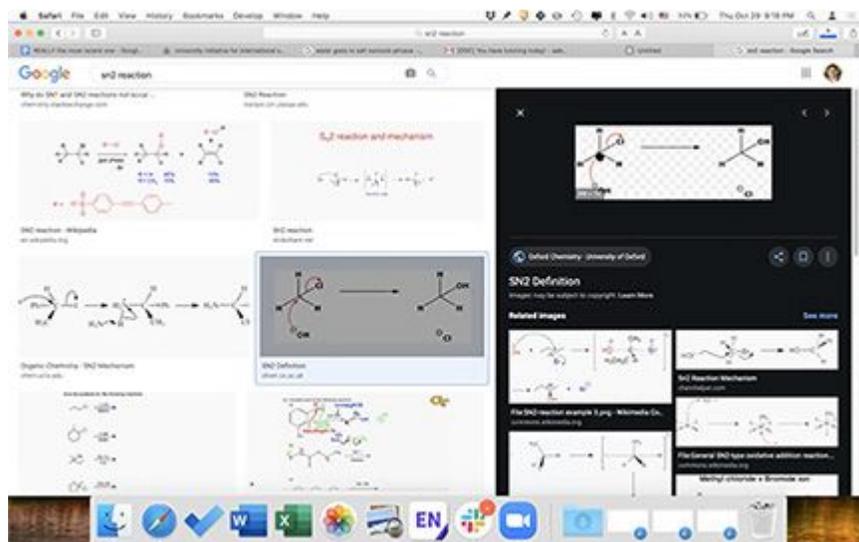




The Roger Lehecka Double Discovery Center

Getting community youth to, through, and beyond college



In this December 2020 issue:

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DDC's First Holiday Gift Box Event: Thank You for Your Support!

Thank you for your tremendous outpouring of generosity! On Friday December 18, in partnership with you and Columbia Community Impact, Columbia Community Service, and Columbia Dining Services, we distributed Holiday Gift Boxes to some 50 DDC students and their families to celebrate the season. Boxes included food for a feast – a turkey, plantains, vegetables and an apple pie – and games like Monopoly, Jenga, Incoherent, and Boggle for the entire family to enjoy. We thank each and every one of you who made this very special event possible!

Thank you for everything. I am so appreciative for all of the work you have done, especially in these difficult times. Everything I brought home is useful, thank you for existing, DDC! ~ DDC Parent

Reflections on DDC's Accomplishments in a Year of Unprecedented Challenges

Recent data shows that remote learning is exacerbating the nation's persistent educational gaps, especially in high-poverty communities. In addition, college enrollments declined this fall: the number of high school graduates going to college immediately after high school fell nearly 22% compared to last year.

Last March, when the world turned upside down and schools switched to remote classes, DDC immediately adapted. Most notably, we identified effective distance learning strategies and shared them with our instructors through professional development sessions so they could integrate best practices into their virtual classrooms. We increased our tutorial sessions to facilitate students' access to academic support. Lastly, we expanded our social-emotional interventions to help them cope with the trauma and anxieties that followed the stay-at-home orders. These initiatives addressed the evolving needs of our students and they responded with resilience and a persistent commitment to their education – our young people kept their academic momentum going!

Here are some highlights of DDC's accomplishments amidst these unprecedented challenges.

1. Academic Enrichment

- DDC expanded its academic offerings to 22 courses, the largest number ever, to continue introducing students as early as 9th grade to different academic subjects and experiences – from the art of debate, to data science to urban planning. This diversity of experiences plays a crucial role in their college preparation. It allows them to develop their self-awareness and interests early so they can incorporate them in their college and career plans.
- DDC offered writing workshops to students and alumni – a pilot for the launch of its dedicated Writing Center in 2021 – to help them develop this critical skill. See our [video](#) announcing our writing services.
- We increased the number of our DDC Fellows from two to five Columbia doctoral students.
- Columbia students volunteering as tutors increased their availability for remote sessions. This translated into an average of three hours of tutoring per day for six days per week, starting Spring 2020.
- DDC joined the New York City Urban Debate League – the largest debate league in the nation – so that students enrolled in *The Art of Debate* class can compete in the 2021 high school debate tournaments.

2. College & Career Success

DDC students:

- We organized and hosted several career panels including *Career Exploration with Uncommon Goods* and *Breaking Down The Myths of Career Journeys*, in partnership with Uncommon Goods, a Brooklyn-based corporation that sells unique items from all over the world. The panels featured different careers within the corporation and exposed career myths such as “There is one perfect career for me,” “You have to stay at a certain job no matter what,” and “You can't have a career that's not related to your major.” This partnership was made possible by DDC alumnus and Uncommon Goods

staff member, Solomon Ademuwagun.

- In partnership with Columbia Business School (CBS), DDC offered a six-session series on finance and career talks in business – *Achieving Success in Personal Finance* – led by MBA students at CBS.
- As of December 17, 195 DDC seniors have submitted some 426 college applications to institutions such as University of Pennsylvania, New York University, Baruch College and Yale University. Make sure to check our spring newsletter to find out where DDC students decided to enroll!
- This month, four DDC students received college acceptances with four-year full scholarships! Next fall, Kumayl A. will be attending Columbia University, Iovanni R., the University of Chicago, Thai S., Brown University and Jasmeiry B., University of Pennsylvania.

Congratulations! What a way to end the fall 2020 semester!

DDC alumni:

- Our alumni now have access to college persistence classes, tutoring assistance and individual counseling hours. In addition, DDC partnered with uAspire, a nonprofit focused on college affordability, to provide them with one-on-one support and resources to help them navigate the complex financial aid process throughout their college journeys.

3. Healthy Minds & Bodies (HMB)

- HMB saw the demand for its counseling services almost double this fall compared to the same period in 2019. Last year, the team worked with 16 students and held 23 individual counseling sessions, this year, the team worked with 23 students and held 47 individual counseling sessions.
- HMB increased classes focused on health and wellness and organized several community events. They also launched a new protocol of Wellness Checks to contact our students on a weekly basis if they are attending school on a remote only schedule to ensure they feel supported and are not overwhelmed by loneliness.
- HMB set up a modest emergency fund to help DDC families navigate the financial hardships of the Covid crisis so that their children's college journeys could continue uninterrupted.
- In addition, HMB distributed students 26 laptops and 14 hotspots with one-year internet service agreements so that they would have access to the necessary technology to stay engaged and on track with their remote classes. This project was made possible by a grant from United Way of New York.

In this year of overwhelming challenges and immense suffering for so many, we are even more grateful for the support and allyship of our DDC community. You have empowered us to elevate the many ways we stand with and support our students. With your help, we have been able to not only care for their needs today, but also to continue preparing them for college and the better tomorrow that we see on the horizon.

Believe it! The day is coming when we will all again gather in 306 Lerner Hall – talking, hugging and laughing around the best pizza and snacks ever!

Until then, we wish you a healthy, safe, and joyful 2021!

Meet the DDC Challenge: Double our Discovery, Double our Impact!

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

- Meet us on [Facebook](#)
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