

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

We hope you are having a great summer! We also hope you will enjoy these exciting CDI updates.

Our program is rapidly expanding. Last year CDI began working with 10 Scholars from Wheaton and Walter Johnson, two public high schools in Montgomery County, MD. This past spring, we brought in our second class of 14 Scholars, more than doubling the overall program size.

This fall, we will begin recruiting the next class of 18 Scholars, which will increase our program from 10 to 42 students in one calendar year. To support this expansion, we will invite two additional Montgomery County Public Schools to partner with CDI and will hire additional staff by year's end.

Our most exciting news is that the Scholars in CDI's Class of 2007 have graduated and will soon be off to college! These talented students were accepted to 47 schools and awarded over \$400,000 collectively for the 2007-08 academic year in grants, scholarships and fellowships. Several are already at their respective campuses for summer academic enrichment programs. Our insert offers details on these students and their college choices. As we see the Class of 2007 off to college, we also welcome CDI's Class of 2008, outstanding students selected from a highly competitive applicant pool.

During these past few months, CDI has received further exciting encouragement and attention. We met with officials from the Department of Education and Federal Student Aid to discuss issues impacting low-income students who seek access to higher education. Also, after Nina Marks published an Op-Ed article in the *Washington Post* (see page 2), among the warm responses was an invitation from Associate Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, to meet with Nina and me in his Chambers. This fall, we are arranging a follow-up visit to the Supreme Court for the Scholars.

I am dedicating this newsletter to the parents of CDI's Class of 2007. From our first home visits and family meetings, CDI's parents partner with us to support each Scholar and make each college dream a reality. We thank all the parents and families and look forward to our continued collaboration through the Scholars' college years.

Warmly,



Theresa O. Atta



Welcome Class of 2008!

Our Mission

- To identify and support gifted, low-income, primarily first-generation-to-college students and help them to plan for, apply to, attend, and graduate from a selective, four-year college.
- To build leaders and scholars by mentoring students' personal and academic development.
- To leverage CDI's expertise in educational and college counseling by offering *pro bono* consulting and training assistance to other similar organizations.

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Milestones

PCACAC Award Winner!

The Potomac and Chesapeake Association for College Admission Counseling (PCACAC) named CDI's Executive Director, Theresa Atta, a 2007 Marion Flag Scholar. The award, named after a former PCACAC President, recognizes high school, college and/or community leaders who serve underrepresented populations and have made a significant contribution in the areas of college advising and advocacy. The scholarship underwrites a one-year membership in PCACAC, along with all-expenses-paid attendance at the PCACAC Annual Spring Conference. This year's conference was held April 22-24 in Hunt Valley, MD.

PCACAC is the regional affiliate for the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) serving Washington, DC, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware and West Virginia.



Families may now use the FAFSA4caster to view an early estimate of their EFC (estimated family contribution) and use this information to plan for college costs. Once information is submitted onto the FAFSA4caster, the data can be transferred seamlessly to FAFSA on the Web after January 1. Federal Student Aid officials have developed this planning tool to help demystify the financial aid application process and to help increase financial literacy related to educational funding. To learn more, visit www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov.

A Fair Path to College

On May 9, 2007, CDI President, **Nina Marks** published an Op-Ed in the Washington Post. Provided below is an excerpt. Please visit CDI's web site for a link to the full text.

The college admissions process is increasingly skewed against low-income students, who need better advising and funding. Even if low-income applicants make the cut, they are able to matriculate and graduate only if they are adequately funded. Such students must compete with wealthy peers for scholarship grants and loans. Many selective colleges increasingly seek to entice stellar applicants with merit awards, regardless of whether those students need funding.

In addition, wealthier and better-connected students typically are given tailored attention and support at home and in school. Once they matriculate, these students have much better chances than their low-income peers of fitting in socially and academically, which increases their chances of graduating. **Nineteen percent of first-generation students drop out in their first year, compared with 4 percent of students whose parents have a college degree; 76 percent of first-generation college students had not received a bachelor's degree eight years out of high school, compared with 32 percent of those whose parents have a college degree.**

The importance of improving pre-college advising, ensuring adequate funding, and providing in-college academic and social support is evident to those of us who work with low-income, primarily first-generation scholars. Programs such as Collegiate Directions, Inc. work with high school students to help them develop study habits and succeed in demanding classes, as well as to hone personal and social skills. In partnership with their families and schools, we will continue to work with students at college, helping them confront the academic and cultural challenges college life poses.

