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Flame



Reaching out to others

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Reflections: Reaching out to others



Connecting with others in China

When a group of students and staff recently travelled to China on a cultural immersion, they walked a path first taken by OLSH students more than twenty years ago. Though separated by nearly a generation, both groups were united by the same purpose: reaching out to others and gaining insight into the culture and daily life of people in China.

Each group was awestruck at the vastness of the Great Wall and the challenge of climbing its steep path. Each group deepened their appreciation of the cultural and spiritual traditions found in cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. And each group returned with the same reflection - that the experience of connection, discovery and reaching out beyond themselves would remain with them for a lifetime.

Editor's message

While our day-to-day focus of education centres on our location in Bentleigh, the reach of our community extends far beyond the OLSH College grounds. In this edition of *Flame*, you will discover stories of students and staff travelling to China and France, engaging with our history and embracing cultural diversity. Our global presence is also reflected in the record-breaking fundraising support for the OLSH Sisters' overseas projects, helping to transform lives in communities far from our own.

We celebrate students representing Australia at a STEM conference in South Korea, as well as individual achievements recognised in places as distant as Hollywood and Scotland, and within our local community. In every instance, whether through physical journeys or symbolic connections, the OLSH spirit continues to inspire a deep commitment to reaching out to others.

Cath Ewart

*Director of Development
and Community Relations*

Principal's message

"May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be Everywhere Loved."

– this very sentence is what we pray here at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College every day. It is proclaimed at the start of every prayer by the person who leads the prayer and those present respond with a rousing "Forever!" It was Fr Jules Chevalier, who gave this prayer to the MSC Priests and OLSH Sisters when he founded their congregations in 1854 and 1874. Since then, this prayer has been prayed across the centuries and around the world, in many languages at all hours of the day and night. Each time we say it, we join with all who pray it today, and with all those who have prayed it before us. In a special way, we join our OLSH Sisters here in Melbourne, across Australia, and throughout the world in the mission of bringing Jesus' love to our world.

As you read this issue of *Flame* you will notice the emphasis on how we "reach out to others." In essence this "reaching out" is at the centre of our education in the OLSH tradition. Our fourth pillar "we are heart people who touch the hearts of others" captures the very spirit of living out witnessing to Jesus' love in our world today. Importantly, that is something that is so evident in the students who are at the College today and those who have graduated and are carrying this spirit with them wherever they go. Whatever we do and wherever we go our hearts have been formed in the OLSH Spirit and that same Spirit urges us onwards each day to be the very best of the Heart of Christ in our world, wherever we are and whatever we are doing.

***May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be
Everywhere Loved. Forever***

***Ametur ubique terrarum Cor Jesu
Sacratissimum, in aeternum***

***Que le Sacré-Cœur de Jésus soit aimé
partout ! Pour toujours !***

***Che il Sacro Cuore di Gesù sia amato
ovunque. Per sempre!***

***¡Que el Sagrado Corazón de Jesús sea
amado en todas partes! ¡Para siempre!***

***Semoga Hati Kudus Yesus dicintai di
mana-mana. Selamanya!***

***Nguyện xin Thánh Tâm Chúa Giêsu được
yêu mến khắp mọi nơi. Mãi mãi!***

*Regnet Christus
May Christ Reign
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart pray for us!*

Anne O'Loughlin
Principal



A very special *pilgrimage*

During the September holidays, sixteen members of the OLSH community flew to Europe together to participate in our We are OLSH! 2025 Issoudun Pilgrimage to celebrate 150 years of the foundation of the OLSH Sisters. They represented a microcosm of our OLSH family – current and past staff members, OLSH friends and family members, a Chaplain and an OLSH Sister!

Retracing the steps of Father Jules Chevalier, they journeyed from his birthplace in Richelieu, to Bourges where he studied and was ordained, and finally to Issoudun where he founded the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart 151 years ago. The pilgrimage was underpinned by a program of daily presentations that covered the beginnings and growth of the OLSH Sisters charism. The focus on the influence of the life and vision of Jules Chevalier and Mother Marie Louise Hartzler assisted all participants to come to a greater understanding of what it means to make the Sacred Heart of Jesus everywhere loved.

