

Report of the Peer Team on Institutional Accreditation of Stella Maris College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Section 1: Introduction

Stella Maris College, a Catholic Institution of higher education for women, is affiliated to the University of Madras and is partly residential. This Minority Institution with a Christian ethos provides higher education that is value based for deserving students, especially those belonging to the Catholic community. Those of other religious affiliations are also admitted without distinction and their rights of conscience are respected. Besides, the college commits itself to serve the economically weak, socially backward and needy students.

The college is under the management of the Institute of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, a registered Society founded on January 6, 1877, at Ootacamund, India, by Mary of the Passion, a woman of vision, courage and conviction. Realizing the importance of improving the status of women, schools and training centres for young working girls were developed by the institute from the very beginning. Stella Maris College owes its birth and its raison d'etre to this vision.

The College founded on August 15th 1947, is a milestone in the history of women's education in India. It had its humble beginning in a one storied building in Mylapore with 32 students in the Intermediate Class. Within a decade, Stella Maris grew into an institution offering graduate and post-graduate courses.

Stella Maris was granted permanent recognition in 1951. To the college belongs the unique credit of starting the Bachelor's degree in Western Music and in History of Fine Arts as well as the Master's Degree in Social Work at the Madras University. In 1952 the Natural Science course was started with 72 students. The college also has to its credit the distinction of being the first to introduce the M.A. course in Indian Music and the first women's college in Madras to offer post graduate programmes in English, Economics and Fine Arts.



Stella Maris was once again the first women's college to have a Social Work Degree Course with the introduction of the post graduate course in 1962. It was one of the few colleges chosen to start the pilot scheme of National Service projects in the year 1968. The college celebrated 30 years of the NSS unit in 1998 with pride and a sense of fulfillment. Today the college has to its credit 12 Undergraduate departments, 2 PG Diploma Courses, 5 Post Graduate Departments, with research facilities in 4 of the PG Departments.

Conscious of the growing need for academic freedom, with meticulous planning and preparation, the college launched into autonomy in 1987, introducing new courses with an interdisciplinary approach. The Autonomy Review Commission which visited the college at the end of three years had this to say of Stella Maris: *Here is an institution which has thought of autonomy, planned for it carefully over a period of time, with full participation of the faculty and is functioning smoothly and well, as an autonomous college.*

The college introduced the Credit Based System in 1997 with the objective of a broad-based education and flexibility in the choice of courses. The Institution has grown by leaps and bounds and with it the Faculty, Staff and Students. The dynamism of the institution is displayed in all its aspects particularly in the manner in which Stella Maris has evolved in response to societal needs and aspirations.

To understand its strengths and weaknesses the college volunteered to be assessed by NAAC and submitted the self study report in December 1999. NAAC constituted a Peer Team to visit the institution and validate the input given by the college. The Peer Team under the Chairmanship of Dr. R.P. Kaushik, Professor of Jawaharlal Nehru University with Dr. Ranganath, Professor of Mysore University and Dr.Sr.Christine Rebello as members visited the college on 24th and 25th of January, 2000. The team had extensive interaction with the Management Committee, Principal, faculty, students, parents and alumni, visited the various facilities of the college and checked the relevant documents. Based on the above exercise and following the seven criteria identified by NAAC the team assessed the quality of education offered in the institution. The criterionwise analysis along with the commendations and suggestions are given in the following pages.



Section 2: Criterionwise Analysis

Criterion I: Curricular Aspects

The college offers 12 undergraduate programmes (B.A. in History, Economics, Sociology, English and Fine Arts; B.Com; BCA and B.Sc. in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology), five postgraduate programmes (Economics, English, Fine Arts, Social Work and Mathematics), two postgraduate diploma courses (Computer Science and Medical Laboratory Technology), M.Phil. in three subjects (Economics, English and Fine Arts) and Ph.D. in four subjects (Economics, English, Mathematics and Fine Arts). The college offers five programmes under the self financing mode – BCA., B.Sc. Mathematics, B.Com., PG Diploma in Computer Science and PG Diploma in Medical Laboratory Technology.

