



START RIO...GO ANYWHERE

MEDIA RELEASE

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Río Hondo College Celebrates Academic Success with Graduating Class of 2022

WHITTIER – Río Hondo College students were celebrated by professors, administrators, friends and family members as they decorated the college campus with adoring signs, bouquets of colorful flowers and congratulatory gifts celebrating the achievements of the class of 2022.

This year, 1,700 students earned Bachelor of Science, Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. Of those degrees, 1,157 are Associate Degree for transfer, meaning they are eligible for admission to the California State University system. Furthermore, this signified the fourth class of students to receive B.S. degrees from the College. This year 21 Río Hondo College students received their B.S.

During the ceremony, the College also honored four Student Success Profiles, which are special recognitions given to students who achieved above and beyond their goals. This year's Student Success Profiles were Emil Dominguez, a biochemistry major who will be attending UCLA; Lenor Chavez, a social work major who will advance her studies at California State University, Los Angeles; Nelinda Cervantes Lopez, a communications major who will attend California State University, Fullerton; and Ruben Muñoz, a communications major who is matriculating to California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss spoke to students about the importance of hard work, relaying her story of how she immigrated from Taiwan, learned a new language and a different culture, and rose to prominence in higher education as the leader of Río Hondo College.

"Graduates – being here today, wearing your well-deserved caps and gowns, exemplifies the Río Hondo College motto 'Start Río, Go Anywhere.' You started at Río, you survived the pandemic and you can go anywhere," Dreyfuss said. "While some students balanced work, family and education, others overcame financial hardships, homelessness, food insecurities, and even loss of family members and loved ones. Your success is our success."

The College honored Valedictorian Megan Marentes, a biology major who will attend California State University, Fullerton in the fall. She is the daughter of Mexican and Salvadoran immigrants, is a first-generation college student, was an assistant biology lab technician and in her free time crochets octopus plushies for premature babies in nearby hospital ICUs.

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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.

The day's events also included remarks Board of Trustees President Vicky Santana, Academic Senate President Doralí Pichardo-Díaz, Associated Students President Priscilla Mendoza, Vice President of Student Service Dr. Earic Dixon-Peters and a commencement address from Congresswoman Grace Napolitano.

"Graduates, as you move onto the next chapter in life, remember this: you are amazing," Santana said. "You are amazing because many of you are the first in your family to set foot on a college campus. Many of you are the first in your family to receive a diploma. And, all of you made major sacrifices to complete this journey with the steadfast discipline to attain this educational goal – all in the middle of the pandemic."

Mendoza, shared her father's advice to dedicate herself and her career to doing something she loves. She said this advice is applicable to all Río Hondo College graduates and encouraged them to face their fears, overcome their challenges and to find their passion.

"You have all the power to strive for success," Mendoza said. "You made it to this point, but I encourage all of you to keep going to reach your full potential. Keep growing and keep accomplishing through your journey."

Santana also announced Dr. Kenn Pierson Geiger as this year's Fellow of the College, thanking him for his 25 years of service to the College as a faculty member and an administrator. Pierson Geiger taught in the Division of Communications and Languages, teaching most of the English and Literature courses offered, and as the primary instructor for the College's only upper-division general education English course, Technical and Professional Writing, for Río Hondo College's Bachelor of Science Degree in Automotive Technology curriculum.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

RHC_GRADRHC1: Río Hondo College graduates celebrated the end of their community college careers with a lively ceremony alongside College professors, staff members, administrators, family members and friends.

RHC_GRADRHC2: A Río Hondo College graduate wears her decorated graduation cap, covered in flowers and butterflies; and signifying her achievement and participation in the class of 2022. Río Hondo College held its graduation on campus to celebrate 1,700 students earning their Bachelor of Science, Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees, of which 1,157 are Associate Degrees for transfer to four-year universities.

RHC_GRADRHC3: Río Hondo College graduates gathered on campus to celebrate their earning Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees during the College's 59th Commencement Ceremony on May 27.

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