



# Milestones

Helping aspiring scholars find their way

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## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

We enter 2007 energized and grateful for the support Collegiate Directions, Inc. has received during our inaugural year. With the help of our Board and our network, the CDI Scholars Program continues to build a strong foundation upon which to grow. The Class of 2007 has done a wonderful job managing all aspects of the college application process. Throughout the fall, Scholars continued weekly test prep taught by CDI and Marks Counseling Associates staff (see Program Spotlight, page 3). The Scholars have also enjoyed planned cultural and social events, including a recent visit to the Washington National Cathedral.



CDI Scholars Class of 2007

To help Scholars manage the multifaceted college application process, our CDI team conducted daily individual and group sessions at the students' high schools, in the CDI office, and in the public library. We worked late into the evenings and on weekends, but our time was well spent. The Scholars have submitted 101 applications to 61 colleges and universities across the country. Our counseling philosophy is to help the Scholars highlight their strengths, interests, and needs, and with these in mind to identify colleges which offer the best overall fit. We also review choices with each Scholar's parents, to ensure family support for the final college list.

For me, the most rewarding moments were not limited to direct interaction with the Scholars, but included drafting the letters of recommendation, which we sent with every college application, in the early morning hours at my favorite coffee shop. These quiet moments allowed me to reflect upon the Scholars' accomplishments as I wrote about how we at CDI believed each of the Scholars would impact their college communities in the coming years.

Our two Montgomery County partners, Walter Johnson and Wheaton High Schools, are now nominating students for the next group of CDI Scholars. I look forward to introducing the Class of 2008 in the next newsletter, as well as sharing news about college enrollment plans for the Class of 2007. We are in for an exciting season!

Warmly,

Theresa O. Atta

## 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

## Destination CDI

CDI Counselors visited more than 40 colleges and universities last year with two goals: 1) to introduce the CDI Scholars Program, and 2) to explore campus programs and services that could adequately support Scholars, should they matriculate. CDI staff, in turn, hosted many college representatives during their busy travel season this past fall. Many thanks to the following admissions representatives who visited CDI and/or met with the Scholars:

Sept. 11: **Williams College**

Fran Lapidus  
Lili Rodriguez

Sept. 15: **Harvey Mudd College**

Peter Osgood

Sept. 19: **Tufts University**

Isabel Casariego

Sept. 20: **Smith College**

Deedee Baldvins

Sept. 26: **Wellesley College**

Sarah Jean Kelly

Sept. 29: **Bucknell University**

Tim Johnson

Oct. 11: **Connecticut College**

Scott Alexander  
Tran Kim-Senior

Oct. 18: **Illinois Institute of Technology**

Lauren Joyce

We offer a special acknowledgement to the admissions officers who took time to meet with us during the annual NACAC Conference in Pittsburgh, PA:

Oct. 6: **Northwestern University**

F. Sheppard Shanley

**Bates College**

Wylie Mitchell  
Marylyn Scott

**Carnegie Mellon University**

Cornell LeSane

## Colleges Host CDI Scholars

At **Tufts University**, the Office of Admissions is deeply committed to reaching out to underrepresented groups. With this goal, Tufts University invited five CDI Scholars and Theresa Atta to participate in their fall diversity overnight program. This year, the Telescope Program included more than 200 prospective students from Massachusetts, New York City, Washington, DC, Maryland, and St. Louis. Participants, hosted by current undergraduates, attended university classes and student-organized panel discussions.

Concurrently, Tufts hosted 20 guidance counselors in the Synthesis Counselor Immersion Program. This Program highlighted the benefits of Tufts University so that counselors could convey the message to their students. The Synthesis Program included simulated classes featuring diverse topics, from contemporary Mexican artists to recommendation writing, and highlighted Tufts' world-class Engineering Department. Counselors were also invited to a reception at the home of President Lawrence Boscow, with faculty members, administrators, and student leaders. CDI thanks the Tufts Admissions team, especially Director Lee Coffin, Davin Berquist, and Darryl Tiggler.

CDI also gratefully acknowledges **Bryn Mawr College** for hosting a CDI Scholar during the MOSAIC Multicultural Program, and **Wellesley College** for hosting two students during the ALANA Fall Open House. Tufts, Bryn Mawr and Wellesley paid the full travel, food and lodging expenses for these trips. Such generosity helps to expand opportunities for students who would not otherwise have the means to visit these prestigious institutions.

## CDI President: In the Community

While hands-on personal interaction with the Scholars and their families is the core of our grassroots work, CDI is actively engaged in the larger national discourse regarding college access opportunities for underrepresented communities. In the past months, **CDI President, Nina Marks**, has participated in several discussions about current trends in college admissions.