The College has an impressive record of curricular options as well as reforms made from time to time. Changes in the syllabi of the courses are attuned to the university system but with sufficient scope towards innovative restructuring.

The credit based system of education has been in practice since 1997-98 wherein the students have the option to choose from 54 general elective courses, in addition to core and optional courses in major and allied subjects. This gives students the opportunity to choose interdisciplinary courses.

The college offers four vocational courses – Food Science and Quality Control for students of Botany, Chemistry and Zoology; Functional Hindi to students *in lieu* of Foundation Language Course; Functional English to the students of the English department and Tourism to students of History and Commerce. To some extent B.A. Fine Arts, B.Com., BCA, and the PG Diploma courses are career oriented.

The existing curricula for a subject is reviewed and updated once in three years. The curricular content of new programmes is formulated through regular Boards of Studies, National curricular sources and through feedback from students and Alumni 35 – 40% of members of the Boards of Studies are drawn from outside. After a new programme is conceptualized it takes one year to introduce it. During the last two years two



programmes have been introduced – BCA and Vocational course in Tourism for B.A. History and B.Com.

The college strives to inculcate in the students a sound philosophy of life based on faith in God, respect for the individual and concern for the less privileged through Value Education classes which are designed to enable students to imbibe noble values and attitudes. The social awareness programmes, NSS and other extension programmes have been designed to provide students with the much needed exposure to the social realities training them to act responsibly in relation to themselves and to others. The college also organises several leadership training programmes, counselling and personality development sessions.

Under credit based system of education several courses are interdisciplinary in nature. For the vocational courses like Tourism and Food Science and Quality Control the college has established linkage with other institutions. Subjects such as Fine Arts, Physics, Chemistry and post graduate programmes in Economic, English, Social Work and Mathematics along with Computer Science and Medical Laboratory Technology add to the vitality of the institution.

Criterion II: Teaching-learning and Evaluation

Students are selected for admission into various courses through special entrance tests, interviews, by their academic record and through combination of the above. Apart from classroom instruction, Projects, Internships, Field training and Seminars are provided to the students. Each department organises seminars, workshops and exhibitions, which motivates students and enables them to realise their potential.

The autonomy grant has helped to improve infrastructural facilities providing Audio-visual equipment, Computers, Slide Projectors, OHP for each department, Video cassettes and software for the English and language departments, laboratory equipment and library facilities. The departments use Audio-visual facilities / computer simulated experiments, simulation games, group discussion, case study methods and role-play as part of the teaching process.

Wherever possible the students are encouraged and guided to undertake projects and field work which also form part of their internal assessment. Third year students of



Botany, Zoology and Chemistry are taken each year for study tours. The students of Fine Arts and History undertake study tours to various places in India as part of their academic programme. The first year students of Botany are taken for a day to collect specimen of Algae. The students who have opted for Vocational Courses are given 'On the Job Training' during Summer Vacations. Students of the Vocational Course - *Food Science and Quality Control* are taken for study tours to several institutions such as FIPPET, CFTRI and King Institute, Dept of Health and Preventive Medicine, Govt. of Tamilnadu. Students of the Vocational Course - *Tourism* undertake a 10-day study tour to various places of Archaeological and Historical interest. The students of Mathematics spend time observing and studying the Constellations. They are also taken to the Planetarium and to the Observatory. In addition to the above, students are also taken to various other institutions such as I.I.T., Veterinary College, Water and Sewerage Plant, The Milk Processing Plant, Institute of Indian Medicine, Hospitals and Research centres to interact with personnel and observe various instruments / procedures.

Each department invites Experts in the field during the academic year to deliver Lectures on Special Topics. The Department of Social Work, in addition to class room teaching has Orientation visits for field work, Concurrent field work, Rural camps, Skill training programme and Block placement. Students are also encouraged to take part in co-curricular (Quiz, debate and oratorical competitions) and intercollegiate cultural programmes wherein their innate talents are brought out.

