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Rio Hondo College, Automotive Technology Professor Receive 2016 Clean Air Award for Forward-Looking Curriculum

WHITTIER – Rio Hondo College and automotive technology professor John Frala have received the 2016 Award for Clean Air Education and Outreach in recognition of the College’s groundbreaking Associate of Science degree in hybrid/electric vehicle/fuel-cell technology.

The degree is California’s first to serve the growing market in advanced alternative-fuel technology, part of a suite of complementary majors in the College’s innovative automotive technology program. Frala, who is a leader in a statewide effort to create a Hydrogen Highway to support expanded use of alternative-fuel vehicles, designed the degree.

The award was presented earlier this month by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, which honored a handful of businesses, individuals and public agencies for contributing to cleaner air in the region.

“We are extraordinarily proud of John and his team in the Automotive Technology Department,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. “Their impressive work on the cutting edge of this technology creates opportunities for our students to explore an exciting and lucrative new career field.”

Rio Hondo College’s Associate of Science in hybrid/electric vehicle/fuel-cell technology, approved in April, teaches students about electrical systems, chemistry, physics and applied mathematics, demonstrating the growing slate of academic skills required by today’s automotive repair industry. Students who receive degrees are trained to safely handle high-voltage vehicles.

“I’m excited to be a part of such a dynamic faculty at Rio Hondo College and pleased to share this award with my colleagues who are dedicated to opening new career vistas for our students as a result of our creative curriculum,” Frala said.

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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.

Frala sits on the Green Team, a state advisory group dedicated to creating a series of hydrogen refueling stations known as the California Hydrogen Highway. He began developing the concept for the new AS degree four years ago.

Progress on the AS degree received a boost when Frala's team led Rio Hondo College in securing a \$200,000 National Science Foundation grant in May 2015 to develop alternative-fuels training.

Frala said Rio Hondo College's automotive programs are quickly gaining recognition across the state and nation for their innovative and forward-looking approaches. He said companies began inquiring about graduates from the AS program almost as soon as it was approved.

This fall, the College also launched a Bachelor of Science program in automotive technology as part of a historic state initiative to provide four-year degrees at a select few community college campuses. The auto tech major is unique to Southern California.

"This award recognizes Rio Hondo College's talented and dedicated faculty, who are a linchpin in our mission to provide students with a strong array of academic and career-oriented programs," Board of Trustees President Mary Ann Pacheco said.

PHOTOS

101816_RHC_CLEANAIR_1: Rio Hondo College professor John Frala designed an innovative Associate of Science degree in hybrid/electric vehicle/fuel-cell technology that has won him and Rio Hondo College a 2016 Clean Air Award from the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

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