it means to him to have his daughter following in his footsteps.

"I'm very proud, OK?" he managed to say. "I couldn't be prouder."

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

## Keeping the Professional Baseball Dream Alive

Student-athletes discover "last resort" is really first step.

Start Río – Go Anywhere! is a common Río Hondo College motto. When it comes to two-year community college and junior college (JUCO) baseball programs, the phrase takes on additional significance. It's a promise of possibility, a pathway for student-athletes to a Division 1 (D1) program or, perhaps eventually, the Major Leagues.

Veteran third baseman Evan Longoria (Río Hondo College / CSU Long Beach), a three-time All-Star and Gold Glove winner echoed many of his Dbacks teammates opinions about JUCOs.

The 2008 American League Rookie of the Year chose Río Hondo based largely on playing time.

Longoria's choice paid off and he made memories at Río Hondo he still talks about

today – being challenged by his coach, Mike Salazar to constantly improve; gameday McDonald's drive through rituals with his buddy for Egg McMuffins and orange soda; cleaning his own game shoes; tarping the field after games.

Even as 19-year veteran now, when his cleats are cleaned and his laundry done for him, he takes nothing for granted.

"All of those things I think kind of started to develop the player that I became ultimately you know, with the work ethic, drive and the discipline," he said.

"It was just, it was like baseball in its purest form back then, and so junior college was fun in the sense that we got to play at a high level but also have this almost like club baseball feel, too."





**RÍO IN THE NEWS:** Read more about [Rio Hondo College's Student-Athletes of the Year](#).



## Oronoz, Tellez Named Río Hondo Student-Athletes of the Year

A standout at the court and on the beach, as well as a kingpin on the mat, sophomores Nadine Oronoz and Alexis Tellez, have been named the 2022-23 Río Hondo College Student-Athletes of the Year for their impressive accomplishments for the Roadrunners.

It's been a long journey for Oronoz, who's been a two-sport star for head coach Teddi Esko's volleyball programs. Originally out of Southlands Christian High School in Rowland Heights, Oronoz arrived at Río Hondo prior to the start of the fall 2019 indoor volleyball season but suffered a knee injury that required surgery.

Through hard work, rehabilitation, and the commitment to return, Oronoz was finally able to make her way back to the court by the spring of 2020. However, due to the pandemic, the college closed down and the volleyball program did not return to campus until June of 2021.

To keep her student-athletes connected and engaged, Esko ran online workouts over Zoom for a year and a half that Oronoz attended each and every one. Upon the return to in-person activity, Esko says she immediately took a leadership role and helped guide the program to great success.

"Our program mission is 'The Río Way' in that our players not only excel on the court but in the classroom as well," said Esko. "We take pride in our academics and athletics, focusing on character, culture, commitment and a championship mindset. Nadine has embodied 'The Río Way' in all facets and it has been an absolute pleasure having her lead the way for both the indoor and beach volleyball teams during her time at Río Hondo College. I am very proud of what Nadine has accomplished at Río and know she will continue to succeed. Her future is bright!"

Oronoz was a two-year starter and team captain for both the indoor and beach volleyball squads. During the fall 2022 indoor season, Oronoz was named first-team All-South Coast Conference for the second time. She helped lead the Roadrunners to a historic No. 12 state-ranking, a second-place South Coast Conference finish, and helped lead the squad to the second round of the Southern California Regional Playoffs.

On the sand, Oronoz was a member of the Roadrunners' No. 1 doubles team, qualified for the South Coast Conference Pairs Tournament, and

helped lead Río Hondo to the Southern California team playoffs for the first time. She was also a two-time All-SCC honoree.

While at Río Hondo, she has compiled a 4.0 grade point average and will graduate this spring. She is committed to Whittier College where she will continue her academic and volleyball career for the nearby Poets.

Oronoz snaps a string of two consecutive women's soccer players to earn the honor, most recently by Jackie Marin (2021-22) and Serina Vargas (2019-20). Due to COVID-19, Río Hondo did not participate in athletics during the 2020-21 season.

Tellez achieved a rare feat for the storied Río Hondo College wrestling program. Over the 56-year history of the sport at the College, Tellez became just the eighth Roadrunner to be named an All-American for two seasons.

