Principal’s Report 2015

It is with a real sense of wonder and thankfulness that I am able to present this year’s 2015 Principal’s report. It has been an excellent year for our College and so it is good to stop at the end of the year and to thank God for what He has done. In Psalms 92 it says,

1 It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
   to sing praises to the Most High.
2 It is good to proclaim your unfailing love in the morning,
   your faithfulness in the evening...

Whether it has been with our Distance Education program or on campus program we do have a lot to be thankful for.

When I first arrived as Principal in March this year I was overwhelmed with the sheer beauty of the college and the surrounding district of Albany. The grounds of the college are idyllic and I was struck by the peace and tranquility of the area. What a great place for a learning environment! Albany itself is an environmental treasure with so many rich natural resources and so provides wonderful opportunities for students to explore and discover and so further inspire their learning. This year our college has sought to build on these natural assets and to weave them seamlessly into our students’ learning. Some of the enriching experiences of our day school included:

- K-PP visiting Discovery Bay and enjoying the Australian animals or having demonstrations on bush tucker and didgeridoo playing
- Year 1-2 students visiting Whale World
- Year 3-4 students exploring Marron Farm
- Year 5-6 visiting the National Anzac Centre
- Year 7-8 hiking to visit the National Anzac Centre
- Our Senior students spending two weeks travelling to Canberra by bus
- Year 9-11 hiking around Lake Seppings

Discussions held with the University of Western Australia (UWA) Albany have confirmed the importance of our focussing on the environment. The theme for their university campus at Albany is sustainability and they offer a whole range full degree courses with this perspective in mind. ACC Southlands has therefore realigned the courses now being offered for 2016 in Year 11 to take advantage of the opportunities offered by UWA Albany. In 2016 we will be offering:

- Earth and Environmental Science
- Chemistry
ACC Southlands has also become a founding member of the Environment Studies Great Southern (ESGS) which is a regional group of organisations committed to improving awareness and education in sustainability. In 2016 each term will be having an across the school theme and in first term it will be sustainability.

Another asset I discovered since arriving at ACC Southlands has been the high quality of the staff. That is, having a highly enthusiastic and talented team of teachers, administrative support staff, outdoor staff and educational assistants who are all committed to developing a culture where students enjoy being at school and are wanting to learn. It has therefore been most encouraging to see our teachers willing to embrace new forms of teaching practices as well as attending many professional learning sessions in their own time and yet, being willing to take the time to connect at the heart level with their students.

A phrase we have often used this year has been, “well known, well loved, well taught” because that is at the heart of our college. As a fellow principal recently said, “It’s all about the teacher, by which I mean, it’s about the integrity, the quality and calibre of the teacher in the class. If you can get that right, you can pretty much teach in a tent.” I have discovered that we have teachers of these very qualities but more than that...teachers who love their students.

However what I have also been impressed with is the quality of our students. It is not just about growing in numbers but about our students growing in every aspect of life....mentally, socially, physically and spiritually. Our College offers an increasing rich variety of enriching experiences for our students and these are all directed towards building better students and preparing them for their life's journey ahead. An excellent example of this being put into practice was the Great Aussie Road Trip to Canberra which was held this year. Our senior students in discussion with the teachers came up with the proposal to travel to Canberra by bus...to be a trip where the journey was as important as the destination. Our students were not only able to develop their understanding of government and the role of Canberra but also to visit key geographical sites along the way and to experienced the wonder of the Australian landscape.

Being a successful school is always a challenge because the world we live in is constantly changing. One of the roles we have as a college is to help students prepare for this real world and to be able to cope with change. That is why I am delighted to announce that we will be
introducing some further changes to courses being introduced in 2016. In Years 7-10 we will be having ICT as a separate subject and this will allow our students to be involved with coding and robotics etc.

However being able to cope with change is more than just academic preparation but it is also involves character development. This year we have continued to focus on developing the character traits of our students like citizenship, teamwork, loyalty, leadership, self-control and self-regulation which come through our, sports, extra curricular activities and student leadership opportunities as well as our more focussed sessions during our College Community Gatherings and our class times in Wisdom, Faith and Life. The introduction of having Mrs Wingard as our school chaplain this year has also provided the college an extra dimension in this important task of assisting students.

Another important feature of our College is being able to demonstrate and model before our students the essential need for faith in our lives. Forgiveness, mercy, gratitude, sense of purpose, faith and integrity can easily be overlooked in our fast paced life but are seen as very important in our college. They also find expression through our spiritual education and the broad range opportunities for service. As part of this program one of our senior students left in November to travel with other Australian Christian College students from around Australia and has gone to Cambodia. These students will be partnering with Samaritan's Purse and assist in their community building programs.

