

My job

From a degree to a career



SKILLS: Mal Chia.

MAD ABOUT MARKETING

NAME: Mal Chia, 29.

JOB: Account manager and digital strategist, Square Holes.

DEGREE: Bachelor of Commerce followed by a Master of Commerce (Marketing), University of Adelaide.

COURSE: Undergraduate degree, three years; Master of Commerce (Marketing), 18 months.

STUDY: The Bachelor of Commerce is a high-demand degree that is valued by employers. The academic program provides students with more than a vocational degree and includes technical business skills. After leaving school I wasn't exactly sure which direction I wanted to head in, which is why I decided on a commerce degree. I felt it would give me a broad understanding of business principles as well as the freedom to specialise further down the track.

CAREER: I took some time out to start my own business in 2001 – an event promotions agency, where I fell in love with marketing. I really enjoyed the strategic process and communications strategy of helping people satisfy their needs and wants by connecting them with products and services.

When I returned to university to finish my degree, I decided to really focus on marketing, which I then followed through in my masters. I was fortunate enough to be able to apply what I was learning in my degree to real-world situations (and vice versa) with my own business.

I have been able to leverage my practical experience and knowledge into several senior marketing and management positions with media and entertainment organisations including the Adelaide Fringe and radio station Fresh 92.7.

I am currently an account manager at marketing intelligence agency Square Holes, where I work with clients to help them better understand and leverage emerging technology. Some clients I have been fortunate to work with since leaving university include Microsoft, Vodafone, Diageo, Adelaide United, Coopers and the SANFL.

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Gender division and subtraction a distraction

An increasing number of schools are going co-educational. Education Reporter **LAUREN NOVAK** looks at what the research says about co-ed versus single-sex schools.

TO separate or not to separate – that is the question. Boys and girls don't always get along. Throw puberty into the mix and some may argue there is a solid argument for single-sex education.

The research on the benefits, or otherwise, of combined versus single-sex tuition does not make the situation clearer for parents.

The general consensus seems to be that female-only classes benefit girls, while boys get more out of a mixed environment.

However, a New Zealand study shows that single-sex education narrowed the performance gap between boys and girls, with a "slight tendency for males to outperform females".

In Europe and the U.S. there is a move towards single-sex schooling. The number of public schools offering single-sex classes in the state of New York has skyrocketed from about 12 in 2002 to more than 360 last year.

In South Australia, education seems to be moving in the opposite direction.

The non-government school sector offers single-sex education at 21 schools – with an increasing number making the switch in the past decade – and co-education at 179 schools.

Private schools also are making moves to even up the gender balance of students.

Pembroke School recently was granted a three-year exemption to anti-discrimination laws, allowing it to turn away boys in Years 1 and 6 and girls from Year 4 to achieve a more even male-to-female ratio.

Equal Opportunity Commissioner Linda Matthews says that while other schools had applied for similar exemptions in the past, Pembroke was the only school to currently hold one.

Scotch College in Torrens Park was granted an exemption in 2006, which expired this year.

Pulteney Grammar School was refused an exemption in 2007 because the school's 40 per cent female imbalance would not affect equality of opportunity.

HOW BOYS AND GIRLS LEARN

■ In girls, the language areas of the brain develop before areas for spatial relations and geometry. In boys it is the opposite.

■ Emotion in girls is processed in the brain area that processes language. It is easier for most girls to talk about emotions. In boys, brain areas involved in talking are separate from those for feelings.

In contrast to the private sector, just two of the state's 588 public schools are now single sex – Mitcham Girls School and Gepps Cross Girls School – and there are no longer any options exclusively for boys.

However, there are plans to close Gepps Cross Girls School and merge it into the new multi-campus super school to be built nearby.

The new secondary campus will comprise co-educational and girls-only "schools within schools".

While the Australian Education Union has not opposed the move, it is concerned about the logistics of the plan.

"It's going to be called a single-sex school and the academic provision will remain as single sex (but) whether we see a drift of girls from that to the co-ed facility because they're surrounded by boys at recess and lunch time, it's a bit of an unknown," AEU state president Correna Haythorpe says.

Parent representative David Knuckey agrees there is "not a lot in the way of opportunities in the public system for single-sex education".

However, it is not a topic many parents raised with him, he says.

"I don't know if there is any really definitive answer on whether one is superior to the other," the SA Association of State School Organisations director says.

Flinders University researcher Shirley Yates has conducted extensive research into the pros and cons of mixing genders in the classroom.

About a decade ago she examined the transition from single sex to co-ed at one South Australian non-government boys' school and found "the gradual introduction of girls into a single-sex boys' school was not disadvantageous for boys present in the school when co-education was introduced".

Dr Yates cites a 26-year study of English grammar schools which found the "more positive, conducive climate in co-

■ Girls hear better. The typical teenage girl has a sense of hearing seven times more acute than a teenage boy.

■ Stress enhances learning in boys. The same stress impairs learning in girls.

Source: U.S. researcher Dr Leonard Sax's book: *Why Gender Matters*.



“All the teachers and boys were extremely welcoming”

Good enough for my son

OLD scholar Lauren Dimas remembers clearly the first time she set foot on the Pulteney campus in 1999.

"I was first of about eight girls in Year 11 to join the school when it became co-ed. It was great," she says.

"All the teachers and boys

were extremely welcoming, and at that time the school really needed to go co-educational, I think."

Ms Dimas had such a positive experience that she intends sending her 18-month-old son, Anastasios, when he is old enough.

BIG DECISION: Former Pulteney co-ed pupil Lauren Dimas has enrolled son Anastasios at the school. **Picture: SARAH REED**

educational schools did not come at the expense of academic achievement".

However, other research has revealed girls reported feeling "intimidated, hesitant, uncomfortable and dumb during mathematics lessons in mixed-sex classrooms".

Overall, Dr Yates' analysis found there was improved academic achievement and "cohesiveness" among students as a result of introducing co-education while there was a drop in competitiveness and "friction". "(This) would indicate that the introduction of co-

education... had positive benefits for student outcomes," the report says.

In NZ, a long-term University of Otago study released last month found "clear differences" in the academic achievement of boys and girls in single-sex and co-ed classes.

It found that among students attending single-sex secondary schools, there was a slight tendency for males to outperform females, while in co-educational schools there was a clear tendency for females to outperform their male counterparts.