

III WOMEN'S EDUCATION WORLDWIDE (WEW)
COLLEGIO NUOVO-FONDAZIONE SANDRA E ENEA MATTEI

THURSDAY 5th JUNE 2008

10.45 - Collegio Nuovo Challenges from 1978 to 2008

PAOLA BERNARDI, RECTOR OF THE COLLEGIO NUOVO

Dear Colleagues, Authorities and Friends of Collegio Nuovo,

today is really a day destined to remain in the history of Collegio Nuovo. Today the dream comes true which I carried with me coming back from the first exciting meeting on June '04 in Mount Holyoke and Smith College. A dream immediately shared by our President and Board of Administrators, our Staff, our Alumnae and our Students: that of having at Collegio Nuovo, in the same year in which we celebrate our 30th anniversary, the worldwide leaders of the university institutions committed to the women's education. Therefore the dream of putting our college in the middle of worldwide discussion and dialogue about women's university education. Really this is a great day for us and I would like give thanks again to the persons who allowed us to realize our dream. First and foremost I'd like to thank Joanne V. Creighton and Carol T. Christ, the Presidents of Mount Holyoke and Smith Colleges, the people who really thought up and promoted our network. Then thanks to all of you who came here from so far away.

Dr Sandra Bruni Mattei, the Collegio Nuovo Founder, would certainly have approved this meeting. It fulfils 30 years of activity and obviously it is for us a new starting point for further growth. Because being 30 means for us to be *already* thirty years old, with all the solid experience this implies. But it also means being *only* thirty years old, in other words we are obliged to look to the future and care for the new generations of women students.

I'll start with few words about our college. It is not an emerging new one, despite its name (Nuovo means New) since it was opened in 1978. The college hosts roughly 120 undergraduates and 50 postgraduates, with 70% enrolled in scientific schools. It is a fully residential, private college, framed in the Sandra and Enea Mattei Foundation, but it is also one of fourteen Italian university colleges that have been granted special status by our Ministry of Education, Universities and Research as "Centres of Educational Excellence". Merit is the criteria for selecting incoming and continuing students at Collegio Nuovo. In addition to promoting talent, the college supports the most deserving students by reserving a number of

free places and by applying subsidised rates (on average 40% of the costs) to all the others.

The structure is independent from the University of Pavia, but anyway it has strong academic links with it. Firstly, all our students are enrolled at the University of Pavia. Moreover, thanks to a clause in the regulations of our University, the College organizes many classes (10 in the current academic year) accredited by the University and open to University students of all Schools. Among these: Digital and Multimedia Communications, Scientific Journalism, Journalistic Methods and Techniques, Semiotics of the Arts, Chinese Law (with a teacher from Shanghai) and short specialized classes in Medicine. In addition the College is the seat of the Master's in Media and Science Technology also held in Tunis. This Master's course is promoted in collaboration with the Institute for Advanced Studies of Pavia, the third Italian Higher Education and Research School, of which the College is a foundation member and now an institutional partner, together with Pavia University and the other colleges of Pavia based on merit. The IUSS School offers undergraduate programs to our students which complement those of the University. So, thanks to these two new possibilities, the Oxbridge model, which has been a dream for centuries in Pavia, is now becoming a concrete reality.

The College also provides study guidance and tutoring services, internal courses in computer studies and foreign languages, training experience, internships, conferences and meetings also open to the public, with leading figures from the worlds of culture, research, politics, business and industry – often women. A few years ago, also as a direct consequence of participating in the WEW network, Collegio Nuovo focused on women's education, offering its undergraduates meetings with influential women, classes for developing skills at work and training courses at work expressly for women.

Collegio Nuovo provides its students with grants, in order to facilitate advanced studies all over the world and hosts visiting foreign students and postgraduates. Exchange schemes have been established with the University of Mainz (1981) and Heidelberg (1992) and with New Hall College of the University of Cambridge (1997). And since 2004 of course with the colleges of the *Women's Education Worldwide* network.

