



Sancta Sophia College

Sancta Sophia College Alumnae and Alumni Newsletter 15

Walk in wisdom towards 2010

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Sancta Sophia College Principal's Report

Dr Marie Leech, Principal

Extract from Dr Leech's address to students at Vale 2009

A tremendous effort goes into gaining a degree!

Some years ago, I gained my fifth degree and communicated the news to family overseas of the hard-earned Ph D. An uncle said: 'Wherever she's going, she's getting there by degrees'... The slightly mischievous comment prompted me to contemplate the value of gaining degrees. Does it assist in navigating everyday life? I discovered four supporting factors:



1. The Utilitarian Factor:

Economist Ross Gittens recently wrote: "As a general rule, the jobs held by the better educated and more highly skilled not only allow them to earn more over their working lives, up to \$1.5million more, but they are also cleaner, safer, less strenuous and more intellectually satisfying." And he continued: "The statistics say the more highly educated you are, the less likely you are to find yourself out of a job" – placing graduates in a privileged and fortunate place in the labour market, and hopefully prompting them to act with care and compassion for those in less comfortable and less secure roles.

2. The Enrichment Factor:

Doing a degree confers benefits associated with actually learning how to learn, how to ask challenging questions and find answers to them; how to flourish as a good citizen. The range and complexity of issues faced by the good citizen is bewildering. In a recent copy of *The Australian*, articles in the first few pages ranged across the following: climate change, stem cells, nuclear proliferation, obesity, poverty, hedge funds, broadband networks and asylum seekers. What better strategy for navigating complexity than multiple degrees in a range of disciplines, setting the foundation for understanding the complexity and interactivity of current issues. Equally crucial is the confidence and willingness to participate, to be part of the policy making and decision making process.

3. The 'Use it or Lose it' Factor:

- Recent Australian research shows that bored brains shrink faster – people who do not engage in complex mental activity over their lifetime have twice the shrinkage of those who do.
- A Finnish study following 1388 participants showed that those with low education levels, when compared with those with higher education levels, were 84% more likely to develop dementia and 85% more likely to get Alzheimer's.
- In a world characterised by busyness, there is increasing recognition of the need for deep and reflective thinking. During his Presidential campaign, Barack Obama said: "The most important thing you need to do is to have big chunks of time [during the day] when all you're doing is thinking"

A recent international conference was told that it is of little use to take up bridge at eighty – 'use it or lose it' work on the brain must begin early in life.

4. The Uplifting Factor:

The Clemente Course, introduced in Australia in recent years, provides university level instruction in the Humanities, with the award of university credits, to economically and educationally disadvantaged people, at no cost to them and in an accessible way and in a welcoming community. It is a course designed and offered to the poor and homeless, to those whose pathways have taken them far from universities. Here are some comments from those who have participated:

...People see that I have a brain because I have done a university unit. I am back in society.

...It is important because everyone always asks you first thing what you do...now I'm doing something.

The originator of the Clemente Course, Earl Shorris, recounts a student who had a reputation of responding very violently to situations; but after commencing the course, he was heard to say that his new approach to challenging situations was: "I ask myself: What would Socrates have done in this situation"...

I wish everyone moments when Socrates and others from their studies come to their aid. And a sincere wish, that wherever you go in life, you "get there by degrees".

Sancta Sophia College Council Report

Rachel Launders, Chair

The Council commenced 2009 with a significant change, as Josephine Heesh stepped down as the Chair of the Council, a role she has filled since 1999. Josephine has devoted an enormous amount of time and energy to the College in that period, guiding it through considerable change. On behalf of the Council and the College community, my sincere thanks go to Josephine for all that she has contributed during her time as the Chair of the Council.

Two long serving Council members, Anna O'Connell and Mons. John Walsh, stepped down from the Council at the start of 2009. We enjoyed a lovely afternoon tea in the Quad, with Mons. Walsh then saying Mass in the Chapel, to mark their retirement. My sincere thanks go to Anna and Mons. Walsh for the contributions they have made to the College through their participation in the Council and our committees, over many years. I do hope they will stay connected with Sancta Sophia in future years.