He wrapped up the 2022 fall season by finishing in third place in the 125-pound weight division at the California Community College Athletic Association (3C2A) State Championships. As a freshman in 2021, Tellez was the state runner up, taking second place.

On his way to state, Tellez earned All-Southern California and All-Southern California Wrestling Association Southwest Conference honors. He was third at the Southern California Championships.

Prior to Río Hondo, Tellez wrestled for just two seasons at Arroyo High School in El Monte, making his dramatic rise to success at the collegiate level even more astonishing.

"Alexis had a great season finishing third at the state championships and earning All-American honors," said Río Hondo College Head Coach Mike Tellez. "He led by example, worked hard in practice, lifted weights on his own every day, and never missed practice. I'm very proud of all he has accomplished."

Tellez is the fifth wrestler over the past six seasons to be named Male Student Athlete of the Year. Last year (2021-22), swimmer Alexander Dimitriadis ended a streak of four consecutive wrestlers to take home the honor: Daniel Romero (2016-17), James Schmidt (2017-18), Diego Sanchez (2018-19), and Kahlil Tucker (2019-20).



# El Monte Students Take Podcasting, First Aid and Music at Río Hondo College

El Monte City School District (EMCSD) students spent part of their summer in Río Hondo College's Career Technical Education (CTE) Program. The program offers 7th and 8th grade students hands-on learning opportunities with cutting-edge technology that explores first aid, CPR, health science and podcasting.

"This program will introduce a child to a different way of thinking about technology, careers and colleges," stated Claudia Romo, lead organizer of the CTE Program. She explained how a "true partnership" between the program and district is key to the program's initial development and success.

The importance of this program is "exposing students to several different CTE fields and areas of expertise; this way they get a chance to see what they like and don't like," voiced Jacob Muñoz, coordinator of engagement and enrichment at EMCSD. Students are given this unique opportunity to explore different career paths.

Río Hondo CTE has been active over 10 years and contains a variety of modules that the students participate in. This year's modules included

first aid, podcasting and music integrated technology workshop. All students are rotated throughout the modules in the span of a week and are able to enjoy what each has to offer.

Students were entertained with exciting modules and innovative technology while simultaneously being exposed to a collegiate environment. College can seem a bit daunting to some students and perhaps unattainable. Therefore, this program helps shape the perception of college for these students. "It's really fun, you get to experience what students in college get to work on," shared Gidley School student, Mayra Rodriguez. Mayra along with her peers have expressed more excitement and interest in going to college.

An objective of the program is to expose the students to college and prove that it is attainable. "A lot of us in our community view college as unattainable and spending a week on a college campus can change their perspective," explained Romo. Everyone involved wants to spark interest in a career path that may not have been thought possible for the students.





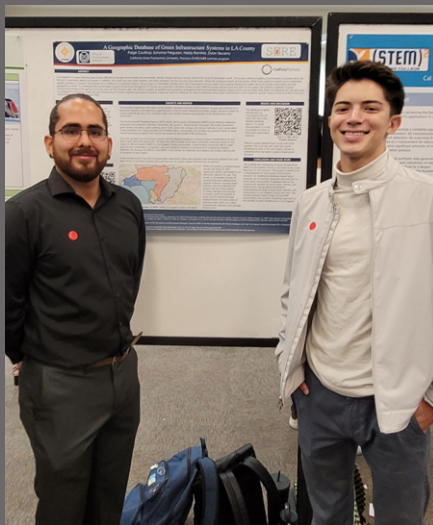
# College Updates



Río Hondo College wrestler Emitt Mercado has signed with Menlo College, a National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics wrestling powerhouse in Atherton, to continue his academic and athletic career. Mercado, originally out of Mountain View High School in El Monte, took fourth place at the State Championships to earn All-American honors for the Roadrunners as a sophomore in 2022.



