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Río Hondo Receives Award to Support Unhoused Students

WHITTIER – Río Hondo College has been awarded a nearly \$1 million grant to fund the Hope Scholars Program, a basic needs assistance project that provides holistic support services for unhoused and transitionally unhoused students.

The College was one of five schools nationally to be recognized with the Basic Needs in Postsecondary Education award by the Federal Department of Education. On Dec. 29, Río Hondo College received notification of the award, which will be utilized for the continued support of unhoused and transitionally unhoused students.

The total funds, amounting \$989,798.00, will increase staffing for the Hope Scholars Program. Funding will allow the Hope Scholars program to deepen community awareness and expand holistic support services for students, such as tutoring and success coaching, academic counseling, mental health services, financial literacy programs and more. Additionally, since going remote due to COVID-19, the College has secured an additional \$2,494,293 in competitive funds to develop and increase supportive services, providing basic necessities and crisis intervention.

The project will also evaluate program effectiveness and develop a tool kit and webinar with partners from the Center for Equitable Higher Education and John Burton Advocates for Youth to support campuses across the nation in developing their own programs for unhoused students.

"The Basic Needs grant allows us the ability to scale up our efforts to support students experiencing these problems through the Hope Scholars program," said Dr. Earic Dixon-Peters, vice president of Student Services. "We believe our work changes lives."

The Hope Scholars Program at Río Hondo College supports unhoused and transitionally unhoused students in aspects such as accessing temporary housing, receiving counseling and registering for classes. Since introducing the Hope Scholars Program in the 2019-2020 academic year, Río Hondo College has seen a 184.3% increase in services provided directly to students, better ensuring their success and retention through provision of basic needs.

"At Río Hondo College, we are dedicated to uplifting our students who, with the help of essential support services, can obtain success in college and beyond," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "This award will allow us to continue supporting our students in their pursuit of stable homes, reliable sources of food and mental health services that ensure they reach their full potential."

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Río Hondo College is an educational and community partner committed to advancing social justice and equity as an antiracist institution that collectively invests in all students' academic and career pathways that lead to attainment of degree, certificate, transfer, and lifelong-learning goals. For information on the College or its programs, please call 562-692-0921 or visit www.Riohondo.edu.