

A College Path for Every Student

College Summit thrives in the National Capital Region



Antoine Tate has big dreams. He wants to be successful like his heroes Richard Wright and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. But standing in the way of his dreams were his life circumstances—growing up in a tough neighborhood where far too many African American men have few good options. ¶ “Do you ever wonder about where you may end up in the future?...I have thought about the worst and best things,” he wrote during a College Summit summer workshop several years ago. “I have worried about living half my life in jail...I have worried about living in poverty, but worst of all, I have thought about accidentally giving my life to God at a young age. College is the key as well as the hope.”

THANKS TO COLLEGE SUMMIT,

Tate and thousands of other young people in the National Capital Region are living their dreams of attending college and opening up their futures. Tate, who received a full scholarship for college from a man who read about him in a piece about College Summit in the *New York Times*, is now a sophomore at Penn State University. He is majoring in Communications and actively involved in campus life, having joined the Black Student Union, the Multicultural Recruitment Team, the Debate Team, and the Chancellor's Special Program.



Antoine Tate

I never expected that a young, African American male like me would enter a new environment and experience a sensational program that he would never forget...My experience there has helped me mold my future," says Tate.

"I always thought that I was destined for great things, but College Summit has definitely helped me BELIEVE that I am destined for great things.

The Investment Partner: College Summit

College Summit is a national nonprofit organization that partners with schools and districts to strengthen a college-going culture and increase college enrollment rates so that all students graduate career and college-ready.

Founded in 1993 by J. B. Schramm in the basement of a low-income housing project in Washington, DC, the program was created to change the trajectory of talented young people like Tate that Schramm was seeing. Too many of them were "graduating" from his teen center to the streets. Earlier in his career, while working his way through Harvard Divinity School as a Freshman Advisor to undergraduates, Schramm had seen the hunger colleges have for low-income talent and their inability to connect with this talent. He became determined to help admissions offices see students, like Antoine Tate, the way he saw them. He enlisted the best writing instructor he'd seen in graduate school and the finest urban youth worker he knew. Together, they designed a model to help bright, low-income students who, with the right support during their senior year, could make a successful postsecondary transition and propel their lives (and communities) in a positive direction.

The Challenge

Although College Summit began in DC, the model didn't get the traction in this region that it got in other parts of the country. Schramm's network of contacts in other areas was stronger, and partnerships with school systems were more accessible elsewhere. However, all the time he was growing College Summit nationally, Schramm's desire to foster and nurture a college-growing culture for the thousands of talented children in low-income communities in the National Capital Region intensified. He wanted to bring the program home to the District and surrounding jurisdictions, but like Tate, he and his team faced challenges and needed help to make their organizational dreams a reality.

Some of the challenges the organization faced in the National Capital Region were:

- Recruiting the right leader for College Summit NCR;
- Creating a specific strategy to build a local presence of scale that would bring College Summit's successful model to thousands of young people who needed it;
- Navigating the complex maze of public school and higher educational systems to forge the partnerships that are so critical to the success of College Summit's model; and

“What sets VPP apart from all the other funders that I am familiar with is the second ‘P’ in VPP — Partners. VPP understands it takes networks at many different levels to successfully pull the levers and align the different institutions so that system change can be possible. With VPP, we’ve got a partner who doesn’t just give us guidance and strategy but works its network.”

—J.B. Schramm, founder of College Summit

- Enhancing the organization’s infrastructure nationally and locally to deliver its programs successfully.

The Action

Venture Philanthropy Partners began working with College Summit in 2004, initially providing funding and support to the national organization to develop an organization-wide strategic plan that included expansion into the Washing-



ton, DC area. Once this planning process was completed, College Summit could begin to create a local presence.

Throughout the life of the four-year partnership, VPP invested \$2.1 million as well as provided strategic guidance and counsel to help the organization navigate through the local landscape. VPP’s financial investment and strategic assistance was focused on the following actions:

- Recruiting a talented leader to run College Summit National Capital Region;
- Developing an implementation plan to build the organization’s presence locally;
- Forging partnerships with the Prince George’s County Public School System, DC Public School System, Morgan State College, and other Historically Black Colleges;
- Building out the technology infrastructure, specifically to deploy software that the College Summit staff, students, educators and others use for college research and applications and tracking student data; and
- Recruiting an Advisory Board to nurture the growth of College Summit in the National Capital Region.

