



Father Tim Manatt, S. J., president of Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Minneapolis

Students earn tuition, prepare for college and for work in Cristo Rey program

A Civic Caucus Focus on Competitiveness Interview

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Present

Dave Broden (vice chair), Pat Davies, Paul Gilje (coordinator), Sallie Kemper, Fr. Tim Manatt, Dana Schroeder, Clarence Shallbetter, Fred Zimmerman. By phone: Audrey Clay, Janis Clay, Dan Loritz (chair).

Summary

According to Father Tim Manatt, S.J., Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Minneapolis operates a unique work/study program that helps prepare low-income and immigrant students for college and the workforce. The school, which opened in 2007, is part of a national network of 26 Cristo Rey schools, all of which are Catholic and college preparatory, include a corporate work/study component and serve exclusively low-income families. The 320 students at the Minneapolis school are 97 percent students of color and 94 percent qualify for free or reduced lunch.

After a summer orientation to workplace behavior and skills, all Cristo Rey students, freshmen through seniors, work one day a week and one Friday a month during the school year at an entry-level job. Most jobs are at Twin Cities businesses, with a few at nonprofit organizations. Four students share one position and each student earns wages that pay more than half the \$13,500 cost of his or her education. Families also make an average contribution to the school of \$850 per year. The remaining costs of the students' education are covered through donations to the school.

Manatt, president of the school, reports that 95 percent of the student's employers say the students meet or exceed their expectations, bringing energy and vitality to the workplace. The work experience

exposes the students to different careers, broadens their perspective on the world, helps them get to know themselves well through formal work evaluations, and teaches them to become advocates for themselves.

Cristo Rey closely follows and supports its graduates, 75 percent of whom are now in college. Manatt says most are doing well, many better than their ACT scores might predict, which he attributes both to the school's intensive academic emphasis on core subjects and to skills the students have learned in the workplace.

Background

Father Tim Manatt, S.J., is president of Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in South Minneapolis, a position he has had for four years. He is a priest and a member of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), a missionary and teaching order in the Catholic Church. He has deep roots in Iowa and is a graduate of Grinnell College. As part of his Jesuit training, Manatt studied at Creighton, Fordham, and Santa Clara Universities, and served as dean of students at Red Cloud High School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. On Sundays, he assists the pastors of Assumption Parish in Richfield and St. Stephen's Parish in Minneapolis with Spanish-speaking Masses. Manatt lives with nine other Jesuits in a community near the Midtown Exchange/Global Market.

Discussion

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Minneapolis, which opened in 2007, is a private, Catholic, college-preparatory high school exclusively for under-resourced students. Father Tim Manatt, S. J., president of the school, which is located in the Colin Powell Center at 4th Avenue and Lake Street in south Minneapolis, said the school's mission is to offer opportunities to low-income and immigrant families, who have very limited options for private, Catholic education.

Cristo Rey is part of a **national network of 26 Cristo Rey schools**. The Network's mission is to overcome the academic, financial, and socio-cultural challenges facing low-income high school students for secondary and postsecondary success. In 2009, the Cristo Rey Network launched an initiative that seeks to formalize relationships with colleges and universities committed to ensuring college success for Cristo Rey and other low-income students. The Network also holds an annual summit to showcase promising research, programs, and practices that have enhanced college success for Cristo Rey Network students and alumni. The summit includes leaders from Cristo Rey high schools, university partners, researchers, and thought partners from the field.

Cristo Rey schools have four basic elements:

1. All are Catholic and approved by the local bishop. Not all are Jesuit; some are sponsored by other orders of priests, brothers or nuns.
2. All are college preparatory.
3. All students work one day a week and one Friday a month. The corporate work/study

program is a central component to a Cristo Rey school.

4. All serve exclusively low-income families. The income ceiling is roughly \$12,000 per capita in a family.

The first Cristo Rey school opened in Chicago in 1996, in response to the large influx of Mexican immigrant families to the city's near South Side. An educational consultant working with the school's founder suggested having all the students work one day a week at paid jobs. The school had to get an exemption from the U.S. Department of Labor to have 14- and 15-year-olds work.

"The Cristo Rey model was born in Chicago out of the need of Mexican immigrant families and the willingness of the Chicago business community to embrace the idea," Manatt said. "It caught the attention of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2000 for the model's uniqueness, its innovation and its sustainability."