I am delighted to welcome three new Council members. Two are alumnae - Christine Lazzarotto (1974-1976), a partner in the law firm Sparke Helmore, and Liz Hannan (1984-1987), deputy editor of The Sun-Herald. The third is Father Danny Meagher, the parish priest at St Columba's North Leichhardt and Director of Mission and Chaplains for Catholic Care. It will be wonderful to have Liz, Christine and Danny as part of the Council.

There are a number of very interesting issues and opportunities for Sancta Sophia College at present, particularly given the current and planned developments at St Johns, and the desire within the University for more student accommodation in a variety of formats.

So, looking to the future, the Council, with Dr Leech, staff, current students, alumnae and alumni, and representatives from the University, has started a detailed strategic planning process, looking at what our students most value about Sancta Sophia and how to ensure that the College can continue to thrive in the future. This process will continue into 2010 and will no doubt give the Council much to consider as we reach the decision making stage during the first half of the year.



Emerging research supports College life

There has been much discussion, nationally and internationally, about the benefits of College life for residents, following the release of research from the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in the AUSSE Research Briefing and research from the Women's College Coalition in the United States.

ACER's key findings:

- Residential students report greater levels of individually focused support – the kind that retains students in university study.
- Residential students' learning, development and satisfaction is greater than for those who lived off campus
- Students living in residence are equally, and in many instances, more engaged than others, particularly in terms of participation in active learning and enriching experiences, their interactions with staff, and their perceptions of support.
- Differences between residential and non-residential students' engagement grew between first- and later-year cohorts, suggesting that the effects of college accumulate over time.
- Students living in residential colleges are more likely than those in the general population to be younger, in their first year of study, from a provincial area, studying full time or an international student.

"Graduates of women's colleges are significantly more likely than women who graduated from other liberal arts colleges or from public flagships to have graduate degrees," stated the Women's College Coalition based on data released in early 2008. The data is part of a longitudinal survey of alumnae of women's colleges, other liberal arts college and of public flagship universities. On a variety of factors, the survey found that the women's college alumnae rated their institutions more highly than did the women who attended coeducational institutions. Several previous studies have found that women's college students demonstrate higher levels of engagement than do students on average.

Source:

www.acer.edu.au/documents/AUSSE_BriefingVolume409.pdf

and www.sanctasophiacollege.edu.au/news/latest_news/womens-college-research.html



Sancta Sophia College Alumnae and Alumni

It has been a wonderful year of engagement with alumnae and alumni with events, reunions and fundraising. Thank you to everyone who participated in our very special and valued functions.

Sancta Sophia College Alumnae and Alumni gather for Champagne in the Quad

Over 90 Alumnae and guests caught up with old friends with bubbles and canapés at the College's first Alumnae and Alumni event of the year, Champagne in the Quad on Saturday, 28 March.



Sancta Alumnae and Alumni Faculty dinners

Members of Sancta Alumnae and Alumni attended two Faculty dinners throughout the year. Alumnae shared the experiences and wisdom gained during their professional lives. Their participation helps develop Sancta's current students into women who will shine in their chosen fields.

Sancta Alumnae and Alumni Reunions in New York and London

In early July, Sancta organised reunions for students based in New York and London. Dr Leech joined Sancta 'old girls' at the Penn Club of New York. In London, almost 20 ex-Sancta students and Dr Marie Leech gathered for drinks and a light summer buffet. Graciously hosted by ex-student Marie-Louise North and her husband Vincent, the evening was a spectacular success. "The Sancta women were amazingly interesting and nonstop talkers! The only challenge was not having enough time – midnight arrived all too soon. A wonderful seed sown here in London, and there are plans that Alumnae will continue to meet," commented Dr Leech.



2009 Fundraising Lunch & 2010 Scholarship and Bursary Fund Launch

In October the College welcomed over 65 Alumnae, friends of Sancta and Sancta staff for Sancta's 2009 Fundraising Lunch. The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Housing and the Status of Women and Federal Member for Sydney, encouraged all present with her informed talk on 'Women and Leadership: Opportunities and challenges'. The Fundraising lunch raised over \$3000 for the Scholarship Fund.

