



# START RIO...GO ANYWHERE

## MEDIA RELEASE

**3600 Workman Mill Road / Whittier, CA 90601**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### ***Rio Hondo College to Celebrate Graduation of Second Cohort of Students in Tesla START Program***

**WHITTIER** – Rio Hondo College will celebrate the graduation of its second cohort of Tesla-trained automobile technicians – 13 men and three women – in a special ceremony from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, Nov. 9.

The students are among the first 100 in the nation to complete a 12-week Tesla START program that includes more than 800 hours of training. The program provides students with the skills to work on electric vehicles and be hired as service technicians at Tesla service centers across North America.

Rio Hondo College was the second location established by Tesla for the technician training program.

“Rio Hondo College is proud to be in the vanguard of automobile technician training,” Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. “Our alternative auto fuel technology programs – which include our Tesla START classes – represent some of the most innovative and forward-thinking career training available.”

The graduation ceremony will take place in the Rio Hondo College Automotive Shop. The event will feature remarks from President Dreyfuss, Board of Trustees President Madeline Shapiro, Tesla Director of Southern California Field Services Michael Ojaghian and Tesla START instructor Timothy Olesijuk. Representatives of local and regional officials are also expected to honor students.

Media tours of the Tesla training program will be available before and after the ceremony. To arrange a tour, contact Director, Marketing & Communications Ruthie Retana at (562) 463-3145 or [retana@riohondo.edu](mailto:retana@riohondo.edu).

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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](http://www.riohondo.edu).*

Rio Hondo College also offers a rare Bachelor of Science in automotive technology. The College has been recognized by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office for its ability to secure jobs for a high number of graduates in automobile technology at strong, livable wages.

Rio Hondo College began offering the Tesla START program in spring 2018. Tesla provides the curriculum, instructors, equipment and job opportunities so students can smoothly transition from the college program to full-time employment.

The program teaches technical skills as well as the soft skills needed to gain employment. Upon graduation, Tesla recruiters work with students on placement at a Tesla service center. Rio Hondo College's first cohort of 11 students graduated in May 2018, with each student immediately placed in jobs at Tesla service centers with a starting salary in excess of \$20 an hour, full benefits and company equity.

"Tesla is working with some of the best automotive programs in the country to train students on electric vehicle technology and to prepare them for a career at Tesla," Tesla's Michael Ojaghian said. "Students graduate with a full-time job, certification and the skills necessary to succeed on day one in the growing electric vehicle industry and to become future leaders at Tesla."

All students in the new cohort are being placed in jobs in service centers from Colorado to Hawaii:

- Jason Amador – Costa Mesa Delivery
- Danielle Blazek – Costa Mesa
- Emilio Cardona-Gonzalez – Tactical Response Team
- Rodrigo Cervantes – Santa Monica
- Conor Douglas – Santa Monica Mobile Service
- William Khai Nho Duong – Hawaii
- Marc Elizarraras – Denver
- Oscar Garcia – Burbank
- Ivann Gregorio – Costa Mesa
- Alejandro Lopez – Las Vegas
- Kory Miller – Costa Mesa
- Lucero Ramirez – Pomona
- Diana Reyes – Buena Park
- Daniel Robles – Buena Park
- Dalton Verwolf – Buena Park
- Jake Zerbe – Buena Park

Rio Hondo is one of five colleges in the U.S. where the Tesla START program is offered. The latest training program to come on board – California's second – is being set up in Northern California at Evergreen Valley College. Rio Hondo's first class of graduates was the second overall in the nation to complete the Tesla START program; the new class is the nation's seventh graduating class.

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“Rio Hondo College is dedicated to creating opportunities for success for its students,” Board of Trustees President Madeline Shapiro said. “Our Tesla START partnership is part of a constellation of programs that deliver on that promise.”

## **PHOTOS**

**RHC\_Tesla\_1-2:** The second cohort of graduates in Rio Hondo College’s Tesla START program will graduate as Tesla-trained automobile technicians in a special ceremony that runs from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, Nov. 9.

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