NORTHWEST DENVER HIGH SCHOOL OPENS $43M EXPANSION

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A small, private high school in northwest Denver just added over 33,000 square feet of space to its campus as it plans to increase enrollment in the coming years.

33,000+	100%	$43M	425
square feet added	Class of 2026 accepted to college	raised from private donors & foundations	students working with 135 corporate partners

Arrupe Jesuit High School, at 4343 Utica St., serves families with significant economic need and aims to provide their children with high-quality experiential education, according to school President Michael O'Hagan. The system works: 100% of the class of 2026 was accepted into college, he said.

Those students deserved a space that reflects the effort and quality they and their teachers put into their education, school officials say. That was achieved by building a new wing and renovating an old space to create over 50,000 new or renovated square feet.

“Our students, we ask them to do a lot. They have to interview to come to Arrupe. Every day, they show up in professional dress, shirt and tie. They go out to work five days a month,” said Chris Freeburg, executive director of Corporate Work Study at Arrupe. “Those are all things that their peers their age are

not asked to do. They choose this. There's an opportunity for us in this space to remind them of how special they are and how special this thing that they're choosing is."

The school celebrated the expansion and upgraded space last month with a ribbon cutting.

Arrupe opened in 2003. More than 1,500 students have graduated since then, 70% of whom were the first in their family to earn a high school diploma, according to school statistics.

In addition to traditional academic classes, Arrupe operates a corporate work-study program in which students work for five days per month at local businesses that sponsor their education. Families pay a small amount of tuition, too, so everyone has skin in the game, O'Hagan said.

The school has 425 students working with 135 corporate partner organizations. The students and families are deeply committed, as are the staff members, O'Hagan said.

"We always challenge ourselves: how can we do better?" he said. "How might we improve the opportunities we provide our kids? That certainly led into this strategic plan that then led to this expansion of our campus."

When Arrupe first opened, the school's walls were made of sheet metal, and there was no air conditioning, O'Hagan said. There were no science labs either. Over the years, the school added features students needed and engaged in a modest expansion in 2012.

As Arrupe approached its 20th anniversary, O'Hagan began to consider what the school could do to better serve students, he said. Arrupe examined creating honors tracks in science and humanities and advanced placement classes, he said. The school also wanted to add more extracurricular activities involving things like robotics, mock trial and theater. It hired architecture firm SmithGroup to conduct a space analysis.

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"They told us we were tens of thousands of feet short on space just for the student body that we were currently serving," O'Hagan said. "If we were going to grow the student body, we really needed to address those space issues."

The school didn't own any more land on the west side of Utica. The Archdiocese of Denver did.

Arrupe and the Archdiocese engaged in a swap in which Arrupe built a rectory on the east side of the street for the Archdiocese and the Archdiocese gave Arrupe the contiguous land the school needed to expand, according to O'Hagan.

The resulting 25,000-square-foot addition includes a new gymnasium, five science labs, a maker's space, a work-study auditorium and a new main entrance with improved security. Other features are a student

commons area and a boardroom to host partners and other activities.

Arrupe also added 8,400 square feet in a renovation of the existing building, where the school remodeled another 21,000 square feet of space. That work added eight classrooms and upgraded three, created a College and Career Readiness Center and expanded the teacher work room and cafeteria.

The school is conducting a giving campaign to fund the renovation. Consultants the school hired called the ambitiousness of the campaign “nuts,” O'Hagan said.

“All the monies have been raised through private donations, private foundations, community foundations, so an extraordinary level of support,” he said.

The result is $43 million raised from over 170 private donors and a dozen foundations. Arrupe says it needs to raise $4 million more.

Arrupe has designs on raising its enrollment to 500 students. That required more space and will mean getting more local businesses to step up as corporate work-study partners. But O'Hagan is confident the school will get there.

> “If Denver is your home and you're doing your work here, do you want Denver to be better tomorrow? If the answer is yes, then we should be talking with you.”
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MOA Architecture designed the expansion, Haselden Construction served as the general contractor and Redtail Advising was the owner's representative. O'Hagan highly praised them all.