



Baltimore's Cristo Rey Jesuit High School: Supporting Students To and Through College

MIDDLE SCHOOL | HIGH SCHOOL | DISTRICT | HIGHER ED

Part of a 35 school college preparatory network, Baltimore's Cristo Rey Jesuit High School (CRJ), provides students from economically disadvantaged households with access to an exceptional education. CRJ's vision maintains that all students have the capacity to achieve at high levels. Students are equipped for success in college, their careers, and in life, impacting their futures, their families, and their community.

Cristo Rey Jesuit High School is a leader in building students' College Knowledge, which is one of the six key competencies in the research-backed Naviance [College, Career and Life Readiness Framework](#).

CRJ has achieved a 100% college acceptance rate for the past 9 years and has a college completion rate that is three times higher than the national average for low income students. "We're in a city where students are typically coming to us very underprepared for high school and therefore underprepared for college," said CRJ's President, Dr. Bill Heiser. "One of the most important things for our students to hear is that college is a possibility."



"Simply put, I don't know how we would do what we do without Naviance."

Jen Ewing,

Director of College Counseling



The Challenge

Over 30% of children in Baltimore live in poverty and CRJ reflects its city: the average family income for an incoming student in the Class of 2022 is less than \$35,000. On the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress, just 13% of Baltimore eighth grade students were considered proficient or advanced in reading level, and only 11% in math. College degree attainment for low-income students continues to be a significant obstacle. Only 12% of students from the lowest income quartile earn a bachelor's degree by the age of 24.* Cristo Rey Jesuit School set out to change those outcomes.

The Approach

The goal of Cristo Rey Jesuit's counselors is to support each student from the start of ninth grade to and through college. CRJ counselors carefully track each graduate's progress in Naviance, including measuring college enrollment, persistence, and completion. CRJ's unique internship program helps students experience careers of interest that bring their postsecondary aspirations to life.



3x HIGHER COLLEGE COMPLETION RATE
Compared to students from similar background

100% COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE RATE
Every year since school's founding in 2011

91% COLLEGE ENROLLMENT
First year after high school. National average for low-income schools is 56%

College Counseling

The school sets the expectation for higher education early in students' careers. Starting in ninth grade, students begin exploring careers and college options in Naviance as part of a course taught by the counselors. The counseling team educates students on key concepts including college fit, the application process, scholarships, and financial aid. But Cristo Rey Jesuit's counselor support does not end there. Their team closely monitors matriculation data imported to Naviance from the National Student Clearinghouse, a non-profit organization that tracks college enrollment for 99% of students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities.

"If we didn't have Naviance, I don't know how our kids would go to college. I don't know how we would manage our caseloads," said Jen Ewing, CRJ's Director of College Counseling. "Simply put, I don't know how we would do what we do without Naviance."

The data in Naviance helps the team ensure that even after high school, students have a support network that is fully invested in their wellbeing and success in college. Their approach has led to a true college-going, and college-completing, culture in which each student knows that completing a higher learning degree is within their reach.

Pre-College Programs

To strengthen student readiness, Cristo Rey Jesuit High School has implemented a few pre-college programs. The goals of these programs are to expose students to best-fit career opportunities, and to introduce students to life in college. Two particularly successful programs are the corporate work study program and summer pre-college programs.

Their hallmark corporate work study program places students in internships with local Baltimore companies to experience potential career pathways. Students gain four years of professional work experience for their high school résumés in addition to informing their career goals.

Summer pre-college programs expose students to what college is really like and build the transition skills needed after high school. CRJ recognized that many of Baltimore's pre-college programs are geared toward students from low-income families which doesn't reflect the economic and racial diversity on a college campus. In response, CRJ strives to connect students to pre-college programs with a more diverse student participation that mirrors the student body of many college campuses. The exposure from these programs helps to inform students' future educational decisions and builds skills to persist once they are enrolled in college.

The Results

The college and career counseling team at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School has achieved exceptional results for their students. Since CRJ's first graduating class in 2011, 100% of Cristo Rey graduates have been accepted to college. CRJ graduates are having success when they graduate as well. On average, 91% of students enroll in college within one year of graduation (compared to 56% of low-income students nationally**) and 81% persist into their second year of collegiate studies. On average, more than 36% of CRJ's graduating classes finish a college degree, over three times the rate for students from similar backgrounds.

One of the most significant barriers to postsecondary education for Baltimore students is the cost of college. CRJ takes extra measures to ensure students maximize their financial options, helping them to fund their education with scholarships and grants whenever possible. The college and career counseling team helped students graduating in 2018 earn \$1.14 million in merit-based awards and \$700,000 in need-based grants. We applaud the tremendous impact that the Cristo Rey Jesuit counselors are having on students' lives.

*http://pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Indicators_of_Higher_Education_Equity_in_the_US_2017_Historical_Trend_Report.pdf

** <https://nscresearchcenter.org/hsbenchmarks2018/>



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