

23 January 2024



Dear Parents, Carers and Students,

Welcome all to the commencement of the 2024 school year. I hope that you had a very happy and safe Christmas and New Year holiday season. I also trust that all are ready for:

- a fresh beginning,
- to be open to new experiences, and
- are looking to continue your journey to human growth and fullness of being in 2024.

I would like to take this opportunity of welcoming our new Year 7s and students who have joined the Merici community in Years 8 through to Year 12. This year our College theme is *Spes*, a powerful word that encapsulates the essence of hope. As we embark on this journey through 2024, we draw inspiration from the biblical quote, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19), anchoring ourselves in the unwavering certainty that propels us forward in all that we do. As a Merici Community, we celebrate the transformative power of hope, recognizing it as a guiding force that illuminates our path and unites us in our shared vision.

Celebrating our 2023 Achievements

Congratulations to our Year 12 Class of 2023 for their exceptional academic achievements.

2023 results include:

- Median ATAR achieved – 83.4
- 21% of students achieved an ATAR over 90
- 70% of students achieved an ATAR over 80
- 93% of students achieved an ATAR over 79
- 98% of students achieved an ATAR over 60

We are very proud to announce that Merici College is the highest ranked Catholic school in the ACT for Year 12 2023 results.

We encourage all students to keep in touch and let us know where their future journey of learning and adventure may take them. A destination survey was sent out and we look forward to receiving their responses. Please register to be a member of our Alumni by sending an email to Ros Parisi at ros.parisi@merici.act.edu.au.

Staffing

We welcome the following staff members for 2024:

Elizabeth Chase – Head of International Baccalaureate
Rohan Langford – Head of Student Wellbeing
Dayne Spencer (Balgo House Coordinator, CAPA and English)
Amanda Brown (Maths)
Nicole Papasidero (English – replacing Jaime McDevitt – Term 1)
Tom White – Science
Faith McCulloch – Learning Support Assistant
Xavier Borgia - Learning Support Assistant
Tara Blake - Learning Support Assistant
Zoa Salazer – Youth Minister

Current Staff Changes:

Kyla Firman – Humanities Coordinator
Jodie Muldoon – MYP Coordinator
Tina Rodriguez – Languages Coordinator
Jo Drummond – Mathematics
Chinese Language Teacher (job share) – currently advertised

Long Service Leave:

Jaime McDevitt – Term 1
Robyn De Puit - 2024

Uniform expectations: Wear our uniform with pride!

Our Merici uniform is highly recognisable in the Canberra community and a symbol of our collective identity. Our smart blazers and navy uniform are highly regarded by members of the Canberra community, and they know a Merici Student when they see one. Every Merici Student is an ambassador for our College and there is an expectation that uniforms will be worn in a responsible and respectful manner, to the highest standard of presentation.

Please familiarise yourselves with the uniform guidelines and support the College in its efforts to ensure the uniform is worn with pride and respect, <https://www.merici.act.edu.au/my-merici/resources/uniforms>. We will be working closely with students and families to follow up on any uniform concerns to reinforce our belief that the uniform helps create a sense of belonging and contributes to our strong school spirit.

Communication and Use of Mobile Phones

We understand that mobile phones and technology are now a key part of modern life. Most students own a mobile phone with access to the internet and for safety reasons students will carry a mobile phone to contact home after or before school.

Here at the Merici, we strongly encourage our students to develop socially and emotionally. This development is just as important as any academic progress or grades. Improving social skills and emotional development can best be done by talking to each other, interacting and developing real connections at break and lunchtime, as opposed to using their mobile phones.

For these reasons, the use of mobile phones on the school site, during school hours is as follows:

During the school day, during lesson time, students must not, under any circumstances, use mobile phones to make calls, send text messages, access the internet, access social media sites, take photos or use other applications.

Students can access their phones to check messages and respond briefly via text message during morning tea and lunch while at their locker. Students are not to use their phones in any other part of the school grounds during morning tea and lunch.

During class time, students must store their mobile phones in a secure locker (**Years 7-10**) or switched off (**Years 11-12**) unless given specific permission from their teacher, or if approval has been given by the College, for example to manage medical conditions.

