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Rio Hondo College Expands Support for Undocumented Students, Families

WHITTIER – Rio Hondo College is expanding and creating programs to support undocumented students and their families so that more people will be able to realize their full potential.

The College is one of 32 campuses across California that received support this school year from the new California Campus Catalyst Fund. To date, the Catalyst Fund has raised nearly \$10 million for this three-year initiative, which was founded by educators, funders and advocates. Rio Hondo College will receive \$125,000 in the initiative's first year.

The Fund increases support for undocumented students and their families on campuses representing the state's three public higher education systems: California Community Colleges, California State University and the University of California.

"Rio Hondo College is pleased to be among the 32 campuses in California to receive support from the Catalyst Fund, which will help us to serve our students and community," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "Together, we are sending a message of inclusion and support to some of the most challenged students across the state."

Rio Hondo College has enrolled 799 students who have identified as undocumented. The College is committed to the following goals:

- **Engagement services:** Educate undocumented students, their families and the community about educational and career opportunities
- **Success services:** Empower undocumented scholars with the academic opportunities to actualize their higher education and career goals
- **Campus climate:** Educate and improve campus climate to support serving student from undocumented backgrounds

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.

To achieve these goals, Rio Hondo College has pledged to:

- Enhance and improve current services
 - Support with applying to and navigating RHC
 - California Dream Act and Scholarship support
 - Culturally and contextually relevant counseling
 - Healing circles
 - Dreamers Conference and seminars
 - Expand the UndocuTextbook Loan Program
 - Academic success coaches
 - Increase external partnerships
- Build new innovative resources
 - Career Exploration and Life Planning course
 - Evaluate practices to better serve students
 - Create events utilizing satellite campuses
 - Enhance professional development and support via training

The announcement comes as Rio Hondo College and other campuses in the California Community College system are preparing for the Undocumented Student Week of Action, Oct. 15-19. Rio Hondo College will mark the week with programs designed to support undocumented students secure a college education, connect with others who have earned degrees and started businesses and advocate for undocumented scholars.

“Rio Hondo College stands by all of its students as they pursue the dream of higher education and the opportunities that education brings for them and their families,” Board of Trustees President Madeline Shapiro said. “This grant is another tool in our toolbox as we develop a rich array of services for undocumented students as well as our other students, as a way of removing barriers to their success.”

The programs of Rio Hondo College and other Catalyst Fund grantees build on the work of students, educators, community leaders and policymakers around the state in providing undocumented students with the resources they need to succeed. In recent years, California has expanded in-state and state-based financial aid, and undocumented immigrants now qualify for career licensing in law, medicine, real estate, and 37 other professions.

“Undocumented young people and their families are integral to the social, economic and cultural fabric of California, and as such, support for them needs to be woven into our state’s higher education system,” said Victor Garcia of Immigrants Rising, a San Francisco-based nonprofit that is administering the Fund.

Supporters for the Fund include the Chavez Family Foundation, College Futures Foundation, Grove Foundation, Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ginnie and Peter Haas Jr. Fund, Heising-Simons Foundation, Hellman Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Michael Moritz and Harriet Heyman, NextGen America, and Weingart Foundation.

For more information, contact Rio Hondo College Dean of Student Success Melba Castro at (562) 463-7029 or mecastro@riohondo.edu.

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