

**III WOMEN'S EDUCATION WORLDWIDE (WEW)  
COLLEGIO NUOVO - SANDRA and ENEA MATTEI FOUNDATION**

**THURSDAY 5 JUNE 2008**

**9.45 a.m. - Welcome**

**BRUNA BRUNI, PRESIDENT OF THE SANDRA AND ENEA MATTEI FOUNDATION**

Presidents and members of the international network of *Women's Education Worldwide*, Deputy Barbara Pollastrini, Rector of Pavia University, Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies of Pavia, President of the Conference of Italian Colleges, Illustrious Professors, Guests and Students,

I would like to give you a warm welcome to Collegio Nuovo and to Pavia, on the occasion of this third international meeting promoted by the main women's colleges in the world. Your presence here today not only honours us and makes us proud but it especially bears witness to our determination to achieve an important goal, promoting the education and culture of women.

The creation of the *Women's Education Worldwide* network is the most interesting, concrete action carried out in recent years by higher education institutions for women. Central to this action is the search for a common model of female leadership, a model able to be translated into real action, so that women can really be those who cause change in society, education, economics and politics, in all parts of the world.

For this I think we must all be grateful to Joanne V. Creighton and Carol T. Christ, the Presidents of *Mount Holyoke College* and *Smith College* respectively, who thought up, promoted and guaranteed the *Women's Education Worldwide* network. Their devotion and enthusiasm, together with their desire to resist any stereotypes about the training and abilities of women, are very close to Sandra Bruni Mattei's project, who founded Collegio Nuovo and the women's section of Pavia's Ghislieri College.

As a Mathematics graduate, Sandra Bruni worked beside her husband in creating and developing a compressors and pneumatic tools company. When her husband died, in 1955, she took over running the firm, with over two hundred employees, all by herself.

Having retired from business, she did not forget the difficulties she herself had had at university. In 1966 she decided to devote herself to furthering talented female students culturally and socially. The idea was to found lay colleges, well involved in modern life. Her first important creation was the Sandra Bruni Foundation, the female section of historic Ghislieri College in Pavia. At her own expense, she had it built to take one hundred women students from all over Italy, chosen on the basis of merit, and with scholarships for the less well-off. With the same criteria, she set up Collegio Nuovo - Sandra and Enea Mattei Foundation, in 1978. She dedicated the last years of her life to launching and furthering these two colleges and she left her personal wealth to them in her will.

Sandra Bruni Mattei was a woman who could look forward. She anticipated the future and especially believed in the value of women. She was a commanding woman, as one would say nowadays, a manager, a leader, with a strong, proud character. She loved travelling and everywhere she went she never failed to make friendships and contacts in the educational field all over the world. In the sixties, therefore, she felt the need to set up a network of international contacts, to give female students and new graduates important world-wide opportunities.

From this international vision came the idea of setting up foreign exchanges, also at Collegio Nuovo, putting women into every area. This desire has continually been realised over the last thirty years.

For Sandra, who was a Mathematics graduate, encouragement of scientific studies was fundamental. Indeed she opposed the idea that women's education should primarily be in the Humanities. Nowadays the number of girls signing on at university far exceeds the number of boys, in practically all disciplines, though it was not like that in 1978, when Collegio Nuovo was founded. And we all know how few women, still today, count in pure science and the scientific fields.

In Sandra Bruni Mattei's mind, Collegio Nuovo was intended to "really contribute to the intellectual progress of the country, providing training and cultural education for the young women on the State university role and other Higher Education institutions in Pavia, who show particular aptitude for study".

The presence of us all here today once more demonstrates that her plan to encourage "worthy but disadvantaged" young women was a specific indication of methodology. It was an invitation to engagement, dialogue and acceptance of responsibility.

The subject of *Women and Politics* is a delicate but decidedly up-to-date topic. And I am certain that Sandra Bruni Mattei's forward-lookingness, her liveliness, her tenacious entrepreneurial will to capture the spirit of the times and help young women, can be an invitation to us all to work well together. This is what I wish for you, so that women – all women, regardless of situation, race, nationality – can have access to education and thus help to build a better world.

Have a good day's work, everybody, and thank you.