Any student in Year 7-10 seen using their mobile phone during school hours, including break and lunchtimes, will have their phone confiscated.

Parents are asked to contact Student Services if there is a need to get a message to your daughter during the school day. Please do not message or call your daughters directly during the school day. If it is urgent and/or an emergency, we ask that you call reception on 6243 4100, they will find a trusted adult that will deliver the message to your daughter and support her. If your daughter is not feeling well, she is to go to Student Services where parents will be contacted by the College if necessary.

If contacting a staff member, I ask that you please be patient. Most of our teaching staff are full time teachers and therefore cannot access their emails or the phone message system until they are free to do so. They will contact you within a 48-hour period.

Important Communications re: Site Works

Many have noticed building hoardings in various sites around the College. We are pleased to announce that four new classrooms are ready to be used from the start of 2024. They are situated between the Chapel and the OYC.

In January, work has also begun at the front of the College on Wise Street. Reception, Administration and Student Services are being renovated in order to create more welcoming and compliant spaces for all.

More information is provided in the full report appended to this letter.

Please see below images of temporary entry points to the College from Wise Street for the duration of site works.



Entry to College from Wise Street



Relocation of Reception, Student Services and Finance Office

Senior Carpark

Due to the renovations currently underway, seniors are advised that the senior carpark is currently closed and are required to use the carpark in the Henty Street carpark.

Updates to the calendar events, news and photos can be found on <https://merici.news> . You are also invited to follow our Facebook, Instagram and X accounts.

I look forward to seeing you all at upcoming school events such as our Community BBQ, Information Evenings, International Women's Day event and St Angela Merici Feast Day celebrations. Once again, welcome to the 2024 academic year.

With kind regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anna Masters".

Anna Masters
Principal

For your information, please find below information on the College's Annual Improvement Plan, as aligned to the College's Strategic Plan.

Annual Improvement Plan 2024

As part of the 2022-2024 Strategic Plan, the Annual Improvement Plan focuses solely on the goals and tasks allocated and/or created for 2024. This plan will ensure a continued commitment to providing a positive and nurturing learning environment that supports our school's mission and vision for the future.

Mission Statement

Merici College empowers women to love life, have hope, be faithful and build futures more wondrous than they dare to dream.

Vision Statement

Merici College endeavours to be a vibrant, faithful learning community that fosters excellence, and takes positive action to build a shared global future.

Purpose Statement

To educate women so that they are empowered to love life, have hope, be faithful and build futures more wondrous than they dare to dream.

Values

Fidelitas
Integritas
Communitas
Spes



Actions as aligned to 2022-2024 Strategic Plan are as follows:

1. **STRONG FAITH - ASPIRATION: TO BUILD A STRONG AND POSITIVE CATHOLIC IDENTITY, WHERE FAITH IS NURTURED AND ALL ARE EMPOWERED TO SERVE OTHERS.**

Domain: Catholic Identity
Strategy 1.1: Enrich charism and Catholic culture in the College
Strategy 1.3: Increase awareness and usage of prayer rooms
Domain: Service Learning
Strategy 1.4: Build understanding and commitment to Social Justice activities.
Domain: Faith Formation
Strategy 1.5: Formalise Professional Learning and Religious Education Accreditation for Staff.
Domain: Mission in Curriculum
Strategy 1.8: Implement contemporary Religious Education practices

2. **POWERFUL LEARNING - ASPIRATION: AN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT THAT INSPIRES LIFE-LONG LEARNING, ENABLING EVERYONE TO ACHIEVE INDIVIDUAL EXCELLENCE.**

Domain: Learning Frameworks
Strategy 2.1: Refine our implementation of the International Baccalaureate for MYP and DP Programs
Strategy 2.2: Train staff in and embed practices in Catalyst Program and SEQTA
Domain: Reflective Practices
Strategy 2.3: Collaborative planning for curriculum alignment and inter-disciplinary studies
Strategy 2.4: Expand opportunities for student reflection of learning through SEQTA
Strategy 2.5: Create and trial innovative techniques for teachers and students

3. THRIVING COMMUNITY - ASPIRATION: A CONNECTED COMMUNITY THAT CULTIVATES COMPASSIONATE RELATIONSHIPS, WELLBEING AND THE WHOLE PERSON

Domain: Parent and Community Engagement

Strategy 3.3: Establish mechanisms to increase parent engagement, involvement and consultation across the school

4. SUSTAINABLE FUTURE - ASPIRATION: ETHICAL PRACTICES ENSURE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE STEWARDSHIP OF ALL RESOURCES.

