

MEDIA RELEASE**3600 Workman Mill Road / Whittier, CA 90601**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
RELEASE DATE: **April 10, 2023**CONTACT: Ruthie Retana
(562) 463-3145***Río Hondo College Speech/Debate Team Ranked 10th in Nation
Among Colleges, Universities***

WHITTIER – Río Hondo College’s Forensics Speech and Debate program has been ranked 10th in the nation overall among community colleges and universities, a milestone that recognizes the hard work, dedication and persistence of the College’s students and faculty over the last 50 years.

The honor was announced during the National Parliamentary Debate Association Championship March 25 to 27. The Forensics Speech and Debate program, which was formed in 1970, has steadily climbed the ranks over the years – placing 17th in 2022, 21st in 2021 and 27th in 2020.

“It is very gratifying to feel part of this, primarily since it validates the enormous amount of work our students put in,” Forensics Coordinator and Debate Coach Grant Tovmasian said. “Forensics Speech and Debate correlates with success for students. We draw our students from political sciences, English and math, just to name a few. In all careers, having the skills to be an effective communicator sets our students apart and gives them tools necessary to navigate academia and life.”

Tovmasian, who has led the program for six years, said the win is due to the team’s regular practices with the Coaches Patricia Hughes, Alex Cadena and Edgar Minasyan and the team’s desire to continually better their speaking skills.

“I am incredibly proud of the team's efforts throughout the season – it is excellent for the team to have all their hard work recognized nationally,” Forensics Speech and Debate Co-captain Ethan Sepulveda said. “Río Hondo College’s Speech and Debate team has had an extremely positive impact on my life, both in and out of college. Being able to analyze the world and how it functions and having the tools to advocate for myself has equipped me to excel both in studying English and establishing connections with people of all perspectives on an everyday basis.”

The 10th-place national ranking has been just one of the program’s highlights of the year. The program also placed sixth overall in the Large School Division both Speech and Debate at California Community College State Championships in March and earned second-place sweeps in the Community College Division at the Gaske Championship in February.

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Additionally, the program took home first place in the top two-year school division in October 2022 during a tournament at Point Loma Nazarene University.

“Our Forensics Speech and Debate team is a prime example of a program that gives students the tools they need to succeed in every facet of their lives,” Superintendent/President Dr. Marilyn Flores said. “Congratulations to Coach Tovmasian and all the participating students – your work has been unparalleled and you deserve all the praise for showcasing your speech and debate skills on a national level.”

Tovmasian said the team hopes to keep up their winning momentum during their next two tournaments, to be held April 8-15 at the Phi Rho Pi National Championship in Bethesda, Maryland and April 29-30 at the Pacific Southwest Collegiate Association.

PHOTO CAPTION:

SPEECH: Río Hondo College’s Forensics Speech and Debate program was recently named 10th overall in the nation during the National Parliamentary Debate Association Championship from March 25 – 27.

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