

Commuter Ministry

Only 27% of college students now graduate from high school at age 18 and immediately enroll, full-time, in a four-year residential college while depending on their parents to finance their education.

—National Center for Educational Statistics



Reaching Future Generations in Philadelphia

“Look at me! If I can do it, so can you.”

This is what one of Súler Acosta’s students would say to kids who attend his former high school. “I am a college student. You can be one, too. Don’t diss school. Do the right thing and get an education.”

Himself a graduate of the Community College of Philadelphia (before going on to earn his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from LaSalle University), Súler is passionate about his opportunity to minister to students from his alma mater.

Súler’s students range in age from 19 to 50, and are all at different stages of life. They are putting themselves through school and paying for it out of their own pockets, which means that most work at fulltime jobs in addition to taking classes. They are motivated to get an education. Many are well-read, all are sharply attuned to their urban context, but as Súler explains, “They are like wide-eyed children when it comes to education. Education to them is an immense privilege.”

Maybe because he was a community college student himself, or maybe because he’s committed to reaching minority students in the city, but Súler can’t imagine a more ideal ministry setting than a community college campus.

“I am a part of the Latin American student organization on campus,” he says, “which has a very heavy community and family focus.” If all CCO staff are about transforming students to transform the world, the immediate effect of doing so is no more evident than at a place right in the heart of where most students are living, working, and raising their families.

“There is a real openness in these students to my presence,” observes Súler. “I am engaged in their family lives. I can invite them to church and know that they might be there for generations to come. I am making an investment in people’s lives that will last over the long haul.”

How it works

Súler Acosta works cooperatively with New Life Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia as Associate Minister for Young Adults and Church Administrator. This position provides opportunities for him to reach out to college students throughout Philadelphia. While he spends the majority of his time ministering to young adults at LaSalle and Esperanza College of Eastern University, he also makes himself available to church members who are students at schools like Temple, Drexel and Lehigh Universities.

Esperanza College of Eastern University offers a two-year associate’s degree. Most of those enrolled are minority students from the surrounding low-income community.

Súler teaches a Bible class there, which is also an ESL class—an opportunity for students to learn English as a second language. Because Eastern is a Christian university, Esperanza College courses are taught from a Christian perspective. But of the five students in Súler’s Bible class, only one would call herself a Christian.

“It’s an amazing opportunity to teach students English, to teach them about the Bible, and to be able to share about Jesus Christ as well,” Súler says. “It’s a great job.”

