



# START RIO...GO ANYWHERE

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### ***Rio Hondo College to Offer Free Tuition for Two Years in Expansion of Rio Promise Program***

**WHITTIER** – Rio Hondo College will launch a significant expansion of its Rio Promise program at 9 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 25, offering free tuition for two years.

Rio Hondo College is the first college in Los Angeles County to implement a second year of free tuition for students.

The program began in 2017-18 with 456 first-year students from local public high schools participating. In 2018-19, those numbers have nearly quintupled, with 2,215 first-year students participating after the College opened the program to students from all high schools.

An estimated 443 students will qualify for the second-year program.

“Part of our mission as a community college is to eliminate barriers that prevent students from realizing their academic and career dreams,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. “This expansion of the Rio Promise helps us to deliver on that mission and to retain our students to continue their educational journey at Rio Hondo College.”

The Rio Promise is funded by donations and by leveraging Pell grants, California Promise grants and California Promise waivers.

The College’s announcement will feature comments from College President Dreyfuss, Board of Trustees President Madeline Shapiro and Rio Promise Scholars Cesar Arciniega and Brittany Morgan. The College will also receive commendations from elected officials.

Arciniega, the first in his family to attend college, said the Rio Promise program drew him to Rio Hondo College. The support he received before starting college and during his first year helped him discover a passion for English, which he plans to pursue at a four-year university.

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*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](http://www.riohondo.edu).*

“There is no place I’d rather be than at Rio Hondo College because of the Rio Promise,” said Arciniega, a Whittier High School graduate who earned 31 units and a 3.61 GPA in his first year at Rio Hondo College. “Thanks to the Rio Promise I am on track to transfer to my dream school next year – UCLA.”

Morgan, who comes from a seven-person home, said the Rio Promise tuition program is helping her complete her higher education journey to become an elementary school teacher.

“The Rio Promise has made it possible for me and my family to save up money so I can transfer to a university, knowing the financial burden will be lessened,” said Morgan, an Arroyo High School graduate who earned 25 units and a 3.05 GPA in her first year at Rio Hondo College.

Morgan started her college journey as a biology major but soon discovered a love for teaching. Faculty and staff members helped her navigate the change in major and her path to transfer next year.

“I really like teaching kids,” she said. “I like being able to explain something to them in a way they understand; and I like knowing I’m helping the kids on their journey, knowing I’m a part of it,” she said.

To qualify for the first-year program, students must be entering their first year of college and enroll in a minimum of 12 units at Rio Hondo College; complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the California Dream Act Application; and submit all required forms from Rio Hondo College’s Financial Aid Office.

To qualify for the second-year program, students must complete at least 24 units at Rio Hondo College by the end of their first year with a minimum 2.0 grade point average; enroll in 12 units a semester their second year; complete the FAFSA or the California Dream Act Application; and submit all required forms from Rio Hondo College’s Financial Aid Office.

Rio Hondo College will also make accommodations for the minimum enrollment requirement, as appropriate, for students in its Disabled Students Programs & Services.

All participants of the program receive ongoing support to foster success. Resources include:

- Workshops on study tips, time management, financial aid, etc.
- Early alert program to provide timely intervention and support
- Student success coaches to provide resources and support for students
- Counselors to help students define educational goals and develop educational plans
- Supplemental instruction in mathematics courses
- Support with understanding career options and preparation
- Exposure to four-year universities and support in transferring

College data shows that participants in the first-year Rio Promise program passed significantly more classes and were more likely to continue on their educational journeys.

## **MORE**

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In other counties, San Diego Community College District, Oxnard College and Santa Barbara City College are also at the forefront of offering free tuition programs to second-year students. Los Angeles Community College District announced a similar plan.

“This is a landmark moment for Rio Hondo College,” Shapiro said. “With this expansion, we are fulfilling California’s historic promise that community college would be accessible to all. Students who enroll in Rio Hondo College will be able to complete their certificates and two-year degrees without financial challenges.”

## **PHOTOS**

**RHC\_PROMISE\_1:** Rio Promise Scholar Cesar Arciniega, who will speak during the College’s announcement of the program’s expansion, says the Rio Promise program drew him to Rio Hondo College.

**RHC\_PROMISE\_2:** Rio Promise Scholar Brittany Morgan, who comes from a seven-person home, says the Rio Promise program is helping her complete her higher education journey to become an elementary school teacher.

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