

Tuitions on the rise for Catholic high schools

Twenty-one Catholic high schools in the Archdiocese of Baltimore experienced tuition increases for the 2007-08 school year, with guardians paying an average of \$641.76 extra for their teenagers to enjoy the educational opportunities provided on those campuses.

An exception is Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Fells Point, which is slated to open its doors this fall.

Overall, tuition costs increased about 7 percent compared to the 2006-07 school year. The largest tuition spike occurred at St. Frances Academy, Baltimore, and the smallest boost took place at Bishop Walsh High School, Cumberland, which is only raising its admission cost \$225.

Though tuition at St. Frances Academy jumped \$1,300 this year, the school was the only Catholic high school not to raise the price for enrollment last year and only 15 percent of its families actually pay the full cost of admission.

"St. Frances Academy determines tuition fees based upon the household income of each student," and a sliding-scale method is applied, said Sister John Francis Schilling, O.S.P., president of the school. "Tuition is determined on a case-by-case basis. All SFA parents and guardians are required to submit tax forms in order to verify household income. No other high school offers this feature."

Tuition fees not covered by families of the students are paid for by the ongoing fundraising efforts by the school, with an estimated \$1 million needed to cover this academic year's admissions expenses the institution forgives, Sister John Francis said.

Most increases in tuition at the schools are attributed to raises in teacher salaries.

"We cannot expect teachers to earn far less than they would in the surrounding public system," said Paul Barker, principal at The John Carroll School, Bel Air. "Our board has made a commitment to maintaining 90 percent parity with Harford County's salary scale. So when their teachers get a big salary adjustment, so do ours. Inevitably, these increases impact tuition."

Maintaining, upgrading and renovating school facilities and equipment is another driving factor when determining tuition each year, said Kristen Koehler, director of

alumnae and media relations at Archbishop Spalding High School, Severn.

Tuition costs at Notre Dame Preparatory School, Towson, are the highest in the archdiocese, with an annual admission fee of \$14,140.

At \$2,500 annually, Cristo Rey offers the lowest tuition of the high schools – but the new secondary school only accepts students from lower-income families, requires its pupils to participate in work study and relies on corporate donations to subsidize its operating costs.

All of the high schools offer financial assistance in some form to enable families facing financial difficulties to enroll their children in the Catholic school system. Cardinal William H. Keeler made it a priority during his 18-year tenure as archbishop of the Archdiocese of Baltimore to boost scholarships for deserving students.

“Each year, contributions to supplement tuition are received from The Friends of Catholic Education of Frederick County,” said James J. Tyrrell Jr., assistant director of institutional advancement and marketing at St. John Catholic Prep, Frederick. “Many families have found success in obtaining financial assistance from their individual parishes and outside organizations, as well.”