

Be Your Best Self

“CWE is an intellectual oasis and I’ve realized here that my life is being lived in each moment. I’ve learned something new and in every new way I find ways to challenge myself.”



Owner, Play by the Park Preschool Class of 2017

B.A. Interdisciplinary Arts & Science
Concentration: History, Politics & Society
Honors: Member of Alpha Sigma Lambda Society (2016) and
Ada Shepard Award and Quest Award (2016)
Resides in: Brooklyn, NY

Lavoya Woods-Dionne

LaVoya Woods-Dionne has been teaching preschool for 10 years and feels that by giving her students the freedom to play, they become inspired and self-directed. Four years ago, she opened an Outdoor Education, a Reggio-Inspired Preschool in Brooklyn. It is a small operation making a big impact as it takes children into Prospect Park to teach them to find comfort with nature, their own bodies, and give them the tools to guide their own learning. “I love working with small people,” she says. “They require a lot of care and patience. Their minds are overflowing with hope and great clues about how to make it in this world.”

Woods-Dionne has won several awards at CWE as well as a Black Europe Summer School in Amsterdam, Netherlands. “Before CWE, I was feeling extremely frustrated with the lack of challenge and inspiration in my online classes. But after just one class here at CWE, I was revived and rejuvenated. This program has inspired me in incredible ways.”

This fall, she will begin her graduate school journey at the University of North Carolina, School of Social Work. She plans to become a children and family therapist and develop therapeutic solutions for children of diasporic ancestry.

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“When I decided to come back to school in 2009, I didn’t know what to study. CWE offered me the most diversity and freedom to follow my own path. It really opened a lot of doors to discover new things I was interested in and options available to me.”



Full-Time Student, Class of 2017

B.A. Interdisciplinary Arts & Science
Concentration: Literature, Communication & the Arts
B.A. Romance Languages (Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese), main campus
Recent Awards: 2014 Southern California Alumni Chapter Scholarship, The Alumni Association of The City College of New York; CWE Alumni Group Student Award 2014; and The Maria Bowen Chapin Scholarship 2012, 2014-2015
Resides in: Upper West Side

Dree-el Simmons

Dree-El Simmons grew up in both the fashion and music industries. Her mother was a top fashion stylist for major celebrities including Luther Vandross, Ashford & Simpson, Roberta Flack, and Diana Ross. At a young age, Simmons became a child performer, dabbling in acting and modeling.

For the past 20 years, Simmons has been a licensed cosmetologist, having her work appear in commercial print campaigns for international companies as well as several independent films.

In addition to working in the beauty industry, Simmons has previously worked as the head concierge for Marriott Corporation at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center. Most recently, Simmons worked 13 years in the betting industry as a betting clerk, specializing in horseracing.

Currently, Simmons is a full-time student with aspirations to travel the world in her next career endeavor. “I want to do something that will allow me to travel and directly work with people of different cultures and backgrounds. I want to take on a position that will make a difference in the long run.”

Divisional Committee on Inclusive Excellence
Division of Interdisciplinary Studies The City College of New York
at the Center for Work Education