On Campus

Double Discovery Program Marks 50 Years

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Joel Klein and Roger Lehecka

Columbia’s Double Discovery Center celebrated fifty years of helping local high-school students prepare for college with an anniversary gala this past September.

The program was founded in 1965 by a group of Columbia and Barnard undergraduates who wanted to help the underserved schools in the surrounding community. Since then, the Double Discovery Center has worked with more than fifteen thousand young people and dramatically increased high-school graduation and college-enrollment rates among local low-income and first-generation high schoolers.

In recognition of their contributions to the Double Discovery Center’s creation and success, Roger Lehecka ’67CC, ’74GSAS and Joel Klein ’67CC, ’88HON received the James P. Shenton Awards, the center’s most esteemed honor. Lehecka, an American studies professor at Columbia and a former Columbia College dean of students, was one of the center’s founders. Klein, who served as the chancellor of the New York City Department of Education for eight years, is the CEO of Amplify and the executive vice president of News Corp.

The anniversary celebration, which included a silent auction and remarks from Columbia College dean James Valentini, raised more than $350,000. An anonymous donor also gave two million dollars to rename the center in Roger Lehecka’s honor and to endow the center’s Freedom and Citizenship Program, which gives rising high-school seniors the chance to take part in a program modeled after Columbia College’s Core Curriculum. “The name ‘Double Discovery’ came from our understanding that work like this would teach us at least as much as it would teach the students,” said Lehecka. “For many of us, it changed our lives pretty dramatically.”



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