Domain: Facilities and Infrastructure

Strategy 4.2: Maintain and improve facilities and supporting resources to enable best practice in teaching and learning.

Domain: Financial Sustainability

Strategy 4.3: Ensure financial status sustains the desired educational offering.

Domain: Stewardship and Environment Sustainability

Strategy 4.4: Strengthen College participation in sustainable practices

Merici College Site Works Update

We are a construction site!

There are two very exciting building works projects underway here at Merici College.

1. New Modular Classrooms

Expected Completion start of Term 1

Project cost when complete approx. \$1.75m

Through the course of Term 4 last year, four new modular classrooms were fabricated exclusively for Merici College. You may have noticed them being lifted onto site just days prior to Christmas on to the far end of the multi-purpose courts adjacent to the College Chapel, overlooking the indigenous garden and College oval. They are currently being fitted out with carpet, heating and cooling, state of the art IT equipment, water-tanks, security, access stairs and ramps, landscaping and more.

We are still on track to have them ready for use for start of Term 1, although weather conditions may mean that not all the landscaping will be complete. A delay in supply of new classroom furniture means we will be using temporary furniture until mid-March. Resurfacing of the multipurpose courts will follow on later in Term 1.

This work is necessary to accommodate an extra 100 or so student enrolments in 2024.

2. Main Entrance and Admin Office Refurbishment

Expected Completion Term 2 2024

Project cost when complete approx. \$1.5m

The College received the green light to commence our 2nd project, the main College entrance and administration office refurbishment works.

This important project has been in the planning and design phase for quite some time. Its purpose is to upgrade worn out or dated and damaged facilities; address significant compliance, WHS, functionality and work efficiency issues, by combining and consolidating all admin staff into the one open plan space, which includes Student Services.

It has the added benefit of freeing up one extra teaching space that is also as part of our efforts to accommodate increased enrolments in 2024 at Merici College.



The design brief developed in consultation with staff, college advisory council and the architects – Oztal Architects, sought to address the following specific issues: -

Improve duty of care to students

Gaps in supervision in the student services section of the current layout were identified at our last school registration in 2022. The open plan design solves this problem by enabling other additional staff direct line of sight to student services just in case it is physically unattended.

Address lack of functionality

There is confusion as to which is our main entrance and where our reception counter is located making visitors first encounter with the college confusing and less than welcoming.

The existing office spaces are very inefficient for current use and not big enough as the college has grown. It means our office staff is fragmented and disconnected as they staff move around to interact with others.

Resolve Work Health and Safety issues

Existing floor tiles in adjacent corridor are very slippery when wet and worn, frayed carpet is being replaced as part of the project

Improve site efficiencies and reduce running costs

Upgrades to modernise heating, cooling and ventilation systems and the installation of no less than 3 airlocks with automatic glass sliding door suites in student corridors will improve movement, retain warmth in winter and improve energy efficiency.



*2nd main entrance corridor to Student Services.
There is no sight into the sick bay.*



Existing Reception window at front entrance



Work Safety

A work safety plan has been devised in close consultation with the builders and will be reviewed, updated or modified as work continues. Students, staff and visitors have a responsibility to conduct themselves safely too, and must remain outside of the designated building site at all times.

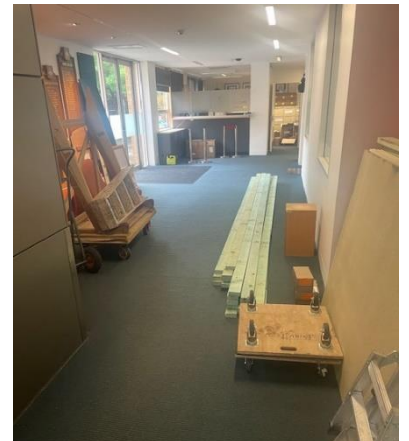
Students will be reminded of the importance of this throughout the building process.

