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Río Hondo College Partners with Summer Research Program to Empower STEM Students

Whittier, California – Approximately 20 Río Hondo College students recently dove into the world of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) – working in labs, conducting research projects and presenting their findings – through the College’s first-year partnership with Cal Poly Pomona’s Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) Program.

The SURE Program has provided more than 100 community college students with the opportunity to participate in high-level, faculty-mentored research projects at Cal Poly Pomona. The program, which first began in 2014, spans eight weeks in June and August and introduces students to the world of scientific research in an immersive, supportive learning environment.

Eleven of Río Hondo College’s debut SURE Program cohort transferred this fall to a range of four-year institutions, including USC, UC Irvine, UC Riverside, UC San Diego, Cal State Long Beach and Cal Poly Pomona. Río Hondo College funded its partnership in the SURE Program through Enlace, a Title V grant-funded program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education to promote the degree attainment of STEM students at the College.

Río Hondo College student Dylan Becerra admits he found scientific research and the SURE Program stressful and intimidating at first, but the exposure gave him a new sense of purpose and confidence.

“I learned that research was not such an intimidating task; it can be difficult but not impossible. I now have a great confidence not only in my capabilities but professionally, as well,” Becerra said. “I can confidently attend internship interviews now knowing I have the experience to back up my words. I could not recommend the SURE Program enough for new scholars out there looking for an intro into research.”

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Río Hondo College chose its inaugural group of SURE participants through a competitive selection process that included an application, essay and interview process. Students received a \$5,000 stipend, parking and a meal card to use during the experience.

“This program helps build our students’ confidence and self-efficacy in these research environments and empowers them to see themselves as scholars in their field,” Río Hondo College Enlace Grant Manager Dr. Molly Morin said. “It is also an opportunity for our students to build connections with like-minded peers and faculty in STEM.”

The SURE Program culminated with students presenting their research findings at Cal Poly Pomona’s Creative Activities & Research Symposium on Aug. 10. They will also present their research at Río Hondo’s upcoming “Tardeada de Ciencias: A STEM Research Showcase” on October 17th.

Applications for Río Hondo College’s 2024 SURE Program participants will begin in Spring 2024. Students can email enlace@riohondo.edu for more information.

“New doors have been opened for our students through the Cal Poly Pomona SURE Program, as the experience, exposure and skills gained over the summer will help our students as they pursue careers in STEM,” Río Hondo College Superintendent/President Dr. Marilyn Flores said. “This partnership directly aligns with Río Hondo College’s commitment to empower our students and promote excellence in STEM education.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

SURE1: Río Hondo College student Angelica Montalvo presents at Cal Poly Pomona’s Creative Activities & Research Symposium to conclude her experience in Cal Poly Pomona’s Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) Program, which provides 100 community college students with the opportunity to participate in high-level, faculty-mentored research projects. Angelica went on to transfer to UC San Diego this fall.

SURE2: Around 20 Río Hondo College students participated in Cal Poly Pomona’s Summer Undergraduate Research Experience Program this summer. It marked Río Hondo College’s first year partnering with the SURE Program, which Cal Poly Pomona launched in 2014 to introduce students to the world of scientific research in a healthy, supportive learning environment.

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