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### IN DEPTH: EDUCATION

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From the March 5, 2004 print edition

## Earning an education

Sponsorships give students a chance to work for tuition

[Lyn Berry-Helminger](#)

Denver Business Journal

Seventeen Denver-area businesses are participating in a unique corporate work-study program that allows high school students to pay for 71 percent of their private school tuition -- and get a taste of the "real world."

The program is supported by Arrupe Jesuit High School, which opened at 4343 Utica St. in Denver with a freshman class of 60 students last August. All of the students participate in the work-study program, which requires them to work one day a week at an entry-level professional job.

Arrupe, which describes itself as a college preparatory school, caters to lower-income students from many parts of the city. "Our mission is to serve students and families that can't afford another private school," said Dan O'Brien, director of the corporate work-study program. "This is strictly for families that have no other options."

Tuition at the school costs more than \$8,500 a year per student, but the work-study program lowers that cost to \$2,500. When the school is at full capacity -- about 300 to 350 students -- families will pay

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\$2,400 a year, O'Brien said.

Corporations pay \$19,500 to be a year-long sponsor in the work-study program -- but Arrupe President Steve Planning is quick to point out it's not a charitable donation.



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"All of the students are employed by the Arrupe Jesuit work-study program as if it were Manpower Inc.," said Planning, who is a Jesuit priest. "The companies contract with us like they would to hire an employee through an agency. The work-study program is the employer."

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To prepare for their foray into corporate America, the Arrupe students attend three weeks of training before school starts to master skills such as keyboarding, how to dress, team-building and public speaking, said Olivia Mendoza, assistant director of the program.

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"For a lot of these students, the whole concept of working in an office is extremely foreign," she said. "We spend a good deal of time with them prior to entering a business to make sure they know the basics."

The students work at sponsoring businesses in teams of four, sharing one full-time job, which can range from a position in a mail room or copy center to human resources, O'Brien said. Each student takes one full day a week, with one rotating Monday shift, for a total of five full work days a month.

"These are the jobs that need to be done," O'Brien said. "We fill a void. These jobs are typically high-turnover positions that don't seem glamorous to an adult, but to these kids it's very glamorous."

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