Sancta Sophia College Alumnae and Alumni

Sancta Sophia College Alumnae and Alumni addressed by special guest speaker, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP

Guests of the Sancta Sophia College 2009 Fundraising lunch and launch of the 2010 Scholarship and Bursary Fund heard insightful words from the Minister for Housing and the Status of Women and Federal Member for Sydney, speaking on 'Women and Leadership: Opportunities and challenges':

"Education more than anything else has underpinned the change in such attitudes and the consequent achievements of women over the last century. Universal education in the twentieth century gave women across the board entrée into areas of life, including leadership opportunities, barred to them previously. But change came neither easily – nor quickly – nor completely..."

There is "increasing recognition of the value of women's economic participation and a growing consensus that investing in women is not only good social policy but good economics."

"CNN recently reported on two US research projects – Womenomics and Women Hold Up Half the Sky – which show that investing in women through increased education and labour force participation can lead to real economic growth. They found that a one per cent increase in female education raises the average level of gross domestic product by .37 per cent."

"Real progress has been made in opening opportunities for women to take advantage of these facts. And I never tire of paying tribute to the many outstanding women who have made this possible. Indeed I include a former Sancta Sophia student in the pantheon. Patricia Conlon was an early and active member of the Women's Electoral Lobby, almost always referred to by its acronym, WEL, and probably the most important women's group lobbying for change in the 1970s.



By all accounts, Patricia was witty, energetic, loyal and most importantly of all, compassionate. All the qualities of a strong female leader. She is also reported to have had the 'gift of the gab' and exuded an aura of authority and presence – excellent attributes for dealing with the chauvinists of her age!"

"A big part of her journey started here at Sancta Sophia, where she was nurtured and guided to use her wisdom and personal courage to aspire to greater achievements."

"Because of Colleges like this, Australia is counted one of the foremost nations for women's educational attainment in The World Economic Forum's 2009 Global Gender Gap report. We need to continue to encourage young women to aspire to leadership and to make the most of opportunities."

Sources:
www.womenscolleges.org/story/educate-a-woman

2009 University of Sydney Alumni Award winners announced

The Alumni Awards recognise outstanding achievements made by alumni locally and outside of Australia in community service and their professional fields. Sancta Sophia College congratulates ex-Sancta residents:

Mr Michael Hintze (BSc '75 BE '77)
Alumni Award for International Achievement winner

Kate Johnson (BMedSc '09) and Claire Stewart (BSc (Adv) '05 MBBS '09).
Convocational Medal Nominees





By Philippa Garner

As one of our esteemed guests told me at our Vale dinner, "It is a rare and invaluable opportunity to represent your peers and friends, no less among some of the brightest and most talented of your generation". I could not have put it better. At Sancta Sophia College we are fortunate to experience all the wonders of an active, academic University life as well as the joys of our Social, Cultural, Liturgical and Sporting calendar.

It was my honour to be elected as the 2009 Sancta Sophia Senior Student and Chairperson of the House Committee. Our Social and Cultural events are a great opportunity to introduce many of our residents to a world outside the normal expectation of College life. We hosted a number of events this year aiming to welcome our students and make them feel a part of our Association. These included: Commencement Mass and Dinner, Vale Mass and Dinner, Cultural Week, Liturgical Dinner, Mother/ Daughter Dinner, Father/ Daughter Dinner, Senior Dinner Dance, Soph Soiree, Semi-Formal, Formal and of course a Victory Dinner. We celebrated our achievements throughout the year and came together to make the most of our fantastic efforts in a social atmosphere.



The Students Association showed support for the keen sporting enthusiasm shared by many of its members. This year, as well as competing in the Intercollegiate Rosebowl Competition, we offered students the opportunity to attend a sports camp on the last weekend of the winter break to build upon our team spirit and sportsmanship. This training proved invaluable and our sportswomen gained higher rankings though out the second semester. The Students Association has also purchased a large amount of equipment and uniforms over the last year to ensure our teams are well prepared.



Residential Assistant Program

Sancta students become part of a warm, caring family. Sancta provides support through the Residential Assistant (RA) program. This ensures that all students are provided pastoral care, academic and social support, social interaction across the College, support for Freshers (first years) as they settle into College and support for individual students as required.

