

The St. Martin de Porres High School community welcomed United States Senator Richard Durbin (IL) to campus on Wednesday, Dec. 3 as part of his day-long tour of Lake County . The Senator, accompanied by three of his staff members, was assessing how the effects of the economic downturn on the general area by visiting the business, educational and military sectors of the county. After being greeted by SMdP senior Jesus Rodriguez and junior Vivian Fajardo, Senator Durbin was led on a tour of the main academic building and Gorter Science Building, stopping in Mrs. Johnsen's computer class and Mrs. Papparigian's Science class. The majority of his time was spent speaking with Mr. Straube's Period G U.S. History class. Senator Durbin warmly greeted the class of juniors and seniors and proceeded to speak briefly about his own life (growing up in East St. Louis, IL as the son of immigrant parents), his perseverance in pursuing a political career and the current excitement he feels around the impending inauguration of his friend and colleague Barack Obama.

Before Mr. Straube opened the floor for questions., junior Raul Gonzalez spoke about the Tufts University program (see sidebar) that members of the class are participating in and juniors Diana Gonzalez and Octavio Brindis outlined the coursework that the class has undertaken thus far in the school year. Several members of the class then asked questions including, "Do you think we're headed for a depression," "are immigrants an important part of the U.S. economy", "how will the election of Barack Obama specifically benefit Illinois" and "do you think the world is like it is because of money or morality?" Senator Durbin, who is quite familiar with the work of the national Cristo Rey Network of schools, was generous with his time as well as his wisdom, telling the students: "Don't give up – live your dream."

"What a joy it was to witness the rapport and respect between the senator and our students. Each question asked was answered with thought and focus. Our door is always open for Senator Durbin," stated Fr. Charles Bolser, C.S.V., president of St. Martin de Porres High School.