



What can S7 do for you?

Pursuing excellence through collaboration

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S7 NEWSLETTER ISSUE 10

SPRING TERM 2018

- Do you have any news or a forthcoming event which would be of interest to S7 colleagues? Contact Sharon Kemp at s7enquiries@gmail.com and we will add it to the next newsletter and the S7 website.

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A Note from the Chair

To academise or not to academise...?

Academisation has vexed us all since the ABR process – and several S7 colleges have taken the opportunity to convert. We have been challenged by time-consuming legalities and weighty trunk loads of paper work – but expect it to be worth it. To academise or not to academise: if only this was *Hamlet* and the RSC in Stratford.



Palaver notwithstanding, we in the S7 Consortium continue to be proud of our record and the difference we are making to post 16 education in the region. We've seen another Education Minister come and go and have yet to test the mettle of Damien Hinds. As MP for East Hampshire he is relatively local and should therefore understand the tertiary education structure and the outstanding record of SFCs in the South East.

We're looking forward to the biennial S7 Support Staff Conference this summer held again at Collyer's. Over 100 staff from across the colleges will be able to attend a full range of workshops and have an opportunity to form support networks. S7 supports over 25 groups of staff from the Principals and Vice Principals to HR Directors and Clerks, who meet regularly to discuss their particular area of work within the local and national landscape. Then there are groups of teachers who get together to share professional practice in their subject areas or specialism, Peer Review and Development work and member colleges taking part in one another's lesson observation schemes and Self-Assessment Review meetings.

Undoubtedly a strength of the S7 Consortium is the professional development and training which takes place annually, organised by Anna and Sharon, and delivered mostly but not exclusively, by Anna and the Senior Teams in the colleges: New Teachers' Training, Aspiring Heads of Department and Pastoral Managers, Senior Leadership Programme and everything else for everyone else above, beyond and in-between. There are excellent opportunities across the colleges for professional advancement. Testament to this are the recent appointments of Dan Lodge, taking over from Steve Nicholls as Vice Principal at Collyer's, Colin Barnard, appointed as Assistant Principal at Richard Huish College in Somerset and Becky Stratton, recently appointed as Deputy Principal at Itchen College in Southampton.

I will have completed my two years as Chair of S7 this summer – it's been great! - and will be handing over to one of the other S7 Principals (name to be confirmed in due course) with a sigh and a handshake! Dan Dean will remain as South East England colleges' representative for the SFCA.

Sally Bromley, Principal, The College of Richard Collyer and S7 Chair



S7 COLLEGES HONOURED IN SIXTH FORM COLLEGES ASSOCIATION AWARDS

In June 2017 BHASVIC, Collyer's and Godalming Colleges were honoured at a Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA) inaugural awards ceremony for the sector.

FE Commissioner, Richard Atkins, compèred the evening which took place at the De Vere Jubilee Conference Centre in Nottingham. The Chief Executive of the SFCA was present and congratulated all of the winners who he said are "examples of outstanding work". He added: "Success doesn't just happen, it is the result of very hard work and great team work."

There were awards in seven categories and those that went to our S7 colleges were:



- ◆ College of Richard Collyer for its 'independent learning' bespoke study programme for special educational needs and disability 19 to 25 year olds. Students on the programme, while at school, formed a company called Jubylee Bakes, using the tag line "special bakes made by special people". When they moved to the college, with tutor support, they pitched their idea to Young Start-Up Talent, an entrepreneurial initiative, and in May last year Jubylee Bakes won a competition and a prize fund worth £50,000 of business products and services.

- ◆ Brighton Hove & Sussex Sixth Form College won the award for best 'business development'. The college's lettings team has "grown the lettings activities and significantly increased income generation opportunities", Mr Watkin said.

He pointed out that the money raised through these activities is not ring-fenced and "therefore benefits all areas of the college". As a result of the extra funds, the college now accommodates a language school every summer, a slimming club and a children's film school each weekend and has secured a number of regular conferences and community events.

- ◆ Godalming's Award was in the Employment and Enrichment Category, which was for their Class Action group. Their work particularly impressed the judges.

S7 Students—Student Union Day 2017

Every year it is a pleasure to run the S7 Student Union Day and the 2017 day was no exception. Hosted at Reigate College, the day was well-attended and the students' feedback demonstrated how useful the day was, particularly the opportunity to mix with students from other sixth form colleges and the time to reflect on their Student Union role and what it means to them, their fellow students and their colleges.

