



THE WOMEN'S COLLEGE

Within the University of Sydney

The Women's College Alumnae Annual General Meeting Minutes

The Women's College

6.00pm Thursday 6th February 2025

Present: Angela Frith (President), Victoria Harper (Secretary), Lucinda Beutler (Committee Member), Amelia Sweeney (Committee Member), Her Honour Magistrate Jennifer Giles (Committee Member), Rachel Peterson, Christa Lenard, Jade Richardson, Lucinda Beutler (Committee Member), Bridget Sweeney, Jackie Menzies, Jessie Kelly, Libby Tondl, Sophie Bosch, Tracey Dawes-Lucas, Georgi Schmidt

Apologies: Janet Phippard, Janet Flint, Jane Dawson, Judith Hunter, Sarah Madew, Suzanne Haworth, Romy Fung, Hannah Heading, Lara Meers, Libby Gilbert, Astrid Eggins

In attendance: Dr Tiffany Donnelly (Principal), Margo Baas (Vice Principal), Jocelyn Palmer (Business Manager)

1. Welcome and apologies

Welcome: Angela Frith welcomed everyone and gave the Acknowledgement of Country. Victoria Harper read the list of apologies as noted above.

2. Minutes of the previous AGM

The Minutes from the meeting of 29 February 2024 were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

3. Business arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising.

4. Treasurer's Report

In the absence of Treasurer Lara Meers, Amelia Sweeney spoke to the *Special Purpose Financial Report for the 12 Months Ending 31 December 2024* as attached to the agenda (and to these Minutes), noting the alumnae's strong financial position after a really good year which might allow for more creative and innovative events in 2025.

The increase in the Alumnae Fee won't take effect until the 2026 intake.

The report was adopted.

5. President's Report

Angela Frith reported as follows:

The previous year had been a very successful year in terms of alumni events and engagement. We kicked off the year with recognition of esteemed alumnae at our annual Alumnae Awards, we were so

impressed with the quality of the nominees, the selection committee highlighted it was a difficult selection.

Our Open Alumnae Award was awarded to: Jane McMaster (90-91) – Recently Chief of Engineers with EA, after a career in defence and professional services.

Young Alumnae: Danielle Lotzof (2011-14), who established a charity READucate to address increasingly high rates of illiteracy across the Philippines and South Africa.

Community Achievement award went to: Jessica Walker (2009-2012) recognising her humanitarian career that included United Nations Secretary General's Envoy for Youth in New York: working in refugee camps, policy development and emergency responses in the Pacific.

We continued support for two very important initiatives supporting our students as they enter the workforce:

We awarded the 2024 Sibyl Grant scholarship which pledges up to \$10,000 to three very impressive student recipients:

- **Ashleigh Lane** Conductor and 4th Year Music student looking to attend a choral conducting masterclass in Lisbon costing \$7000
- **Hareem Sohail** looking to attend AMSA Melbourne for networking at a cost of \$1500
- **Dilshika [Didi] Wickramasinghe** 3rd Year Medicine student looking to attend the same convention in Melbourne in July at a cost of \$1500.

The Alumnae Mentoring Program which in its fourth year targeted the mentoring of **mid-career alumnae**.

Throughout the year we hosted a total of eight events facilitated by the Alumnae Committee, a substantial increase on the year prior. Since 2020 we have taken the opportunity to refresh what we do in maintaining some of our traditional events and introducing some new events in line with the new Women's College strategy which has put our Alumnae Community in the centre. We now have an elevated focus on supporting women throughout their lives – encouraging connection, support for women during transitions in their lives and ways to contribute back including with their time in mentoring, participating in events and eventually through philanthropy.

The events included:

- **The Wisteria lunch** – with 50 in attendance – hosted by Committee member Her Honour Magistrate Jennifer Giles
Katrina Dawson Foundation concert, a very popular event.
- **The National Gallery at Victoria event with Melbourne Alumnae** – 21 who joined from across Australia.

We had an increased focus on reunions targeting a number of year groups, many "re-engaging alumnae", who have come back for the first time and sparked a number of philanthropic enquiries.

- **Bathurst & Central West Reunion** in July at the beautiful Abercrombie House, the family home of Victoria Harper our secretary and organiser of this reunion – 60 attendees, approximately 10 re-engaged alumnae.
- **Wizzie Fizz**
A social drinks event targeted a recent graduates held at the Ace Hotel in Sydney's CBD with 35 attendees (50 registrations), largely re-engaged recently graduated alumnae.
- **Back to the 80' Reunion [1981 – 1985]** our first multi-year reunion; with 120 attendees, around 30-40% re-engaged for the first time.
- **A new event targeted : Economics & Finance Industry Forum**, hosted by EY and attended by 76 young alumnae.