We are intending to further expand these opportunities in the future by offering in 2017 a 10 day trip to Vietnam for students in Years 9 & 10. This study trip whilst covering key areas in our History and Geography courses will also give students the opportunity to serve by assisting in two orphanages.

Our College has always seen the surrounding local area as vitally important to the long term learning of our students. Education which is restricted to only the classroom can lack authenticity and relevance to students and so reduce engagement in learning. Having the community actively involved in the College reduces misunderstandings and their active support encourages students. Our parents through our P&F play a vital role in helping our college achieve these community links. Some of their activities this year include:

- organising a number of community bar-b-qs
- assisting in hosting a Rugby Union carnival at school
- spearheading a food drive for St John’s church outreach program
- arranging for our students to be in the Albany Christmas Pageant
- holding a Garage sale and fete
Our P&F has also raised money to assist in buying teaching resources for our college. This year over $6,000 was donated towards buying new music equipment. As well as raising money the P&F have also been involved in community education events such as our Parent Cyber Safety night which was very successful this year.

This year I have also been impressed by the way our College partners with the community in a number of learning areas. This includes having our technology classes held at the local Trade Training Centre, our senior students sharing facilities at UWA, students enrolling in TAFE for subjects and sharing resources with the Living Water Anglican Church. This is a healthy sign for any school.

**College Performance**

Being new to the college this year, I have made a point of visiting all our classes and observing lessons and the interactions of students and teachers. I have been impressed with the quality of teaching and the enthusiasm of students to learn. Nevertheless I recognise that it is still very important to cross check these observations with data received from student testing. In terms of student data our college relies not only on class testing but also ACER testing and our NAPLAN tests. The recent publication of the NAPLAN results have again been very encouraging for our college.

Again it is important to remember that the NAPLAN tests are only one measure of student learning which are conducted early in the year as well as tests skills that are developed over time through the school curriculum. The beauty of the NAPLAN test is that it is also an effective diagnostic tool so that schools can identify areas of strength and weaknesses in students’ learning. At the end of term three we held a College Review day which gave all our staff the opportunity to examine the NAPLAN data in more detail. However it is worth noting that

- Our Year 3 had higher than national average achievement above the minimum national standard in the Reading, Writing and Numeracy domains.
- In Year 5 all students met the minimum national standard in the Reading, Writing and Numeracy domains as well as having a higher than national average achievement above the minimum national standard in the Reading and Numeracy domains.
- In Year 7 all students met the minimum national standard in the Numeracy domain. (A very high proportion of students (35%) achieving in the top 20% of the nation in Numeracy). There was also a higher than national average achievement above the minimum national standard in the Reading and Writing domains.
- In Year 9 all students met the minimum national standard in the Reading and Numeracy domains. A very high proportion of these students achieving in the top 20% of the nation in Reading and Numeracy. A higher than national average achievement above the minimum national standard in the Reading and Writing domains.

**Excellent Registration Visit by authorities.**
Our whole school registration visit by the Department of Educational Services (DES) was held on 10/9. The inspection panel was delighted with the progress of the school and no issues were raised at all in regards to our Day school. The new Distance Education (DE) program was examined closely and the inspection panel were impressed with the changes that we had made and especially in our use of the West Australian curriculum. I am aware that the College has undergone lots of changes over the past 12 months and so it is wonderful that we are now able to move forward with renewed confidence.

**Enrolments:** It is very pleasing that the rate of enquiries for new students is growing. In 2016 we will have the record number of new students starting. We are now placing any prospective new students for our DE program on a waiting list for 2016.

**Music and the Arts** is important for all schools and I have been pleased with the progress we have made in this area this year. Our Primary school students under the leadership of Ms Louise Rolley performed their first musical production called Papa John’s Garden. This was held at the Living Water Anglican Church. I also want to commend Michael Poole for running the extra curricular performing music class after school on Wednesdays. We are looking at extending our music program over the next year and inviting music teachers to offer small group instrument lessons.

I also want to thank Mrs Elissa Pitavanik for her outstanding work this year in the area of Visual Arts. She is not only a teacher but is an accomplished artist in her own right and so we are delighted that she will be able to teach Visual Arts at the Year 11 level next year.

**Sport** has also made some big strides this year. In term one we held our first college swimming carnival and the enthusiasm and talent of our students was wonderful. I must give special mention to Holly and Montana Yorkshire for their outstanding efforts as well as their performances at the regional carnival.