The College also provides its students with resources and facilities for study (multimedia main and other lecture theatres, studies, computer and newspaper reading rooms, library, free Internet access in the study-bedrooms too) and also for leisure: living-rooms, TV lounges, video library, indoor and outdoor sport facilities.

Since its very opening, Collegio Nuovo has always had specific aims. Three primarily: to select its students on merit, to provide them with

a rich cultural program in addition to that of the University and the IUSS, and to look for an international dimension.

Well now some numbers: in 30 years of activity Collegio Nuovo has selected 789 students, including the current ones, coming from all the Italian regions. More than 650 are now graduates, almost all with top grades, the seniors (but seniors less than 50 years old!) have already reached high-ranking positions (among them a Full Professor in Medicine at the University of Oxford), the younger ones are embarking on brilliant careers. A great group of talented women, doctors, teachers, scientists, lawyers, engineers, managers, judges, journalists and so on. Investing in merit, really is giving excellent results. Clear evidence of this comes from a recent survey of our younger Alumnae: 44% of them find a job or start a paid research activity within 3 months of graduation, with this percentage rising to 80% by 6 months. With, I am sure, something special coming from having been students of Collegio Nuovo.

In the same period the College organized more than 500 cultural meetings with keynote speakers together with professors of the University of Pavia. And hundreds of other specialized meetings and classes.

But, because we are now in an international context, I would like to focus on the international outlook that our college is adopting more and more, hosting foreign undergraduates and young researchers, giving its students and Alumnae grants for studying abroad, and setting up international partnerships. The international outlook of the College is precisely the subject of the book *Collegio Nuovo goes international*, published for this meeting and which we are pleased to offer to our guests today, to our international partners, both current and those who, we hope, will become partners in the future. Its aim is to tell how Collegio Nuovo came onto the world stage and at the same time to provide a basic account of its history and the life of the College within the context of the University which is also such a feature of Pavia as a town. It is interspersed throughout with more than 50 accounts from students and Alumnae, both foreign and Italian, who have come to Collegio Nuovo and left it to travel abroad.

As far back as its first year of opening, together with the first 24 Italian women students the College had its first overseas guest, a Somalian graduate, who was a student in Banking, and the following year another, this time from the United States. In the very first year the College set up its first in-house language courses. This continued to expand over the following years, to the point where the College can now count among its thousands of students, both past and present, a high number of foreign Alumnae, most of whom stayed for nearly the whole year and even for several years, that is 249 or 25% of the total, as well as, of course, an even higher number for shorter periods. They have mostly been European

(around 80%), but a fairly good number have come from other continents. They have mostly been students in the Humanities, but with a number of students from other disciplines too, such as Medicine and Science. Throughout the world they form a precious heritage for our College. Not only have they enriched and broadened the community of the College with their presence but they now form an incalculable cross-border network of relations and links. Most of them are still in contact with us, most of them sometimes came back for the annual meeting of the Alumnae, most of them have good memories of their period at the College, as we can read in their accounts in the book. Among them we can now include the Vice Chancellor of Amravati University in India, several University Professors in Europe but also in Tokyo, Jerusalem, Peking, Ankara, Vassar College, Caracas, several teachers, managers, lawyers, doctors and so on. Some of them now live in Italy, mainly because in Pavia they have found their husbands too!

In recent years a new typology of foreigner students has begun to arrive at Collegio Nuovo: not simply guests, but college students, having passed entry examinations. They are the daughters of recent immigrants to Italy from the non European countries. It's an important sign which, I am sure, will bring to the College and our country further richness of human capital, more possibilities of interaction and growth, as real integration, gets through to schools and education.