The programme began with a fun team-building activity which quickly broke the ice between students who had not met before. Anna then led them through the nuts and bolts of organising an event, highlighting what can work well, but also pitfalls to avoid and this was followed by how to run effective and useful meetings. After a tasty lunch, Brett Freeman, Principal at Woking College, led a workshop on Student Representation which allowed the delegates to really think more deeply about their roles and responsibilities as Student Union reps.

We are looking forward to running the next Student Union event at BHASVIC on 25th June 2018.





VISIT TO COULSDON ENGLISH DEPARTMENT BY PROFESSOR SARAH CHURCHWELL, SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

By Kathy Miller, Head of Level 1/2 English and A Level English Teacher, Coulsdon

On 31st January, students from Coulsdon and Reigate Colleges were privileged to host a talk at Coulsdon College by Professor Sarah Churchwell, Chair of Public Understanding of the Humanities, Professorial Fellow in American Literature, IES, School of Advanced Study, University of London.

They say you should not meet your heroes but I am glad I did. 'Careless People' is a brilliant portrayal of 1920's America and The Great Gatsby as well as the social history of the time, of detective work and the influences on Scott Fitzgerald when he wrote. The list goes on.

The author, Prof. Churchwell, gave a fascinating insight into the REAL America in the place where The Great Gatsby was set. She tackled difficult issues such as extreme wealth, racism and discrimination which have resonances in contemporary society. She instructed us that morals need to be taught, that greed and the worship of money leads to where some societies are today.

The talk was hugely appreciated by a wide range of students, who asked incisive questions. Prof. Churchwell was inspirational and brought learning alive and applied it to our world. Students and staff were very engaged and lively discussion ensued after her departure. I am delighted she has said she will return to speak next year.

Education is more than passing exams - it is being inspired to learn and to think. Prof. Churchwell certainly left us all thinking...



COLLYER'S STUDENT ROBOTICS TEAM

The Collyer's Robotics Team has been amazingly successful: firstly, in reaching the finals of the national Student Robotics competition and then winning a play off to represent the UK at the inaugural [FIRST Global international robotics challenge](#) in Washington DC in July.

The team designed, built and coded an autonomous robot for a task set by the Student Robotics organisation, entitled 'Easy as ABC': the robot had to move nine boxes from the centre of an arena to their own corner within a three minute-match during which points were allocated. The team successfully worked through the knockout stages to the semi-finals until their hard work and commitment got them to the finals. Here their robot was programmed to keep its lone webcam-eye on the prize. The three-minute match went by in an instant and team Collyer's secured third place and the chance to represent the UK in Washington.

The next stage was to build another robot in just two weeks from robotic parts received from the USA and to create a video making the case to be selected as "Team UK". After a huge amount of effort and excellent team work, the team was ecstatic to be informed that they had beaten the opposition and would be off to Washington.

The event in Washington was incredible. National teams representing over 150 countries participated in the games, along with representatives of the seven continents and a team of refugees. Teams from all over the world worked together to get their robots to separate contaminated "water particles" from a "river bed" and to deposit them into storage containers; they also had to lift themselves up from the "flood plain" at the end of each round. It was a truly amazing experience that the students and accompanying staff will never forget.





Current S7 meeting groups:

- ◆ Principals
- ◆ Curriculum & Quality Group
- ◆ Staff Development Managers
- ◆ Student Services Managers
- ◆ Equality and Diversity
- ◆ BTEC Nominees' Group
- ◆ Finance Directors
- ◆ Learning Support Managers
- ◆ Admissions
- ◆ Attendance Officers and Bursary Administrators
- ◆ Careers/Student Progression
- ◆ Clerks to Governors
- ◆ Counsellors
- ◆ Data Protection Group
- ◆ ESOL Group
- ◆ Exam Officers
- ◆ IT Developers Network
- ◆ IT Managers
- ◆ Learning Facilitators
- ◆ LRC/ILC Managers
- ◆ Marketing Group
- ◆ MIS Managers
- ◆ Moodle Group
- ◆ Oxbridge Coordinators
- ◆ Personnel/HR Group
- ◆ Receptionists
- ◆ Science Technicians
- ◆ Student Liaison Officers

Subject meetings can also be arranged on a one-off basis when required.

