

September 7, 2020

Dear Friends of Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School,

What's happening at Cristo Rey these days is extraordinary.

Our new school year began during the week of August 24th for 550 students, including 158 freshmen. We have begun with an all virtual model with live on-line classes every day and dedicated time for academic support and counseling. Thanks to our community's generous support, every student has the necessary laptop and internet access. We will also offer an option to participate in supervised virtual learning from our building to a limited number of students who are unable to successfully participate in virtual learning from home.



The Work-Study Program, which is critical to both our student development program and to our financial viability, has been completely redesigned and reimplemented in virtual form. Students will “work remotely,” because almost none of our Partners have returned to their own workplace. Student workers will be supervised by an expanded CRPHS Work-Study team with occasional virtual interactions with their job partners. Student teams will research, survey, collect and analyze data and prepare summary presentations on critical topics that impact our Partners' culture such as:

- Diversifying the talent pipeline
- Connectivity and culture in a remote work world
- Wellness in the workplace
- Working with millennials and Gen Z

Our Work-Study partners fund 50% of the operating costs of the school, so renewing Work-Study contracts is critical to our survival. About two-thirds of our Partners have renewed and are excited to participate in the redesigned program. However, some Partners have their own serious COVID-19 related challenges and will not be able to renew this year.

We will need to rely on increased annual fundraising through tax credit programs, scholarships, foundations, grants and individual gifts - to make up for shortfalls in Work-Study revenue.

In addition, we are confronted by tensions and stresses that have come into painful focus because of racial, economic and educational inequities in our city and across America. I have spent much of this summer listening to students and families, and I have learned, by their frank and honest testimony, that we can do much better at Cristo Rey to make our school more welcoming and more effective in our mission. And we will.



I am most grateful that many of you have called or written to offer your encouragement and support as we navigate these challenging times. And, many of you have asked: “How will Cristo Rey survive these turbulent times?”

After 8 years, we have become “the school that works” primarily because of the diversity and unity of our collaborative community (students, families, faculty, staff, board members, Work-Study Partners, donors, volunteers). We have developed a unique and powerful culture. We like challenges, we are good problem solvers and we are not afraid of change or hard work. We are a resourceful and creative community bound together by a common purpose: to nurture and challenge our students to recognize and realize their full potential.

It gives me great confidence to know that you believe, as I do, that our school is essential for Philadelphia. Our mission has never been more important than it is today. We are a proven solution to the problem of systemic educational inequity – one of the root causes of racial inequity in America. Our students will become leaders in Philadelphia and America, and they will champion the elimination of hatred, racism and violence from our world.

We are stewards of a community treasure. We will persist with our mission by adapting to whatever confronts us. Whenever and however the new normal in Philadelphia emerges, Cristo Rey will be there, strong. The school that works.

Sincerely,

John McConnell
Founder and President

Meet the Class of 2024!

It is a tradition at Cristo Rey for the freshman class to create a WE LEAD video where they showcase values important to them. This



year, our newest students got creative in making a video together in a virtual setting. Click the image to watch!