Last June, Nina was interviewed by *The Washington Post's* education writer, **Jay Matthews**, for Post Radio. In October, she facilitated the National Association of College Admissions Counselors' (NACAC) annual Pre-Conference Workshop entitled "Ask the Deans & Directors", an interactive panel discussion. The workshop faculty included Deans of Admissions from Princeton University, the University of Michigan, the University of Virginia and Bowdoin College. Later in the month, she spoke on the current college admissions landscape at an educational event hosted by **Elizabeth and Michael Galvin**. In December, Nina and Harvard Professor and author **Christopher Avery** appeared on PBS's *Newshour with Jim Lehrer*, to discuss college admissions, focusing on policies which might affect underrepresented populations. For a transcript of Nina's remarks on the college admissions landscape, please visit our web site at [www.collegiatedirections.org](http://www.collegiatedirections.org). For the audio, video and transcript of Nina's *Lehrer* appearance, visit [www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/july-dec06/admission\\_12-15.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/july-dec06/admission_12-15.html).



## Program Spotlight: Study Skills

Contributed by *Nina Marks, CDI President*

As we have been working with CDI's Class of 2007 on the college application process, our focus has also been beyond admission, on college retention and success. Since last summer our team has met weekly with the Scholars, individually and in groups, to focus on learning styles and study skills. Nitin Sawhney and Dan Bloss, CDI's tutors, help the Scholars not only to confirm their grasp of specific concepts, but also to improve their overall reasoning skills and confidence. One of the students exclaimed, at the end of an intense three-hour session, "Since this tutoring started, I feel good!"

Our counselors and tutors have also offered regular writing workshops, emphasizing editing and proofreading skills. Most of our Scholars speak a language other than English at home. All are committed to improving their oral and written work. They are increasingly comfortable using the vocabulary on which they're drilled each week. One of them told us proudly that "admonish" is her new computer password. Another Scholar shone when interviewed by College Board officials and a Channel 4 TV crew, who visited Wheaton High School. He said, "CDI prepared me to present myself. I told them I have taken six APs because I know I must challenge myself by working hard and taking *rigorous* courses." He told us proudly, "I remembered to use an SAT word!"

We are delighted with early college feedback on the Scholars' applications. Some have already been offered campus visits and merit awards, others have had encouraging local interviews. Yet, as we wait for final college results, we believe the Scholars have already achieved a key goal. They have made great strides in learning how they learn. We are certain that the CDI Scholars' enhanced skills and confidence will contribute to their success, not only in college, but also in life.

## Scholars' Voices

*In the following passage, CDI Scholar Rafelin Valdez shares his thoughts on the person who most deeply influences him: his grandfather.*

I feel grateful that I have received the chance at something other families in the Dominican Republic are still fighting hard to get, which is to come to the United States. This has made me become determined to do well in school and work hard to get to college. I always do everything according to plan, such as not being absent for important appointments, completing school related projects, and doing well in my academics. What has shaped me into becoming a responsible person is that I am the oldest brother with two younger siblings, and I help to take care of them. I used to help my mother put my brothers to sleep by rocking them in a rocking chair, giving them their bottles, and even changing diapers.

In the future, I know I will be a person who will help out family members who are not as successful, or who did not have the opportunities I did. My grandfather once told me to accept the things I cannot change, but to have the courage to change the things I can. I think that if I keep that in mind, it can help me through the good and bad times that I will face. I wish to become the type of man my grandfather is today: a man who has worked his entire life to raise and support his family, a man who worked hard to make sure his kids would receive a better future and a better education than he did. I know that if I stay focused and humble, I can achieve my goals of getting into the right college, being successful, and having a good career after I graduate. Most importantly, I hope I will not look back and be disappointed by what I did not do, but rather be proud of everything I have worked hard to accomplish.



*Rafelin (left) and Nitin hard at work*



*Merab and Kevin (left) with Dan*



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# Milestones

## The Road Ahead



*Scholars visit the Washington National Cathedral*

January 22	Financial Aid Meeting and Interview Preparation
January 23	CDI Staff Retreat
February 11	College Goal Sunday @ Wheaton High School
February 15-17	Wesleyan University Seminar
February TBD	Washington Shakespeare Festival Event
March TBD	Private Tour of US Capitol Building
April 2-9	Montgomery County Schools Spring Break
April 14	Cherry Blossom Festival on the National Mall
April 18-19	Montgomery County NACAC College Fair
April TBD	Tea with College Admissions Representatives
April 22-24	PCACAC Spring Conference
May 1	Students' Response Date to Colleges



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