Another important feature of the international stance taken by Collegio Nuovo has been the awarding of grants for study abroad, since 1981, for summer grants aimed at language learning and at work experience in labs and research centres. Since 1987 annual grants have been awarded for postgraduate course in universities, labs and research centres, included Harvard, Sloan-Kettering, Oxbridge, Paris Sorbonne, Karolinska Institute and the Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Peking! Also in this instance the number is extremely high, that is 405, of which 131 for postgraduates. It means that more than 50% of Collegio Nuovo Italian students stand a chance of going abroad thanks to our College. Those postgraduates travelling the most were scholars in Humanities, recent graduates in Medicine, Biology and Physics, but also Law and Political Science. The main destinations: the United Kingdom, Germany, France and the United States. Some of the Collegio Nuovo postgraduates ended up staying abroad for several years with other grants which they were offered once they were there. 27% of them stayed abroad permanently, mostly in the United Kingdom, Germany and the USA. Collegio Nuovo Alumnae abroad are a truly mixed group, a sort of global university, an international "network of knowledge", which, as also with the foreign students, puts the College onto the world stage.

We can surely say that Collegio Nuovo has always worked hard along the road toward the internationalization. So you can easily understand with

what delight I received, on 22nd of January 2004, the invitation from Presidents Joanne V. Creighton and Carol Christ, on the recommendation of Anne Lonsdale, President of New Hall, to take part in the first gathering in June '04. The theme was the importance of women's education in order to gain true equality with men, especially in the scientific fields. I have met women used to facing the challenges that being a woman today still involves in the world, women ready to offer their students the appropriate tools for attaining self-confidence in their abilities and therefore leadership. It is a real challenge for all of us in our different contexts and not merely a declaration of principle that is already widely discussed and shared.

Now, 4 years after that historic meeting, I can repeat that it was really exciting to meet world leaders in women's university education and to discover too that we speak a common language and face similar problems beyond those very many differences in culture, religion and political and economic models. The '04 meeting had direct repercussions on the internal life of Collegio Nuovo and of the Italian colleges, of which I took over the annual presidency on behalf of Collegio Nuovo that very year. All or nearly all Italian colleges in our group, even the co-educational ones, started to work on the subject of women's education. At the end of that presidential year there was even a conference here on *The making of women leaders - The role of the Colleges*, attended by university professors, company managers and journalists. It ended with speeches by four Alumnae from different colleges, all now in important positions, to show that women can achieve positions of a high level. During my subsequent international meetings outside the WEW meetings, I have never stopped speaking with people about the importance of women's education. The last time was two weeks ago with woman Professor Yu Hang, Executive Dean of the College of Mechanical Engineering at Tongji University in Shanghai, partner of University of Pavia and IUSS Institute. And, of course, I have always tried to transmit to our students what I have learned in such conversations.

For our students indeed the WEW network is also very important. As from that same year, '04, one or two of our students can attend the international meeting *Insight Dubai* every year, with a grant from our College. This is a five-day conference focusing on women and empowerment in the Arab World, organised by Dubai Women's College, which we can now rightly include among our partners. To date six students have attended, all of whom have returned full of enthusiasm and enriched by a truly special experience. I am sure the two Collegio Nuovo undergraduates selected for next week's first truly international students' conference, cohosted by Mount Holyoke and Smith College with the participation of Wellesley, will come back with the same enthusiasm. In addition we are looking for start-up contacts with some more colleges to enlarge the possibilities for our students to go abroad and to enrich our

community with students coming from other colleges. I think that is an important result of our network and I am sure that we will all go hard at this.

In conclusion I would remark once again on the relevance of our network. Often the majority of people, and even many of our women students, think that in all the countries in which women have long had access to education, the struggle for equal opportunities is only a past memory. They think that if women students give strong performances at university and graduate with high marks, they will not have problems to find a job and to achieve success they merit. We all know, on the base of experience, that this is not true and that women have still to face a lot of problems all over the world. This is the importance of an international coalition, which forces more and more discussion about the relevance of women's education and can become, too, an international force committed to the advancement of women in the world. Not only for making women successful in their activities but also for giving them the opportunity to be agents of social and economic change and so help to build a better world. This is the reason why our College has suggested that WEW members choose "Women and Politics" as the subject for this conference. Despite our differences, which are also one of our strengths, we all are ready to do this. And we are proud to be protagonists of such an important discussion, between such persons.