

Coming – A New Catholic High School



A new Catholic high school with a focused mission and a unique approach is coming to Columbus. Work is under way to open Cristo Rey Columbus High School in 2013. Cristo Rey will be a Catholic, college preparatory high school for economically challenged students. The school will be part of the national Cristo Rey network of schools. The first Cristo Rey school was opened by the Jesuits 15 years ago in Chicago. Since then, the number of Cristo Rey schools has grown to 24. These schools are intended to address the fact that a Catholic college preparatory education has become completely unaffordable to the poorest in our society.

Every year, about 1.3 million students drop out of high school, with students from low-income families dropping out at six times the rate of students from affluent families. Similarly, while 59 percent of students from families in the top half of income levels in America are college graduates, only 12 percent from the bottom half are.

Cristo Rey is part of the solution to this problem. Cristo Rey high schools have a 15-year track record of taking in low-income students from poor-performing schools, graduating them from high school, and sending them on to college. Cristo Rey schools do this in percentages far higher than public schools with children from similar backgrounds. In recent years, 98 percent of the seniors in Cristo Rey high schools across the nation have graduated and were accepted into college. Cristo Rey schools do this by providing a high-quality, Catholic, college preparatory education in an environment of high expectations. The Cristo Rey Network's rigorous academic model gives students the teaching, tutoring, and supervision necessary to achieve those high standards.

Cristo Rey students will participate in a unique work-study program that gives them the opportunity to work five days a month at white-collar businesses such as law firms, insurance companies, banks, universities, accounting firms, and hospitals. This innovative arrangement allows students to pay for most of their tuition, and it gives them exposure to a professional world they would never have experienced without Cristo Rey. The experience, knowledge, and self-confidence they gain from their jobs will complement their education and help them graduate from high school, go on to college, and succeed there. Cristo Rey is a chance to steer underprivileged eighth-graders to a Catholic high school and then on to become the first in their families to graduate from college.

Cristo Rey Columbus program director Barbara Brown has been working for the past three years to do the work necessary to give the school a firm foundation. A board of directors for the school has been appointed by Bishop Frederick Campbell. The board is chaired by Tom McAuliffe. This month, Cristo Rey Columbus' first two employees have started work to bring this school to life. Jim Foley, the school's president, will be in charge of overall operations. Development director James Ragland will be in charge of fund raising efforts. The school will be hiring a principal and other members of the leadership team this summer.

The Cristo Rey team will begin meeting with potential students and their parents later this year and will conduct informational meetings at schools and churches throughout central Ohio. For information, contact Foley at jimf@crstoreycolumbus.org or (614) 395-1505.