

A Goal Achieved

I am often impressed when students share the goals they have set for themselves: being the first in their family to attend college; getting accepted into law school; or becoming a heart surgeon. **However, it is in the journey from setting a goal to achieving it that the extraordinary takes place.** The challenges our students overcome, the people in their lives who support them, and the growth they experience along the way.

I had the unique opportunity to get back to my teaching roots this year for our AP Calculus class while a faculty member was on maternity leave. It was truly wonderful to connect with students on that level again, and for one student, **to witness him achieve a much sought-after goal.**

Gedion decided during his junior year that he wanted to be class valedictorian. "My parents put a high value on education, and I had always gotten good grades," said Gedion. "I realized that if I worked a bit harder, being valedictorian was something I could achieve." This meant taking the most difficult courses that Cristo Rey offers – as a senior, five of his seven classes are Advanced Placement (AP). **"I knew these AP courses wouldn't be too high a barrier that I couldn't climb.** I could take these classes, work hard, and get to the position of valedictorian because of that challenge."



Sustaining a dedicated work ethic is not easy, and Gedion credits the faculty at Cristo Rey for helping him get over hurdles. "The teachers here have been amazing. **It's hard to put into words how much they have done to support me.**"

It is not just support from teachers, his parents, or his friends that helped him toward his goal. **"Before anyone else supports me, it's my responsibility to build my own foundation,"** said Gedion. That sense of self-reliance – one of the five pillars at Cristo Rey – is such a powerful life lesson and one that students carry with them their entire lives.



It was my honor to call Gedion into my office to give him the good news – he was officially valedictorian. "The relief was immeasurable. **I felt a state of peace because I had finally achieved my goal,**" said Gedion about receiving the news. "My parents were so proud of me, and my dad told me, 'Keep grinding, keep going.' He encouraged me to be in the present and enjoy what I had achieved, but to always keep an eye on the future. I definitely agree with him."

In just a few weeks, Gedion will deliver the valedictorian address at commencement. The Class of 2026 will walk across the stage to receive their diplomas. And thanks to their Cristo Rey education, **our graduates will set off toward bright futures.**

I am so grateful for the support that makes the Cristo Rey experience possible for our young men and women. I ask that you consider making a donation to honor our students, like Gedion, who set high goals and have big dreams. Your gift will celebrate the class of 2026 and lay the foundation for our next school year. **Thank you for being a part of their journey and for helping them achieve their goals both now and in the future.**

With Gratitude,

Ryan Michelle Pettit, Principal
Cristo Rey Columbus High School