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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
RELEASE DATE: Oct. 19, 2017

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Rio Hondo College to Launch Student Food Pantry and Resource Program, Hold Town Hall on Food Insecurity

WHITTIER – Rio Hondo College on Tuesday, Oct. 24 will launch a multi-faceted program to combat student food insecurity, building on more than two years of efforts to aid a significant number of students who struggle financially.

The campaign will include a food pantry and supporting resources dubbed the RioSource Room and will be kicked off with a town hall highlighting student needs.

“Food insecurity or instability is a critical issue for far too many of our students,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. “This program expands our efforts to create a security net for members of our community whose financial issues pose significant challenges to their pursuit of an education.”

Forty-seven percent of Rio Hondo College students experience food insecurity, meaning they lack access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food, according to a Rio Hondo College survey conducted in fall 2016.

Surveyed students said they worry over feeding themselves and families, including 35 percent who skip meals because they lack money. More than half the surveyed students who receive financial aid said they spend at least some of those funds on food.

After the survey, the College pledged to provide access to food and housing for students who are food insecure, strengthen collaboration with student leaders and guide students to support services.

“We can’t stand by while our students struggle with such a monumental challenge,” Board of Trustees President Norma Edith Garcia said. “As an institution dedicated to helping our community thrive – especially students who choose us because other higher education options are far too expensive – we are in a unique position to tackle this barrier to their success.”

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.

The College's Food Access Task Force and Associated Students of Rio Hondo College are collaborating on the effort, building on efforts by both to support students over the last two years. Those efforts provided Food Break stations for students during finals week in fall 2016 and offered free groceries from area food pantries at the end of the 2016-17 academic year.

The RioSource Room, located in Building A next to the Rio Hondo College Bookstore, will serve as a drop-in pantry for students who need food while on campus or groceries to take home. It will also serve as the point of contact for students to get information about and referrals to local nonprofit and community resources, including state food aid, shelters, health providers and mental health services.

The pantry will be supplied with aid from Food Finders, Heart of Compassion and Emmanuel Presbyterian Church Food Bank, which have donated items for past food efforts. President Dreyfuss also pledged \$25,000 from the College as ongoing support.

"With the RioSource Room, Rio Hondo College is fulfilling its pledge to create options for our students in need," Dreyfuss said. "This is in keeping with the mission of service that has driven us to develop a rich array of services for veterans, foster youth, under-represented minorities and students who struggle with poverty."

The College will launch the effort with a 12:30 p.m. town hall that features talks by the leaders of the Food Access Task Force and ASRHC President Martin Covarrubias at the Student Union. A ribbon-cutting will follow at 1:30 p.m. at the RioSource Room featuring remarks from Dreyfuss and former ASRHC President Andrew Gonzalez.

PHOTOS

RHC_FOOD_1: Rio Hondo College's Food Access Task Force provided students with free groceries at the end of the 2016-17 academic year in collaboration with local food pantries. The effort is part of an ongoing campaign to combat food insecurity.

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