

**MEDIA RELEASE****3600 Workman Mill Road / Whittier, CA 90601**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
RELEASE DATE: **May 31, 2023**CONTACT: Ruthie Retana  
(562) 463-3145***Río Hondo College Celebrates Class of 2023***

**WHITTIER** – Nearly 1,800 Río Hondo College students strolled, jogged and danced onto campus wearing smiles on their faces and colorful grad caps – some with hopeful messages about their dreams and futures and others with homages to their loved ones, nationalities and personalities – on their regalia during the College’s 60th Commencement ceremony on May 26.

This year, 1,791 students earned Bachelor of Science, Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. Of those degrees, 1,074 are Associate Degree for transfer, meaning they are eligible for admission to the California State University system. This commencement also celebrated the fifth class of students to receive B.S. degrees from the College. Twenty Río Hondo College students received their B.S. in automotive technology.

“I have nothing but love and admiration for the class of 2023,” said Cecilia Rocha, this year’s Fellow of the College. “Your perseverance reminds me that we all have a fighting spirit that is relentless in the pursuit to improve ourselves, our families and our community’s well-being. Move forward with confidence, but remember to look back at your Río family because we wholeheartedly believe in you and your dreams.”

The day’s events also included remarks from Board of Trustees President Kristal Orozco, Associated Students President Matthew De Haro, Vice President of Student Services Dr. Earic Dixon-Peters, Vice President of Finance and Business Dr. Stephen Kibui, Vice President of Human Resources Tina Kuperman, Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Don Miller and a commencement address from the Honorable Jorge C. Hernandez, Superior Court Judge.

“Stand up for yourself, because no one else will. Don’t let fear control you,” Hernandez said. “We are the sum total of our past, but it is our actions that determine our future.”

The College honored Valedictorian Bianca Casillas, who will study family therapy at University of California, Los Angeles, with a plaque and as the Pellissier Family Scholarship awardee.

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“I want to thank ourselves for dreaming the dream, for waking up every day and keeping going, for turning bad situations into lessons, for not taking no for an answer,” Casillas said. “We all have our own story, no matter what we have gone through. Río Hondo College is our home. It's our safe place to learn and thrive, to be ourselves.”

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 students were Jacob Estrada, an 18-year-old criminology and psychological major with seven degrees and three certificates who will attend University of California, Irvine; Roman Paez, Río Hondo College's first Hope Scholar who will attend California State University, Los Angeles to study social work; Dontaylor Maxell, a kinesiology and sports medicine major who will attend her dream school, the University of California, Los Angeles; and Ana Tavira, a sociology major and mother of two who will attend California State University, Los Angeles.

“Graduates: the diplomas you are receiving today embody your potential and drive, your ability to effect change, and your commitment towards excellence and completion,” Superintendent/President Dr. Marilyn Flores said. “Río Hondo College graduates, as you move forward towards your next goal, remember that you are now an alum of this institution, carrying its name and reputation everywhere you go. Continue to strive for greatness, lead with integrity and compassion and make a difference in this world.”

#### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**GRADRHC1:** A group of Río Hondo College grads pause for a photo-op on the way to their College's 60th Commencement ceremony, marking their successes in earning degrees while some will transfer to four-year universities.

**GRADRHC2:** Río Hondo College celebrates its 60th Commencement ceremony, marking 1,791 students earning Bachelor of Science, Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. This commencement also celebrated the fifth class of students to receive B.S. degrees from the College.

**GRADRHC3:** Two newly minted Río Hondo College graduates (mother and daughter) proudly wear Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOP&S)/Cooperative Agencies for Resources for Education (CARE) sashes, marking the end of their academic journeys at the College.

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