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Río Hondo College Trustees Swear in Two Members, Reorganize

WHITTIER – Re-elected Río Hondo College Trustee Vicky Santana and newly elected Trustee Kristal Orozco took the Oath of Office on Dec. 16 during a Zoom meeting in which the Board of Trustees also selected new officers for the coming year.

Santana was sworn in by U.S. Rep. Linda Sanchez and Orozco was sworn in by newly elected California State Assemblymember Lisa Calderon. Shortly after, during a Special Board Meeting, Trustee Rosaelva Lomeli was selected as the new board president, Santana as vice president and Orozco as clerk.

The board also includes Trustee Oscar Valladares, who served as president for the last 18 months; the fifth board seat has been empty since July and will be filled through an election in March 2021.

Santana and Orozco were praised for their dedication and service by Sanchez and Calderon as well as by State Sen. Bob Archuleta.

Santana, who is starting her third term, said the College was tested by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This has been a year like no other. The pandemic has turned our world upside down. Life as we know it has disappeared,” she said. “I’m hopeful 2021 will bring us much hope and many changes.”

Santana said the College came together to deliver services to students remotely, but the effort was a huge lift that included many difficulties, and she urged unity as the College continues to serve students through online instruction.

“I’m committed to continuing to represent you to the best of my ability,” Santana said.

Orozco said she wants to ensure Río Hondo College connects with the K-12 community it serves.

MORE

Río Hondo College is an educational and community partner committed to advancing social justice and equity as an antiracist institution that collectively invests in all students’ academic and career pathways that lead to attainment of degree, certificate, transfer, and lifelong-learning goals. For information on the College or its programs, please call 562-692-0921 or visit www.riohondo.edu.

"I truly believe in our community college system and the benefits it provides to our underserved populations. This year has been difficult and has shined a light on many inequalities in our community. My top priority is to ensure that students, faculty and staff as well as community members have access to high quality education and services," she said.

Valladares was praised for his service as president, which included personal challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In brief remarks, he thanked his family and colleagues for their support and said he was proud of the College's work to avert a financial catastrophe and instead build a 25% General Fund reserve.

"I'm very proud of a long list of accomplishments," Valladares said. "That took a lot of work, especially from our heroic leaders on campus."

"In the last 18 months, I realized the essence of the role of trustee of Rio Hondo College is to serve and protect this institution. By serving and protecting our students, I honor our students, our community, our staff and, of course, my family."

Lomeli thanked her colleagues for their trust and the College's staff and faculty for their work on behalf of students over the last year. She also urged her colleagues to build unity to benefit students.

"It's a new day, new beginnings at Río Hondo College," she said. "The time has come to focus on our house, Río Hondo. Let's take stock of our strengths and our weaknesses and work on them. Let us foster unity, reinforce our fiscal stability, prepare for accreditation and get through the pandemic. ... Let's continue to make Río Hondo College the best place to work and be a student."

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