The Gates Foundation gave \$20 million for the Cristo Rey model to be replicated up to 10 times, by providing seed money and first-year operating money. The first city where it was replicated was Portland, Oregon, in 2001. Then Los Angeles, Cleveland and Denver opened Cristo Rey schools. The Minneapolis school was in the largest cohort of Cristo Rey schools that opened in 2007, which also included Baltimore and Tacoma Park, Maryland; Newark, New Jersey; Omaha; Indianapolis; and Birmingham, Alabama.

Manatt said the Gates Foundation did not continue its school replication grant past its original \$20 million grant, although it has continued its engagement through lesser grants for the sake of improving academic standards and ACT scores across the Network. However, the Walton Family Foundation is now involved. He said the Network is likely to expand again soon. Columbus, Ohio, opened a Cristo Rey school this year and Atlanta and San Jose will open in August 2014. The next schools under discussion are in San Antonio and Milwaukee. The Cristo Rey Network will probably reach 40 schools in the next 10 years and maybe 50 in the 10 years after that, he said.

Nationally, less than 15 percent of African American and Hispanic students graduate from high school and college within 10 years. Manatt said the graduation rate for Hispanic students in the Twin Citiesmetro area is 45 percent and is similar for African American students.

Cristo Rey is one concrete response to that situation. "Our school is offering opportunities, especially to Latino and African American students in the Twin Cities," he said. The school has 97 percent students of color: 70 percent Latino; 25 percent African American and African immigrant; and five percent Asian, Native American or white. Seventy-two percent of the students are Minneapolis residents and 94 percent qualify for free or reduced-cost lunch.

Enrollment at the school is now 320; last year it was 295. Manatt said the school's "sweet spot" would be about 450. He said the number of graduates each year has been 62 students, 55 students and 47 students. Next spring it should be in the 60s and by 2015 it will be 70-plus. There are 112 freshmen this year, which is a 10 percent increase over the previous year. "We're getting the younger sibling and cousin effect," he said. Risen Christ School, Kipp Academy, Minneapolis Academy, and Aurora Charter School, all in Minneapolis, have become feeder schools for Cristo Rey.

In addition to Manatt, the president (or headmaster), there are two other Jesuits at the school: one full-time teacher and one who works with faculty and adults in faith formation. There are 23 full-time faculty members and a leadership team of eight administrators, including a principal and an executive director of the Corporate Work Study Program.

Cristo Rey has an application process and turns down 20 percent of its applicants . With its size and funding, Manatt said the school cannot serve most students with special needs requiring special education. The school can take a child with Asperger's Syndrome, but not those with more serious diagnoses on the autism spectrum. The building can accommodate children with physical limitations. "We can't serve everyone," he said. "We're taking some pretty significant risks on a lot of kids and a lot of families. If anything, there's been pressure to increase the academic standards in admissions."

"We take very few transfer students, because the culture of work is something that really needs to be ingrained and learned at an early age," Manatt said. "We look for academic behaviors, things like homework performance and attendance."

Seventy-five percent of Cristo Rey's graduates are now in college. "We have 162 graduates; 122 of them are in college and four are in the active U.S. military. Of the 36 not in college currently, half of them have completed at least one semester of college. Overall, the postsecondary progress of our graduates is about five times the national average with these demographics," Manatt said.

He said the school employs a full-time person to support its graduates, offering logistical and emotional support. "We visit all of our graduates who go to college on their college campuses before Thanksgiving in their freshman year," he said. Manatt makes some of those visits himself.

"That jump from high school to college, especially if you go away, is much larger than many of us can imagine," he said. It's a large emotional burden if a student from an immigrant family has always acted as the interpreter for his or her mother and then goes away to college. Besides offering emotional support, the school also offers families assistance through the college and financial-aid application process.

"Both in the college counseling process and in the graduate support," Manatt said, "I can boldly and legitimately say that no school in the Twin Cities takes as much an interest in its graduates as Cristo Rey. We can tell you where every one of those 162 graduates are, what they're doing, how they're doing and what's the next move they're contemplating, because we 'hound' them and they come back to our school frequently."

Cristo Rey students concentrate on core subjects. Manatt said the school doesn't offer electives and Advanced Placement classes. The students come to the school on average at least one grade level behind, especially in reading and math. "We need to have them on their core subjects: math, science, English, social studies and world language," he said. In the freshman year, the students get a double dose of math and English, because the state requires only three years of social studies.