They soaked up the beauty and spirit of Issoudun before making the eight-hour trip to Wissembourg in Alsace, the birthplace of Mother Marie Louise Hartzler. There, they visited her school, her family home and her parish. They walked the streets, listened to her story and met the local priest and parishioners as they let her story seep into their hearts.

"Through the pilgrimage experience, I have really valued the connection between OLSH and different parts of France. It deepened my understanding of our school's heritage and strengthened my sense of faith and community," Angela said.

The group shared morning prayer and evening eucharist each day and were nourished by the sharing of faith, friendship and fun together. Towards the end of the pilgrimage, they took time to reflect on our OLSH story and the vital part they each play in being OLSH today!

"Walking in the footsteps of Fr Jules Chevalier and Sr Marie Louise Hartzler, deepening our understanding of our shared foundation and charism, was a privilege. To be able to share this sacred journey with my mum made it even more meaningful," Antonella said.

All participants paid their own way for this pilgrimage. We are grateful to the OLSH Sisters for the opportunity to honour their 150th anniversary milestone in this way.



Sharing morning tea together.

"I hope and pray the pilgrimage spirit will never leave me, revitalizing my faith, helping me to become a better person and reminding me that life is meant to be a hope-filled journey of love, empathy and kindness."

Lee



Hagenau, underneath the window of Marie Louise Hartzler's grandparents brewery, Statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, The Basilica of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

Professional debut for Paris

We were thrilled to hear that Paris Leveque (Class of 2020), secured her first professional stage role as the female lead Nabulungi in The Book of Mormon. Here is her reflection of her journey to that achievement.

As a young child and student at OLSH College, it was always my dream to be a performer. I took up other interests but none of them stuck like performing arts. OLSH was one of the first places that truly nurtured my passion and allowed me to bring it to life. I trained in music theory, dance and acting throughout my school years, not just in the classroom and in my VCE studies but in school musicals, plays and as Performing Arts Captain. I was able to express myself fully at OLSH and if it wasn't for that safe space, I don't think I would have been able to pursue my dream with as much enthusiasm.

A strong team of staff including Kellie Mentilowksi, Julie Freeman-Smith, Christine Lucas-Pannam, Michelle Fenton, Natasha Esteves, Josh Debreceni and the leadership team created a trust in me as a teenager, to follow through and nurture my passion, and I will forever be grateful. The OLSH and De La Salle school musicals were where I felt the most myself and was able to immerse myself in a simulated version of what I do for a living now.

Coming out of high school, I began my formal musical theatre training at the Western Australian Academy of the Performing Arts in 2021 and completed a Diploma in Musical Theatre. I then returned home to Melbourne and completed my Bachelor in Fine Arts in Music Theatre at the Victorian College of the Arts.

These schools are highly competitive and demand a great deal of self-discipline and patience. However, pursuing further education in the field I love most gave me confidence, experience, and expertise that I would not have developed otherwise. While I believe higher education is valuable in any profession, in the arts it is not essential in order to secure work.

The Book of Mormon audition process was long and rewarding. After five rounds of singing and acting through the show material, I received the e-mail that every actor dreams of receiving. At first, I thought I had read it incorrectly but once I had overcome the shock, I was filled with excitement and contentment - everything I had worked so hard for had finally been achieved, in securing the lead role of Nabulungi. The whole experience has been a dream come true, the company, the cast and being able to do what I love every single day is exactly what 15-year-old Paris dreamed of. Some days are harder than others but that is the charm of live theatre. I come to work every day grateful for every stepping stone that had took me to where I am now, OLSH being the biggest of them all.

"The whole experience has been a dream come true, the company, the cast and being able to do what I love every single day is exactly what 15-year-old Paris dreamed of."



*Class of 2020 student Paris Leveque;
Paris in her lead role as Nabulungi in The Book of Mormon*

Climate innovation at APEC Conference

Three OLSH College students – Isabelle Atherton, Samantha Milenkovski and Jessica Lee – were invited to attend the APEC STEM Youth Conference in Busan, South Korea recently.

They were selected from students across 14 Asia-Pacific countries to research and present a topic that provides a youth-led STEM solution to strengthen climate resilience.

