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HCC in the News: The Florida College System Student of the Month Estefany Rivas Ortiz

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Estefany Rivas Ortiz is a student at Hillsborough Community College (HCC) pursuing a degree in pre-med. Rivas Ortiz is an international student from South America, raised in Cali, Colombia. Rivas Ortiz remembers family members facing hardships in Colombia and her father deciding to leave the country for a better life in the United States. After migrating to Tampa, Florida, her sister was soon diagnosed with thyroid cancer. Rivas Ortiz is convinced that her sister would have died without access to the medical care available here, resulting in her professional goal of becoming an oncologist. She was inspired by the doctors and health care professionals that she met while her sister was being treated.

Rivas Ortiz has overcome adversity in her life to become a leader in the HCC community. Rivas Ortiz graduated from Leto High School with a 4.3 GPA after starting her American high school experience in the 11th grade. She did not speak English, which made it difficult as she acclimated to a new culture and language. However, Rivas Ortiz did not let these barriers get in the way of her success, as shown through her academic success. She currently maintains a GPA of 3.89 at HCC and is the President of the Phi Theta Kappa's Dale Mabry Campus Chapter "Phi Chi." She is also the Vice President of Scholarship for the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, as well as an honors ambassador for the HCC Honors Institute. Additionally, Rivas Ortiz was recognized by the Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges, a premier honors program for over 1,000 universities and colleges across the country. She is consistently on the Dean's List and has been awarded the Presidential Honors Scholarship, which granted her $1,200 to help pay for her schooling. Most recently, she helped organize and direct a scholarly exchange program called the "Celebration of Water" that brought 20 students from the University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam to HCC and the Tampa Bay area.

Rivas Ortiz is not only active within HCC, but is also active in the community. She works with two assisted living facilities as part of service projects and regularly participates in other charitable events, such as walks for diabetes. Lastly, Rivas Ortiz was one of the student leaders of the 2016 International Festival at HCC, as well as a volunteer for the Asian Festival held each year in downtown Tampa.

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