

SM Faculty Take Part in National Diversity Practitioners Institute (NDPI) 2016

Earlier this summer, five St. Mark's faculty members participated in the National Diversity Practitioners Institute (NDPI) formerly known as the National Diversity Directors Institute (NDDI), at St. Andrew's School in Potomac, MD.

Assistant Head of School/Dean of Faculty Samantha Brennan, Director of Community & Equity Loris Adams, Director of Counseling Services Jennifer Taylor, and Director of Wellness Carl Corazzini all attended the three-day NDPI event, while Associate Director of Admission & Financial Aid Rohan Arjun served on the NDPI faculty. This was the third year in a row that adults from the St. Mark's community had attended the Institute. This year, St. Mark's was the school with the second most participants.



Designed for those with responsibilities for aiding the equity and justice initiatives in their schools, the three-day program provided a framework for engaging in best practices, giving participating educators an opportunity to plan their diversity efforts at their respective schools with support from institute faculty throughout the year with a formal mentoring program. It also enables ongoing networking and resource sharing among members.

"NDPI was a fantastic journey with wonderful people," said Loris Adams. "It was confirmation to see St. Mark's so well represented and gave me an opportunity to bond with some of my new colleagues."

Adams noted that "the overall theme of the conference - In the Midst of the Storm - was grounding for me because, as a woman of color in a time so wrought with racial tension, I have felt just this way. The NDPI team did an excellent job in helping us make sense of a challenging time to be the best we can be for each other and our students and families."

"As an Admission Professional, who is passionate about diversity work and considers himself a diversity practitioner," said Rohan Arjun, "I am proud to work at an institution where all of the adults in the community are encouraged to do this work. After all, diversity and inclusion is everybody's work. It is evident that St. Mark's shares this value and is willing to invest in building capacity for this work, not only by the sheer number of faculty members from St. Mark's who have attended NDPI the last three summers, but also the variety of titles and responsibilities that they each hold. St. Mark's is now one summer and four diversity practitioners closer to being a truly inclusive community for all members of our community no matter how they choose to identify."

Significant for Adams, a veteran educator beginning her first year as St. Mark's Director of Community & Equity, was "the exploration of the evolution of the educational and pedagogical model in the US from Horace Mann and John Dewey to Sonia Nieto and Bell Hooks.

Multicultural and inclusive pedagogy is ingrained in the foundation of our educational system, and is not simply a new 21st-century learning trend. As Horace Mann stated:

[The Common] school [should] mitigate class conflict, circumvent anarchy, enhance civic education, and advance morality.

SM Director of Wellness Carl Corazzini most effectively summed up his time at the Institute. "NDPI was an excellent educational experience," he said. "It opened my eyes to many conversations that must be had, not only within St Marks, but our nation, as well."