I also want to congratulate Mr Wing Kuen Wee for the leadership and example he has provided within the sporting area of the school. As well as being one of the coaches he has coordinated our school’s involvement in the Saturday Albany Junior Soccer League. Our college entered teams in the U7s, U8s, U10s and the U11s this year and I was most impressed with not only the quality of performance but their dedication to practice and to continue to improve.
Our college rugby union team continued to do well this year and made the grand final of the inter school carnival held at our school. They were beaten in the final by Denmark Agricultural school. Rugby union provides an excellent opportunity for community building and we look forward to further improvement next year.

The sporting and PE areas of our college will be further improved in 2016 when we have Mr Tim Burns joining our staff. Tim Burns is an experienced PE teacher and this will add strength to our college as we continue to grow.

**Distance Education (DE):** The world of change I have been speaking about also affects our DE families and so we have been determined to ensure that our DE program keeps pace with their changing needs. This year our DE program has undergone radical changes in order to bring it into line with the Australian Curriculum and West Australian curriculum requirements. This new program was launched in Term three.

Our new DE program is also designed to ensure that the day school and Distant education programs are able to work together so that students who move from DE to day school are not disadvantaged. It should be noted that the Primary program is mainly paper based (using textbooks and syllabus documents) and assessment/engagement tasks are electronically submitted. For primary students, each year group is involved in regular teleconferences and they are in constant contact with their teacher. The secondary program is an online course with students being involved in regular class forums with their peers and teacher. The use of our college’s schoology software also enables students to be in touch with their teacher and to receive frequent feedback on their progress.

One of the advantages for me this year in preparing to launch our new DE program was that I was able to go on a number of road trips to hold meetings with families; to get to know them better and receive feedback on how we can deliver a better service. These group meetings were in homes, halls, municipal libraries, churches and parks a in all cases, they were inspiring as I learnt about how DE was helping their families.

We have already received some wonderful feedback from our current distance education parents and the numbers on our waiting list for 2016 continue to grow. I believe that there will be a growing demand for our Distance Education because we can now offer parents across the whole of Western Australia who are facing a myriad of educational challenges a realistic choice in the education market.

Our DE team of teachers have done a magnificent job this year amidst all these changes and so I want to pay special tribute to Ms Ming Tan, Brandon Moody and Mrs Merrill Graham.

**Final remarks:**
You might remember that in 2011 we saw in graphic detail the London riots which shocked us all. I visited London not long after these events and saw the scars which were still visible all
around London. (I will never forget these events because they triggered off my son and family deciding to return to Australia to live). One of the disturbing features of these destructive riots was that many of the key people were actually employed or attending university. They were not all the classically unemployed people. At the time I noted that one particular commentator had observed that “the issue was one of poverty of aspirations and poverty of values”.

These events raised an important question for me, “what are we doing to give our students the greatest opportunity to be able to leave school with purpose, aspirations and values?”. Yes, we must give the best academic opportunities but is that enough?

And so at the end of this eventful year with the Paris and Beirut terror attacks I am again reminded of our purpose as a Christian school….that is, to being a living expression of Jesus’ love in action in Albany as we seek to meet the vast educational needs of our students.

At the forefront of our College is Faith which allows us to form a deep understanding of our reason for living. An ability to be able to answer the big “why” questions of life. This is more than just a set of beliefs. It is the affirmation that we can live in relationship with the God who created us because of what His son Jesus did for us. Our College is able to invite students and families to discover this life of faith.

Our College also provides for genuine aspirations or a real hope for living. Hope is another central message of our College as it flows out of the discovery of our purpose in life. That is why we can strive to encourage every student to reach their God-given potential (i.e. developing true self-confidence) as well as equipping our students with the necessary skills for the future. That is why we take our learning very seriously.

Our College also encourages values which can give our students real direction for living. Our College recognises that all our values are centred in Love which is the key for all relationships in life. That is why our College believes that teaching students to serve others and accept responsibilities is so important.

Faith, Hope and Love…. these are core elements of our life as a College.

- Faith - giving us the reason for living
- Hope - giving us a purpose in living, and
- Love - giving a way of living.

‘I also know that these are not just concepts to learn about but are realities in which we seek to discover together and grow. That is why we see our College as being a learning community where we are all (staff, students and families) seeking to grow in Faith, Hope and Love.

And so to the great team we have here at ACC Southlands, congratulations for what you have achieved and the wonderful love you demonstrate every day to our students. To our College Board, the wider Southland family and our supporting churches please accept my thanks also. To our mums and dads, my heartfelt thanks from all the staff for your continued support and
faith in us. Special thanks also to Mrs Barbara Gill who has been a tower of strength in the office. Finally might I acknowledge my wife Yvonne who has fully supported me in this move from one side of Australia to the other and who has been my constant encourager.

R. Malcolm Bromhead
9.12.15