



From the Headmaster's Desk

ST ANDREW'S COLLEGE



Dear Parents and Staff

Welcome back to everyone for the start of the busy Michaelmas Term. It seems extraordinary that we are already at this stage of the year with so much ahead of us over the next three months. On the first day back at school a Memorial Service was held for **Stuart (Smiley) van Oldenborgh**, Grade 9 Graham, who was killed along with his father in an air crash at the start of the holidays. The service in the Chapel was profoundly moving, with extraordinary tributes paid to Stuart by his peers and by his mum, Gillian.

For the matrics this term marks the culmination of twelve years of schooling and some of the boys are beginning to feel the urgency as they approach the end. At Assembly recently I gave them a "min dae" theme where I spoke about the army and having forty days left. They have only got forty school days left in which to get their preparation organised, to make up their minds whether they are going to get a great set of marks or an ordinary set, and whether they are going to focus, try their best and strive for excellence.

At the recent Independent Schools' Heads' Conference in Cape Town, the Vice-Chancellor of UCT, Dr Max Price, spoke about that University's controversial admissions policy, their desire to redress the wrongs of the past, the IEB, and the success rate of students who write the IEB at UCT. I am not going to enter into that debate now. What is significant is that UCT is clearly the university of choice for the vast majority of excellent matriculants, and applications to that university have increased steadily over the last ten years. So whereas before they were predominantly a Western Cape University, they now have hundreds of applicants from KwaZulu Natal, Gauteng and from Africa at large. Faced with such intense competition to get in, it is imperative that our boys apply at more than one faculty and certainly at more than one university.

The theme of our Heads' Conference was "Design Ahead" and we were exposed to international speakers who challenged our paradigms on the classroom and who emphasised the importance of staying abreast of technology. The fact is that many of us continue to teach in a 20th century way with 20th century methodology when we are preparing our pupils for a world that is changing rapidly and where new jobs and new types of work are being created all the time.

One of the speakers, Westley Field, in a talk on Future Schooling, described the school as a node on the network of learning and that we needed to move from seat time to competency. He saw teachers as collaborators and that all students needed to have their own "personal GPS". He spoke about courses that combine face to face classroom instruction with on-line learning and reduced classroom contact. He used the expression "blended work", learning time on task linked with cross curriculum work.

We were challenged by John Hunt, founder partner of TBWA Hunt Lascaris, in a talk on Managing Creativity, not to stick to the status quo and that sometimes organisations are structured in an 'idea unfriendly way'. Anyone should feel free to have an idea and that challenging the status quo shouldn't be the preserve of a few who happen to be in senior

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positions. He said that sometimes we confuse information with insight and that information can retard processes and ideas as much as illuminate them. He also further challenged us to embrace diversity as 'it will hug you back'. (Why have the same kind of people in the room if you want a new idea to come out?!) We are guilty sometimes of intellectual incest, playing footsy footsy with sameness and nothing new is going to come out of that.

We were also privileged to listen to Dr Tim Noakes who spoke about the importance of Sport as something that should be done at school in order to encourage a love for sport and a lifelong habit of exercise. He warned us that sport is not a profession in this country, and that only a handful of children will make it into professional sport. He spoke about participation by all as being more important than excellence for the few. In a school of College's size it is imperative that we continue to encourage boys to participate across the board in sport and not to specialise in one sport only.

James Anderson, an Australian, spoke on the Habits of Mind. The website is included at the bottom of this letter as it might be useful for you to have a look at it. A determinant for success is practice and he said that people need to have a growth mind set. The mantra should be "I can't do it now but I will" or "I can't do it YET". Talent is not the cause of something, but the result.

One of the first Habits of Mind is managing impulsivity. Anderson spoke about being persistent, being organised, having the ability to plan and persevere and not give up, to be able to listen with empathy and understanding, the ability to think flexibly and to reflect, and to be able to think about your own thinking. We need to strive for accuracy, to question, to be able to pose problems, to apply past knowledge to new situations, and in an ever competitive world our pupils need to search with wonderment and awe, to be creative, to be able to imagine and be innovative, and to take responsible risks and to grasp opportunities.

In this digital world we need to manage our boys, stay with them and understand how they are using social networking. This generation has been described as "generation me", with a great increase in narcissism. A useful article which was quoted was Peggy Orenstein in the New York Times: "I tweet, therefore I am". The role of the social media in the uprisings in North Africa and in the recent London riots was highlighted, and with reference to the latter the quote was made that "Infamy is much better than anonymity". It was pointed out that technology is agnostic – it is neither good nor bad. Clearly the challenge for us in a boarding school is to focus on relationships as children become more and more bound up in social network relationships. In an environment which is very addictive, some of our children find Facebook friendship more profound than real friendship. To be unfriended on Facebook can be devastating.

The third term is an exciting and challenging one. To go back to where I started, the matrics are gearing up; the Grade 11s are turning their thoughts to moving into their matric year and the responsibility that goes with leadership at College. The Grade 10s have the thought of Journey ahead of them and all the preparation that goes with that. We enter a short, sharp athletics season – it is a shame that it is so short. Boys who are athletes must be given the chance to represent the athletics team first and foremost before their other summer sports.

The seasons seem to have largely disappeared and summer sport preparation began in the holidays with successful cricket tours to Zimbabwe and the T20 Tournament at St David's whilst the water polo players held a water polo camp in preparation for the SACS Tournament.

The Half Term in the Michaelmas Term is a time where some of our pupils indulge excessively in alcohol and in unacceptable behaviour at Kenton. I will be writing a specific letter about this but

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I ask please, that parents support us on this issue. I remind you that abuse of alcohol and substances is a Headmaster's Offence and the ultimate sanction is expulsion.

Many of you will be coming down for Balloon Week and we look forward to meeting you and welcoming you.

We look forward to a very successful term and wish the matrics well over these next few rather tense months ahead of them.

Kind regards

PAUL EDEY
HEADMASTER

References to websites you may find interesting:

Habits of Mind – www.habitsofmind.org

Aga Khan Foundation – www.adkf.org

www.waitingforsuperman.com

Mind Set – A book written by Carol Dweck – www.mindsetonline.com