



# Milestones

Helping aspiring scholars find their way

FALL 2006 / VOLUME 1 / ISSUE 2

## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

CDI has had a productive summer! We have launched the **CDI Scholars Program** with extraordinary students from Wheaton High School and incoming students from Walter Johnson High School. Although they are high school Seniors, when I look at their faces I already see college graduates and community leaders. As the first class of CDI Scholars, they are true pioneers!

In June, we kicked off the program with a CDI Dinner and Orientation. In July, the Scholars started weekly standardized test preparation (see Nitin's Notes, page 3) and began composing college essay drafts. Also, Scholars and their parents came to our office to discuss Senior year curricula and individual college plans. In August, we took the Scholars to visit Franklin & Marshall College, where we toured the campus and had lunch with admissions representatives and current students. Additional workshops led by CDI Counselors on essay writing techniques and the Common Application have kept the Scholars engaged. They managed all of their CDI activities in addition to summer jobs, fellowships, and babysitting duties. I am very proud of their hard work and diligent focus!

Summer cannot be all work and no play, can it? As an end-of-summer activity, we headed out to Maryland's Eastern Shore for a celebratory cookout. We all enjoyed a full day of swimming, kayaking, boating, and sightseeing in the charming town of St. Michaels.

Now fall is upon us, with much to anticipate, including multiple workshops for the Scholars, college visits, and continued work on college applications. In the late fall, we will begin the process of identifying our second class of CDI Scholars. We look forward to sharing updates as the year progresses.

Warmly,

Theresa O. Atta



Scholars at St. Michaels, Maryland

## 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.

## Inside

- College Visits
- High School News
- CDI in the Community
- Nitin's Notes
- Scholars' Voices
- Harvard Summer Institute on College Admissions
- Board Update
- The Road Ahead

# Milestones

## College Visits

What would summer be without a road trip? Schools which have welcomed CDI Counselors or Scholars in the past few months include:

Amherst College  
Boston College  
Brown University  
Bryn Mawr College  
Connecticut College  
Dickinson College  
Franklin & Marshall College  
Harvard University  
Haverford College  
Mt. Holyoke College  
Smith College  
Swarthmore College  
Trinity College (CT)  
Trinity College (DC)  
Tufts University  
University of Pennsylvania  
Villanova University  
Wellesley College  
Wesleyan University (CT)  
Williams College  
Yale University

## High School News

CDI welcomes **Walter Johnson High School** as our newest partner from the Montgomery County Public Schools system. **Dr. Christopher Garran** and his team of counselors have worked closely with us to bring the CDI Scholars Program to their school. We look forward to having the Walter Johnson Scholars join the Wheaton Scholars in their fall workshops and test preparation. We will work with these students not only through the college application process during Senior year, but also throughout their undergraduate years.

We acknowledge the Montgomery County Public School system for its support in helping CDI to connect with the high school community. We especially appreciate the leadership of **Mr. Kent Weaver**, Supervisor of School Counseling Services, and **Dr. Nancy Carlson**, High School Counselor Specialist, and we look forward to our continued collaboration.

CDI sends best wishes to **Dr. George P. Arlotto**, the outgoing Principal at **Wheaton High School**, who offered key support in the selection of CDI's current Wheaton Scholars. Dr. Arlotto is joining the Anne Arundel County Public Schools in Annapolis, MD as the Director of High Schools. We look forward to a continued partnership with Wheaton High School and incoming **Principal Kevin Lowndes**.

## CDI in the Community

On July 20th – 22nd, **CDI Executive Director Theresa Atta** served as a facilitator at the **College Summit Educators' Institute** in Denver, CO. During this landmark conference, 100 teachers and counselors from across the United States convened to learn how to create a “college-going culture” in their schools. Educators received professional development credit while learning how to motivate the entire student body towards higher education.

On Thursday, August 3rd, **CDI President Nina Marks** served as a panelist at the 9-day **HOBY World Leadership Congress** in Washington, DC. During the NACAC-sponsored session entitled “The Road Ahead: Preparing for College”, Nina addressed 400 students from 20 countries eager for advice about the college application process. Admissions Directors from **Lincoln University**, **Goucher College** and **American University** joined Nina to dispense advice about college planning and choosing the environment that offers the best fit.



*CDI Scholars visit Franklin & Marshall College*



## Nitin's Notes

*Nitin Sawhney is CDI's pro-bono Tutoring & Test Prep Director*

Our 90-minute CDI class starts each week with a vocabulary quiz. The goal is to learn 720 words over 18 sessions. Every fifth week, the quiz is cumulative. When I walked into the room on the day of the first vocabulary quiz, each student was using flashcards to test a partner. Many CDI Scholars speak a different language at home, which limits their vocabulary, but they are all committed to learning these new words.