Spotlight on Sophs

Research indicates that Sophs (Sophomores, or second year students) sometimes find it difficult to maintain momentum, being over the initial phase of University and not yet seeing the end in sight. Sancta has consulted its Sophs on their academic progress, contributions to College life, and areas in which they think College life can improve, to ensure strong student input into this program.

Seniors Privilege Package

A program of special events and special support for Sancta's seniors and which will include career guidance, development of CVs, interview skills, linkage with postgraduate opportunities and special social functions.

Student Mentoring Program

In 2010 Sancta will launch a mentoring program in which final year students will be paired with a mentor active in a field in which their mentee might pursue a career, further education or research. Mentors will typically be Alumnae or Alumni of the College. An extensive Mentor Recruitment Campaign is underway to find suitable mentors for Sancta students.



After mentor training and after being introduced to each other at the College, mentors and mentees will meet individually twice a semester to discuss matters relevant to the mentee's future career. The mentor/mentee relationship lasts for one academic year and is rounded off with a special function at the College.

Tutorial Program

Recent research indicates that one of the key factors differentiating residential from non-residential students is the support the former receive, especially academic support. Sancta Sophia College's 2009 Tutorial Program during Semester 2 had 10 tutors teaching a total of 24 subjects, catering for 57 tutorial requests. Each week the College runs approximately 15 tutorials. With an increasing budget for 2010, the tutorial program will be expanded!

Piano Masterclass with acclaimed concert pianist Roger Woodward

In June 2009 Sancta Sophia College hosted a Piano Masterclass with the acclaimed concert pianist Roger Woodward for students from Sancta, Wesley and Women's Colleges: Katy Sheridan (Sancta), Tessa Neilson (Sancta), Cheuk Cheung (Wesley), Elizabeth Campbell (Women's).





In early 2009 Sancta Sophia College launched the Environment Committee which was charged with investigating options for making Sancta **green**. From this the Sancta Sustainability Project was established, resulting in extensive sustainable enhancements to the College's bathrooms, toilets, lighting and exhaust fan sensors as well as extension of Sancta's bee hives, creation of the herb, vegetable and flower gardens, worm farms and composting, and implementation of a 'reduce, reuse, recycle' culture at the College.

Scholarships and Bursaries

Sancta offers a variety of scholarships for students who are academically gifted as well as a growing number of bursaries for students who seek financial assistance towards College fees. In late 2009 Sancta launched a Scholarships and Bursaries Fundraising Appeal aiming for an initial \$1million target as well as developing scholarship partnerships with the University of Sydney.

Sancta Sophia College is pleased to announce three new scholarships:

1. Sancta Sophia College Music Performance Scholarship 2010.
2. Director of Music Scholarship 2010.
3. The JT Clark scholarship for an incoming first year student from a rural area to attend Sancta to study Veterinary Science or another Science/Medical related degree at the University of Sydney.

In addition to these new scholarships, Sancta also offers the following Scholarships and Bursaries:

- Foundation Scholarships
- The Archbishop of Sydney Academic Scholarships
- Entrance Scholarships
- Annual Prizes
- Sancta Sophia College bursaries
- The Sancta Sophia College and Sydney University Sport Scholarships

Visit the Sancta Sophia College website for information on current scholarships:

www.sanctasophiacollege.edu.au

Sancta Wants To Keep In Touch With You

Living overseas? Want to catch up with other Alumnae and Alumni near you?

The College has been busy this year updating its ex-students database and has noticed that the number of ex-students living overseas is on the rise. If you are interested in catching up with ex-students in your new country, please email your details and request to marketing@sancta.usyd.edu.au

Decade Reunions throughout 2010

Sancta Sophia College is planning to host reunions for those who were freshers in 1930, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000 next year. The eight reunions will be spaced throughout the year. If you are interested in coordinating your reunion or putting your name down to attend please email marketing@sancta.usyd.edu.au

Seeking lost Alumnae and Alumni

Do you keep in contact with any ex Sancta students? The College is updating its Alumnae and Alumni database and needs your help. Please email any ex-student's phone, email or postal contact details to the College's Database Administrator, Maria, dbadmin@sancta.usyd.edu.au.

Thank you in advance.