Remedial Teaching sessions are regularly conducted for the students who require assistance to improve their academic performance. The students are selected for remedial teaching after the first Continuous Assessment Test each semester. The college offers a **one year preparatory English Bridge Course** designed primarily for students who have completed their school education in the vernacular medium and who require to improve their English Language before they join an Undergraduate programme. The course offers intensive training in English language and communicative skills. They are also given coaching in a subject of their choice in order to improve their academic performance.

The college also has a **Writing Centre**, which functions with the objective of improving the writing skills of the students in the areas of grammar, organisation and style. The centre functions with the help of Staff Advisors from the English Department and writing



assistants from the final year UG and PG classes. Students from various departments who need help have access to the Centre, where they will receive individual guidance.

Evaluation of students is based on both Continuous Assessment and End Semester Examinations held at the end of each semester. Components of **Continuous Assessment (CA)** is carried out by the course teachers. Students are expected to take all testing units that are administered to them. It includes two tests and a third component of seminar / assignment / project work / any other. The testing units carry equal importance. Seminar / paper presentation is a requirement at the Postgraduate level.

There is no provision for additional tests on the grounds of absence or poor performance. However, those who have not taken the tests because of participation in college sponsored activities on test dates are permitted to complete the course requirement before the commencement of the semester examination. A student is permitted to take the End Semester Examination provided she has a minimum attendance of 75% per paper and has completed CA requirements of tests / seminars / assignments / project work, etc. The Postgraduate courses of Social Work, Fine Arts and Economics have viva-voce for the dissertation / project work.

Centralised Double valuation is followed for the End Semester Examination. Since the College follows a Double Valuation System there is no provision for re-valuation. A student can apply for Review and Re-totalling within 10 days of the publication of Results. The schedule of the Examination (both CA and ES) is printed in the College Handbook and the exams are conducted as per the scheduled dates. The results are published within one month after completion of the examinations.

Eighty Seven out of the 110 permanent faculty have at least a one-step higher qualification than the mandatory minimal level. The faculty keep abreast with recent developments in their subject area by attending Refresher Courses / Orientation Courses, Seminars, Workshops, Conferences, etc. The college also conducts Seminars and Workshops, as well as invites experts as resource persons. It also invites experts to deliver Guest Lectures for faculty and students of the departments and invites eminent persons to deliver Endowment lectures (Dept. of History, Mathematics and Economics)



The institution follows self-appraisal method to evaluate teachers on teaching, research and work satisfaction. Feedback on performance appraisal is given to the individual faculty member by the Principal. It is also used for career advancement. Further, individual Teacher evaluation is done by students at the end of the semester and Institutional evaluation by students on completion of the 3 year degree programme. The evaluation done by the students is very confidential and is used by the Principal/ Head of Department only as a feedback mechanism for the improvement of faculty performance.

The Peer Team is impressed by the method of Self Appraisal of the teachers as well as evaluation done by the students from time to time. The teachers adopt a variety of new teaching methods such as holding summer camps, rural camps, hands-on-experience, visiting planetarium and observatories and projects in collaboration with Tamil Nadu Government agencies such as the Department of Preventive Medicine. The extensive field study programmes are an encouragement to students of vocational courses.

The periodical and continuous assessment of students and end semester examination is a noteworthy feature. Students are also expected to put in 75% attendance to be eligible to appear in the exam for promotion to the next class.

Criterion III: Research, Consultancy and Extension

Thirty per cent of the faculty are actively involved in research and have published 40 papers at international and national levels and 33 books have been authored by them during the last five years. 21 faculty members have acquired Ph.D. during the last 5 years. A few departments have on-going research projects.

College Autonomy, Environmental Conservation, Food Quality Control, Jewellery designing, Career and Personal Counselling, Public Relations & Communications, etc. are some of the areas in which the college has offered consultancy to others. Since the inception of autonomy, Stella Maris College has hosted faculty from several other colleges and Universities from other States to study the functioning of autonomy in the college and interact with faculty and students.