The Results – Transformation

Antoine Tate would not have gotten his chance to go to college, had College Summit not come to his Prince George’s County high school. VPP’s investment in and strategic assistance to College Summit helped bring the model to the region, and more specifically, to students like Tate. J.B. Schramm and his team embraced the rigor of the planning process and were committed to continuous improvement. As a result, not only did Schramm fulfill his own dream to have a National Capital Region affiliate, but he was also able to make important changes that improved the effectiveness of operations for College Summit throughout the country.

Results for Students

From 2006 to 2009, more than 5,000 high school seniors in the region like Antoine Tate have successfully navigat-

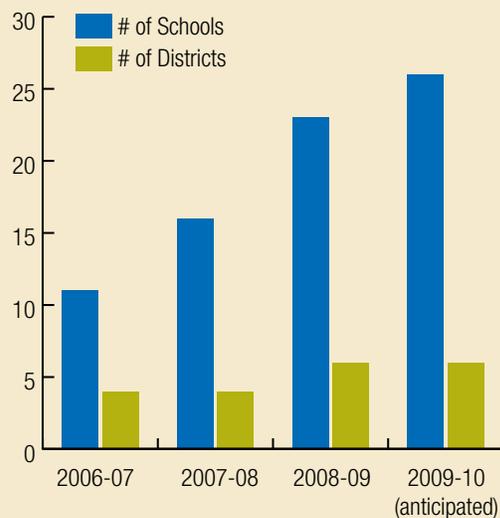
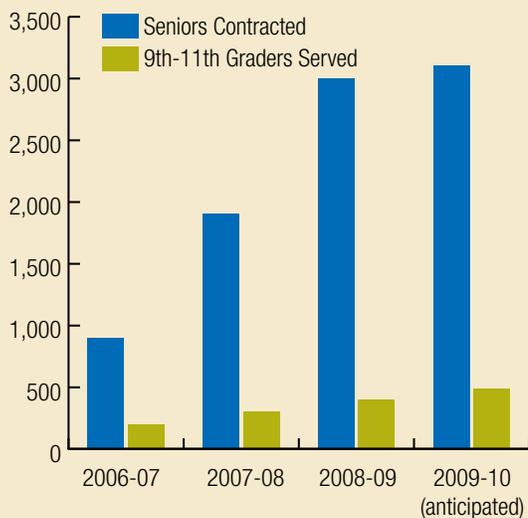
ed through the college application and preparation process and are attending and graduating from two or four year colleges. More significantly, in the same period, College Summit NCR has more than doubled the number of schools it currently partners with and developed relationships with new school districts to be able to reach a greater number of high school students. It also has refined its model to begin working with students earlier instead of waiting until the senior year. Specific results include:

- A three-year partnership with Prince George’s Public Schools to serve more than 3,000 students through 2010
- Partnerships with Alexandria and Arlington Public Schools
- Partnerships with the Duke Ellington School for the Performing Arts, the first DC Public School

“This school year the NCR is serving 7,000 students, and knowing the stories of our students and the impact we’ve had literally brings tears to my eyes. To lead our fantastic NCR team on this incredible journey has been an honor and one that would not have been as successful without the vision, generosity, and support of VPP.”