At the start of the competition, nearly 130 students were allocated to a multi-national team and collaborated for six months on their research project. The top ten teams were invited present their findings at the Korea Science Academy in Busan to present their findings. Our students were the only Australian delegates.

Head of Science at OLSH College, Ms Dianne Byers said "I watched our students deliver rigorous, clear, and engaging presentations that reflected a strong grasp of scientific processes. It was inspiring to see them collaborate so respectfully and genuinely with students from across the Asia-Pacific region."

The goal of the conference was to foster future talent and strengthen science and technology cooperation among APEC member economies.

The event was hosted by the Ministry of Science and ICT and organized by the APEC Science and Gifted Mentoring Center.

"I presented my original research report on sustainable mangrove coastal defence systems with an international teammate—a project we began eight months ago, progressing through multiple stages of research, analysis, and refinement. The conference included a booth presentation and a live Q&A session, which were part of the evaluation process for our work," Isabelle said.

"I was thrilled when all this effort culminated in winning the conference's top prize, making me the first Australian ever to achieve this recognition."

"With two other students from overseas, my team's focus was the implementation of AI into Flood Early Warning Systems. We presented our findings on stage to experts and explained the project in detail in our exhibition booth. Our team won the award for APEC Connectivity," Jessica said.

"My team investigated a way to reduce excess carbon dioxide levels in urban areas through the use of activated charcoal made from coconut shells. Our project explored how this sustainable method could be engineered into green wall systems to improve plant and root biomass and strengthen climate resilience, and we were presented with the APEC Innovation award," Samantha said.

"We are so proud of Isabelle, Jessica and Samantha for representing the College and Australia at this prestigious event. The work these students are doing and their passion for making a difference through STEM initiatives is truly inspiring," OLSH College Principal Ms Anne O'Loughlin said.

The students will continue to put their research experience into practice and will share it with their peers in the classroom.



Cultural immersion to China

Nearly 40 of our students and staff shared an incredible 10 days in China, immersing themselves in the culture and history of the country and exploring Beijing, Shanghai, Wuzhen and Hangzhou.

From walking the Great Wall to catching a bullet train, riding rickshaws, exploring temples, and tasting local cuisine, the group deepened their understanding of China's history and contemporary life. They finished the trip in Shanghai, enjoying a river cruise, an acrobat show, and a visit to St Ignatius Cathedral. Here are some reflections from four of the travellers.

"This was a once-in-a-lifetime trip to China and I have learnt so much about the history of China, including the dynasties, the culture and the cuisines. Travelling through the different cities has broadened my deep appreciation of China and I've also made lifelong friends, developed skills and, most importantly, made memories that I'll treasure forever." - Ivory

"In Hangzhou, I loved visiting the Olive Tree International Academy to learn about how the students manage taking classes that all contribute to different university requirements globally. It was really interesting to have a chat with the wonderful students. We had the opportunity to take a class, and to hear their experiences of completing curricula from other countries." - Kara

"Visiting the markets and being able to interact with the locals were my highlights. As a Chinese language student this invaluable experience has allowed me to practice my speaking skills and have an authentic experience to embrace and broaden my perspective of Chinese culture and society." - Hannah

"Walking on the Great Wall of China was an amazing experience. The views stretched forever and it felt incredible to stand on something with so much history." - Violet



"As a Chinese language student this invaluable experience has allowed me to practice my speaking skills and have an authentic experience to embrace and broaden my perspective of Chinese culture and society."

Hannah



Enjoying the cultural and historical sites of China

Record-breaking Feast Day fundraising

In September, we gathered as a College community - students, staff, parents and the OLSH Sisters - for a very special Feast of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Mass led by Father Mark Hanns msc.

The theme, *Oceans Apart, Together at Heart*, came alive through joyful singing, uplifting words, and a vibrant display of costumes and colour. It was a beautiful beginning to our day, reminding us of our deep connection to the Heart of Jesus through Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and how we live out this connection through our Feast Day fundraising.

After mass, our Feast Day carnival was officially open and the College grounds came to life with rides, food stalls, bands and games. We finished the day with 'best-dressed' prizes for the clever and creative costumes that students prepared to match the day's theme.

