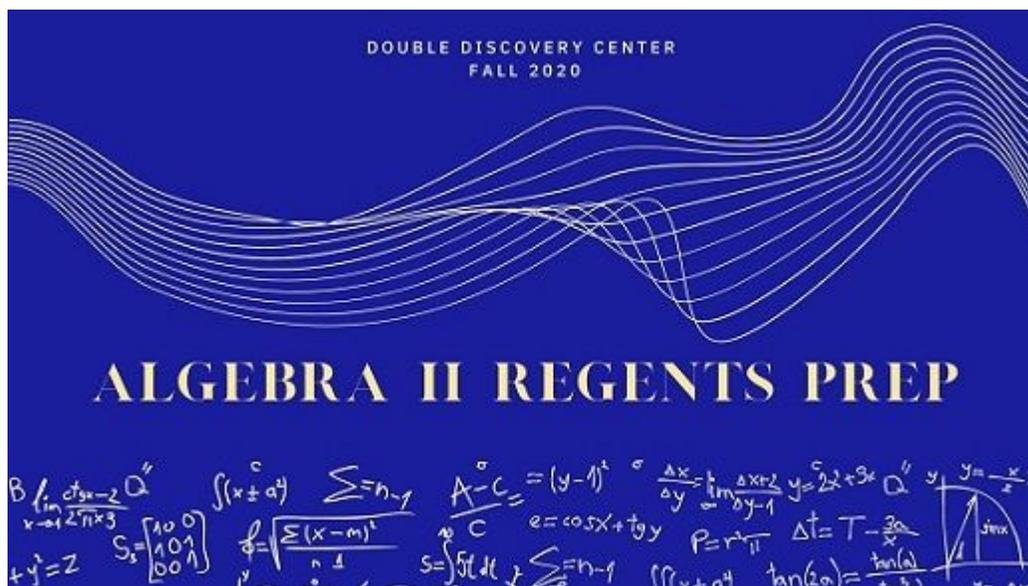




The Roger Lehecka Double Discovery Center

Getting community youth to, through, and beyond college



In this September 2020 "Back to School" Issue:

- ***So Excited to Be Back!* Reflections from Students, Instructors and Counselors**
- **Highlights of DDC's Fall 2020 Program!**

***So Excited to Be Back!* Reflections from Students, Instructors and Counselors**

On September 9, DDC welcomed over 80 students, instructors and counselors at its first of two virtual town hall events to kick-off another year of program activities! During the session, staff reviewed the wide array of fall courses, schedules, and extracurricular events. The enthusiasm and sense of community was palpable as students and instructors shared their excitement about starting another semester at DDC. Here are a few of the "shout-outs" that opened the session:

- *I will be learning new things and meeting new people,* Betzie R., student
- *I want to welcome you to my class, come join us, I cannot wait to hear your voice,* Chiara F., DDC Fellow & Instructor, Doctoral Student at Teachers College, Columbia University
- *I want to learn how to write different types of essays,* Mamota M., student
- *I am looking forward to meeting my students,* Yarisell H., DDC Counselor
- *I am excited about Code Nation, how to make websites, apps and games,* Alyza T., student

Throughout the evening, students expressed eagerness to see their DDC friends again, dive into the courses, and even hang out with everyone on Zoom!

The DDC staff wishes everyone – students, instructors, tutors, and mentors – a brilliant semester!

Highlights of DDC's Fall 2020 Program!

We are applying lessons learned from spring and summer 2020 to adapt our fall activities. One glance at the [Fall 2020 Course Catalog](#) explains students and instructors' anticipation. DDC is kicking-off this academic year with many exciting and relevant courses.