The college organises Functional Literacy Programmes in 4 villages of Chinglepet District in Tamil Nadu. The college requests the faculty to volunteer to participate in the extension programme on a rotation basis. Student volunteers are drawn from the



undergraduate classes. In keeping with its objectives especially in forming women of character, sensitising them to a deeper awareness of the social reality of the country, training them to act responsibly in relation to themselves and to others, the college has given high priority to outreach programmes. The faculty are encouraged to undertake extension programmes / consultancy that are geared towards the progress and development of society and care of the environment.

Some of the projects / Extension Programmes undertaken by the college are :-

- Culture & Drug Use / Abuse (1992-97) – funded by IFCU
- University & Community Development (1997 onwards) funded by IFCU & CARITAS India
- Functional Literacy Programme (1992 onwards) funded by Indian Bank
- English for Communication for bus conductors & drivers (1993-95)
- National Service Scheme (1968 onwards)
- Leather Industry & its impact on the Environment (1996-97)
- Environment Awareness Programme (EAP) (1994 onwards)
- Impact of Higher Education on the Empowerment of Women

The team members felt satisfied with the level of research, consultancy and extension offered to the extent offered by the institution which is predominantly undergraduate and has select postgraduate programmes. The department of Fine Arts deserves a special mention for its notable contribution at U.G. as well as P.G. levels. This is the only institution in the State of Tamil Nadu to offer this course.

Criterion IV: Infrastructure and Learning Resources

The College has a well-planned, futuristic master plan and the infrastructural facilities are excellent. The 20 acre plot is strewn with 18 academic blocks housing the different programmes of study and built phase-wise over a period 50 years. These facilities are used optimally by conducting English classes for conductors of the Public transport system, lending of the buildings to several private and public sector undertakings to conduct conferences/seminars/workshops, entrance tests, etc. One of the computer laboratories is made available to conduct classes for the economically weak students of the neighborhood, on Saturdays. The college premises are offered for conducting

programmes for disadvantaged groups such as spastics and street children. Maintenance work is done annually.

Housed in a 2 storied building the library occupies the pride of place in the campus and works on 270 days in a year from 8 a.m. – 4.30 p.m. on week days. With a total of 69739 books, reprographic facilities, audio & video cassettes, CD ROMs and internet. The library services are partially computerized using CDs/ISIS software.

Two computers labs are available for BCA & M.Sc. Maths students, one for the M.A. (Eco) and BA Fine Arts, B.Com. and B.Sc. Maths students, one lab for faculty and separate facilities for the four administrative offices. A total of 124 computers and 2 servers and 22 printers are available in the college.

Sports facilities include 2 courts each for Basket Ball, Volley Ball, Lawn Tennis, Tennikoit and one court for Ball Badminton, one court for Kho-kho, a multipurpose 200 Mts Standard Track, a cricket pitch, hockey field, Table Tennis and the required equipment for these games and sports. The sports facilities are indeed impressive. Outstanding players are given college fee concession. The college has won trophies at the Regional, State and National levels.

There is an Infirmary and First Aid facilities with a resident qualified nurse on the campus. Compulsory medical check up is organized for the first year students.

Welfare programmes of the college include Students Aid Fund given by the college, free hostel accommodation to economically weaker students, interest free loan for administrative and supportive staff and ready response to situations like natural calamities, unforeseen medical emergencies of staff and students.

There are 2 hostels with 210 UG & PG students with one warden for each hostel and an assistant warden common for both the hostels. The hostels are provided with TV and other recreational facilities.

Other facilities include a separate block of 4-stories for administrative and academic services with 2 conference rooms, audiovisual room, inter-religious prayer room, DTP centre, a good canteen and a fruit juice centre.

The members of the team had a very extensive coverage of the institution's infrastructure, its built up area, the quality of the building, class rooms, facilities available in class rooms as well as laboratories and students hostels, recreation centre and other buildings of the college premises. The members feel that the institution's infrastructure is extremely impressive and immaculate. In terms of this general infrastructure, despite the fact that the college is situated in the heart of the city the institution has a very good ambience and its serene atmosphere is conducive for teaching and learning.

