**Best Practice – 1**

**Title: The UNESCO and Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation Chair for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue and its related Diploma Courses**

India is a country which is proud of its rich and cultural heritage, diversity in ethnicity, religions, languages, and landmass. Since independence several organisations and movements have been working towards making Indians proud of this heritage and respectful of each other’s culture, religion and language. Yet, from time to time there is violence in the name of religion and other issues. It was a honour and prestige to have UNESCO confer on St. Andrews College a Chair for Inter-religious and Intercultural Dialogue in collaboration with UNESCO.

**Aims and objectives:-**

● To promote Peace building and Harmony through intercultural dialogue, congresses, conferences and publications

● To celebrate the multiplicity of cultures

● To address issues of poverty, gender inequality, and strive for inclusivity through education, sciences, culture, communication and information

● To achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Context**

The Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation Chair was established in September 2009 and the UNESCO Chair on September 8, 2015. This is one among 15 such UNESCO Chairs in the country. The chair has been conducting an International symposium annually since 2009-10.

The Chair offers a Graduate Diploma course in Religion & Society, Peace and Dialogue endorsed by the University of Mumbai and conducts a PG Diploma in Inter-Religious Dialogue and Water for Sustainable Development in collaboration with the Institute of Indian Culture and Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work in Mumbai (2017-2021). The activities, International Symposia and diploma courses allow students to discuss their ideas in a supportive environment, understand and appreciate each other’s religion, foster tolerance and respect for people of other faiths.

**Practice**

The Executive Committee of the Chair, comprising The Chair-holder, the Principal, Secretary and other Committee members, plan and monitor the activities of the Chair. To promote peace and harmony, students are encouraged to participate in the Annual Strings of Peace event (2016-20), Fashion shows, Film screenings, Dance and drama contests from different cultures.

The Annual International Symposiums shed light on various themes promoting peace, harmony and tolerance. Previous themes have included: The Role Of Education In Fostering Religious Harmony (2017-2018), A New Utopia: Promoting Dialogue For A Humane And Sustainable Society (2018-2019), Celebrating Diversities (2019-2020), Evolving Inclusive Communities For Greater Solidarity (2020-21), and Leaving No One Behind: Water & Inequalities (2021-22). A number of eminent speakers have spoken at the symposia, such as Mr. Tushar Gandhi,

Ms. Maitre Wivine Mumba,

Dr. Jean Louis Oliver, General Secretary of Water Academy, Paris; Prof. Fadi Georges Comair, President of the UNESCO IHP Intergovernmental Council and Dr. Alexander Otte, Associate Programme Specialist, Hydrology, UNESCO.

Additionally, events are organised that promote knowledge of religious diversity. These have iftar ceremonies, quizzes on religion and culture, visits to heritage sites or religious events (such as Durga pandals, Elephanta Caves, Mount Mary, Aga Khan Palace, Shree Narayani Dham Temple, the Golden Pagoda), elocution and debate competitions on social justice issues (such as racism, terrorism, casteism, and LGBTQIA+ rights), and the annual strings of peace event where students are encouraged to tie ribbons to each other’s wrists as a sign of acceptance and peace. Students are encouraged to celebrate tolerance and harmony with dance and song, ‘make-from-waste’ fashion shows, and games. Students are urged to attend film-screenings and participate in the critical film analysis that follows, which usually discusses issues such as the need for women’s empowerment, human rights, nationalism, and more.

Furthermore, the students often put on street plays to educate the community. Guest lectures and workshops are conducted on contemporary events so as to sensitize the participants. These have previously included talks on the role of education in fostering harmony; a talk on women, law, and religion; and a discussion about community-wide need for water conservation. The UNESCO and Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation Chair for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue along with the *Ummeed* Child Care Development Group and co-hosted by the Equal Opportunity Cell, conducted a workshop on ‘Narrative Practices and Ideas’ in order to address the intersection of culture, story-making, and mental health.

**Evidence of Success:-**

**●** First UNESCO Chair in Mumbai colleges since 2009.

● Successful enrolment of students in Diploma Courses.

● Grand success of the Annual International Symposia.

● Successful release of 5 volumes of Journal ‘Ethics and Society; International Journal, Religion, Peace and Harmony’ (ISSN: 2250–3331) till 2021 respectively.

**UNESCO Chair Review**

● Visit of **Director and UNESCO Representative** who **appreciated the contribution of the College** towards furthering the vision of UNESCO and also made concrete suggestions for future initiatives. The **college was awarded an extension of 4 years** of the UNESCO Chair until 2023.

**Future Initiatives**-

● To facilitate Research Projects among students relating to Religion, Culture and Social aspects.

● To promote the Chair’s activities on a broader platform across Colleges, Religious and Cultural Institutions in Mumbai.

● To collaborate with other UNESCO Chairs in India.

● To collaborate with NGOs at the local level.

**Problems Encountered and Resources Required -**

1. To gets students to enroll for the diploma, as students are not able to transfer credits

2. While discussions and deliberations are held on key issues surrounding climate change, peace and harmony, translating it into practical achievable targets is a challenge

3. Challenge to connect and coordinate with other Chairs in India and conduct common programmes

Resources required:

1. No financial support received from the UNESCO Chair

**Best Practice- 2)**

**Title: Research**

**Aim/Objective :-**

The practice aims to instill, focus and encourage students and faculty members towards development of research temper and be actively involved in conducting research. It is widely accepted that research is the most vital component of academics and these interests have to be garnered early in one’s academic life. Hence, the college has instituted a dedicated Research committee which has a separate Student wing.

**Context :-**

St Andrews College admits students from all sections of the society in order to partake in integrated learning which includes a large number of first generation learners which accounts to an average of total number students in the Degree college during the assessment years is above 48% in Aided section and above 33% in SFC section. The students from such moderate backgrounds very often are not inclined towards research and do not possess a passion or will to pursue academic research. It is the role of the Research Committee to inculcate this fervor to pursue research.

**Practice :-**

The history of this process began when it was realized that research culture in college was not appreciative. So as a part of discussions in IQAC and staff meetings it was proposed that national, international and local level seminars be made a regular practice. Department of English and Economics offering single majors in the third year made it a mandatory practice to conduct yearly International and national seminars. **The UNESCO and Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation Chair for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue** has an annual International seminar. By way of these seminars the college is able to address and create awareness towards various issues like environment, community engagement, inter-religious dialogue inclusivity, multi-disciplinary and multi- lingual aspect and development of human values. These seminars are open for students and faculty. College follows a system of conducting an annual staff seminar where faculty present paper. With regard to development of research fervor in students the students research wing conducts activities in these areas :

* The research committee conducts multiple sessions to orient students about essentials for carrying out research.
* Prepares and coaches enrolled students for University of Mumbai Research Convention “Avishkar” students competition
* Every student is provided a research guide
* Encourage inter-disciplinary research
* Conduct intra-collegiate research competitions, winners of which are sent to University of Mumbai Research Convention “Avishkar” students competition

**Evidence of Success :-**

The evidence of this initiative’s success can be observed by the increase in number of research papers presented and published by faculty members. College has three in-house ISSN Journals and one in-house e-ISSN Journal. Specifically in the last academic year, we received a total of ten ISBNs from Raja Ram Mohun Roy National Agency for ISBN of which four books are published. Refer to Table 2 for details. The number of faculty with Ph.D. has also increased in this assessment period

**Challenges:-**

The faculty members need to be encouraged to explore areas of undertaking minor and major research projects funded by UGC, STRIDE and others.