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Local Advocate to Deliver Rio Hondo College 54th Annual Commencement Address

WHITTIER – A Downey attorney who has helped helm Rio Hondo College's innovative Pathway to Law School program will give the commencement address at the College's 54th annual Commencement Ceremony, set for 6 p.m. Thursday, May 25 at the hilltop campus.

Ricardo Perez, a civil lawyer who often advocates on behalf of children's and immigrant rights, will share his journey as an undocumented youth living a gang-dominated neighborhood to attending UCLA and law school.

Perez will touch on the struggles of being isolated during Loyola Law School – so much so that he dropped out during his first try – and how he learned to forge connections with classmates and, later, his community.

The ceremony will recognize as many as 1,553 students who earned a record 2,154 degrees in summer/fall 2016 or spring/summer 2017.

"Each year at Rio Hondo College, we see an acceleration in accomplishments from our talented and dedicated students," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "It's a great confirmation of our mission to provide students with access and opportunity as they pursue their higher-education dreams."

During the ceremony, students will hear remarks from Dreyfuss, Board of Trustees President Norma Edith Garcia and Associated Students of Rio Hondo College President Andrew Gonzalez, a founding member of the College's Pre-Law Society who will pursue his studies at Syracuse University.

MORE

*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**.*

Academic Senate President Robert Bethel will announce the class valedictorian, Jianshu Chi. Chi, who immigrated to the U.S. from China at age 17, plans to study computer science at Southern Taiwan University for Science and Technology before pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree at UC Berkeley.

Vice President of Student Services Henry Gee will recognize three students selected as “profiles in student success” for overcoming significant obstacles en route to securing their degrees.

The ceremony also marks the graduation of the second cohort of students in Rio Hondo College’s Pathway to Law School program. This year, 15 students will matriculate to such universities as UCLA, UC Berkeley, UC Irvine, UC Riverside, Cal State Los Angeles, Cal Poly Pomona and Cal State Long Beach for the second stage of their three-part journey to law school.

Students in Rio Hondo College’s nursing program will receive pins on Wednesday, May 24 to mark their success. In all, 75 students will receive associate degrees in nursing, 24 will receive vocational nursing certifications and more than 65 will receive certifications this year from Rio Hondo College’s several nursing assistant programs.

Many of the students with associate degrees are already enrolled in bachelor’s programs through partnerships with California State University, Los Angeles, Azusa Pacific University and University of Phoenix.

Rio Hondo College is also home to acclaimed public safety training programs, which hold their graduations throughout the year. This year, 29 police cadets graduated in January; 40 more are expected to graduate in August. The Fire Academy will graduate 36 cadets, the EMT program will graduate 89 students and the Wildland Fire Academy will graduate 40 cadets this year.

“Each spring, our Rio Hondo College community celebrates the extraordinary achievements of our students, who depart our campus eminently well prepared for the next stage of their life journeys – whether those journeys are taking them to four-year colleges or into our highly competitive job market,” Board of Trustees President Norma Edith Garcia said.

PHOTOS

RHC_COMMENCE_1: Downey attorney Ricardo Perez, who has helped helm Rio Hondo College’s innovative Pathway to Law School program, will give the commencement address at the College’s 54th annual Commencement Ceremony at 6 p.m. Thursday, May 25 at the hilltop campus.

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