

Candidates for Rio Hondo College board talk equity in representation, curriculum

SAN GABRIEL VALLEY
TRIBUNE

By [Sandra Molina](#), Whittier Daily News

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The two candidates vying for a seat on the Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees debated about representation for Pico Rivera and class availability for students at a forum Wednesday hosted by the League of Women Voters of Whittier.

Incumbent Vicky Santana disagreed with Lorraine De La O, a former Pico Rivera Parks and Recreation commissioner, about whether or not Pico Rivera is being represented fairly, and how well-served the students are in regard to meeting their academic goals. "I'm running to ensure that our community gets its fair share of resources, programs and services," said De La O, who called the plan for a \$1 million satellite center in the city "an insult." "While satellite centers were being built using taxpayers' money in Whittier for \$7 million and in El Monte for \$12 million, we remained in bungalows," she said.

Santana countered that there has not been any cost disparity between the satellite centers. "The bond was passed in 2010, with the majority of the funding going to improve the campus," she said. "South Whittier was an existing campus site which cost the college \$2.2 million that we refurbished." The El Monte Center, Santana continued, "was built with \$3 million and the intent was to refurbish it, but the building was a bad one and we had to rebuild it."

The quality and quantity of classes available for students who want to graduate and/or transfer was also discussed.

De La O, who attended Rio Hondo College, called herself an advocate for older students who work full time and need to have more class availability in the evenings. "High-quality education is for all students equally, and all barriers should be removed," she said. "I've talked to night students who feel they are not getting enough from the college." She suggested longer library hours, child care and an increase in evening classes to make educational opportunities more equitable for night students.

In light of the campus shooting in Oregon recently, the candidates were asked about safety and the availability of mental health services. They both agreed that mental health services provided to students was paramount for a safer environment.