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Rio Hondo College Bustles as Fall Semester Begins

WHITTIER – Riky Shannon, Matthew Bowman and Santiago Guerrero, all recent graduates of La Serna High School in Whittier, regrouped outside the bustling Rio Café at Rio Hondo College on Monday to share notes about their first day as college freshmen.

“It’s a big transition from high school to college. You really have to be on top of things,” Guerrero said. “I never really had to study in high school, but I know I will in college.”

The men joined thousands of fellow students in starting the fall 2016-17 semester at the community college. Students clustered in small groups to share their first-day experiences, stopped at information booths for last-minute directions to classrooms and pored over new textbooks.

Fall semester began Aug. 20, but many students started classes on Monday at the main campus in Whittier and satellite campuses in El Monte, South Whittier and Pico Rivera. The Rio Hondo Educational Center at Pico Rivera, which opened this fall, offers 25 day and evening courses.

“It’s an incredibly exciting day for us as well as for the students,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. “There is so much energy on campus, so much hope and optimism as our students embark on their higher-education journeys with the help and support of our dedicated faculty, administrators and staff.”

New this year is a Bachelor of Science program in automotive technology, the only degree of its kind at a community college in Southern California. Rio Hondo College is offering the major as part of a historic state initiative.

The College’s top majors include business administration, accounting and computer information. Besides being sought-after by students seeking entry-level positions, the business degrees provide a pathway for continued education at the bachelor and master level.

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.

The Computer Information Technology (CIT) program is growing through new degree and certificate programs. Computer-related jobs are growing in varied industries, which are seeking entry-level employees with the skills like those taught in the CISCO certification program.

Rio Hondo College is listed among the 2016 Top 25 Community Colleges for Hispanics by Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education Magazine for helping students attain degrees. The College offers 24 degrees that guarantee graduates admission to California State University campuses.

The College is also home to nationally recognized programs in nursing, firefighting and police services.

Jasmine Sosa, 20, a returning child development major, joined fellow South El Monte residents Nadine Gonzalez, a freshman, and Adrene Hernandez, a returning administrative justice major, to chat between classes on Monday. Sosa said her goals for the new semester were simple and clear: "Pass all my classes, again, and be organized."

Rosemead resident Meagan Mutuc, 20, a returning nursing student, said she remembered to arrive early Monday for her first class to ensure she could snag a prime parking space.

"I came at 9," Mutuc said. "I got a space right by my class."

Yellow-shirted staff members dotted the hilltop campus, guiding the flood of new and returning students to a host available parking lots and shuttles. Mutuc said parking will become easier in about a month, once the new students learn the ins and outs of the campus.

New students also got a hand from Rio Hondo College Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs JoAnna Schilling, who positioned herself near the campus' central stairs, a cluster of maps in hand, to provide directions to a steady flow of new students.

"At Rio Hondo, a sense of community permeates all we do, a feeling very much in evidence on our first day of classes," Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees President Mary Ann Pacheco said. "We are thrilled that so many students are finding ways to take advantage of our rich program of academic and career preparation programs."

PHOTOS

082216_RHC_FIRSTDAY1: Rio Hondo College freshmen Matthew Bowman, left, Riky Shannon and Santiago Guerrero regroup outside the Rio Café at Rio Hondo College on Aug. 22.

082216_RHC_FIRSTDAY2: Freshman Nadine Gonzalez and returning students Jasmine Sosa and Adrene Hernandez meet up during the first day of classes at Rio Hondo College on Aug. 22.

082216_RHC_FIRSTDAY2: Meagan Mutuc, 20, of Rosemead, said she arrived more than an hour early for her first class at Rio Hondo College on Aug. 22 to secure a prime parking spot.

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