Andrew McDougall Dux 2013

As Dux of the School last year and a representative of the 156 students who completed year 12 I am proud to be given the opportunity to address you today. I will do my best to provide any help I can to those of you approaching your final years of school education, as well as sharing some of my experiences throughout my time at BCC. Unfortunately most of them are clichés that we have all heard before but as you will come to realise, they are said so often for a reason: they work.

My first unoriginal tip is to maintain balance between school and the other aspects of your life, whatever these may be. I have been a competitive swimmer for 11 years, training 6 sessions each week and often waking up at 10 pass 5 to attend training. Due to its time consuming nature, I decided to go on take a break at the start of September with the idea that it will give me more time to study and sleep and will be beneficial for my results. While the effect of this on my results can’t be measured, I can say with absolute certainty that it made my final few months at school less enjoyable. I felt like I had less energy, was more moody, had less escapes from the high demands of school, and as a result became more stressed. I have realised that eliminating all other important activities places more importance in your mind about your school results. This made SACs, assessments, and my final exams much more stressful and unpleasant. Ultimately, make time for fun and other things just for the sake of your own sanity. We are only human and can only allocate so much time to schooling.

The next tip is to create a good relationship with your teachers – they are the biggest assets you have. It is not a coincidence that BCC gets some of the best results in the state; the teachers I have had during my time at BCC from year 7 to year 12 have been some of the most passionate, determined and helpful people in my life and truly are inspirations. They will always make time for you and even harass you about homework or work ethic in order to get the best out of you. So make sure you return the favour and reciprocate the hard work that they demonstrate each and every day. Feel free to approach them with any questions, whether they be big or small and they will be willing to help, they will want to help and even be upset if you don’t ask them. We are so privileged to have such great teachers and you should all take advantage of their knowledge and expertise.

My next tip is quite annoying, it is that there is no substitute for hard work and consistent effort. As much as we would all like it, there is no magic pill or quick fix that will give us all 100% on every task. Cramming the night before may lead to a sufficient pass, but it will not give you the best result possible, which is what I always think about when reflecting upon a result after I have received it – did I do the best that I possibly could. So if you are serious about your studies and wish to make the best of your time at school, the hard work starts now. This tip is more directed at those beginning year 11. I found that the difference between many student’s results and levels of success came down to their work in previous terms, semesters and even years. It is virtually impossible to master the more difficult skills and techniques you will face late in year 12 if you did not put in the effort to learn the basics earlier in your schooling. Yet again, I know this is incredibly annoying and we all wish it wasn’t the case. But there is nothing we can do about it.

And the last thing I will say is to appreciate and enjoy the little things in your life. There will be times when you are sitting up at midnight still doing homework. Don’t let it get to you and understand that it will be over soon. Have breaks and keep refreshed. I remember countless nights when I was so tired and annoyed at my homework and still had to face getting up in 4 hours to go to swimming training. If you ever feel like this, I highly recommend finding something small to take your mind off it, if only for a second. It can be music, it can be drawing, it can be carving up the down ball courts during recess before a SAC which unfortunately I am not familiar with. But personally, I found a small plastic basketball hoop that clips onto my door, only a couple dollars from the reject shop, to be my saviour. Between specialist maths questions that took up a whole page, at 1 in the morning, I would spring up out of my chair and spend 5 minutes doing ridiculous slam dunks, realise that I am only 5ft tall and get back to work. And this was all I needed. Find what works for you and roll with it, it is a much individualised experience and you need to make the most out of it.

One extra thing I will say is to stay calm in the face of adversity. Things will happen along the way that you wish didn’t happen. But there is nothing you can do about it. I actually threw up 2 hours before my English language exam, my last exam, and my most important exam. Obviously this is
not an ideal situation to be in but I just thought to myself, stuff it, I’m just going to do my best and then I’m done. That’s all I can do. I came out thinking it was the worst exam I’ve done to date and couldn’t face talking to Ms AP about it, thinking I had let her down. It ended up being my most successful result in my opinion and is part of the reason that I got the score I did, and the reason I am talking to you all right now. So on that I will say good luck to you all, do the very best you can so you can, look back on your time at BCC with no regrets and are proud of what you have accomplished. But don’t forget to enjoy the journey along the way. Thank you