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Rio Hondo College Offers Multiple Pathways to Student Success as Fall Semester 2015 Begins

WHITTIER – Rio Hondo College is offering a broad array of programs in the 2015-16 academic year to promote student success, including its new four-year bachelor's degree, Pathway to Law School Initiative, 21 degrees that guarantee transfer to California State University and premier fire, police and nursing training programs.

The academic programs work hand-in-glove with the community college's equally deep range of student support programs, which include priority enrollment for targeted student groups, a First-Year Success Center and state-of-the-art facilities.

Monday, Aug. 24 marked the start of fall semester 2015 classes at the scenic hilltop campus.

"There's never been a more exciting time to attend Rio Hondo College," said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. "Our campus is a hive of activity as we continue to find innovative new ways to ensure our community receives the greatest possible opportunities for pursuing higher education and acquiring the hands-on skills needed to compete in our highly technical, highly demanding 21st century marketplace."

A majority of Rio Hondo College students pursue two-year degrees, with some concurrently enrolling in four-year colleges and most transferring after securing associate's degrees.

The campus population also is diverse, enrolling a mix of Hispanic, white, Asian and African-American students.

The College's spirit of student-centered innovation was recognized by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges' Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, which reaffirmed Rio Hondo College's accreditation in January after a comprehensive evaluation.

"The Commission recognized our dedication to our students and our broader community," said Board of Trustees President Madeline Shapiro. "It's a testament to the incredible team of teachers and staff who make our beautiful hilltop campus a thriving center of education and possibility every single day."

MORE

Rio Hondo College, located in Whittier, California, is committed to the success of its diverse students and communities by providing dynamic educational opportunities and resources that lead to associate degrees, certificates, transfer, career and technical pathways, basic skills proficiency, and lifelong learning. For information on the College or its programs, please call 562-692-0921 or visit www.riohondo.edu.

Highlights of campus programs and services include:

21 Degrees for Transfer: Rio Hondo College is among 39 community colleges to offer 20 or more associate degree programs that guarantee graduates enrollment at a California State University campus and priority placement into programs for their field of study. Degrees include a host of STEM subjects, including math, physics, and the 22nd degree program currently awaiting approval – biology. Other transfer degree subjects include history, philosophy, journalism, studio arts and business administration.

Transfer Pathway Success: Rio Hondo consistently helps a high number of students successfully transfer to popular California four-year institutions as well as those with national profiles in other states. In 2014-15, more than 200 students transferred to UC campuses in Berkeley, Irvine, San Diego, Santa Cruz and Santa Barbara, as well as to Cal Poly Pomona, USC, University of Arizona, University of Illinois, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Stony Brook University, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, and University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Underrepresented Minority Transfers: Rio Hondo College consistently ranks in the top 10 of all community college campuses for the high percentage of underrepresented minorities among students who transfer to UC campuses.

Four-Year Bachelor Degree: Rio Hondo College will begin offering lower-division courses this fall for its historic Bachelor of Science degree in automotive technology. The College is one of 15 community colleges in the state and the only one in the San Gabriel Valley chosen for a pilot program. The four-year degree was approved in May.

Pathway to Law Schools Initiative: Rio Hondo College is one of 24 community colleges in the state and the only one in the San Gabriel Valley to offer a unique initiative that prepares students for a continuum of educational programs leading to a degree from one of six top California law schools. The program launched in fall 2014 with a focus on under-represented and first-generation college students.

STEM Opportunities: Rio Hondo offers instruction in multiple science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) subject areas valued by four-year universities as well as employers. Disciplines include math, physics, engineering, chemistry, biology, water management, environmental health and safety, water treatment and distribution, astronomy, geology, geography. Programs are supported by the College's Math and Science Center.

Fire Academy: Rio Hondo College's Fire Academy offers some of the most comprehensive training available to beginning and advanced firefighters across the nation. The College's Wildland Fire Academy posts a 100 percent placement rate for its graduates.

Police Academy: This historic institution has trained hundreds of police officers across the state from more than 200 student classes. Revamped in 2014, the academy's training program is considered one of California's most rigorous.

Nursing: Rio Hondo College's nursing students have posted 100 percent passing rates on the last five state certification tests. The College also offers advanced nursing training and a growing nursing assistant program.

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Personal Care Aides: Rio Hondo College launched a pilot program this summer that offers free training to become a personal care aide, with on-the-job training and assistance in securing a job provided to those completing the course. Personal care is an entry-level health care field.

First-Year Success Center: The center is home to a network of student support services, designed to ensure all students begin their college journey with a firm understanding of what they need to do to succeed. Services include educational counseling, assistance with registration and financial aid and freshman seminar workshops.

Student Success and Support Program: In 2014-15, Rio Hondo assessed nearly 7,000 students in English and math, advised about 10,000 and created 12,700 educational plans to help guide students in their pursuit of degrees and career goals.

Student Equity Plan: This plan, adopted by the Board of Trustees, targets College services to ensure all students have their greatest possible chance to succeed.

MESA: The Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Program is nationally recognized by Excelencia in Education for increasing academic opportunities and achievement for its students. MESA provides students with a supportive peer group and enrichment activities in the sciences and mathematics. MESA students are pursuing a two-year research project under a NASA-sponsored grant awarded to 12 California community colleges in 2014-15.

TRIO/Student Support Services: Rio Hondo College this summer secured its fourth, five-year Department of Education grant to continue offering its TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program. More than 1,400 applications were submitted. Student Support Services helps disadvantaged, low-income college students, first-generation college students and students with disabilities complete programs of study. TRIO also received a five-year, \$220,000 grant to help participants pursue transfers to four-year universities to study science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) subjects.

Disabled Students Programs & Services: Rio Hondo provides services to support students with disabilities, including note-taking, sign-language interpreters, specialized furniture, registration help, counseling, computer lab access and assistive technology.

Veterans Service Center: Opened July 1, the Veterans Service Center offers a one-stop shop for counseling services, Veterans Administration benefits help, financial aid, tutoring, a computer lab and even a graduation cap-and-gown loan program.

State-of-the-Art Facilities: Rio Hondo College has invested in modern facilities to give students access to the latest tools to ensure success. These include a Student Services Building with a study lounge and the Rio Café; an Administration of Justice building that is home to the Police Academy; a new P.E. Complex with a campus Fitness Center; a 94,000-square-foot, LEED-certified Learning Resource Center; and a newly remodeled Automotive Technology building. New projects include a new soccer field with lights for night games, a remodel of the science building, upgrades for the Library tower and an entry plaza/information center.

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