—Donna Fleming, Executive Director, College Summit NCR

College Summit, NCR Scale and Reach



that is not a charter school to invite College Summit to work with its students

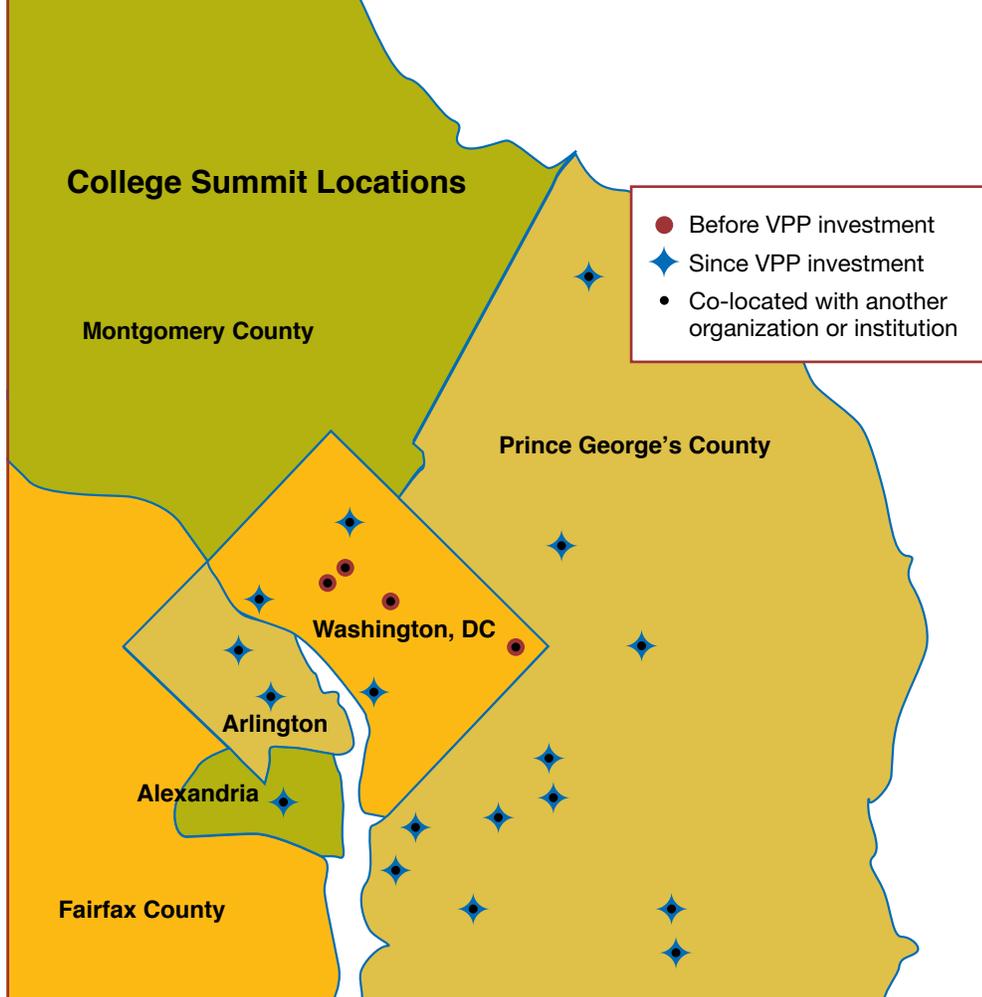
- Partnerships with several DC Charter Schools
- Steady annual growth of college enrollment of participating students

Organization Results

A Strong Leader for the National Capital Region

The linchpin for the success of College Summit NCR was finding the right leader to run the local organization. Initially, the thought was that the leader for the National Capital Region would be at the same level as other College Summit executive directors around the country. However, after many hours of discussion with VPP during the planning process, it became clear that the National Capital Region required a different kind of leader with specific skills due to the complexity of navigating and managing across three jurisdictions.

With VPP's support, College Summit engaged the services of professional recruiter Korn Ferry to conduct a thorough search that led them to Donna Fleming. She had an extensive private sector career, including managing an executive team for a government contractor that grew to have 300 employees and earn \$30 million in revenues. She had also served on a number of nonprofit boards and had been an active volunteer.



“When I took the Executive Director position, my first at a nonprofit, I came in hoping to make a difference for students who just needed opportunity to overcome their obstacles. For me, it was personal because as a teenage mother, I knew what it felt like to have the statistics stacked against you. But like so many of our students, I was able to rise above it and succeed. Now looking back over the past three years, everything that we’ve been able to put into place is just astounding.”

Not only did College Summit have a capable leader for its Washington, DC regional office, it also gained new insight into the relationships between its national and local organizations. Previously, program leaders and partnership managers each reported in to two different levels. Through the plan-

ning process, it became clear that the organization would have more success by unifying the structure. Changes were made, not just for the new affiliate in the National Capital Region, but throughout the entire organization.

