

Stella Maris: The pioneers of offbeat courses

16th August 2010



One thing that you notice about Stella Maris College, apart from the pretty females, is its lush green campus. The college is as old as independent India.

It began on August 15, 1947, in a one-storied building in Santhome with just 32 students. Today, it offers 14 UG and 12 PG programmes along with five research programmes at a 19.5 acre campus on Cathedral Road.

The college is known for introducing new courses. The Bachelor's in Visual Arts (BVA) programme of the fine arts department is a four-year programme. MSc IT and biotechnology were also recently introduced. "The science department comes under the Star College Scheme of the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India. It promotes and popularises basic sciences. Stella is one of the 28 colleges in India that comes under this scheme," says Priscilla Jebakumari, one of the dean of student affairs.

The college, which became autonomous in 1987, changes the syllabus

every three years. "Stella was the first college in the city to adopt choice-based credit system, where, students can choose a subject of her choice in addition to her majors," says Anna

Titus George, treasurer of student's union. It has a list of highly-qualified faculty. "I came back to Stella because our department is one of the best in the state and that's because of the faculty," says Revathy Antony, first year MA Economics. It also has a fully digitised-library. Every fresher must attend the 'Know your library' programme.

The college says a strict 'no' to ragging and has an anti-ragging cell. The freshers'-friendly seniors will choose 10 juniors and take them for a campus tour. The usage of mobile phones is strictly forbidden during college hours.

Stellaites also need to adhere to a dress-code. Students can either wear a kurta and jeans, or salwar kameez or saree. "Initially, it was difficult. But, now I feel it's good because, many times students tend to misuse the freedom and dress vulgarly," says Rekha R, final year, Zoology.

The college is a haven of cultural activities. It also encourages the students to be part of various clubs. The Enviro club has persuaded the management to remove all nailed posters from trees, as the rust can destroy the trees. It also has a robust sports team excelling in basketball, throw ball, hockey, cricket and athletics. "Stellaites are more confident individuals and different from other college students," adds Rekha.

Stella chooses to celebrate some off-beat, yet interesting days. The MTC Day will see students inviting all the MTC (Metropolitan Transport Corporation) bus drivers and conductors and felicitating them. Also, on Worker's Day, all the workers on campus will get a holiday. Students will take up their roles, serve them lunch, give them gifts and also screen a movie. "It's a day when students appreciate the workers for what they do throughout the year," says Jebakumari.

The college is currently gearing up for a Model United Nations (MUN), on campus, from today to August 18. It's an academic programme explaining the functioning of the United Nations. "It is the first time a college in the city

is conducting such a programme," adds Titus.

It also gives away scholarships to meritorious students. "These are given under three categories and is mainly to encourage first-generation learners," says Razia Tony, dean of student affairs. And the best thing about Stella is that, "everything is so systematic here," says Titus.