



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / RELEASE DATE: Feb. 26, 2024 / **CONTACT:** Ruthie Retana 562.463.3145

Newly Appointed OC Superior Court Judge Credits Río Hondo College for Shaping His Path to Success

Whittier, California – Bryan Clavecilla’s journey to being appointed Orange County Superior Court Judge took him through Río Hondo College (RHC) in 2003, and he is quick to credit the College for leading him to a successful future.

Appointed by California Governor Gavin Newsom for the judgeship on Jan. 29, Clavecilla credits RHC as providing him with experiences – on the College’s Speech & Debate and Wrestling teams – that helped develop his level-headed tenacity, critical thinking, and public speaking skills that gave him the confidence to pursue his goal of becoming a trial attorney.

“Coming to Río Hondo College gave me the opportunity to compete at a high level, with some of the best athletes and debate students in the country,” said Clavecilla, who served as a Senior Deputy District Attorney and Assistant Head of Court at the Orange County District Attorney’s Office, and later as an Orange County Superior Court Commissioner for 17 days before his appointment. “It sparked me to pursue a more rigorous path, thanks to the support I received there.”

It has been a whirlwind journey for Clavecilla, who graduated from William Workman High School in La Puente, received his undergraduate degree from UCLA, then moved to the Fowler School of Law at Chapman University before making his name prosecuting sexual assault and human trafficking cases in Orange County as a Deputy District Attorney.

Needing to pass one foreign language class so that he could obtain his undergraduate degree at UCLA and proceed to law school, Clavecilla eventually stayed for two terms at Río Hondo College, where he met two professors, including current Speech professor Gilbert Puga and former Wrestling coach Paul LeBlanc, who were able to hone Clavecilla’s formidable talents into championship form.

“Bryan really flourished on the Speech & Debate team; he was a debate and impromptu winning speaker at the state and national levels. He’s one of the teammates who elevates the entire team to be the best they can be,” Puga said. “I even remember him coming back to volunteer time to speak and mentor first-time speech students at Río Hondo. I’m very proud of all he has accomplished, from completing law school to practicing law, and now a Superior Court judge.”



Clavecilla cites his transformative experiences as a member of Río Hondo College's Speech & Debate and Wrestling teams for teaching him the value of hard work, perseverance and humility, enabling him to acquire the professional growth required to be a successful trial attorney.

"I think people underestimate the value of education they receive at a community college, and that's a big mistake," Clavecilla said. "It will save you money and there is so much to learn, even things they can't teach you at university."

Clavecilla also credits his former Spanish instructor for teaching him a necessary lesson in humility by giving him a grade that would not qualify him for the credits he needed to graduate. It forced him to come back for another term, which Clavecilla now considers a blessing in disguise because it gave him a second chance at personal growth that he took advantage of.

"It could have been a huge failure. Instead, Río Hondo College helped turn that experience into a positive and show me the value of education," Clavecilla said. "Don't underestimate what you can do if you put the hard work in – my Río Hondo College professors all taught me that and I have carried these lessons with me ever since."

Clavecilla also volunteers his guidance at two Southern California legal pathway programs – the Cabrillo Law Academy of Justice at Cabrillo High School in Long Beach and the Elizabeth Macias Guerrero Legal Studies Academy in Santa Ana – helping to advance diversity throughout the legal system.

"Congratulations to Bryan Clavecilla for his appointment to the O.C. Superior Court. Río Hondo College is honored to have played such a pivotal role in his development, both as a district attorney and as a person," Superintendent/President Dr. Marilyn Flores said. "We are most appreciative of Bryan's support of California Community Colleges and in particular the Río Hondo College professors, coaches, programs and activities that have helped prepare him for success in his career."

PHOTO CAPTION:

JUDGE1: Río Hondo College alum Bryan Clavecilla was appointed Orange County Superior Court Judge by California Governor Gavin Newsom. Clavecilla, who attended Río Hondo College in 2003, credits the College for providing him with experiences that helped develop his level-headed tenacity, critical thinking and public speaking skills that gave him the confidence to pursue his goal of becoming a trial attorney.

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