Criterion V: Students Support and Progression

The average pass percentage after minimum period of study is 80%. Many students pursue higher education and take up lucrative jobs. Students are offered courses in General Knowledge and current affairs to help perform better in competitive exams at the national level. Apart from the Govt. Scholarships, the college offers 166 scholarships. Thirty four other scholarships instituted by private donors and 9 awards are also available. 457 students have received merit and merit cum means scholarships and other financial aid during 1998-99.

The college arranges for campus recruitment and placement through the Deans office. It is advisable to have a regular placement cell with a placement officer.

A few members of the faculty are available for personal counselling to the students. Peer group counselling is organized. Students are allotted to a particular faculty member for advice on academic matters.

The Alumnae Association of the college is very active and has raised Rs. 2 lakhs towards the building fund in 1996-97 through a cultural programme and has organized Career Guidance seminars. A directory of life-members (over 500) has been published in 1997-98. The alumnae news letter gives information about the activities and major developments in the college serving as a link between the past and the present. The alumnae have begun networking and Stella Maris Alumnae Chapters are being set up in some of the states in India and other countries.



The Students' Union of Stella Maris organizes collegiate and inter-collegiate curricular and cultural activities. 14 students clubs provide opportunities for students to evolve into mature and responsible women, ready to face the challenges of life.

The Deans of Students Affairs offer counselling and facilitate the academic activities for students.

Criterion VI: Organization and Management

Stella Maris College is a Catholic minority institution and has its own management committee with well defined functions. The management committee meets at least once in 2 months. As an autonomous college it also has a statutory Governing Body constituted as per UGC norms for minority colleges.

With the introduction of autonomy and the credit system, administration has been made more participative and democratic. The college has 2 Vice-Principals, 3 Deans of Students Affairs, 2 Academic Deans and the Controller of Examination who are actively involved in the day to day administration. The College Council with the participation of students, plans for the academic year. The views and suggestions of the faculty are sought at general staff meetings.

Additional faculty positions have been created by the Management to ensure effective and efficient functioning of the college.

The institution provides for performance appraisal done for the purpose of career advancement of the faculty. Students also evaluate the course of study and the course teachers at the end of the study programme.

The financial resources of the college are sound. Fund raising drives and contributions from alumnae serve to augment the resources. The college has itself identified areas of weakness and proposes to enrich financial resources and create a data base of all relevant documentation.

The Government of Tamil Nadu is not in a position to fund the institution sufficiently. The Management has stepped forward from time to time in filling that vacuum. As



indicated earlier the management ensures the quality in the recruitment of teachers by funding their salaries and creating posts.

An Appeals and Grievance Committee attends to the grievances of students regarding continuous assessment and end semester examinations. The students council which meets thrice a year also acts as a forum for students to voice their grievances. The staff welfare committee acts as a liaison between the college office and the staff forum. The management provides uniforms, ex-gratia payments to supportive staff.

Criterion VII: Healthy Practices

The Peer Team members have observed that the institution has many healthy practices which are laudable.

1. On-the-job training and work experience for the students of vocational courses - Food Science and Quality Control, Functional Hindi, Functional English and Tourism.
2. Offering a programme of visiting scholars which is a collaborative endeavour. This is more particularly visible in postgraduate research and internationally funded projects.
3. Participative method of students, faculty and administration in the running of the institution is a notable feature. Not all autonomous colleges have such satisfactory faculty volunteerism.
4. Students participation in academic projects, seminars, symposia and several other academic activities is excellent in this institution.
5. The college maintains a good rapport with parent and alumnae.
6. Functional Literacy Project in collaboration with Sinclair Community College, Dayton, Ohio, USA and University and Community Development Project with IFCU, Paris, France – translating objectives into programmes are appreciable.
7. Making available its infrastructure to various service organizations especially to the Spastic Society of India, Ecumenical Fellowship, Street Children Meetings, Women's Fellowship, etc is a service to society.
8. National-level cultural activities – SPIC Macay programmes and conducting other annual cultural programmes of the college – a commitment to preserving tradition and culture, are hosted by the institution.
9. Earn while you Learn Scheme provides additional income for needy students.
10. Excellent Faculty Welfare and Recreation facilities are made available.