College Goal Sunday

This past February, CDI once again participated in College Goal Sunday, a nationwide community outreach event which helps low-income and immigrant families interpret, understand and complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Over 150 families (a 50% increase from last year!) from Maryland, Washington, DC and Virginia were on site at Wheaton High School to meet with professional financial aid administrators and learn more about federal and statewide college funding resources.

CDI is proud to partner with Montgomery College, the Educational Opportunity Center, and Wheaton High School to provide this valuable service to the community. For more information about College Goal Sunday, please visit www.collegegoalsundayusa.org.



Student Support Spotlight: AccessUVA

CDI's Board of Directors and Advisory Board members convened on Saturday, June 16th for our annual joint meeting. As usual, the afternoon segment of the agenda included a presentation and discussion on an issue relevant to CDI's mission. This year, the focus was AccessUVA, the financial aid and student support program for low-income students at the University of Virginia. Ms. Valerie Gregory, Director of Outreach and Assistant Dean of Admission, came to meet some CDI Scholars for lunch and later, with the Board, discussed AccessUVA as a model for college support services.

AccessUVA is a program that offers a debt-free education for all admitted low-income students by meeting 100% of a family's demonstrated need, regardless of Virginia residency. The program also limits the amount of need-based loans for middle-income students admitted to UVA. In addition, AccessUVA students benefit from individual financial counseling and may participate in the Rainey Academic Program during the summer prior to fall matriculation.

The AccessUVA program was launched in 2005 to serve the University's mission to increase socioeconomic diversity on its campus. CDI applauds the comprehensive support which the AccessUVA program offers low-income students and their families.



New York City Ballet



United States Capitol Tour

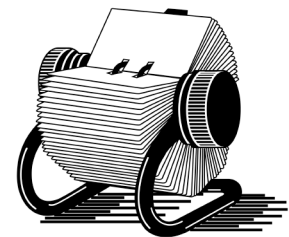
Scholars' Voices

CDI Scholar, Class of 2008, Isel Otero-Vera shares her important leadership role and what it means to be a community builder in her high school.

Three years ago, I helped organize the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Club at Walter Johnson High School. My former U.S. History teacher and now ESOL Club Sponsor, Mrs. Borno, encouraged me to join forces with other students working to help integrate non-native students into the larger WJ community. I remember clearly how difficult it was at times to be in a new school after moving to the United States from Puerto Rico. As a member of the ESOL community, I knew that something had to be done to prevent isolation and ease the process of assimilation for teenagers into a new school community.

After three years, I am proud to be an ESOL Club Co-Founder. It is very rewarding to know that I am able to help others who are experiencing the same feelings and obstacles that I once faced coming from another country. Through the ESOL Club, we provide guidance to our peers who are new to the "American school system" and help them feel more comfortable. We sponsor a series of activities and programs designed to facilitate socialization among students, staff and faculty. We promote cultural events like the cross-cultural lunch called the *International Café*, where we sample foods from each other's countries.

From rigorous academic courses to fun dance classes, from the fierce debate team to the inspirational Gospel Choir, Walter Johnson HS has a great community with lots to offer all of its students, no matter where in the world we come from! I am proud to contribute to this wonderful community as a leader in the ESOL Club.



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Milestones

Program Directors' Forum at Wesleyan University (CT)

On February 15-17, 2007, CDI participated in a special Program Directors' Forum hosted by Wesleyan University (CT). During the third annual gathering, educators and leaders of non-profit and community programs from across the nation convened to share best practices related to supporting underrepresented students in college. The year's program included an exploration of college diversity initiatives, in the broader context of student achievement. While on campus, we also were introduced more in-depth to the resources of Wesleyan University, including a campus tour, lunch with current students, and an interactive faculty panel discussion. CDI thanks the entire Wesleyan Admissions team for arranging such an important and informative forum.

The Road Ahead

July 6-27	Family Meetings to Discuss College Lists
July 9-13	Individual Common Application Work Sessions
July 10	Summer Study Skills Classes Commence
July 11	CDI Team Retreat
July 14	Day Hike in Great Falls, VA
July 20	Transition Workshop for Class of 2007
July - September	College Visits: Bates, Georgetown and Barnard/Columbia (<i>tentative</i>)
August 2	Interview Workshop hosted by DePauw University
August 4	Bon Voyage Party for the Class of 2007
August 8	<i>Phantom of the Opera</i> at the Kennedy Center
September 1	End of Summer Cookout in St. Michaels, MD
September 16-19	Bates-Bowdoin-Colby Counselors' Tour
September 26-29	NACAC National Conference in Austin, TX
October 6	SAT & Subject Tests



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