



SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

Dear College Community:

March 31, 2020

On the day we honor César Chávez, a most courageous and humble labor (UFW) leader, and while in the midst of health concerns along with a myriad of emotions, I believe it is fitting to take a brief moment to reflect and thank you for everything you do to teach and support our students.

As we look ahead to better days, please know that your initiative, understanding and hard work, particularly over the past few weeks, has not gone unnoticed. Through the anxiety and stress many of us are experiencing, I offer my gratitude and most sincere appreciation for the heroic work you are doing on behalf of our students. Along with our community, I am indebted to every Río Hondo faculty member, classified staff member, confidential employee, and manager for quickly adapting to the recent developments. Through your efforts you have mitigated potential negative impacts on our campus community, transformed our instruction and student services while demonstrating compassion for our students that embodies the Río Hondo mission.

I have been touched by so many unselfish deeds and genuine acts of kindness by our colleagues. I want to share just one anecdote through an email string (edited to maintain anonymity) that exemplifies similar situations we have overcome together:

(3/21)

“Dear Superintendent Reyes-I have a homeless student in my class. He has two other classes and is a top student in all of them. He never misses, rides his bicycle and takes the bus to upper campus and spends most of the day and evening classes there. He texted me tonight that he is very worried as the campus is now closed. I have been supplying him with extra bags of food to supplement what he got on campus but he also can't go to any fast food places now as they only have drive up. I will continue to still meet him every two days to give him extra food to get through but he is very concerned that he will not be able to take a shower on campus. He was taking a shower there every three days. I thought the RV people still had continuing access to the gym. I know there are other students who live in their cars and use the showers. Are there any other resources? I just feel helpless and don't want to abandon him. He is really trying and I have gotten him warm clothes but I just don't know where to get him a shower. Are we totally closed ?????”

(3/22)

“He is coming over to my back porch where I have set up a surge bar to plug in so he can charge his phone and laptop. He can phone the Salvation Army here in Whittier Monday. All of the sites on the link are a bit too far but maybe they have info. I can't let him into my house as (medical condition of other resident omitted here) so can't contaminate anything inside here, but at least the porch will give him access to food bags and a charging station, and a table to do the work for his other two classes. He can use the hose on my back porch and if worse comes to worse, I have a clean black barrel and can warm-up water to add to water so he can partially wash ... I have put some toiletries (antibacterial soap, deodorant, toothpaste, etc.) in plastic bag and he can take and dispose wipes in the trash can. For now, this is just what I can do in a survival mode. Will keep in touch.”

(3/31)

“You would be so proud of my STUDENT. His team was the first to submit their assignment--A level. His assignment partner is an autistic young man STUDENT did plug in to the back porch outlet, then bought a heavy duty charger (about 6 lbs.) with a light, etc. and had it for a long-term charge in case the school didn't open and he would have to go a number of days and couldn't get back with the rain. I left him two large pots of boiling water every other day on the porch and he used the hose. We never touched. We both had disposable gloves and sanitizing Lysol strips. He had a large bin and at least shaved and cleaned up. He has old towels that dry on the chair and I will throw those away after it all. He cleans and sanitizes the table, chair, all he touches before he leaves. I never went out. I just waved through the window.” STUDENT also got a bag of food with pop top cans. Since the college partially opened this week, I imagine he went up there. I have not touched base since Saturday as I have been busy grading and trying to plan for lessons this week. We can cover the course in a lot of different ways-but teaching them to communicate their concerns and then dealing with them will release a lot of the pent-up future PTSD.”

“So for now, we are all pulling together and I canvas with the classes each day with upbeat announcements. This is my STUDENT'S 2nd year (all A's /Bs). I'm sure there have been other faculty who have also got him this far. Our students are resilient. We shall rise again!!!”

Unprecedented times call for unprecedented actions! One faculty member's initiative, plus staff and administrative action propelled this student to persist and succeed. Such unwavering commitment to provide extraordinary support during this crisis typifies our remarkable College culture of care and personifies our mission. Incredible how the kind-heartedness and courageous deeds of one individual can truly change a student's life!

As we endure this ordeal together, I am convinced our collective will and dedication will prevail above all adversity and any future challenges. Your actions over the past weeks, your ability to work through hardships, and the leadership so many of you demonstrate each day will ensure our students, our communities and our loved ones are completely supported through these historic times. Along with our trustees, I want to assure you that we stand with you in promoting the health and safety of all students, faculty, staff, and managers.

In closing, I also want to thank each of you personally for your service to our College and your love for our students. As we navigate through this together on this day, I ask you to remember César by trusting in Dolores Huerta's appropriate and timely immortal words of universal inspiration: **¡Sí se puede!**

Un abrazo,



Dr. Arturo Reyes
Superintendent/President