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Rio Hondo College Veterans Success Center Assists Vets Achieve Higher Education Goals

WHITTIER – Veterans who have earned degrees and certificates from Rio Hondo College praise the College for its support services, including the Rio Hondo College Veterans Service Center (VSC), as a critical element in their success.

“I truly enjoy my time here at Rio Hondo College,” said U.S. Navy veteran Hayden McCord, who recently graduated with an Associate of Science in fire technology. “Rio is by far the most veteran friendly college I’ve ever attended. The VSC takes the time to assist with any issues that arise. I am happy to be part of the Rio family.”

Rio Hondo leaders say the College’s goal is to ensure access to higher education for all students and to guide them to success. This includes ensuring veterans obtain their educational benefits and receive the specific services they require in balancing their educational goals with other needs.

The Veterans Success Center provides an extensive selection of educational and vocational opportunities combined with a wide range of support services designed to support veterans students with their transition into higher education. The center helps to facilitate orientations, holds application process clinics and workshops, all while connecting the students with Veterans Administration resources within the community.

The VSC is also a designated area where students can network, use the computer lab, assist with tutoring, obtain career goals as well as an area where veterans can congregate. The VSC offers a safe space where veterans can find that missing element of camaraderie and Esprit de Corps from their active duty lives and apply it in their new student life.

“Many of Rio Hondo College’s service members thrive during their higher education endeavors, earning degrees and transferring to four-year institutions such as UCLA, UC Irvine, Cal State Fullerton, Cal State Los Angeles, Cal State Long Beach and San Diego State University,” Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Dr. Arturo Reyes said.

Rio Hondo College, located in Whittier, California, is committed to the success of its diverse students and communities by providing dynamic educational opportunities and resources that lead to degrees, certificates, transfer, career and technical pathways, basic skills proficiency, and lifelong learning. For information on the College or its programs, please call 562-692-0921 or visit www.riohondo.edu.

In spring, the VSC reported 50 veterans graduated or transferred, including Kevin Skinner, a former Marine sergeant who maintained a 4.0 GPA throughout his Rio Hondo College career. Skinner, who will attend Harvard University, mentored fellow veterans at Rio Hondo College and served as president of the Veterans Club. He organized Veterans Week activities and spoke at community events, including the College's 9/11 Memorial.

Skinner earned an Associate of Science in general studies with an emphasis in science and mathematics. He will study environmental science and engineering at Harvard.

In addition, U.S. Army veteran Sergio Tamayo was among the first cohort of students who earned Rio Hondo College's Bachelor of Science degree, offered as part of a historic California program.

Veterans are also among those who receive scholarships from the Rio Hondo Foundation, including Brennen Robbins, Alexander Foskarino, Nicolas Kiyohara, Felipe Aceves and Eric Stone.

Alumni Mark Tavera, who served 30 years in the U.S. Army, continues to give back to the local community.

Tavera, who is from El Monte, leads Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10218 of Greater El Monte. He provides Thanksgiving baskets with all the trimmings each year to 50 family members. He works to ensure that the veterans and their families are thanked for their sacrifices they have done for our country.

"Rio Hondo College is proud to assist our veterans, who have given us so much, in achieving their higher education and career dreams," Board of Trustees President Oscar Valladares said. "Our Veterans Success Center is part of a broad array of support services that are key to guiding students on their journey."

PHOTO

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