



THE HOWLEY
FOUNDATION



The Howley Foundation Grantee Spotlight: Cristo Rey Network



Elevating Student Success and Retention Grants

About: The Cristo Rey Network is a unique network of 38 Catholic high schools across the country (with one school in Cleveland and another in Philadelphia) that integrate four years of rigorous college preparatory academics with a four-year professional work-study program. Cristo Rey delivers a powerful and innovative approach to education that equips students from families of limited economic means with the knowledge and skills to achieve their aspirations.

The Need: In 2018, Cristo Rey's national office began planning for a large-scale response to the changing needs seen across schools in the network. One of the areas identified as needing greater attention pertained to addressing the reasons why students leave their schools prematurely. As a result, they introduced several new supports to ensure that every student succeeds once they've enrolled in Cristo Rey.

The Opportunity: Through the **Student Success and Retention Grants** program, the Cristo Rey Network national office offers grant support to individual schools in the Network, fueling success and retention interventions that are strategically tailored to the local school culture and need.

What The Howley Foundation Funded: The Howley Foundation has made a total contribution of \$17 million to the Cristo Rey Network and provided the lead gift of \$1.5 million to fund Cristo Rey's four-year **Student Success and Retention Grants** program. During the 2021-22 academic year, two-year grants totaling \$560,000 will be distributed to equip grantee schools with financial resources to develop and implement a data-driven, strategic, and intentional approach to support the academic achievement of their students and ensure college readiness.

Why The Howley Foundation Funded This Work:

The Howley Foundation values Cristo Rey's commitment to strengthening member schools through ongoing cycles of continuous improvement. By gathering and analyzing data, determining and responding to challenges, and monitoring their impact, the Cristo Rey Network has illustrated their dedication to an important goal of The Howley Foundation—creating quality educational opportunities that lead to greater social and economic mobility.

About the Student Success and Retention Grants Program

- In applying for grants, schools across the Cristo Rey Network are asked to self-identify their causes of attrition and/or barriers to student success, and prepare individualized proposals on how to address them.
- Certain requirements have been embedded into the current eligibility guidelines to best support students and teachers. For example, since attrition at Cristo Rey schools tends to occur most in 9th grade, grantees are now required to have a summer bridge program with robust academic learning before students start their freshmen year.
- A total of 22 Cristo Rey schools have been awarded financial assistance to fund their proposals since the introduction of this initiative in 2019.

Program Accomplishments and Goals

Since The Howley Foundation's first investment in the Cristo Rey Network's student retention programming, the network-wide four-year high school student retention has increased from 62% to 69%. School grantees aim to improve students' academic performance by increasing the number of students earning a GPA of 3.0 or better, and ultimately, make strong progress towards 90% four-year high school student retention, the rate currently attained by the Network's highest performing schools.