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New Administrative Leadership to Foster Student Success at Rio Hondo College

WHITTIER, Calif. – The start of the new school year at Rio Hondo College also welcomes positive change as three new directors have been hired to oversee some of the College’s most vital departments, while a position has been revised to ensure students flourish at every level.

Kicking off the academic year in his new position as Dean of Counseling and Student Success – a position revised to implement the College’s Student Success Initiative – Dr. Mike Muñoz provides leadership and direction for general counseling services and activities that include the Transfer Center, Career Development Center, First-Year Student Success Center and High School Outreach and Educational Partnerships.

Formerly the Associate Dean of Student Services, Muñoz directed the College’s Student Life and Leadership Office, which included the Associated Student Body and Inter Club Council, high school and community outreach for 16 service area high schools and educational partnerships such as GEAR UP and Early College Academy.

Muñoz holds a bachelor’s degree in psychology and social behavior from the University of California, Irvine and a master’s degree in counseling from Long Beach State, where he also earned a doctorate in educational leadership with a specialization in community college leadership.

“Dr. Muñoz has the kind of experience that we need for the revised position of Dean of Counseling and Student Success,” said Rio Hondo College Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. “Not only does he have extensive background in counseling and working one-on-one with students, he has a deep desire to see them succeed. He has worked in the trenches and understands our unique perspective and needs.”

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New Director of Financial Aid, Scholarships and Veterans' Services Yvonne Gutierrez-Sandoval holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Pitzer College and a master's degree in higher education administration from Claremont Graduate University.

In the past, Gutierrez-Sandoval worked as director of extended learning at the University of La Verne and senior associate director at the Office of Financial Aid at Pitzer College. Her duties included providing administrative and professional leadership and direction for extended learning, spearheading the establishment of experimental Federal Pell Grants for short-term training programs and ensuring compliance with regulatory and student financial aid agencies for experimental Federal Pell Grants.

Heba Griffiths, an experienced administrator with more than 16 years in higher education, has been tapped as director of Extended Opportunity Programs and Services/Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (EOP&S/CARE).

Griffiths has spent her career serving and advocating for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and promoting educational equity. She has worked at the community college and university levels, as well as community-based organizations, including Pasadena City College, UC Santa Barbara and the East Los Angeles Community Union (TELACU). Most recently, she served as the Interim Dean of Student Life at Pasadena City College. Griffiths holds a bachelor's degree in sociology and law and society from UC Santa Barbara and a master's degree in education with an emphasis in counseling and guidance from Point Loma Nazarene University.

Lastly, Stephen Kibui is slated to start his new post as Director of Accounting on Sept. 3. Kibui holds a Master of Business Administration degree from Newman University in Wichita, Kan. and a bachelor's degree in accounting from Strathmore College in Nairobi, Kenya.

Since 2004, Kibui – a Certified Public Accountant – worked as a supervisor for Vasquez & Company LLP, one of Southern California's most venerable accounting firms. While at Vasquez & Company, Kibui was in charge of financial, federal and state compliance for school accounting services and was responsible for auditing Rio Hondo College for about five years. He is thoroughly familiar with California Code of regulations for Title IV and education code requirements on compliance with educational institutions.

“The steps to fill these positions included proactive recruitment and a comprehensive review and application process to assess each candidate's background, experience and qualifications required to be successful,” said Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees President Vicky Santana. “We hired a top-notch team to start the new academic year – a team that cares about student success and their role in achieving this goal.”

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