Parents, please keep a look out for information and signage that will be provided on where to go when visiting the site.

Please note relocation of the following Administration areas:

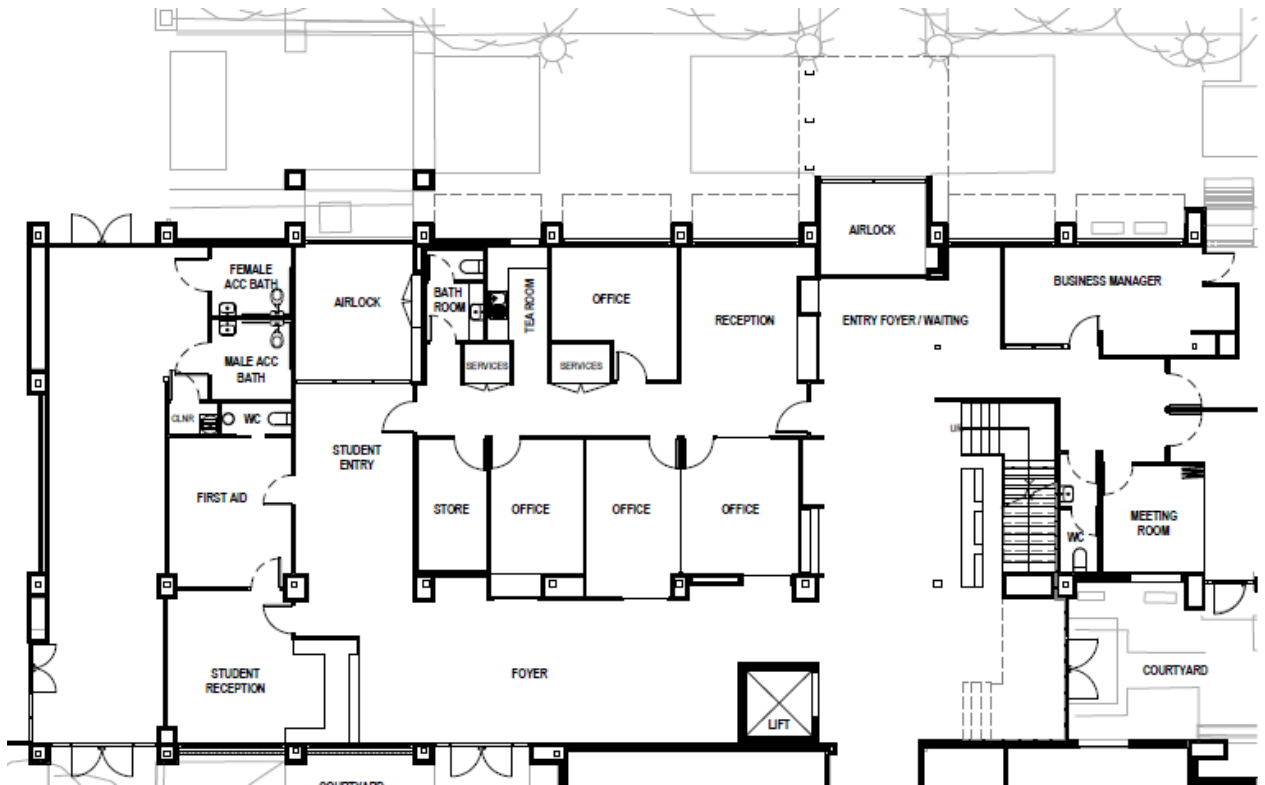
C2 Classroom – Student Services (Jess Wilkinson, Georgia Bennett), Reception (Susan Anderson), Finance (Jodi Wrenford, Leeanne Guildon), Administration Support (Elizabeth Young)

Administration Computer Office (next door to the staffroom) – Enrolments (Narelle Patrick), Comms and Marketing (Ros Parisi)