The students' average ACT score is rising, but it's not yet to 20, while 22 is considered college ready. He said despite the lower ACT scores, the vast majority of the students are doing "quite well" in college. "This is where the corporate work/study comes into play," he said.

Cristo Rey students don't participate in the state's Postsecondary Educational Options (PSEO) program. PSEO allows high school sophomores, juniors and seniors to take classes at any postsecondary institution in Minnesota. Manatt said the school has lost a few students because it doesn't participate in PSEO. "Our principal is more than ambivalent regarding PSEO," he said. "We have maybe six kids in each senior class who could legitimately take part in something like that."

Cristo Rey's 320 students fill 80 full-time equivalent work/study positions, since four students share a single job. Of those jobs, Manatt said, 72 positions are paid and the other eight are in nonprofit placements. The students receive no pay individually; all the wages go directly to the school. Students are employees of the school and the companies contract with the school to fill full-time, entry-level jobs. "The job is not charity and it's not a corporate contribution," Manatt said. "If the students weren't doing the work they're doing, United Health Group, for example, would have to hire someone else." All students, from freshmen through seniors, work at a job.

Each company pays \$29,000 for the work that four students are collectively doing, so they're each earning \$7,250 towards their education. He said \$2,088,000 out of the school's \$4.4 million budget comes from wages for the work/study jobs. In addition to each student's wages of \$7,250, each family contributes an average of \$850 to the school each year. The cost of educating a student is \$13,500 a year, so the wages plus the family contributions cover about 55 percent of that cost.

"Our sustainability model is based on growing enrollment and full employment," he said. The four largest employers are United Health Group, General Mills, Health Partners and U.S. Bank. The General Mills Foundation also contributes to the school financially.

Cristo Rey's whole program is set up to accommodate the work/study component. Manatt explained that each student works one set day a week between Monday and Thursday and one Friday a month. He said none of the students misses any classes. The system is set up so that, for example, all of a sophomore English teacher's students are gone on the same day. He said Cristo Rey's school year is longer and its school day is longer than traditional schools.

Manatt noted that all students come to the school each day, many riding the school's eight buses from pickup points in suburban Minneapolis locations, St. Paul and West St. Paul. He said Cristo Rey is not a neighborhood school: only 20 percent of the students walk or come by city bus. After the students arrive at school, four of the eight buses stay and take the students to work. There are also minivans to take the students to outlying work locations. The students take public transportation to get home from work.

The school runs a three-week work/study orientation in the summer for incoming freshmen and transferring sophomores. The workshop includes a skills assessment and coaching on things like making a good first impression, workplace ethics, appropriate conversation, how to answer the phone, hygiene, dress, how to address someone and how to take constructive criticism. The students receive formal evaluations and turn in time sheets. The school gives employee-of-the-month awards, one to a lower classman and one to an upper classman.

Manatt said the students are allowed one missed workday each semester. Starting with two missed days, they have to make up their days at work, because they are employees. Some students have been fired from their jobs or the school has had to retrain them right before they were about to get fired.

Ninety-five percent of the students' employers say the students meet or exceed their expectations. "They say our kids bring energy and vitality to the workplace," Manatt said. The companies comment that the freshmen are too quiet and sheepish, but the sophomores are "remarkably confident."

He said the students' workplace experience begins to expose them to different careers and how various fields of study might lead to different types of jobs. "Being in a workplace broadens students' perspective on so many things," he said. "Of the many skills our students are learning, so many of them are interpersonal. Through their work experience and the frequent evaluations, they learn to know themselves extraordinarily well. They become advocates for themselves. Our kids' world gets big, because they've interacted with people with college and master's degrees, people who've been in the Peace Corps, people who've been around the world."

An interviewer asked if demand from businesses is high enough to push the school to expand. Manatt said the school expects to increase enrollment by 20 to 25 students each year for the next four years. For every increase of four students, the school needs a new work/study job, either by adding jobs within existing companies or adding new companies, such as Target and Cargill, which joined this year. "For us, it's a question of getting our name out and convincing companies to take a risk on teenagers," he said.

The work/study program is hard to duplicate. An interviewer asked if there were any other schools in the Twin Cities interested in using the work/study model. "You have to have faith-based philanthropy, businesses that will work with you and a corporate work/study program inside yourschool that is an employment agency for teenagers," Manatt said. "How many schools can create that?"