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Rio Hondo College Students Return for Start of Fall Semester

WHITTIER – Rio Hondo College buzzed on Monday with the sounds of returning and first-year students greeting each other, connecting with friends and exploring their academic home for the coming year.

First-year student Matthew Amperano joined a steady stream of new students receiving advice and, in some cases, a guide to their first classes from an information booth staffed by peer mentors and members of the Associated Students of Rio Hondo College.

“It’s always exciting when the students arrive for the first day of their college careers and return as knowledgeable leaders and friends,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. “Each year, we try to give them a new, more amazing experience with continued growth of new programs and services to ensure their success.”

Amperano has long planned his attendance of Rio Hondo College, lured by the College’s strong Administration of Justice program. He hopes to complete his general education requirements and continue his studies at Cal State Fullerton en route to becoming a K-9 officer.

The College’s stellar public safety program includes a Police Academy, Fire Academy and nursing program. This fall, Rio Hondo launched an Associate of Science degree in homeland security to prepare students for entry-level jobs in the high-demand field and for advanced homeland security studies at four-year colleges or universities.

Amperano was on campus for one class on Saturday, Aug. 18 – the official first day of the fall semester – but was still a little daunted on Monday, when most students started.

“I’ve heard it’s small, but it looks big to me. And there are a lot of hills,” said Amperano, a Whittier High graduate.

A student guide escorted new student Victoria Holguin up one of those hills to her first class.

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.

Holguin, who is studying biology, chose Rio Hondo College because it was more affordable than University of California, Irvine, where she was also accepted. She was thankful for the guide, who helped her navigate a crowd of fellow students just after 9 a.m.

“There’s a lot of people. I’m kind of nervous,” said Holguin, a Pioneer High graduate.

Student information booth workers helped a number of students overcome similar uncertainties, as well as directing them to financial aid offices, the First Year Success Center and other student services. The College is known for its strong array of support services, including tutoring programs, programs to guide students along their chosen courses and services for students in financial need or who have been part of the foster care system.

Many students on Monday were returning for their second or third year of studies, navigating the campus like seasoned professionals. Sophomores Taylor Alcala and Miranda Fernandez laughed together as they climbed the stairs near the campus quad. The two met during summer conditioning for the school’s softball team before their first year.

Fernandez, a Covina resident who is studying psychology, started at Whittier College but decided to enroll in Rio Hondo College.

“The programs are good here and they have good diversity as far as different programs,” she said.

The two arrived just before 9 a.m. but avoided the annual first-day parking rush by snagging spots by the softball field.

Second-year student Samuel Cox, who is studying history, said he continues to be struck by Rio Hondo College’s hilltop location even as construction continues to improve the campus L Tower, one of its most distinctive buildings.

Cox said he’s enjoyed strong teachers in a variety of subjects and participating on the College’s award-winning Forensics Speech and Debate team.

“Rio Hondo College’s goal is to provide all our students with incredible opportunities for success – through academics, careers and ways to engage their communities,” Board of Trustees President Madeline Shapiro said. “Welcome to all our new scholars and welcome back to those returning for the next step in their higher education journeys.”

PHOTOS:

RHC_FALL_1: Student mentor Alex Lopez tells a freshman about student mentoring programs as Rio Hondo College begins fall semester on Monday, Aug. 20.

RHC_FALL_2: New and returning students flooded the Rio Hondo College campus on Monday, Aug. 20, setting the campus abuzz as they connected with each other, searched out classes and launched into their 2018-19 academic adventures.

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