While introducing vocabulary, I told the Scholars about a GRE class with which I once worked on memorizing difficult words. We'd been through "pulchritude", "pusillanimous", and other arcane words, and someone always had the answer. Then I said, "Peccadillo." Not one prospective graduate student knew the word. Finally one tentative arm went up. A Spanish-speaking girl asked, "Does that mean...like, a little sin?"

Pecadillo comes indirectly from Latin, but directly from Spanish. "Pecado", in Spanish, means sin. "Pecadillo", a diminutive of "pecado", is defined as a minor sin or fault.

When I finished the anecdote, an "aha" went through the group even though not all of the CDI Scholars are native Spanish speakers. Those Scholars who speak a Romance language at home had just found an inside track on English vocabulary. "I'm looking forward to this vocab stuff," I heard one girl telling her friend later as they all walked out of the office. She didn't know I was listening.

## Scholars' Voices

*In the following passage, CDI Scholar Gloria Koskey reflects on her family's experience in the United States and her quest for higher education.*

When people ask me where I'm from, it seems like a simple question that requires a simple answer. However, to me it is as complex and intricate as the Calculus problems I solve in class. The easiest response would be: "I'm from Kenya, but I was raised in America". Until the summer of 2004 when I returned to Kenya, I, too, would have agreed with that statement. During my visit, I was initially struck by the reality of a poverty-stricken country. I knew that to my family, education was the ticket out of their corrupt and ill-fated world. To my family, education meant opportunity, the opportunity to prosper and thrive beyond your imagination, the chance to accomplish something with your life and the prospect of living a life better than your ancestors. To them, education was everything.

On my trip I also discovered that even in my home country I was a foreigner and an outsider. As I walked the streets of Nairobi, the gaze from the residents' eyes whispered one thing: stranger. I knew from that visit that I could not belong in the place my mother called home. During college visits, students are asked a common question: How did you know that this college was the one? Many students share a feeling that they find themselves in the right place. Often their response is: "Once you visit the right college, it just clicks." They had the ability to say that this is my college, and they experienced the sensation that this is where they belonged. As I apply to colleges, I'm seeking the place where I can succeed and help others to do the same. To me, education means finding the right place, the place where I am no longer a foreigner or a residential alien. For me, education is simply finding the place which I can call home.

## Harvard Summer Institute on College Admissions

In June, CDI Counselors attended the Institute in Cambridge, MA co-sponsored by The College Board and Harvard University. Conference faculty included senior admissions representatives from **Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Brown, MIT, Harvey Mudd, Claremont McKenna, University of Pennsylvania,** and the **University of Michigan.** Over 100 counselors and admissions officers discussed current admissions issues, including college rankings, standardized testing, financial aid, and affirmative action. CDI gratefully acknowledges Harvard's admission staff, especially **Dean William R. Fitzsimmons** and **Rosemary Green.**



## Contact

**By mail:**  
**Collegiate Directions, Inc.**  
**4833 Rugby Avenue**  
**Suite 301**  
**Bethesda, MD 20814**

**By phone:**  
**301-907-4877**

**By fax:**  
**301-907-7609**

**By e-mail:**  
**tatta@collegiatedirections.org**

**On the Web:**  
**www.collegiatedirections.org**



# Milestones

## Board Update

In July, we conducted our first Annual Joint Board and Advisory Board Meeting. As part of our program, Board Member **Dr. Judy Madden** (Director, Mental Health Association/former Supervisor of School Counseling Services for Montgomery County Public Schools) conducted a presentation entitled, “Loss, Longing & Leaving: Factors Affecting College Access & Success for Immigrant Youth”. Following the presentation, **Larry Griffith** (Director of College and University Relations/VP for Higher Education Services for The College Board) facilitated a discussion about the challenges to college access and success for the growing population of immigrant youth. Many CDI Scholars are immigrants or the children of immigrants. Dr. Madden and Mr. Griffith framed the discussion to help us further understand how to best support these students.

## The Road Ahead

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| September 23   | CDI Saturday: Mock Admissions Workshop   |
| October 2      | Scholars visit Georgetown University   |
| October 4      | Site visits to Carnegie Mellon and Duquesne Universities                         |
| October 4-5    | Nina Marks’ NACAC Pre-Conference Workshop:<br><i>Ask the Deans and Directors</i> |
| October 5-7    | NACAC National Conference, Pittsburgh, PA  |
| October 10     | CDI Board Meeting  |
| October 14     | SAT Test Date  |
| October 21     | CDI Saturday: Presentation Skills and Interview Preparation                      |
| October 25     | CDI Reception  |
| November 4     | SAT Test Date  |
| November 18    | CDI Saturday: Financial Aid Workshop   |
| December 2     | SAT Test Date  |
| December 16    | CDI Saturday: Holiday Event  |
| December 24-31 | Office Closed  |



4833 Rugby Avenue  
Suite 301  
Bethesda, MD 20814