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Rancho Solano starts work on new high school

Phoenix Business Journal by Angela Gonzales, Senior Reporter

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Rancho Solano Private Schools has outgrown its space in Glendale dedicated to middle and high school classes and is investing more than \$10 million to move into new facilities in North Scottsdale.

The private school signed a long-term lease for an 82,000-square-foot building on land owned by the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community in North Scottsdale. The school will serve 400 high school students and 300 middle school pupils.

The school offers the International Baccalaureate program with rigorous academic classes to prepare students to become leaders in the global workforce with an understanding and respect for other cultures.

With tuition ranging from \$11,000 to \$17,000 a year, Rancho Solano has served as an exclusive preparatory school since it was founded in 1954. With its new partnership with the tribe, Rancho Solano will offer scholarships to Salt River Pima community students, said [James Carruthers](#), president of Rancho Solano.

"We would like to teach a Native American culture elective as well as community service," he said.

Renovations to the empty building at 9180 E. Via De Ventura Blvd. started last week so doors will open for the new school year on Aug. 6.

Ayers Saint Gross, which has offices in Tempe, is the project's architect. Hardison/downey construction inc. is general contractor.

Ayers Saint Gross and hardison/downey also will be involved in the design and construction of a 23,000-square-foot student center and gymnasium for that campus. The building will have seating capacity for up to 1,000 and will include college-sized floors with the ability to separate into two full high-school sized courts. Included in the building will be six scoreboards with shot clocks, a weight room training facility, four locker rooms, three volleyball courts, an athletic training room and coach offices. The gym is expected to be completed during the fourth quarter of 2012.

Rancho Solano is the largest private school in Arizona, with 1,600 students. This new site will replace its prep school in Glendale. Its other campuses are in Gilbert, Peoria, Scottsdale and Phoenix.

While Carruthers declined to reveal the private school's annual revenue, he said it has been profitable since its inception in 1954.

"Enrollment has grown over the last five years in spite of the recession," he said. "We were just outgrowing the campus in Glendale," Carruthers said. "We had no room to expand there. I could see this coming two or three years ago, so we started looking for a place convenient for parents."

Rancho Solano had been a K-8 school until about five years ago when it was purchased by Northbrook, Ill.-based Meritas Family of Schools, an international provider of college prep schools that is part of Chicago-based **Sterling Capital Partners**.

Rancho Solano's will graduate its first class of 18 high-school students this year.

"They're all getting into top schools and got over half a million dollars in scholarships right now," Carruthers said.

Ishan Ranjan is one of them. He will be attending the **University of Arizona's** honors program on a scholarship, said his mother, Dr. [Parveen Ranjan](#). Ishan has attended a Rancho Solano student since he was 3, she said.

"He had been a high achiever at Rancho, and when I heard they were going to open the high school, I was the first one to call," she said.

She said Ishan plans to major in science, but she and her husband, who also is a physician, have not pushed him to become a physician.

"It's his choice," she said. "He has become a real mature person with all this experience he has had at Rancho."

Ranjan, whose daughter is in seventh grade at Rancho Solano. said she has enjoyed the personal attention the school has lavished on her children.

"The whole administrative team is one of the best," she said.

Angela Gonzales covers health, biotech and education.