



9 December 2022

Dear Merici Community,

Serviam

Our community knows, that as people of God, we are called to activate our hearts, heads and hands to further the welfare of those around us. We are continually being invited to walk in Jesus' footsteps and be inspired by His model of servant leadership, most beautifully conveyed to us in the moment when He washed the feet of His followers, not long before He died in order to save all of us.

In *Let Us Dream*, Pope Francis shows us that "what saves us is not an idea but an encounter. Only the face of another is capable of awakening the best in ourselves. In serving the people, we save ourselves." In another year filled with joys, challenges and the disruption of a lingering pandemic, our College's values have proven to be integral to living lives of service. As a faithful community we seek to 'Act, bestir (y)ourselves, have faith and confidence.' (Angela Merici). Saint Angela saw that the heartbeat of a daring Jesus is to be found at our core, in those we meet, in every decision we make, in the day-to-day and in all that God has created. She wrote "Do something, get moving, risk new things, stick with it, get on your knees then be ready for great surprises." The Merici community *does* work to follow Christ's example of love and service to those in need, firm in the knowledge that this is not a task reserved to a select few but a calling for all Christians.

We all are indeed blessed that in 2022, we have had the impetus to act and positively shape our lives and that of others. In 2022, I continue to feel immensely privileged and proud to be leading such a wonderful community. It is one defined by our school motto, 'Fidelitas' where all are encouraged to act as Pope Francis has demonstrated, with a heightened awareness of the impact our actions have on ourselves, others and creation. Our College seeks to be a "bright candle" that makes a positive difference in our local and global world.

We are a joy-filled and dynamic learning community, intent on building upon the heritage founded by all that have come before us. This heritage works to liberate, empower and motivate young women to use their gifts with confidence, creativity, generosity and in the loving service of others. I am proud to be a member of a learning community that responds to changing circumstances with courage, agility, positivity, resilience and skill.

Registration 2022

Merici College continues to work to become a beacon school, a centre of excellence and growth, the school of choice for families, young women, talented staff and educational leaders in the Canberra region. Following the development of a Strategic Plan (2019-2021) in 2021, 2022 has seen the College undergo formal Registration and School Improvement Review.

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This was a thorough and extensive process that involved a panel of expert reviewers from Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn (CECG) interacting with our parent community, our student body, College Board, staff and Leadership teams. This team lived with us for three days: visiting classrooms, conducting extensive interviews with key stakeholders, reviewing comprehensive documentation, examining finances, auditing premises, buildings and resources, sharing meals and immersing themselves in the rich culture of our College. They also completed an extensive check of all policies and processes we have in place to ensure that we are compliant as an educational institution under the ACT Education Act 2004. I am pleased to write that Merici College was determined by the Panel to be compliant with the provisions of the ACT Education Act 2004.

The College also received an extensive and very positive report offering feedback and guidance about the College's improvement agenda. This was expressed through five strategic domains: Catholic Identity and Culture, Staff Capacity and Leadership, Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Partnership and Community and Stewardship and Resources. Some of the highlights of the affirmations in the report are as follows, as are some of the recommendations we will weave into our future Annual Improvement Plans (as aligned to our Strategic Plan).

Catholic Identity and Culture

- Merici College is proudly Catholic and genuinely welcomes students from diverse faith backgrounds who feel included and respected.
- There are well-structured programs for religious celebrations enabling staff and students to participate in the rich traditions of the Church as well as celebrating the varied charisms of the religious orders which established the College.
- The College maintains strong connections with its Alumni and provides regular opportunities for current and past students to engage together in religious, educational and social activities.
- Students speak highly of the available opportunities to engage in community outreach, particularly the Christian Service Learning and Volunteering Programs, which are enthusiastically embraced.

The College will continue to develop spaces within the school grounds which provide opportunities for students to engage with and connect to spiritual traditions, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spiritualities. It will also seek to find opportunities to actively engage with remote or regional schools to involve students and staff with mission, outreach and the evangelising work of the Church.

Staff Capacity and Leadership

- The College has a genuine commitment to building ongoing staff capacity in meeting the aspirational mission and vision of Merici College.
- Staff are enthusiastic, professional, dedicated and along with students and families are clearly fully invested in the success of Merici.
- A documented professional development plan exists for all teaching staff, including provision of opportunities to refine skills to ensure continued authorisation of the IB and embedding High Impact Teaching Practices (HITP) across the school.

- Students are provided with many valued opportunities to develop leadership. These include both formal, well-established leadership positions, the *Big Sister* program embedded in Pastoral Care groups, as well as informal opportunities provided via the planned curriculum.

The College will develop a framework to affirm and build on existing practices of teacher reflection, coaching and feedback; engage with professional learning; build the capacity of the current Leadership Team; and, to advance the development of future leaders.

Excellence in Teaching and Learning

- Merici College has an embedded positive learning culture that prioritises high expectations, led by the Leadership Team who have developed clear strategic alignment with system priorities and goals.
- Emphasis is placed on high impact, evidence-based teaching practice. Teachers actively engage in professional learning to implement practice change through CE's *Catalyst* initiative and the IB program.
- Staff are collaborative and support each other to evolve, deepen and refine their practice. They prioritise learning time and are supported with the resources and materials required.
- Data-rich practices are evident in the College to support teachers in knowing every student and how they learn. Rigorous moderation practices are used across all subjects and year levels to support growth.
- Students are actively engaged in the vibrant learning culture at the College.

