

Countering Egotism

During the week the educational supplement in *The Australian* published an article entitled *Colleges pump out cohort of 'egotists'*. While the substance of the article was directed at universities in the United States, the theme holds direct relevance for all educational organisations that share responsibility for the formation of young men and women. It referred to 'the contagion of self-possessed graduates whose lack of empathy or interest in the broader community [is] a threat to future societies'. Furthermore, the research team who had been commissioned to investigate the culture of university life asserted that there was 'a concerning trend of diminishing empathy and community consideration in 13 to 19 year olds', and, that when messages associated with concern for others are sent out they 'are drowned out by the frequency of messages from parents and the larger culture that emphasises individual achievement'. This is in stark contrast to the educational program in Jesuit schools and particularly Riverview. Central to the educational platform and to Ignatian spirituality is the drive to form men for others – men who will take their place in the world and make a meaningful contribution to it. Each and every boy at the College is required to complete 70 hours of community service by the time that they enter their HSC year. It is not tokenistic nor is it a shallow expectation, for the forms of service the boys engage in can be very demanding; working with disabled children, distributing meals on Night Patrol, assisting the aged, infirmed and elderly, and, embarking on overseas immersions to support the marginalised in countries across South East Asia. These are exercises in humility that promote reflection and growth, aimed to improve the fabric of community for those who are benefactors of the service activities, and, to engender a deep awareness of faith in action for those who render service. It is core to what Jesuit schools aspire to and to what our families commit to through their enrolment.

While the winter co-curricular program is thriving on weekends so too is Debating, which sees hundreds of boys across five separate competitions test their oratory skills in the public domain on Friday evenings. Apart from the senior teams which participate in the ISDA, CSDA competitions and Mock Trial, the boys in the primary school are part of a highly organised and robust IPSHA competition. Perennial Cup competitions such as the Glenn King Cup and the Lawrence Campbell Oratory Competition, each designed to test skills of communication, logic and analysis, augment these programs. Master in Charge of Debating, Mr David Johnson, rightly asserts that *Debating and Public Speaking at Riverview are enjoying a period of renewal as more students come to the activity each term to take part in the diverse range of opportunities presented to them. It is an outstanding feature of the College that such a wide range of students are able to demonstrate their talents for argument and rhetoric in activities that allow them to broaden their minds, challenge them to justify their case and provide them with a skill set that will take them far beyond the gates of school, enhancing their ability to engage with the world they are moving into*

As part of a deliberate attempt to link with other Jesuit schools throughout the world, the very first student exchange is being formalised between St Ignatius' College and Fordham Prep in New York and Boston College in Massachusetts. Year 10 students together with a small contingent of staff and students from these schools will arrive in Australia later next month and attend classes before undertaking the service week activities in various agencies in Sydney and/or non-metropolitan regions of New South Wales. In September of this year, the boys who host the visitors from the US will travel to experience Jesuit education in an American context, shortly after the northern academic year begins. It is envisioned that this will be one of an expanding range of opportunities for students from Jesuit schools in different contexts to compare and contrast Ignatian spirituality and to broaden their knowledge and appreciation of the founding charism in its differential expression throughout the world.

Last weekend a sizeable number of the Old Boys, current parents, prospective parents and staff gathered in Dubbo to celebrate the strength of the boarding community. The very first boarder from the region, Francis Souter, was a member of the inaugural class in 1880 and since that time hundreds of boys from

the area have been part of a generational enrolment cycle at Riverview. Some families such as the Egan and McKay families span five generations and with Old Boys such as David Egan (OR 1940) in attendance at the dinner it drew attention to the significance of the occasion. Many thanks are extended to the expansive rural community, many of whom travelled significant distances to attend the function, as well special thanks to Christine Zimbulis, Bron O'Brien and Kim Clarke who work tirelessly to promote the cause of boarding at Riverview. Further expos are planned for Wagga and Moree over the months ahead.

Behind the scenes the College Council provides direction to the strategic futures and policy formation, that enables St Ignatius to continue to move ahead in a rapidly changing and competitive educational landscape. The macro-picture is a complex one, particularly as different governance models for the College are considered in light of a Province structure that has non-negotiable and non-delegable civil and canonical responsibilities. Over recent weeks the Therry Precinct Building Application was approved by the College Council and forwarded to both the Province headquarters in Melbourne and then onwards to Rome for dual approval. And, it is the Council who systematically authorises structured reviews of the College's educational program so that the many different elements of school life can be formally assessed in context of best practice in schools and educational organisations across Australia and more broadly throughout the world. On behalf of the school community, I wish to acknowledge and thank the members of Council who give generously of their time and expertise to ensure that the College is cognisant of, and responsive to, the best advice that positions it to move to the next stage of its proud and distinctive history.

From the myriad service activities of students to the discernment of Council, both informed by the spirit of St Ignatius, Riverview works assiduously to avoid any claims of 'egotism' that are emerging as concerning trends in educational organisations across the world.