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3600 Workman Mill Road / Whittier, CA 90601

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CONTACT: Ruthie Retana
(562) 463-3145

Rio Hondo College to Train Cybersecurity Technicians, Professionals to Meet Rapidly Growing Industry Need

WHITTIER – Rio Hondo College educators have developed plans to offer a cybersecurity certificate and degree program in fall 2018 to help meet rapidly growing demand for technical experts capable of shielding sensitive electronic data.

"This effort reflects the creative and innovative approach that is a hallmark of Rio Hondo College's faculty," Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. "We are looking not only at the needs of today's students and our industry partners, but at the needs expected to develop over the coming years, and then shaping instruction to match."

The program spans 26 courses in information technology, math, accounting and business law; it includes certificates earned for completing several sequences of the classes, including one for "ethical hacking." The College plans to offer Associate of Science degrees in cybersecurity and information technology, featuring courses in computer, server and network security.

The College's announcement comes during the first-ever National Cybersecurity Career Awareness Week, which aims to spark interest in the career field's potential.

"Cybersecurity is an increasingly important career field – the data breaches at Home Depot, Target and Equifax all testify to that," Computer Information Technology Assistant Professor Rudy Rios said. "But there's a vast unmet demand for trained professionals. Even if all California community colleges had programs, we still couldn't fill the need."

Experts estimate a global shortage of 2 million cybersecurity professionals by 2019. In California, more than 31,000 jobs are currently unfilled, according to industry tracker Cyberseek.org. Some experts estimate California's unmet need will rise to 45,000 positions in the next five years and climb by 10 percent a year after that.

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****.*

Rios, who is part of the team mapping out the program, said Rio Hondo College developed the plan in consultation with an advisory committee of industry professionals. Now, a consortium of Los Angeles area community colleges is reviewing the plan to ensure it doesn't overlap or duplicate other programs.

The next step will be review by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, which Rios expects to go smoothly because the programs follow the California Model Curriculum. The model is also followed by Cal State San Bernardino, one of a handful of California colleges to offer cybersecurity degrees.

The effort is funded through a workforce development grant from the Chancellor's Office. As part of that effort, Rio Hondo College is buying advanced NDG Netlab tools that virtually simulate the environments students will need to master, including routers, switches, servers and client computers.

The College will collaborate for the simulations with the LA/OC Regional Netlab Hub at Orange County's Coastline Community College, which is a designated Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense.

Rio Hondo College's cybersecurity courses include a mix of new classes and foundational instruction from its existing business, informational technology and math programs. The combination of degrees and certificate programs will prepare students to enter the workforce in entry-level positions or continue their studies at a four-year school.

"It's really thrilling to see how each year Rio Hondo College expands opportunities for students, adding new fields of study and career options," Board of Trustees President Norma Edith Garcia said. "This venture into cybersecurity builds on our strengths and, I believe, will lead to new innovations yet unimagined."

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