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NEWS

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CRISTO REY'S 100% COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE RATE AND INNOVATIVE WORK-STUDY PROGRAM LEADS THE NATION IN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER SUCCESS

"I am a great fan, supporter, and champion of the Cristo Rey model. This is a marvelous program because of what it does for young people in America."

— Colin Powell, former Secretary of State

"As a corporate partner, we welcome these students into the Sherwin-Williams family. This work study model is a terrific opportunity for highly motivated young people to acquire real world people, business, and life skills that will serve them well as they move on to college and beyond. The Cristo Rey, Sherwin-Williams work study model can and does make a positive, life changing impact for students."

— Chris Connor, Chairman and CEO of The Sherwin-Williams Company

Putting Education to Work

**How Cristo Rey High Schools Are Transforming Urban Education
By Megan Sweas**

Boasting a 100% college acceptance rate, a college graduation rate twice the national average of peers from the same urban economic background, and a work-study program that employs students at businesses ranging from Fortune 500 companies to local enterprises, the Cristo Rey Network of Catholic high schools has reinvented urban education, positioning them firmly at the leading edge of education reform in the United States.

While many consider the American public education system to be broken, failing to give the most socio-economically disadvantaged youth the opportunity to build a better life, Cristo Rey results show how effectively their schools prepare students for high school graduation, college performance, and career success – demonstrating that its innovative approach helps even the most vulnerable and at risk youth in America succeed.

Filled with amazing stories of hardship and transformation experienced by students and educators alike, ***Putting Education to Work: How Cristo Rey High Schools Are Transforming Urban Education*** (HarperOne; August 2014; Hardcover), written by journalist Megan Sweas, is a testimonial to the effectiveness of the Cristo Rey movement. From humble beginnings in an inner-city Chicago neighborhood, Cristo Rey now comprises a national network of 28 schools, teaching 9,000 students who come from underserved communities. Sweas presents the story of how Cristo

Rey developed its unique model of education, explains their innovative teaching methods in detail, and shares the lessons they have learned along the way.

Demographics of Cristo Rey Network students:

- Come from disadvantaged urban communities;
- Face socio-economic challenges such as low income, poor literacy and high crime neighborhoods;
- Begin at ninth grade and, on average, are two years behind their grade level;
- 96% are from minority backgrounds;
- Average family income of \$34,000.

Cristo Rey Network impact and results to-date:

- 100% college acceptance rate (to a 2 or 4 year college);
- For the graduating classes of 2008-2012, 90% of Cristo Rey graduates enrolled in college;
- For the graduating classes of 2005-2007, 42% graduated from college. This percentage is twice the rate of peers from the same economic background.

Key features of the Cristo Rey education model:

- An innovative work-study program that prepares students to enter the demanding world of college and the knowledge economy – previously unobtainable for these students. With a focus on real-life job experience, students are employed to work five days each month at one of 2,000 business partners, including local enterprises and Fortune 500 companies (including AT&T, Ernst and Young, J.P. Morgan, Comcast, Eli Lilly, Nike, MetLife, United Healthcare). Wages earned go towards funding their tuition.
- Constant evaluation of the curriculum that allows for implementation of the latest advancements in education and new practices developed by teaching peers.
- Strong school leadership committed to collaboration, with high expectations of staff as part of the community at each Cristo Rey school.
- Supportive learning environment rooted in the traditional values of Catholic education.
- Focus on character development and the formation of a ‘whole person’ that helps students learn personal responsibility for their own success and their role in helping others.

Putting Education to Work shows how any school – religious or secular – can benefit from the Cristo Rey education model. Students graduate with critical thinking skills and the experience needed for college and the workforce, and they also change the way they think about themselves, their education and their futures, allowing them to aspire to something greater. The Cristo Rey story, ultimately, offers a hopeful promise of what young people and determined educators can achieve together.

About the author:

MEGAN SWEAS is a journalist who writes about social and economic justice issues and world religions. She previously was an editor at *U.S. Catholic magazine*. Sweas was an Annenberg Fellow at the University of Southern California, where she earned a master’s degree in Specialized Journalism. She graduated from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University.

Also available for interview from the Cristo Rey Network:

FATHER JOHN P. FOLEY, S.J. served the Jesuit missions in Peru for 34 years before returning to his hometown of Chicago in 1995 to collaborate in establishing Cristo Rey Jesuit High School. As the founding President of the school for eight years, Father Foley established the tradition and spirit of a school that has become a national model for preserving the tradition of Catholic education. In January of 2005, he assumed the presidency of the Cristo Rey Network, and he is presently Chair Emeritus and Chief Mission Officer.

Father Foley's efforts in pioneering a new model to prepare disadvantaged students for success in college and beyond have been profiled in national media outlets, and he is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Presidential Citizens Medal from President George W. Bush.

Other representatives from the Cristo Rey Network of 28 schools (listed below by state) are available for interview on request.

The 28 Cristo Rey schools + those currently in development are located in:

- NY: New York City, Brooklyn
- NJ: Newark
- MA: Boston, Lawrence
- PA: Philadelphia
- MD: Baltimore, Takoma Park (near Washington DC)
- OH: Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati
- IN: Indianapolis
- IL: Chicago, Waukegan
- MI: Detroit
- WI: Milwaukee
- MN: Minneapolis
- MO: Kansas City
- GA: Atlanta
- AL: Birmingham
- FL: Tampa
- LA: Baton Rouge
- CO: Denver
- TX: Dallas, Houston
- NM: Albuquerque
- AZ: Phoenix, Tucson
- CA: Sacramento, San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles
- OR: Portland

**For more information about Father Foley and the Cristo Rey Network, visit:
cristoreynetwork.org.**

Proceeds from book sales will go towards funding Cristo Rey Network programs.

PUTTING EDUCATION TO WORK by Megan Sweas

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