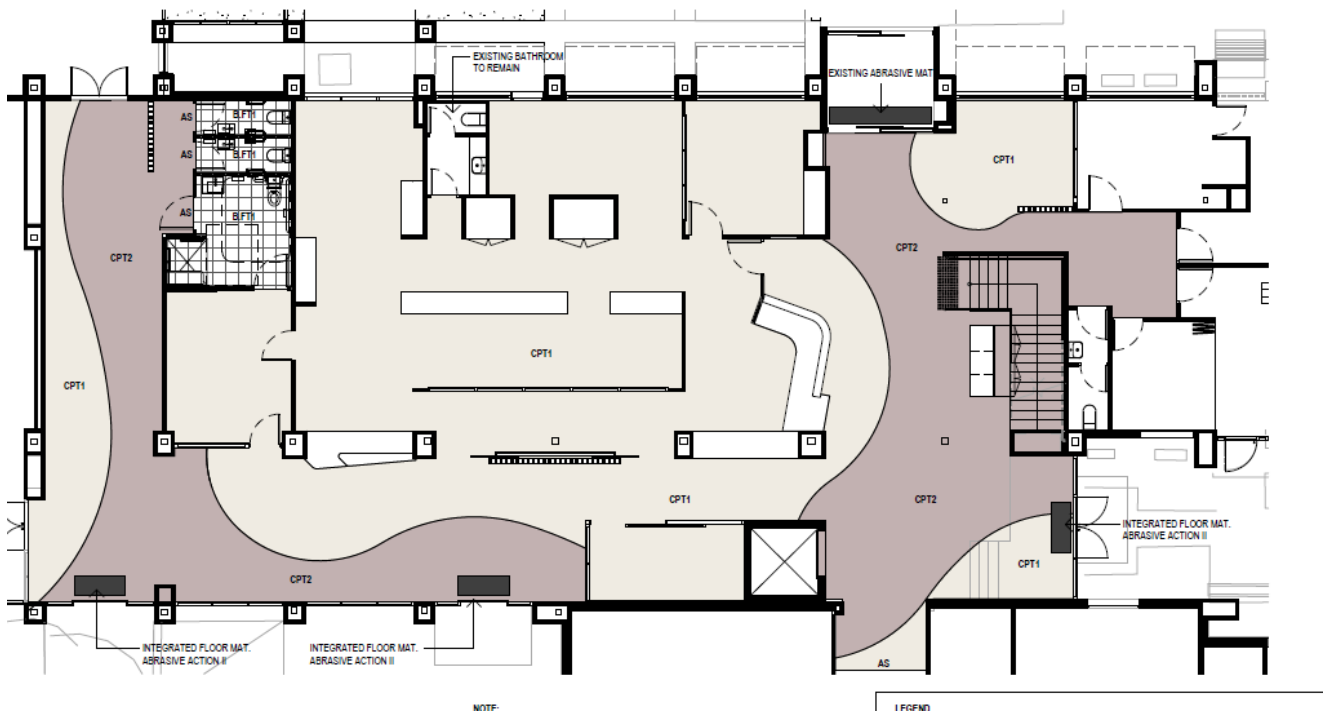


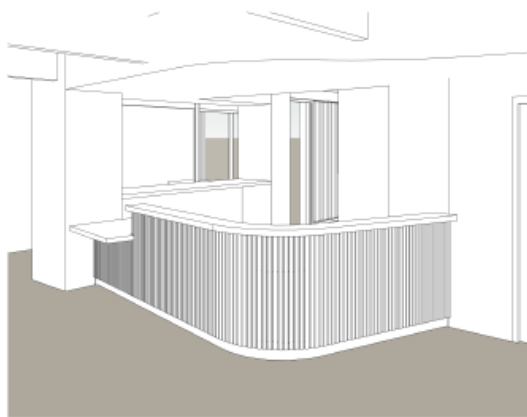
Relocation of Reception, Student Services and Finance Office

Existing Plan:



Proposed:





RECEPTION 1



MEETING BOOTH



Proposed feature for St. Angela Meric statue incorporates LED lighting – Reception foyer

All in all, it is expected that these works will continue throughout Term 1 and will entail some disruption to movement and College operations in general, but it will be worth it!

Mr. Adrian Heim
Business Manager
January 2024