Then it was the moment everyone was waiting for – the announcement of our final fundraising figure and it was a record-breaking \$30,160! This was an incredible achievement by our College community and will make a real difference to the communities supported by the work of the OLSH Sisters overseas projects.

Provincial Leader of the OLSH Sisters in Australia, Sister Philippa, told us at our Feast Day Mass of the difference our fundraising is making in the Philippines, providing clean water to families who previously had limited access to water. We know that this year's fundraising will have just as much impact and we're grateful for everyone's generosity.



Feast Day Mass; Feast Day carnival raised a record-breaking \$30,160

Reunions

We've welcomed back three groups of past students in recent months – the Class of 1975, the Class of 1965 and students who completed their schooling at OLSH prior to 1965.

Each of these events were special, providing reconnection and story sharing and a reflection on the early decades of the College's history. Our Student Leaders Keiva and Gabi shared some time with the group and were intrigued by the stories of life at the College in the 1950s and 1960s. Our returning OLSH students were equally captivated by life at the College in the present day and enjoyed revisiting the spaces on a tour of the grounds.

The Class of 1975 students recalled the forward thinking of the OLSH Sisters who acquired land to expand the College and develop the opportunities available to the students. In those years, students had elective classes, such as textiles, in the houses on the property and the Jasper Road side of the property was sports courts and open space.

We also had a visit from Class of 1983 student Siew Peng Soo who returned to OLSH recently to tour the College. Siew was one of eight overseas students at the College in 1985. Siew went on to study at Monash University, before returning to Malaysia where she runs an organic skincare company.

Thank you to our alumnae for returning to the College and for sharing your stories of your time here.

Pre-1965 Reunion



Class of 1975 50 Year Reunion



Class of 1983 Siew Peng Soo



Vice Captains, 60 years apart



Celebrating creative talent

Beyond the canvases

Class of 2020 student Alyssa Mercuri was recently invited to present an exhibition of her artwork at the Glen Eira City Council Gallery. The invitation was part of the prize Alyssa received when she won the Glen Eira Youth Services art competition for a large-scale portrait of her Italian grandfather.

Alyssa displayed 20 artworks, including the piece that started it all called *The Nonno*, which is created in a mixed-media style.

"I've experimented with countless mediums, each offering something unique. This variety allows me to choose the best material to represent the symbols in my work. For example, I might use real sand in a textured beach painting." Alyssa said.

Alyssa draws inspiration from her active imagination and the ability to hyper-focus, using mixed media to portray how she lives and sees the world.

Principal Anne O'Loughlin and one of Alyssa's teachers, Robyn Rayment, visited the exhibition on opening night.

"The highlight of the exhibition the community gathering and reconnecting with family, friends and others to discuss my artwork and artistic process," Alyssa said.



Alyssa with Anne O'Loughlin

Zara's high kicks in the highlands

Year 8 student Zara spent time in Scotland recently, competing in a number of highland dancing competitions. While there and during the lead up to the trip, she completed up to eight hours of training each day which included dancing, strength exercises and swimming to build fitness.

"After training, we had ice baths and spent time in compression boots to ensure we were recovered for the next day's training or competition," Zara said.

"I also danced in Scotland last year, dancing for the King and Royal Family at the Braemar Highland Games."

Zara started Scottish highland dancing when she was seven, after seeing it at the Dandenong show and has made lifelong friends around the world through her interest.

"Competing is a great way to learn life lessons like resilience and good sportsmanship. I've been fortunate to win a number of competitions in Australia and am preparing for championships in Newcastle next year and the Australian Championships on the Gold Coast," Zara said.

Zara is also completing her silver exam over the summer holidays and hopes to go to Scotland again next year to qualify for the world championships.



Zara in her Highland Dancing dress

News in brief



1 **A chorus of collaboration**

Our VCE Music students and members of Chante, our senior auditioned choir, took to the stage for the OLSH and De La Salle Vocal Collaboration. The evening featured a mix of solo performances, ensemble pieces, and combined choir pieces. The depth of talent and vocal range was inspiring. It was a joy to witness the musical partnership between our two Colleges and to see the value our students gained from performing and learning together.

