

MEDIA RELEASE

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Profiles in Student Success: Rio Hondo College Students Beat Odds to Graduate, Transfer

*Each year, Rio Hondo College showcases Profiles in Student Success. This year, staff and faculty combed through the stories of many deserving students and found those listed below exemplified success in the face of adversity and were recognized at the 51st Commencement Ceremony. **All students are available for media interviews. Please contact Christina Cárdenas at VMA Communications at (909) 447-2402 for information.***

Valeria Guerrero

Who is Valeria Guerrero? According to her moving speech at commencement, Valeria is “a proud Undocumented Queer Woman of Color living in El Monte.

I am also a first generation college student with aspirations to become an immigration lawyer.” Guerrero is well on her way. As a DREAM Act student, Guerrero used public transportation for four years to attend school full time. She also succeeded in becoming the Associated Students of Rio Hondo College president for the 2013-14 academic year while being involved in a variety of clubs. When it came time to apply for four-year universities, she used her last fee waiver for UC Berkeley, but didn’t believe she would be accepted. Her disbelief gave way to pleasant surprise when she was notified that she had been accepted. She will start her undergraduate studies there as she pursues a career in law.

David Rios

Paralyzed by five bullets, David Rios has overcome an array of obstacles to graduate and transfer. The 2002 Nogales High School graduate was involved in gangs and had no interest in pursuing higher education. He worked warehouse jobs and couldn’t let go of his old ways. He was arrested and sent to prison. Shortly after his release, he was shot five times and became paralyzed from the chest down. After about a year, Rios changed course after realizing a man in a wheelchair had no place running the streets. Rios enrolled at Los Angeles Trade Tech College and eventually transferred to Rio Hondo College. He received an associate degree in social science and has been accepted into the Rehabilitation Studies department at California State University, Los Angeles.

Sandra Lucero

Sandra Lucero decided at age 47 it was time to go back to school. For years, she was living in a dark place where drugs and domestic violence cast a large shadow. To escape the abuse, she turned to drugs and unfortunately her young daughters witnessed it. One day, her life turned

around. She took a long look at herself and how her decisions affected her children. After getting sober, she enrolled at Rio Hondo College, but the summer after her first semester, she suffered from a heart attack. In spite of her cardiac episode, she had plenty of heart to pursue her dreams. At the age of 50, Lucero was an honor roll student who received associate degrees in drug studies and general studies with an emphasis in social behavior and self development.

Paola De La O

Paola De La O was a model student at Mountain View High School in El Monte, but despite being a stellar and well-prepared student, she didn't have the means to head to a four-year university after high school. As an undocumented student, she could not qualify for financial aid. De La O's father died 12 years ago and left her mother to raise their children alone. She moved the family to the United States in search of a better life. While De La O could only afford a couple Rio Hondo College classes at a time when she began, the passage of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act allowed her to be eligible for financial aid. She became involved in student organizations, and received an associate of arts degree in child development and a certificate to become a preschool teacher. De La O is looking to transfer to California State University, Dominguez Hills in the fall to pursue a bachelor's degree in psychology.