S7 Teaching and Learning Conference 2017

The biennial Teaching and Learning Conference took place at Royal Holloway in June 2017. It was attended by 400 teaching staff from our colleges and the evaluations suggest that the vast majority of teachers really enjoyed and benefitted from the day in all sorts of different ways.

Mental Health is a subject that we are currently all interested in knowing more about, in order to best help our teenagers and the first keynote speaker, Grace Barrett from the Self-Esteem Team, was a breath of fresh air in terms of her delivery and message. For those who wished to take this subject further there was a workshop in the afternoon given by Sarah Townsend from Disability Learning. There will be a follow-on Mental Health First Aid course for some of our staff organised by S7 during 2018.



Bob Craig, from Learning and Development Ltd., spoke in a very different style about Cultivating Curiosity, and whilst his message was not universally appreciated, some people found it very uplifting and helpful.

The very varied workshops that followed ranged from Creating an LGBT environment and Trans discussions to Exam and University workshops and Assessment and Marking, Nurturing confidence and Getting students talking, and many other interesting subjects in between. We even had a workshop comparing the English and Finnish schooling systems from someone who had spent time in Finland! We are really proud to say that the majority of the workshops were delivered by staff from our own S7 colleges, which shows the calibre of expertise that we are able to draw on and constantly reinforces why we make such an effort to work together and support each other in these challenging times.



The day was completed with subject meetings, which again in these times of changing specifications and demands, seemed to be very valued in terms of quality sharing and support for each other.

There will be another Teaching and Learning Conference in summer 2019.

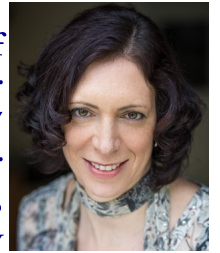
.... This summer, on 10th July, there will be a Support Staff Conference at The College of Richard Collyer in Horsham (Collyer's). We will be following the same format with a keynote speaker at the beginning of the day, followed by workshops, which will be delivered twice so that staff can attend two of them, and then networking groups will be organised for the afternoon. The 2014 conference saw over 100 Support staff attending and we will be able to cater for more than that this year, which we are very excited about. Collyer's also provides a fantastic lunch which was hugely appreciated and an added reason for signing up to this exciting event.



Thank you to:
 *Kathy Miller,
 Coulsdon College;
 *Collyer's Students
 from the Robotics
 Team
 for their contributions
 to this newsletter.

A message from the S7 Director

Yet again we have had a year of enormous change in terms of Government initiatives, exam board demands, Senior Management personnel and even in the membership of S7 itself. Our aim is to work together to support each other through these challenging times, to share expertise and practice, to prevent reinvention of the wheel and to save time, money and energy. I hear on a regular basis how much staff value speaking to their opposite numbers in the other colleges in our networking meetings and the contact that you have with each other in between meetings via email is certainly increasing as the years go on.



I am sometimes asked by outside agencies why we have developed our own training courses. The short answer is that it saves each college a huge amount of money on professional development, but the long answer is that it is much more than that. There simply are not Sixth Form College specific training courses available anywhere else in the country. We have a valuable resource of expertise in all sorts of areas in our own colleges which we utilise, and our management training is taught by Senior Managers who have done the job and are still currently working in Sixth Form Colleges. They provide, up to date, relevant and specific training which is thoroughly evaluated and acted upon. How can you argue with that?

Once again, however, I must acknowledge the time that many of you spend in leading the sessions on these courses. My predecessor, when I took over the S7 Director's job, said to me that I would need an A level in tact, as I would be asking staff to do things above and beyond their day job on a regular basis. I can honestly say, now that I have been doing the job for nearly nine years, that I never meet with anything but enthusiasm and willingness when I ask any of you to deliver courses or work for S7 in any other way, and therefore we have been able to develop a national reputation for excellence in terms of our staff development courses. Doing an S7 course does not give you an accredited qualification, but on your CV it will be recognised and highly regarded both inside and outside of the S7 group of colleges.

We also recognise, however, that we can always improve and develop, so please do not hesitate to contact myself or Sharon Kemp the Consortium Officer if we can be of any help to you in the future.

Anna Loveday, S7 Consortium Director

To view all job vacancies for the S7 colleges please visit:
<http://www.s7colleges.com/index.php/s7-vacancies/>. This is regularly updated so keep coming back. You can also find details about S7 courses and meetings on our website.
 Dates for 2018/19 will be updated in later summer term.