2 **Gold Medal chefs**

Congratulations to our Teen Chef participants Neeve, Harlie, Alana and Lily on their participation in the CGSAV competition. OLSH hosted students from Killester and Kilbreda and two chef judges for the event in our Food Tech space. Neeve and Harlie created a giant pappardelle with mushroom filling and a cream sauce for the main and Alana and Lily produced a Paris-Brest with hazelnut mousseline cream for dessert.

All teams received great feedback and tips from the chefs who rated the dishes as 'restaurant worthy'! OLSH and Kilbreda received Gold Medals, Killester received Silver and Kilbreda were the overall winners. Thank you to Mrs Smith and Fran for the work they did with the team to prepare for this competition.

3 **Hartzler XIII draws to a close**

Our Issoudun (Year 9) students have now completed their Hartzler and Nous Sommes programs, which included a four-week residential experience at our Bowral, NSW campus. The rich and varied program took students beyond the classroom, with excursions to Sydney, hikes through nearby national parks, visits to other schools, and opportunities to contribute through community outreach. While based at Hartzler Park, students worked on a major Canberra project and presentation inspired by their visit to the capital, alongside their classwork, personal training, and weekend recreation. We are deeply grateful to be able to offer this unique program each year.



4 **Cassie's Young Artist Academy Award**

We were thrilled to hear that Year 7 student Cassie received a Young Artist Academy Award at the Directors Guild of America, in Hollywood. She was selected out of youth actors from UK and US for her category - Best Supporting Performance in a TV Series.

Cassie was recognised for her performance in the television series *Planet Lulin*, which aired on ABC and was recently picked up by Nickelodeon UK.

The Young Artist Academy Awards (known as the Youth Oscars) celebrate youth in film and television, with past winners including stars like Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence. You can watch *Planet Lulin* on ABC iView. Well done Cassie!

5 **Compelling drama from our Senior students**

Our senior students presented two gripping performances of *The Crucible*, in partnership with De La Salle College. The quality of performance was outstanding, with students delivering powerful and complex dialogue which had the audience captivated through to the final scene.

The experience of preparing this production has been one of growth for many of the cast, providing an opportunity to further develop their dramatic repertoire and learn technical skills from their teachers and each other.

Alumnae profiles



Christine Spirasou
(Class of 1965)

I recently returned to OLSH to celebrate 60 years since my graduation. It was a special morning, providing connection between past and present students, shared stories from our life's journeys and a chance to tour the grounds. Memories flooded back of the gifts, the learnings and the challenges that informed my life – female leadership and the nun's commitment to their vocation, the possibilities that life and learning offered, encouragement to be the best you could be for yourself and the community and the values of honesty and decorum.

At twenty-one, a friend and I boarded the liner Fairstar for an overseas adventure. Disembarking at Panama, we rode buses through Mexico, United States, and Canada; boarded a cargo ship in New York to Belgium, onwards to London. We hitchhiked and cycled around England, Scotland and Ireland. A year later, four of us travelled in a VW van through Europe, Türkiye, and Greece, my father's homeland. We lived in Athens and worked as nannies. Back home, unable to adapt to office work, we became x-ray technicians travelling Victoria for the TB Caravan Screening program.

The most confronting professional role I had was working as a Cottage Mother of four children who had experienced physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Their trauma was profound. Working within a team environment, and consulting with the children's school principals, the wellbeing of the children slowly improved. Our team restarted the journey of care.

Managing a respite and social support program for young people with disabilities and their carers over twenty-five years was my most satisfying and challenging role. School and the values instilled in me at home, travel, and a return to study at thirty (and again at 71) helped prepare me for the position. Resolute staff and, importantly, the young people with disabilities and their carers working collaboratively, ensured positive service outcomes and program growth.

I am grateful to all who guided me.



Christy Hatherley
(Class of 2006)

After graduating from OLSH, I pursued a career in healthcare inspired by a Year 11 Physics excursion where we learned about radiation therapy. I was drawn to the way it combined science with the opportunity to help people. I went on to study radiation therapy and, in a full-circle moment, ended up working alongside the very educator who had introduced us to the field during that school trip. It was a rewarding career that also gave me the chance to work overseas.

I have moved from clinical work into a role as an Improvement Advisor in the public health system. Rather than supporting individual patients, I now focus on system-level change—identifying, testing, and implementing ideas that improve access to and the experience of care across hospitals. It's a different kind of impact, but one I really enjoy.