There are 21 *Academic Enrichment* courses that include 9 Humanities, 8 STEM, 2 Arts and 2 Writing. They will be taught by 15 instructors including 5 Columbia University doctoral students, 1 Ph.D. from Harvard (Biology), and 1 Ph.D. from Columbia (Organic Chemistry). We also are launching two new programs focused on financial literacy and career talks in business:

- 9th and 10th graders: DDC's financial literacy course, developed through a generous grant from the Macquarie Group, begins. The course specifically addresses the financial challenges of low-income and first-generation college-going youth, including the consequences of college debt, which can persist for years and limit young people's life choices long after graduation.
- 12th graders and DDC alumni: In partnership with Columbia Business School (CBS), DDC will offer a six-session workshop series, *Achieving Success in Personal Finance*, led by MBA students at CBS. Workshops will focus on money management strategies and through the *Career Talks*, students and instructors will discuss the nuts & bolts of career pathways in business. It is a great opportunity for participants to learn from the various career and workplace experiences of people in the field and to start building their professional network.

We refined our Professional Development (PD) activities to more effectively develop our instructors' pedagogical efficacy for teaching in this new and prolonged remote learning environment in two important ways:

First, we are building instructors' capacity to design and implement Project-Based Learning curricula. In the PBL classroom model, the project is the vehicle used to teach specific knowledge and skills and learning activities are long-term, interdisciplinary, and student-centered. The integration of PBL into our courses will help maximize student engagement and learning.

Second, studies show that humanizing online learning and making students feel connected and emotionally engaged with the class is essential for productive learning. With this in mind, our research-based PD sessions have focused on student engagement in the virtual space, culturally responsive pedagogy, data-driven instruction, and actionable feedback.

In addition, to help our students effectively manage their screen time since all students will be doing some or all of their school classes remotely, we have adjusted the length of our class periods from 120 minutes to 75 minutes. Wednesdays will be devoted to our College Prep class.

College and Career Success (CCS)

DDC will run seven College & Career Success Classes taught by our College Counselors – including a class dedicated to our 7th & 8th graders. In collaboration with Columbia

Admissions, we will offer workshops on financial aid and the personal statement. Other workshops will focus on a range of topics, including the variety of education opportunity programs available in New York State for academically and economically disadvantaged New York Residents.

DDC's mission of getting high school students to, through, and beyond college hits home during these challenging times, says Leticia Vasquez, Assistant Director, Upward Bound. It has made it even more essential for all of us to go the extra mile and extend as many resources and opportunities as possible to guide our students to their "best fit" college.

Because DDC's support for its students does not stop at high school graduation, we are launching our first College Persistence Class series for alumni-in-college. Classes will cover graduate school explorations, careers & the job market, equity & inclusion in the workplace, and development of professional skills. Participating alumni also have access to individual advisement meetings and college writing tutorial sessions.

Now more than ever, says Marlin Santana, Assistant Director, Talent Search, it is important that we check-in with our current college students to make sure they have all the support necessary to persist on their journeys towards higher education success! I am excited to create a space this semester where our undergraduates can ask questions and explore resources that they can apply in real time.

Healthy Minds and Bodies (HMB)

Research shows that social emotional learning (SEL) empowers students to do better in their academic pursuits because it equips them with the knowledge and skills necessary to manage challenges as well as to set and achieve productive goals. The emotional devastation caused by the current crisis, particularly in low-income neighborhoods, has dramatically increased the need for SEL programs for DDC students and their families.

This fall, HMB will deepen DDC's continuing efforts to cultivate community and foster a sense of belonging by offering several initiatives:

- For students, two mini courses: *Stress Less* and *Happiness 101*; along with *Feel Good Fridays* and *Move It! Physical Activity Breaks* between classes on Saturdays.
- For parents: *Town Halls* on a range of topics to help parents; and *College Parent Series*, to help parents support their children through the grueling college and financial aid application processes.

These activities are in addition to HMB's ongoing individual and small group counseling sessions. Kristan Rosenthal, Assistant Director, Healthy Minds and Bodies, stresses, *with this crisis, teenagers are feeling isolated and anxious about their futures. The HMB team wants to be a source of consistent support for DDC students and families. We listen to their experiences and strive to meet their needs while offering hope and excitement along their journeys.*

DDC welcomes another year to ready community youth to go to, through and beyond college!

Partner with us to offer the gift of education! To help fund our programs and expand our outreach, click here: ["Change a Life"](#)

Calling all DDC Alumni and Former Volunteers!
We want to hear from you! Click [HERE](#) to reconnect

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