

Faith, Purpose, and Service

An Interview with Paul Scariano, Board Chair, Cristo Rey Brooklyn High School

EDITORS' NOTE Paul Scariano is an engineer and business leader. In 1996, he founded Paul J. Scariano, Inc., and currently serves as its Chief Executive Officer, along with the other PJS Group companies, which include: PJS Electric, Inc. (1998) and DeBoe Construction, Corp. (2017). The PJS Group of companies employ more than 350 full-time employees ranging from highly skilled tradespeople to Professional Engineers and Certified Public Accountants. Scariano is active in various volunteer activities. He is the Chair of the Board of Cristo Rey Brooklyn High School, as well as on the Board of Trustees of Brooklyn Jesuit Prep where he is Chair of its Building and Facilities Committee. Scariano is also a member of Xavier High School Board of Regents, following his serving two full terms on the Board of Trustees, chairing the school's Facilities Committee, and co-chairing the Athletic Field Task Force. He is also on the Civil and Environmental Engineering Advisory Board of Manhattan College. Scariano earned a BS degree in civil engineering from the Manhattan College School of Engineering and has been a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers since 1993.



Paul Scariano

Will you highlight the history of Cristo Rey Network?

The Cristo Rey Network (CRN) began in 1993 with the Chicago Society of Jesus (“the Jesuits” – now known as U.S.A Midwest Province of the Society of Jesus – Jesuits) looking to respond to the needs of working-class immigrant families who lacked good and affordable educational options for their children. The first CRN school began in Chicago, Illinois in 1996 and was founded by Fr. John P. Foley, S.J.

The process of opening a Cristo Rey Network school is a rigorous one that takes about 36 months to complete and is largely based on a detailed feasibility study and academic performance that meets standards set by the CRN. There are currently 38 schools across 24 states in the Cristo Rey Network.

Cristo Rey New York, in Harlem (CRNY), opened in 2004 as a collaborative project of generous lay people, and The Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, the De La Salle Christian Brothers, and the Jesuits. Following Cristo Rey Harlem, Cristo Rey Brooklyn opened in 2008 as the Lourdes Academy High School in Bushwick, a provisional member of the national Cristo Rey Network. In 2011, the school was rechristened Cristo Rey Brooklyn High School (CRBHS) and achieved full membership in the Cristo Rey Network in 2012. Its religious endorser

is the Sisters of Mercy. In May 2018, after a two-year accreditation period, CRBHS achieved full accreditation from the NYS Association of Independent Schools. Before I joined CRBHS, I was a supporter of CRNY because of my friendship with the school's president, Dan Dougherty, with whom I served at the Board level at Xavier High School. When the opportunity presented itself to join the Board at CRBHS through William Ford, III, who helped found and had been the principal of CRNY (and who is now the Chief Academic Officer of the Cristo Rey Network), I was happy to join in the work and go along for the ride, especially since I grew up less than two miles from the school.

How do you define Cristo Rey Brooklyn's mission?

Cristo Rey Brooklyn is a Catholic high school partnering with families of all creeds to educate deserving young people from underserved communities to become men and women of faith, purpose, and service. By integrating a rigorous curriculum, a unique work/study experience and the support of an inclusive school community, we enable students to succeed in college and beyond with the values essential to a fulfilling life.

What have been the keys to Cristo Rey Brooklyn's growth and leadership, and how do you define the Cristo Rey Brooklyn difference?

Cristo Rey Brooklyn has a strong mission and partnership with the community, along

INSTITUTION BRIEF Cristo Rey Brooklyn (cristoreybrooklyn.org) is a college prep, Catholic high school located in central Brooklyn that educates young people of all faiths, exclusively serving families of modest financial means. It does so with a unique and innovative model. A member of the national Cristo Rey Network (CRN), Cristo Rey Brooklyn High School opened to freshmen students in September 2008 as Lourdes Academy High School in the former Our Lady of Lourdes elementary school building in the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn. In 2011, the school was renamed Cristo Rey Brooklyn High School. In 2013, after five years in its initial home, it moved to the former Catherine McAuley High School in the East Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn. This facility provides the capacity to grow enrollment and offers numerous resources that were lacking in the previous location. In May 2018, after a two-year accreditation review period, CRBHS achieved full accreditation by the New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS). CRBHS is supported by its religious endorser, the Mid-Atlantic Community of the Sisters of Mercy, and also works closely with the Diocese of Brooklyn.



Cristo Rey Brooklyn 2023 Graduation

with a long commitment to philanthropic entrepreneurialism, contributions, and care of the founding board with notable leadership by Bob Catell and Bill Henson. Our current Board, which still includes some early members, is just as dedicated and proactive in doing our work to help the school and administration to thrive and prosper. I think the difference at CRBHS is the focus on individual success through school and post college. We're investing in our students' lives – not just their education.

How does Cristo Rey Brooklyn approach its curriculum?

A subset of our students come to us from schools that may not have prepared them well for success in high school. During our admissions process, we look for students who can succeed – even while some may not have yet done so. Therefore, our curriculum, which very much includes our work study program, our extracurricular activities, and our community service and community building programs, seeks to take each student – from the strongest to those needing extra attention and guidance – and help each reach their full potential by the time they graduate. Our college acceptance rates, generous pool of scholarships and grants,

and relationships with our alumni tell us we are doing that very well.

What has been the impact of Cristo Rey Brooklyn's Corporate Work Study Program?

The CWSP is an integral part of our curriculum and carrying out of our mission as well as our financial model. When you look at our standardized test averages – which typically lag in communities such as ours – and then see that our college graduation rates are in line with the full national average, you could conclude that our kids work harder and smarter and just know how to navigate the world a little better than most.

While some may need their college years to fully catch up academically to their more affluent peers, those same peers are trying to catch up to them in work ethic, grit, and professionalism. That is due to their families, our faculty, and our CWSP.

How valuable is it to have such an engaged and committed board of directors at Cristo Rey Brooklyn?

It is immensely valuable – and necessary – to have an engaged, generous, and committed board. The steadfastness of our mission and the work we do starts at the top.



What was the vision for creating the Young Professionals Committee at Cristo Rey Brooklyn?

The Young Professionals Committee was created to get fresh and new perspectives. The YPC has since been renamed Emerging Leaders' Council (ELC). The purpose of the ELC has evolved to include working toward the expansion of the CRB community of supporters, work study partners, mentors, etc., as well as to engage the school's alumni more directly into the life of the school as well as with their respective career networks. ELC members, who are interested, will also be prepared for future board service either at CRB or other nonprofit organizations.

How important has it been for Cristo Rey Brooklyn to build a diverse and inclusive faculty and student population?

You can't do what we do without a diverse and inclusive faculty and student population. The students and families need to feel not only included, but central to our community, so they need to see themselves in the leaders around them. It is essential for their formation to learn that everyone is to be loved and respected so that they can help put that back out into the world.

What are your priorities for Cristo Rey Brooklyn as you look to the future?

Getting the word out about the great work we do so we can build our ELC, CWSP partners, and our group of benefactors to help enable us to pay our amazing staff well, add and update programming – both academic and extracurricular – and rebuild and create new spaces that allow us to offer more and more robust learning opportunities. My education as an engineer and entrepreneur has served me well in helping guide the Board and a school on the brink of excellence and put it more firmly on a path to achieve further success in the coming years. ●



Cristo Rey Brooklyn teacher Bill Klein with students (above); Students on Cristo Rey Summer Training Program field trip (top)