Forging Strong Partnerships

Building a partnership with the Prince George's County Public Schools jump-started College Summit NCR's growth. The networks and relationships of VPP partners in the community were instrumental in helping the organization build that partnership. With the assistance of VPP, College Summit was able to identify and meet with the right people in Prince George's County Schools who were receptive to the organization's approach. The partnership with the Prince George's County Public Schools is the



“We have learned so much from working with College Summit about what it takes to help a national organization scale out on a regional level. JB, Donna and their teams at all levels are doing incredible work in responding to the needs of school districts by creating a college-going culture throughout our local school systems and their growth has been phenomenal, benefitting thousands of young people in our region.”

—Carol Thompson Cole, President and CEO, VPP

first fully funded three-year district-wide contract with a public school system in the organization’s almost 20-year history.

VPP was also helpful in connecting College Summit to college partners. Although over 85% of the students participating in College Summit in the NCR are African American, College Summit did not have a partnership with a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) either in the NCR or nationally. Through VPP partner Shirley Marcus Allen, College Summit was able to build a partnership with Morgan State University. The University hosted a summer workshop for three years, costing the University in excess of \$20,000 annually. It paved the way for other partnerships with HBCU’s in the region.

Building Out the Technology Infrastructure

A third aspect of VPP’s investment was helping the organization create an effective online tool for staff, students, educators and others to use for college research and applications as well as to track student data. The tool that the organization was using previously was cumbersome and not user friendly. Two technology companies had created a proprietary product—one provided the college research and applications component and the other tracked student data. With VPP’s investment of \$800,000 on the table, College Summit was able to move forward with negotiations for the development of a new product that brought research/applications together with student data. That product, CSNAV, was successfully piloted in Prince George’s County and later rolled out to all of College Summit’s sites nationally.

Creating an Advisory Board

VPP’s networks were effective in helping connect College Summit NCR leadership with business, educational and other leaders to serve on its Advisory Board. Through these members, College Summit continues to deepen and expand its relationships in the community, identify new sources of revenue to sustain and nurture its growth, and provide sage counsel and guidance to Donna Fleming and her team.

“VPP has opened doors in the community. When I say I want to meet someone, [VPP’s] Rolodex is available to us. Whether it’s in the private sector, foundations, or colleges and universities, VPP genuinely opens doors for us.”

—Donna Fleming, Executive Director,
College Summit NCR

Invest Locally, Impact Nationally

Although VPP’s investment was focused on the National Capital Region, both organizations were pleased to discover benefits for the national organization as well. “The planning process was supposed to be about the region, but the process ultimately helped the organization reconfigure its management nation wide to allow regional affiliates to function more effectively and efficiently,” said Shirley Marcus Allen, the VPP partner who worked closely with College Summit. As the investment progressed, stronger capacity and innovations at the NCR site continued to influence the national organization. The technology solution that was developed and piloted locally eventually spread to all sites. Based on feedback from a school partner and

with support from the VPP investment, College Summit also created a pilot model in the National Capital Region that extended the program from senior year to freshman year, called the “whole school” model. The organization is considering extending this new approach through other sites where possible. The relationship with VPP has also allowed College Summit to demonstrate a track record with high engagement funders to other potential philanthropic partners, resulting in support from the Deaconess Foundation, among others. Overall, College Summit’s data showed growth happened at a rate of 1200% in the NCR, compared to an average of 800% in other regions, a factor they attribute to VPP’s involvement.

Two Journeys

In a sense, the journeys of College Summit NCR and Antoine Tate mirror each other. College Summit has found its footing, mapped its direction, and is expanding its reach and impact as a result of its partnership with Venture Philanthropy Partners. And Antoine Tate is finding his path in the world as a result of his involvement with College Summit.

KEY INFORMATION

- > Investment duration:
2004 – 2009
- > **\$2,126,542** invested
- > **2,438** more children served
(609% increase)
- > Revenue has increased **\$690,000 to \$1.4 million** during investment period
- > **\$10,000** leveraged funding
- > **19** new school partners

“When I think about it, nothing can describe my dynamic freshman year at Penn State! Because of my experiences [with College Summit], I have a better understanding of the meaning of adulthood...So far, I’m headed in the right direction.”

—Antoine Tate



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