

Towards Scholarship

Last Friday, two signature events that promote both the cause and the effect of scholarship at the College took pride of place. The first was the Laureate Assembly, which presented the graduates of 2015 who secured Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) scores in the top 10% of New South Wales, and by implication through interstate conversion, the top 10% in the nation. While all boys who worked hard and achieved success are to be commended, there should be no apology for aspiring towards and achieving academic excellence. The range of tertiary courses, the number of scholarships and the success of the boys in gaining access to some of the most competitive courses in Australia's finest universities (not excluding American Ivy League universities) are, in a word, impressive. In all, 83 boys representing 37% of the graduating cohort achieved scores in excess of 90, with 11 boys being included at the rarefied top end – in the highest 1% of the nation. Xavier Eales, College Captain and Dux with an ATAR of 99.85, encouraged the boys to aim high and work hard to accord fully with a scholarly tradition of Jesuit education that spans the better part of five centuries, and in the process, capitalise on the God given opportunities presented to them in one of the finest schools of the nation. Some very proud parents joined the Assembly with their Laureate sons, before sharing a memorable morning tea in the Memorial Hall, where major school celebrations have been hosted for over a century.

Another of the achievements in the Graduation year is the distinction of being chosen for the Kircher Collection, which is a compendium of the finest works in Literature, History, Music Composition and Art. These four disciplines have their own place in Jesuit scholarship, and particularly in light of the eponymous Athanasius Kircher, who was a quintessential Renaissance scholar; a Jesuit whose expertise across a range of expertise in various disciplines has been compared to the more widely known Leonardo Da Vinci. Each of the 20 boys who contributed to the publication is now a published author – something rare in the landscape of scholarship, particularly at the ripe old age of 18. The level of creativity, the quality of analysis, the passion for learning and the sheer sophistication of the works contained in the Kircher Collection are truly remarkable, so much so that special guest, Professor James Curran (OR1991), remarked that they are equivalent to high undergraduate level at university. Copies of the Kircher Collection can be purchased from [Mrs Brooke Hillsdon](#) from the Advancement Office, should parents and members of the wider Riverview family wish to enjoy the quality of the boys' scholarship.

Among a number of changes to the curriculum affairs at the Regis campus, a new STEM focus is being introduced over the course of the term. STEM is a combination of established disciplines - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, utilising a methodological imperative that draws upon creativity, problem solving, analysis, synthesis and collaboration. Over the course of the coming weeks the boys will undertake computer coding, robotics, animatics, humanitarian engineering with an orientation towards sustainability and ecology. Along the way some new skills will be acquired such as problem decomposition, pattern recognition, algorithm generation and abstraction. And, there is much fun as there will be tactile and visual learning to enhance and deepen cognition.

The boys who participated in the immersion to Cambodia prior to Christmas held their Reflection Evening on Thursday, presenting their insights and experiences that were part of three memorable weeks in one of the poorest counties on the Indo-Chinese peninsular. At times challenging and confronting, while ultimately rewarding and enriching, it is clear that the boys have gained in myriad ways from this inimitable time of rendering service to the marginalised and disadvantaged. Perhaps the most instructive and moving aspect of the evening as an educator, was hearing of the schools that had been converted to prisons during Khmer Rouge rule in Cambodia, which saw classrooms converted to prisons, with the instruments of torture as a reminder of a regime of fear and destruction. The call to faith through justice that was lived out in orphanages, schools and villages and brought immediate and practical gain to the local community.

At the beginning of each year a dinner is held with the parents who are new to the College to celebrate the partnership of education that we enter into. For most parents, the relationship will span six to eight years, and the chance to highlight key emphases in the educational program on an informal occasion at the outset is very valuable. In its own way, these function form and consolidate community, those that alter year by year as new boys enter the College and as families leave when their senior boys graduate. This is the microcosm of the community that not only embraces current parents and students, but over time the wider and extended network that includes the Old Ignatians Union (OIU), the Parents and Friends (P&F) and the Past Parents Association (PPA). Each give life and vitality to the College in so many ways and each embrace an Ignatian spirituality that is unambiguously hospitable and welcoming. Sincere thanks are extended to the parents for joining us on these occasions and weaving the tapestry of community that celebrates the good times and draws so closely together during adversity. A whole school mass was celebrated in Ramsay Hall to commemorate Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. We have entered one of the most significant phases of the liturgical year – the 40 days of introspection and renewal in preparation for the death and resurrection of Christ. As we move into this period, it is worth remembering that mass is held each day at the College (with the exception of Monday) in various chapels: Tuesday at Regis Campus, Wednesday in the Therry Chapel and Thursday and Friday in the Dalton Chapel. Parents, staff, students and friends of Riverview are very welcome to attend these community masses and participate in their own formal preparation for Lent, which will culminate in the Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection in five weeks' time.



I look forward to reporting on the Year 5 Camp which was held over the latter part of the week, in the next edition of Viewpoint.

Best wishes for the week ahead.