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De La Salle Builds Resumes Early

Inner-city youth gain experience in workforce

By KATHERINE KOVACICH
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

In 2001, De La Salle North Catholic High School opened with 71 bright ninth graders ready to learn. This year, those proud students will be the first class to graduate from the school as seniors, moving onto bigger and better things in life.

And they've already got some hefty resumes.

Through an intensive Corporate Internship Program, the school promotes self-sufficiency by providing career training, personal mentoring and paid employment. Once a week for eight hours, De La Salle students go to work in one of 60 offices around Portland, building job skills many people don't have until they're a few years out of college.

"It's really about giving kids options to believe they can achieve more," said Mike Jacobson, director of Corporate Internship Program at De La Salle.

This year, a whopping 98 percent of seniors are headed off to higher education in the fall, with more than 50 percent accepted to private, 4-year schools. More than \$1.2 million has been awarded in college scholarships.

Rated as the second high school in the nation and first in the northwestern states to feature a work-study program of such magnitude, De La Salle is called the "School That Works." The program takes after Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, a corporate internship school in downtown Chicago. Next year, 11 more schools in the nation will take after this model.

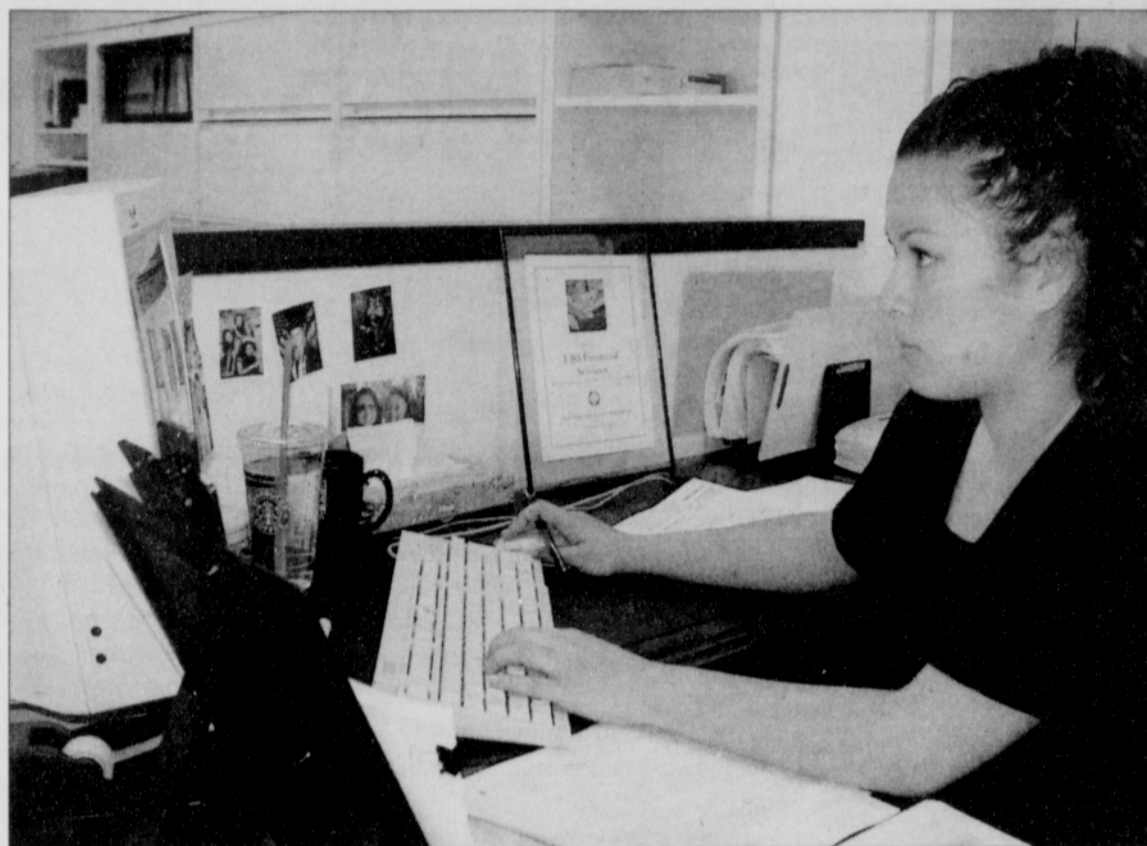


PHOTO BY KATHERINE KOVACICH/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Annie Nguyen, a junior at De La Salle North Catholic High School, works at UBS Financial Services in downtown Portland one day a week through the school's Corporate Internship Program.

