Chestnut Hill, MA (March 25, 2006) – The Archbishop Oscar A. Romero Scholarship Committee is honored to announce Christopher Ortega `87 as the recipient of the 2006 Father John A. Dinneen, S.J. Hispanic Alumni Community Service Award.

Christopher Ortega was born in Brooklyn, New York and raised in Stamford, Connecticut. In 1987, Christopher graduated from Boston College with a Bachelors degree in Computer Science. He has worked for the past two decades providing database management consulting and implementation services to a wide range of companies in the healthcare, financial services, direct marketing, and non-profit sectors.

In 1995, Christopher settled in Nashua, New Hampshire with his family. His employer at the time was trying to establish roots in the community and encouraged employees to get involved. Christopher decided that the Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter (NSK&S) would be a good place to start. The NSK&S is an organization dedicated to providing food and shelter to those in need, including advocacy, employment education, emergency shelter, and transitional housing. For over a year on a weekly basis, Christopher would serve breakfast to the clients before heading to work.

As he became familiar with the organization and its mission, Christopher decided to get more involved with the NSK&S. At the time, the charity’s largest fundraiser was the annual Run for Food & Shelter. Christopher started volunteering to get sponsors for the race and explored different ways to attract participants. After working with the committee for the year, Christopher was asked to chair the event. His leadership is credited for helping to increase revenues by 150% and to record levels in 2005.

Christopher’s volunteer work on the race committee caught the attention of the Board of Directors and in 1998 Christopher was again asked to become more involved. As a volunteer Board Member, Vice-President and, most recently, as President since 2003, Christopher has helped the organization serve a more diverse population in need through a variety of programs offered at the NSK&S. The budget for this organization operates primarily through fundraising and private donations therefore effective fundraising is critical for its survival. Under Christopher’s leadership, the NSK&S was able to increase...
their budget by 80%, thus allowing the staff to expand the services offered. One of the
direct benefits to the community has been the employment a full time Hispanic advocate.
The advocate not only helps to offer services in Spanish, but works in conjunction with
the staff to provide educational support, transitional housing assistance as well as serve
meals to hungry clients. The NSK&S is one of the few agencies in Southern New
Hampshire that offers these services in Spanish.

In addition to the over 1,000 meals per week served, the NSK&S added the daily
distribution of fresh produce and bread to the community it serves. Last year, the
NSK&S was able to accommodate over 22,000 visits from clients needing these items. It
was also able to expand and provide on a weekly basis over 50 individuals and families
assistance with non perishable food items and basic necessities not covered by food
stamps.

In 2002, the Nashua Soup Kitchen & Shelter was recognized for a second time in its
history with the prestigious Walter J. Dunfey Award for Excellence in Management from
the Corporate Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

Christopher also worked with the Board of Directors and staff to expand the mission of
the organization to include homelessness prevention. In 2001, the Board of Directors
adopted ending homelessness as part of its mission and made a commitment to move that
mission forward in the community as a partnership of local charities, government, and
private businesses. As a direct result of this effort, the Greater Nashua area is the first in
New Hampshire to have a plan to end homelessness. This plan served as the model for
the State of New Hampshire Plan for Ending Homelessness.

Homeless shelters, originally intended to be short term emergency housing, are becoming
longer term housing options for people trying to make the difficult transition due to high
rents. Ending homelessness required the increase of the limited affordable housing stock
in the Nashua area. In 2004, Christopher signed papers for the NSK&S’ purchase of a
nine unit apartment building to provide sub-market rate rental units, adding to the
organization’s inventory of shelter and transitional housing units. Based on its successful
operation in this new business venture, the NSK&S continues its search of suitable
properties to purchase in order to expand and protect affordable housing.

In 2004, Christopher ran as a New Hampshire State Representative candidate. He
currently serves as vice-chairman of the Merrimack Republican Town Committee.

Christopher currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Merrimack Youth
Association Basketball League and the Merrimack Youth Association Lacrosse League.

Christopher is an active coach of basketball, lacrosse, and soccer teams in Merrimack,
NH where he lives with his wife, Kathleen, and their four daughters.