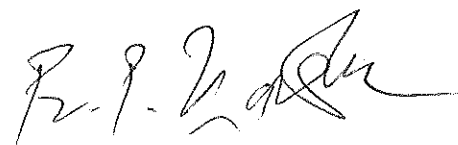


Parents and alumnae have unanimously expressed appreciation for the specific culture of academic freedom, excellence, care and concern prevailing in the institution.

Section 3: Overall Analysis

Following points of self appraisal by the institution are good and accepted by the Peer Team:

- the record of curricular options which is impressive
- the curricular reforms made from time to time
- offering of several courses that are interdisciplinary in nature.
- the credit based system of education in practice since 1997-98 which gives students the opportunity to choose interdisciplinary courses
- the vocational courses and programmes like B.A. Fine Arts, B.Com., BCA, and the PG Diploma courses which are career oriented
- the work experience and on the job training provided to students of the vocational courses
- the courses are designed to inculcate in the students a sound philosophy of life
- Value Education classes which are designed to enable students to imbibe noble values and attitudes.
- the social awareness programmes, NSS and other extension programmes that have been designed to provide students with the much needed exposure to the social realities and training them to act responsibly
- the leadership training programmes, counselling and personality development sessions organised by the institution
- awards won by the faculty like Best Principal Award, Best Teacher Award and other awards, selection for United States information Agency (USIA) visiting scholars programmes
- the remedial programmes arranged for the academically weaker students
- the transparent admission policy of the institution
- the teaching methods that adapt various innovative strategies
- availability of audio-visual facilities and other learning resources to enrich teaching-learning
- well stocked library
- well maintained and effectively utilised computer facilities



- performance appraisal of teachers and course evaluation by students that are effectively used for further planning of the educational experiences of students
- the continuous evaluation system and its effective implementation
- the qualification and commitment of the faculty
- academic, personal and financial guidance and support given to the students
- the faculty adviser system and the Deans of Students Affairs that works well as a counselling system
- involvement of the institution in the community oriented extension activities and
- participative management style.

The following suggestions are offered for further progress of the institution:

- The college needs more exposure to outside expertise from the national mainstream.
- With such infrastructural facilities and team work available, the college may strive for greater number of academic programmes.
- It can conduct further special courses for the weaker sections of the society and make the facilities available towards this direction.
- A few more professional courses such as Information Technology and Hotel Management could be tried for further induction.
- The research output in a few more departments may be enhanced.

The parent-alumnae association has suggested that the college may strive for more intensive involvement towards community service and women's orientation programmes to face social and economic challenges of life.

The Peer Team suggests that the Government of Tamil Nadu and the parent university that the college is affiliated to (Madras University), could be requested to permit the institution in introducing new courses without much delay. The administrative bottle necks may be eased out to allow the institution in launching innovative schemes as well as academic curriculum. The delay causes loss of time, wastage of energy and resources by staying too long on decision making.

The Peer Team places on record its gratitude to the management, Principal, faculty, staff and students for their tireless effort in facilitating the visit of the NAAC Team for purpose of assessment and accreditation. The team commends the commitment of all

concerned and appreciates their collective venture towards uplift of the institution and wishes them greater heights of progress and excellence in the years to come.

Signature of the Peer Team

1. *R. P. Kausik* (Prof. R. P. KAUSHIK)
2. *Sr Christine Rebello* (SR. CHRISTINE REBELLO.)
3. *HARANGANATH* 25/1/2000 (Prof H-A. RANGANATH)

I have gone through the report and agree with the same.

B. R. R. R.
Signature of the Principal

Jan. 25, 2000.

Date: *Chennai*

Place: *Jan. 25, 2000*

PRINCIPAL
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R. P. Kausik