I still live locally with my wonderful partner. Outside of work we both enjoy pursuing our creative outlets - mine are cooking and quilting. Some of the quilts I've made have been inspired by OLSH memories and the process of making them has been a lovely way to reflect on my experiences and the different ways that my time at OLSH has stuck with me.

One of my most formative experiences at school was our trip to Kiribati, which sparked a lifelong love of travel and adventure. A highlight was backpacking around Europe for 6 months with my best friend, such a worthwhile experience! The most enduring gift from my time at OLSH has been the friendships. My girlfriends from school remain a central part of my life, we've grown up together, and I'm so grateful we continue to share life's journey.

To current students, stay curious and open to unexpected opportunities. You never know which moment like a school excursion might shape your future. Value the friendships you're building now - they may become the most important relationships in your life. Success doesn't always follow a straight path - what matters most is finding purpose in what you do and staying true to your values.



Grace Bowles
(Class of 2020)

After graduating from OLSH, I moved to Wollongong to study a double degree in Law and Arts. I am now in my final year of that degree and have absolutely loved the experience of moving interstate, living with wonderful friends, getting involved in the community here, and exploring the beautiful landscape of NSW's South Coast.

While studying, I've been fortunate to collaborate on and co-author research work in criminal justice, intern at the NSW Courts and the Aboriginal Legal Service, work at a major commercial firm in Sydney, and undertake an exchange semester at the University of Leeds. Next year, I'll be moving to Sydney to work as a Tipstaff to a Judge in the Supreme Court of NSW and am excited to be pursuing a career in criminal justice.

I look back on my time at OLSH very fondly and am incredibly grateful for the wonderful staff and students. The passion of the teaching staff was infectious and has inspired my love of learning. In fact, I chose to study Law because of my incredible Legal Studies teacher, Ms Verna. I am particularly grateful for the student leadership opportunities I had at OLSH, particularly as College Captain in Year 12. I learnt so much about working collaboratively, being adaptive, thinking big and the potential for real impact a small group working together can have.

I would encourage current students to try absolutely everything that appeals to them. Try a new sport, a subject that might challenge you, audition for the production, speak to new people. There is such a broad range of opportunities right at your fingertips and it is an exciting time to experiment with what might interest you in a safe and supportive space. At the very least, you'll meet new people and have fun doing it, and if you're lucky you might just find something you're passionate about!



Lucy Hammond
(Class of 2015)

After graduating from OLSH in 2015, I went on to study for my Bachelor and Masters degrees in Architecture at Monash University, focusing my studies on the impacts of architecture in disaster resilience in the wake of climate change. This involved travelling across Australia and Indonesia. My final project went on to be displayed in Melbourne Design Week and was in bushfire recovery hubs across Victoria.

After graduating, I spent a few years working in corporate architecture. I then went on to work at my current studio, where we work with First Nations communities, local councils, and not-for-profit organisations. We aim to deliver architecture that reflects the culture, values, and strategy of the organisations we work for, rather than just creating beautiful buildings. We do that too and won the highest award at the Victorian Architecture Awards last year.

I'm currently undertaking the last hurdle to become a registered architect, and once complete, I am planning to move overseas.

My fondest memories of OLSH were spent in the art room, of course, but there are many other memories, such as the dance parties we would have at lunchtimes in the common room, getting 'mates' wrapped in brown paper from the canteen (which you lined up all lunchtime for), and bellowing out *By the rivers of Babylon* with my classmates.

My advice to current students is don't be too hard on yourself – you don't have to be the smartest, most well-behaved student to find success later in life. If you pursue what you really care about, life has a way of working itself out.



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Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College Bentleigh stands on the lands of the Bunurong people and we acknowledge them as Traditional Owners. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

Front cover: OLSH College students on a cultural immersion trip to China.

Back cover: Highlights from OLSH College life in Semester 1, 2025

Disclaimer All care has been taken to verify that the information contained in this edition of *Flame* is correct. However, we apologise if any inadvertent discrepancies have occurred. Please contact the College if you would like to reproduce any of the material in this edition of *Flame*.

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