With the success of last year, this year we want to continue the momentum. Our focus will be to bed down our revitalised calendar and create the space to try new events each year.

In addition this year with the backing of the Council we are planning a new Alumnae scholarship/part scholarship to support the Council in its philanthropic objective to accelerate their goal of raising \$30 million for the Realise Campaign.

Angela thanked the committee members: Elizabeth Gilbert – Vice-President, Lara Meers – Treasurer, Victoria Harper – Secretary, Ella Bailey, Lucinda Beutler, Lucinda Garling, Jennifer Giles, Amelia Sweeney and Hannah Heading.

She recognised committee members who were stepping down, who will however stay connected, keen to be co-opted for some of our initiatives; Libby Gilbert and Lucy Garling.

In addition, Angela thanked Dr Tiffany Donnelly and Dr Olivia Murphy for their guidance and involvement with the Alumnae Community, and Jocelyn Palmer and Peter Bull for continued support provided to the Committee.

As a member of the College Council, Angela was looking forward to continuing to work with the newly elected Council. She welcomed the alumnae who were new to the Council: Kristen Auld [1993-95], Christa Lenard [1997-2000] and Bridget Sweeney [2007-09].

The report was adopted.

6. Proposed amendments to the Constitution

Angela discussed the proposed changes to the Constitution aimed at aligning the Alumnae Committee with the revised strategy put forward by the College Council. Our focus is on the Committee providing support and alignment – how do we support women as they travel through their lives?

Tiffany raised the question of increasing the number of ordinary members from five to six, noting that the position of Membership Secretary had been removed some time ago for privacy reasons. Victoria commented that any membership issues were looked after by all committee members.

Amending the Constitution was moved by Angela Frith and seconded by Amelia Sweeney. The motion was carried.

7. 2025 Alumnae Social Calendar

Angela spoke to the annual events calendar:

There are multiple aims of these events:

- to foster community and support for each other
- to drive connection back to the College
- to increase awareness regarding opportunities and to contribute back

Since 2020 we have taken the opportunity to refresh what we do, maintaining some of our traditional events and introducing some new events.

This year we will be maintaining all the events, extending two new Industry events, STEM and Law Industry forums. We invite any alumnae in these fields to participate, they are networking events aimed at helping our alum early in their careers, but also an opportunity to connect with those in your field. In addition we are trialling some new events.

Angela reminded the meeting about the Louisa McDonald Oration coming up in May, encouraging all alumnae to attend.

8. Election of Office Bearers and Committee

Dr Donnelly took the Chair for the election. The results were as follows:

President

Angela Frith

Vice-President

Jennifer Giles

Secretary

Victoria Harper

Treasurer

Lara Meers

Committee Members

Lucinda Beutler

Amelia Sweeney

Hannah Heading

Ella Bailey

Jade Richardson

Georgi Schmidt

Auditor

Peter Bull

9. College update from the Principal

Dr Donnelly reported as follows:

- Staffing Update
 - Olivia's resignation announced.
 - Olivia acknowledged for 3.5 years of service, particularly in alumnae engagement and academic tracking.
 - Margo Baas appointed Interim Vice Principal; brings experience in international development, recruitment, and academic program management.
- Admissions
 - Admissions cycle concluded successfully; approximately three applications per place.
 - Applications closed in October for the first time, indicating strong demand.
 - 2025 intake:
 - 107 new freshers in residence
 - 25 new affiliates
 - Demographic mix: 17–20% interstate, 29% Sydney, 23% regional, 12% overseas.
- Student Leadership
 - Student leaders would be arriving the following week for Welcome Week training.
 - Leadership cohort includes academic leaders and RAs; representation from all three teams and five First Nations students.
- Scholarships
 - Over \$1 million awarded in scholarships.
 - Gadigal Scholars partnership with the University of Sydney.
 - New scholarships: Yim Family Scholarship and one in development from an alumna.
 - Sophie Fletcher again awarded Alumnae Scholarship; studying nuclear physics and serving as RA.
- Alumnae Engagement
 - Close to 500 alumnae attended events in 2024 (Council KPI achieved).
 - Upcoming events: Canberra Reunion in March; Ethel Carrick Exhibition.

- Facilities
 - \$100,000 refit of former computer lab into Mary Anderson Design Studio (maker space for architecture, visual arts, fashion).
 - Space to be renamed Ida Saunders Senior Common Room in recognition of donor.
 - Heritage architects engaged for Main Building refurbishment (paint and soft furnishings required).
- Strategic Initiatives
 - Council strategy refresh underway.
 - Focus on engaging younger alumnae and those with young families.
 - Exploring global alumnae program to connect students with overseas networks for study and career opportunities.

AOB

There was no other business.

Next meeting

The Women's College Alumnae Committee Meeting 4 March at 6:00pm.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 7:14pm.