

Point of View: Make it your business to be part of OKC's future

BY CHIP CARTER

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Chip Carter

This summer, Oklahoma businesses have been trying to implement new processes and procedures to comply with Centers for Disease Control guidelines while remaining profitable. Many are struggling to navigate the pandemic and are being forced to make major budget cuts including layoffs. As the world searches for stability, businesses are turning to innovative methods to maintain productivity, including conducting all business virtually, because they know they must become more agile to meet demands imposed by COVID-19.

In a similar vein, we are hearing daily how our schools are trying to identify the best way to resume instruction while maintaining the health and safety of students and faculty alike. Many are planning to turn to virtual classroom instruction as the risk remains too high to return in person.

At Cristo Rey Oklahoma City Catholic High School, we are asking our students to go back to school and navigate a new work environment amidst of this pandemic.

Cristo Rey OKC exclusively serves students of limited economic means and is uniquely defined by our Corporate Work Student Program. This program allows students to earn a majority of their own tuition while gaining work experience. Students who likely had never been in a professional office environment are exposed to multiple career paths, learn technical office skills, and gain a confidence that will benefit them through college and beyond.

When a business becomes a Corporate Work Study Partner, it is provided with a team of four students who work on alternating days to cover one full-time equivalent position. Companies lease our students, meaning Cristo Rey OKC pays all taxes, workers' comp and handles all employment issues. Companies receive eager and productive employees, at a highly competitive rate, while developing a pipeline to predominantly-minority talent who are already familiar with the company. The companies also know they are helping change a life.

Our students benefit from this program in many ways. But perhaps most importantly, they know they are earning their education by themselves, for themselves.

However, for this program to work our students need to have jobs to go to, and in this tough economic season many companies feel they simply cannot take our students now. We at Cristo Rey OKC are undeterred and will continue to strive to find a work home for our next generation of leaders.

Education and industry alike are facing a challenge like no other. We know a quality education followed by a college degree is the best way to economic self-sufficiency, and our partners have the opportunity to help provide that gateway for students of limited means. Cristo Rey OKC is doing our part to educate and prepare the future leaders of Oklahoma City. Make it your business to be part of our city's future as well.

Carter is president & CEO of Cristo Rey Oklahoma City Catholic High School.