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Río Hondo College Celebrates Strength, Resilience of Class of 2024 at 61st Commencement Ceremony

Whittier, California – Fully decked out in graduation caps, gowns and a variety of stoles, 1,664 Río Hondo College (RHC) students crossed the stage to receive their diploma, designating them as the College’s latest cohort of graduates during an on-campus commencement on May 24.

Río Hondo College’s Class of 2024 is comprised of 1,664 graduates who earned Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees, 951 graduates who earned an Associate Degree of Transfer, making them eligible for admission to the California State University system, and eight graduates who earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Automotive Technology.

Throughout the ceremony, Río Hondo College celebrated its wide range of graduates – including first-generation and system-impacted students, student parents, students with housing and food insecurities and undocumented students – which reflect the rich diversity of the College community.

“Graduates, the diplomas you are receiving today embody your potential and drive, your ability to effect change and your commitment towards excellence and completion. I have every confidence that you, graduates of the Class of 2024, will become leaders in your fields,” Superintendent/President Dr. Flores said. “As you move forward toward your next goal, remember you are now an alum of this institution, carrying its name and reputation everywhere you go – continue to strive for greatness, lead with integrity and compassion and make a difference in this world.”

During the ceremony, Michelle Renteria-Vasquez was honored with a plaque and awarded the Pellissier Family Scholarship as the Class of 2024 Valedictorian. Alexandra Zuniga, who will transfer to UCLA in the fall, also led the ceremony in the pledge of allegiance in her final act as the RHC Board Student Trustee for the 2023-24 school year.

Río Hondo College continued its tradition of honoring four stories of student success, recognizing Sherrina Barnes, Gilbert Hernandez, Isabella Estrada and Laura Betancourt for achieving excellence despite personal and educational challenges.

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Barnes will transfer to Cal State Los Angeles after having served as a community advocate, leader and earning six associate degrees at RHC. Betancourt, who grew up in Colombia, overcame 100% vision loss and secured the accommodations required to complete her classes in pursuit of her passion to work with children. Seventeen-year-old Estrada will also transfer to Cal State Los Angeles to study social work with seven degrees and three certificates from RHC. Hernandez, a Guardian Scholar, majored in music and integrated technology while participating in student panels to create awareness on the importance of foster care.

The day's events also included remarks from Board of Trustees President Anais Medina Diaz, Vice President of Student Services Dr. Eric Dixon-Peters, Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Don Miller, Assistant Director of Human Resources Toni Traster, President of Academic Senate Dr. Angela Medina Rhodes, Associated Student Body President Christina Miranda and Orange County Superior Court Judge and RHC alumnus Bryan Clavecilla.

"Río Hondo College has prepared you to embrace the opportunities and overcome the obstacles that lie ahead. Your journey does not end here, but rather opens a world of possibilities waiting to be explored and pursued with your drive to make a difference in the world," Medina Diaz said.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Medina Diaz also presented Mary Becerril with a plaque in recognition of her being named the 2024 Fellow of the College. Becerril, who has served RHC for 38 years and is currently the senior coordinator in the Admissions & Records Office, will be remembered forever as a permanent plaque will display her name in the Administration Building.

"This honor is not just a reflection of my individual efforts, it is a testament to the collective dedication and passion of our entire Río Hondo community," Becerril said. "Together, we have worked tirelessly to advance the mission of the college, to uphold its values, and to make a positive impact for our students."

During the keynote address, Clavecilla encouraged graduates to believe in themselves and their capabilities, instilling a sense of belonging and possibility. He drew parallels between the graduates and California's coastal redwoods, which are referred to as "sempervirens" in Latin.

"Roadrunners, if you are in the room – any room – you belong. Redwoods believe they belong and they keep on growing and standing tall," Clavecilla said. "Río Hondo Class of 2024, we believe in you – achieve your dreams, be redwoods – sempervirens – always living."

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PHOTO CAPTIONS

GRAD1: Río Hondo College celebrated its Class of 2024 graduates during an on-campus commencement on May 24. The class is comprised of 1,664 graduates who earned Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees, 951 who earned an Associate Degree of Transfer and eight graduates who earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Automotive Technology.

GRAD2: Fully decked out in graduation caps, gowns and a variety of stoles, 1,664 Río Hondo College (RHC) students crossed the stage to receive their diploma, designating them as the College's latest cohort of graduates during an on-campus commencement on May 24.

GRAD3: Río Hondo College honored its diverse group of 2024 graduates during its 61st commencement on May 24. Throughout the event, RHC celebrated its wide range of graduates which reflect the rich diversity of the College community.

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