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Rio Hondo College Wins \$2.6 Million Federal Grant to Expand Support Services for Hispanic and Low-Income Students

WHITTIER – Rio Hondo College will receive \$2.62 million in federal funds to help Hispanic and low-income students prepare for the rigor of college courses, identify education goals and map achievable programs of study in order to shorten their time to completion, the College announced Friday.

The award is one of about 87 five-year Title V grants of up to \$2.63 million each for individual institutions and up to \$3.25 million each for cooperative arrangements awarded this week by the U.S. Department of Education to colleges and universities at which enrollment is at least 25 percent Hispanic. At Rio Hondo, 70 percent of students are Hispanic.

“This generous grant will allow us to develop important new resources to significantly improve Rio Hondo College’s already highly successful model for ensuring student success,” said Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss. “I’m excited to see the difference we will make in the lives of these students thanks to the innovative ideas our team has developed.”

Rio Hondo has received several of the five-year grants for Title V, Hispanic-serving institutions. The most recent grant, which spanned 2010 to 2015, helped the College create its popular Summer Bridge program, which eases the student transition from high school to college.

The new grant will fund The *Avance* Project, aimed at expanding Rio Hondo College’s capacity for fostering student success by establishing a year-long integrated and connected success pathway for first-year students to persist into their second year. *Avance* is Spanish for advance.

“Our goal is to create a continuum of integrated academic and student service supports for our first-year students,” said Barbara Salazar, Interim Assistant Dean and Title V Grant Project Director for Rio Hondo College’s Office of Student Success & Retention. “We have learned that strong guidance during the students’ first year is critical to ensuring they get the most out of their college experience.”

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.

Avance's components include a summer math academy, a guaranteed first-year schedule, a seminar course so students can explore discipline-based career paths and focus on a continued program of study, and regular tutoring, counseling and coaching.

In addition, Rio Hondo College will celebrate and support *Avance* students through a First-Year Seminar Conference, where they can learn more about different college disciplines, hear both student and professional presentations, and present their own field-related research inspired by the First-Year Seminar Course.

The grant will fund training for faculty and staff for the First-Year Seminar Course and ensure they are attuned to the California Standards instructional approaches being used at local high schools.

"Our new array of expanded student services underscores our commitment to pursuing every avenue to ensure our students will be successful when they leave Rio Hondo College, whether they choose to attend a four-year university or tackle a career in today's highly competitive job market," Board of Trustees President Madeline Shapiro said.

Avance will run from Oct. 1, 2015 through Sept. 30, 2020, serving 200 students in its initial year and adding 100 students annually until participation peaks at 600 students in its final year.

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