



CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

A Marist Brothers High School 1958



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Fernando Mendoza Returns to Columbus High School, Inspires Students During Surprise Visit

Miami, FL – April 14, 2026 — Earlier today, Christopher Columbus High School proudly welcomed back alumnus and Heisman Trophy winner **Fernando Mendoza 22**, the national college football champion quarterback of the Indiana Hoosiers, for a surprise visit that energized and inspired the entire student body. Students and faculty erupted in cheers as Mendoza entered the gymnasium carrying the prestigious Heisman Trophy, taking his seat on stage beside the iconic symbol of his achievement.

Joining him on stage were his former head football coach Dave Dunn and Christopher Columbus High School's Ambassador of Alumni Relations John Lynskey '78, who moderated an engaging question-and-answer session.

During the conversation, Mendoza reflected on his time at Columbus and what it means to be Marist. He spoke candidly about handling pressure on the football field, the importance of discipline, organization, and involvement in school life, and the lasting impact of his experience at Columbus and the school's Mas Family Program. He also shared memorable stories about his time playing under Coach Dunn and described the emotions of making the pivotal play in the college national championship game against the University of Miami.

Mendoza offered heartfelt advice to the young Explorers, encouraging them to remain grounded in faith, committed to excellence, and confident in their purpose.

In a special moment to conclude the program, Mendoza—serving as a Taco Bell Franchise Player—presented a \$25,000 Taco Bell Foundation Live Mas Scholarship to Columbus senior Andres Vergara. He then surprised the crowd once more by announcing that a Taco Bell truck was on campus, providing free tacos for all students and faculty.

Following the presentation, Mendoza spent time taking photos with students alongside the Heisman Trophy, creating lasting memories for the Columbus community.

The unexpected visit served as a powerful reminder of the lifelong bond shared among Explorers and the extraordinary heights they can achieve.