Río Hondo College Police Academy Class 215 cadets participated in the 2023 Albert Rivera Menudo Run at Whittier Narrows Park on August 26. It marked the 40th year of the annual Menudo Run, which supports the National Latino Peace Officers Association Scholarship Program. In attendance were Río Hondo College Superintendent/President Dr. Marilyn Flores, Board of Trustees member Rosaelva Lomeli and Police Academy Director Walter Allen III with instructors Milt Hernandez and Anthony Encinas. They were joined by Director of Government and Community Relations Dr. Russell Castaneda Calleros and RHC staff Alejandro Amaro, Vanessa Cerano, Jason Dwyer, Jeffrey Grajeda, Griselda Hernandez, Miguel D. Prudente, Antonio Velarde and Ana Xulu.

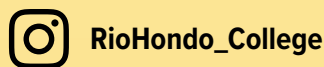


Twenty Río Hondo College Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) students delivered poster presentations on a variety of topics, including biology, chemistry, engineering, plant and computer science, at the Cal Poly Pomona (CPP) Creative Activities & Research Symposium (CARS).

The group of students participated in the SURE Program, funded by Title V Enlace, where they had the opportunity to participate in an eight-week, full-time faculty-mentored undergraduate research experience at CPP which culminated with CARS. Eleven of the students will be transferring to a range of institutions, including USC, UC Irvine, UC Riverside, UC San Diego, California State University, Long Beach and CPP.



## Connect with Us on Social Media



## Serving the communities of

El Monte                      Santa Fe Springs  
South El Monte              Whittier  
Pico Rivera

and portions of:

Norwalk                      East Whittier\*  
Downey                      South Whittier\*  
La Mirada                    West Whittier\*  
City of Industry              Avocado Heights\*  
Los Nietos\*

\*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 Hondo College**  
celebrating 60 YEARS  
1963 - 2023

**JOIN US!**  
**FRI | SEPT 15 | 2023**

**Río Hondo College**  
3600 Workman Mill Road | Whittier, CA

**FREE & OPEN**  
**to the COMMUNITY!**

**Río Hondo College**  
invites you to an all-day  
**60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**  
in honor of our College  
serving the community since 1963.

**9:30 am** Kick off with a big group photo forming the number 60 on the soccer field. (Please wear a golden yellow shirt.)

**11:30 am – 3:00 pm** Celebration with music, international cuisine, live cultural performances, games and activities on the lower/mid quad.

**3:00 pm – 5:00 pm** Games, activities and entertainment continued on the lower quad.

**5:00 pm – 8:00 pm** **AT CAPACITY.** Evening festivities with mariachi, ballet folklórico and El Grito contest in the L Tower Breezeway.

**FEATURED RESTAURANTS**

- NORMS Restaurant
- Camila's Tacos
- Cortina's Italian
- Golden Sun Mediterranean Kabobs & Desserts
- RJ's Southern Homecooking
- Herach and Ara
- Gelato Go
- Moonwood Coffee

**FEATURED PERFORMERS**

- Japanese Drummers Taiko Project
- West African Performer Ame Kora Music
- Native American Dancers Red Boy Production
- Mariachi Tierra Mia
- Ballet Folklórico Sol de Fuego
- RHC Choir, Theater, and Music Tech Students
- DJ Justin Chu
- DJ Emiliano

**COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS**

- Rose Hills Memorial Park and Mortuary
- Central Basin Municipal Water District

**Please RSVP for day events only.**

<https://gorio.page/60th-anniversary>

Río Hondo College will commemorate 60 years of serving its community with a daylong celebration of the College's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, which officially opened its doors to students in 1963. The event – which is free and open to the public – will feature vibrant live music and cultural performances, international cuisine, games and other fun-filled activities throughout the day.



## Save the Date

September is...  
**Latinx/Hispanic Heritage Month**

**6 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 13**  
Río Hondo College Board of Trustees Meeting

**All Day from 9:30am-8:00pm, Friday, Sept. 15:**  
Río Hondo College 60th Anniversary Celebration starting with a photo shoot with faculty, staff, students and community members on the Soccer Field at 9:30am. For more details, and to RSVP for the day events, go to: <https://page.riohondo.edu/60th-anniversary/#rsvp>. FYI: the evening event is at capacity.

**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

**10 a.m., Friday, Oct. 13**  
California State University, Fullerton Campus Tour. Stop by TRIO SSS (SS 140) to fill out a permission slip and secure a spot

**Week of October 16:**  
Undocumented Student Action Week

**6 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 8**  
Río Hondo College Board of Trustees Meeting