The College will ensure that the Middle Years Program fosters global connections and partnerships through staff and student exchange and collaboration on learning projects with schools nationally and globally.

Partnership and Community

- Parents reported feeling welcome and valued, and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and key partners in their children's education.
- Through the passionate and committed contribution of the College Board and Parents and Friends (P&F) Committee, parents are involved in the strategic planning of the school.
- The College has supported the development of the student Narragunnawali Mob which is reported by students to feel like their own family within the school.
- The College is commended for its ongoing generous support of local schools and community groups.

In line with their 2022 School Improvement Plan, the College will develop a Reconciliation Action Plan. Merici will continue to promote parent agency and community engagement through the Board and P&F Association.

Stewardship and Resources

- Merici distributes resources in an equitable and targeted manner.
- Inclusion is a feature of the culture of Merici, with strategic, active support provided to students with diverse and accelerated needs.

- The College's approach to sustainability through several ongoing initiatives is commended.

The College will continue developing their Master Plan, in consultation and collaboration with CECG, focusing on stewardship for the future and providing certainty around enrolment capacity.

It is thrilling for the College to experience such an affirming process and receive recommendations that align with our Strategic Plan and dreams for our future. I must express gratitude to all who were involved and, in advance, to all who will be part of our on-going and exciting journey as a College.

Extended Uniform Shop Hours January 2023

We are pleased to advise that the Merici College Uniform Shop will be offering extended hours during the January 2023 school holidays to meet your uniform requirements.

If you wish to visit the shop for a fitting, the extended hours are as follows:

1. Wednesday 18 January 2023 9am - 3pm by appointment
2. Thursday 19 January 2023 9am – 3pm by appointment
3. Friday 20 January 2023 9am – 2pm No appointment needed.

Parents are strongly encouraged to use the online ordering system as the preferred option for supply, including part orders for Click and Collect. Garments can be returned due to incorrect sizes but please ensure that items have not been worn and tags attached.

For new families, please click [here](#) to find the online ordering system.

For current families, please click here, <https://pay.merici.act.edu.au/mymonitor/>

Further information and uniform price lists can be found on our website, [here](#).

College Celebrations

This term has seen a number of services and celebrations for the students in their different year groups. Year 12 students attended a moving Graduation Mass at St Christopher's Cathedral and, for the first time, a special Graduation Dinner and Awards Ceremony. We have also had a wonderful celebration with students and their families at the Formal held at the National Museum, it was a magnificent night ending with a rousing rendition of the College Song! We had a moving Advent Mass and High Tea for our Year 10 students, and beautiful Advent Liturgies for our Year 7 – 9 students. This year ended with the celebration of academic achievements for our students in Years 7, 8, 9 and 11.

To my staff, I thank you for your support and constant care of our students. As several staff are moving to promotional positions, retiring, looking forward to new horizons or moving interstate or retiring, I would like to personally thank you for your professionalism and commitment to educating our young ladies and contributing to the life of Merici College. I wish you an abundance of happiness and peace in all you do in the future.

Thank you to the members of the College Board and P&F Committee, especially to the Chair of the Board, Christina Ween for your support, humour, wisdom and your time, which you all give so freely. I am so grateful for the welcome, trust and dedication of the College staff who make my role exciting and do-able!

To our parents and carers, I value the partnership we share in educating your daughters and thank you for your support. I appreciated your warm words and encouraging emails. We are looking forward to 2023 with the College theme *Communitas*, with building renovations continuing, the continued growth of our International Baccalaureate Diploma and Middle Years Programme and many exciting new programs and offerings in the curriculum and extra-curricular area.

For those moving within the ACT or moving interstate or overseas - we hold a strong belief that the education you have received at Merici and the time you have spent here has put you in good stead for whatever path you have chosen. Never be a stranger to us and know that you will always be loved as a member of the Merici College family. If you are leaving our community, can you please contact our Enrolments Officer soon as possible so that we can contact prospective families who would like to join us in 2023 and who are on our waiting lists.

The 2023 school year will begin for Years 7, 11, 12 and new students on Tuesday, 31 January and for Years 8, 9 and 10 on Wednesday, 1 February. During the week prior to this, staff professional learning, new staff orientation, and staff planning will take place. The 2023 School Calendar can be viewed online [here](#).

In a year of new beginnings, future dreaming, courage, challenge and continued threat from COVID-19, I would like to conclude by sharing, once again, an extract from a beautiful blessing by John O'Donohue.

A Morning Offering

May my mind come alive today
To the invisible geography
That invites me to new frontiers
To break the dead shell of yesterdays,
To risk being disturbed and changed.

May I have the courage today
To live the life that I would love,
To postpone my dream no longer,
But do at last what I came here for
And waste my heart on fear no more.

With my best wishes for a very happy, safe holy Christmas and New Year season.



Anna Masters
Principal