The schools are placed in inner cities by the Christian Brothers, the Jesuits, and other religious orders to keep their historical mission of serving the poor. The majority of students are actually non-Catholic, non-white and from economically challenged families. More than 80 percent of the current 193 students at De La Salle qualify for free or reduced lunch.

A large portion of tuition cost is covered by the program, leaving a little more than \$2,000 left to pay out of pocket. Still, this is a substantial savings for inner city youth wanting to attend a private school.

Stephen Randolph, a senior at De La Salle, will attend Hofstra University in New York this fall with a major in psychology.

Job-wise, he said, many of his peers outside of De La Salle can only find work in a fast food restaurant, at a video store or in a movie theatre.

"It puts us in a pool for more professional jobs," Randolph said. "The relationships we've built have given us a safety net. It makes it where we've proved we're able to do the work. It makes us more responsible with our schoolwork because we associate work and school together. It gives us a sense of responsibility."

Annie Nguyen has been working at UBS Financial Services since last fall, doing clerical work with Microsoft Excel, client research, and putting together portfolios. She even attends corporate meetings

for the sake of experience.

Her demeanor isn't one of a junior in high school, but of a professional behind her own desk. She was recently trained to work on litigation matters.

"I like how they have big projects for me," Nguyen said. "I have a head start. It's going to help so much," she said. "It's helped me feel comfortable around adults. When I come here I'm not the same person I am when I'm hanging out with friends."

More than 70,000 hours of corporate internship work has been undertaken by this year's graduates.

"The work study exposes them

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Shattering the Minority Glass Ceiling

Discrimination still found in the workplace

Powerful minority executives have some thinking that minorities no longer face discrimination in the workplace. The reality is that success stories are the exception and not the rule. Reaching the top is more a result of perseverance, talent and ambition than workplace equality.

Contrary to popular opinion, minorities seeking success in the workplace regularly encounter a variety of roadblocks that prevent them from reaching their full potential. Many find themselves in a "wait and see" position while their white male peers are "fast tracked" early in their careers, enabling them to reach executive levels fairly quickly.

Unfortunately, the success of minorities in the workplace is often attributed to affirmative action or luck, and not skill and talent. To overcome these obstacles, minorities often find they must perform above and beyond what is expected to get the same treatment of others that have lower levels of performance, and still many continue to earn significantly less than their

Minorities often find they must perform above and beyond what is expected to get the same treatment of others that have lower levels of performance.

white male peers.

Despite the seemingly overwhelming odds, there are steps minorities can take so that they not only survive, but also become very successful in corporate America.

Develop your ability to promote yourself. Raise your visibility by serving on high-profile board and committees, having your name submitted for awards and seeking out speech opportunities. Notify local newspapers about your accomplishments and contributions to the community.

Apply problem-solving skills to workplace racism. Focus on how to deal with immediate problems without jeopardizing your standing in the company.

Demonstrate that you are executive material by identifying key issues in complex situations, showing respect for expertise of others, acting quickly to get a plan moving and discussing business issues

with authority.

Learn the unwritten rules of your organization. The majority of decision-makers in corporate America are white males, so set out to learn their standards of behavior, and study any nuances concerning minorities.

Develop a diverse network and cultivate strategic allies within your organization. During times of mergers, lay-offs and reorganizations, which minorities are often twice as likely to be negatively affected, you'll fare better because of your connections.

Those that persevere, strive to learn, accept challenges, gain a deep understanding of the cultures and unwritten rules of the organizations for whom they work, create an adaptable game plan that they follow, build alliances, and develop refined people skills, will find the climb up the corporate ladder, one filled with rewards and achievements.

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