



27 May 2002

Dr David Woodhouse
Executive Director
Australian Universities Quality Agency
Level 10, 123 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Dr Woodhouse,

I am submitting to you on behalf of my institution the Performance Portfolio for the 2002 Quality Audit of Australian Catholic University. I consider this document to be an accurate reflection of progressive achievements in structure, governance, management and scholarly outputs, and of progress made in developing a coherent institution with a strong culture of quality teaching, learning, and research.

Since its inception in 1991 Australian Catholic University has been committed to its role as a university that contributes significantly and in a unique fashion to higher education in Australia.

One of the key factors underpinning this commitment has been our focus on strategic planning and, through the implementation of quality management principles, continuous improvement. Accordingly, Australian Catholic University has approached the forthcoming external audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency as an important opportunity to examine our achievements, and those areas where we will be focussing our improvements over the forthcoming period.

ACU holds the view, expressed in the current Strategic Plan, that systematic quality management processes should be integrated into all of the operations and academic activities of the University. In that context, the processes associated with this first external audit of ACU by the AUQA are seen as part of a continuing commitment by the University, in which the outcomes of the external Audit will be used to assist this University in its ongoing quality enhancement efforts.

In accordance with the procedures for the forthcoming external Audit by AUQA, I am therefore pleased to provide details of Australian Catholic University's Performance Portfolio, including Appendices and supporting Documentation.

I look forward to meeting with the Panel Chair and the AUQA staff member at your preliminary visit, and with the full Audit Panel in September.

I value the dialogue established in relation to this audit and look forward to our being able to interact with you and the Audit Panel about how to better and improve the quality of this institution.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter W Sheehan".

Peter W Sheehan AO
Vice-Chancellor

Volume 1

Index

Acronyms

Overview

Section A: Nature and Context of Australian Catholic University

10	1.0 Nature of Australian Catholic University
11	2.0 Integrating the Mission
11	3.0 Contribution to Higher Education in Australia
12	4.0 Development of the Institution's Strategic Intent and Quality Management
13	4.1 Development, Implementation, Review and Improvement Cycle
13	4.2 Quality Management
14	4.3 Formal University Reviews
14	4.4 Faculty Reviews and Internal Quality Review
14	5.0 Preparation of Performance Portfolio
15	5.1 Achievements and Priorities for Improvement

Section B: Quality Review Findings

18	6.0 Governance and Management
18	6.1 University Senate
19	6.1.1 Achievement
19	6.1.2 Priority for Improvement
19	6.2 Strategic Planning
20	6.2.1 Achievement
20	6.2.2 Priority for Improvement
20	6.3 Development of Integrated University Structure
21	6.3.1 Reviews of Academic and Administration Areas of Operation
21	6.3.2 Achievements
22	6.3.3 Priorities for Improvement

22	6.4	Consolidation and Improvement of Campuses
23	6.4.1	Achievement
24	6.4.2	Priorities for Improvement
24	6.5	Communication
25	6.5.1	Achievements
25	6.5.2	Priorities for Improvement
25	7.0	Teaching and Learning
26	7.1	Faculties
26	7.2	Course Development and Review
27	7.2.1	Achievement
27	7.2.2	Priority for Improvement
27	7.3	Teaching – Learning Processes
28	7.3.1	Course and Unit Evaluation
28	7.3.2	Achievements
28	7.3.3	Priorities for Improvement
29	8.0	Research and Research Training
29	8.1	Research Flagships and Centres
30	8.2	Research Degrees
30	8.3	Achievements
31	8.4	Priorities for Improvement
32	9.0	Community Engagement
33	9.1	Achievements
34	9.2	Priorities for Improvement
34	10.0	International Education
35	10.1	Achievements
35	10.2	Priorities for Improvement
36	11.0	Student Support, Equity Groups and Indigenous Support Services
37	11.1	Equity Groups
37	11.2	Indigenous Students
38	11.3	Achievements
38	11.4	Priorities for Improvement
39	12.0	Library
39	12.1	Achievements
40	12.2	Priorities for Improvement
40	13.0	Staff Development
41	13.1	Achievements
41	13.2	Priorities for Improvement

41 **14.0 Administrative Services**

42 14.1 Student Administration

42 14.1.1 Achievements

43 14.1.2 Priorities for Improvement

43 14.2 Personnel Relations

44 14.2.1 Achievements

44 14.2.2 Priorities for Improvement

45 14.3 Information and Communication Technologies

45 14.3.1 Achievements

46 14.3.2 Priorities for Improvement

46 14.4 Financial Planning and Management

47 14.4.1 Achievements

47 14.4.2 Priorities for Improvement

48 14.5 Risk Management

49 14.5.1 Achievements

49 14.5.2 Priorities for Improvement

Section C: Conclusion

52 **15.0 Conclusion**

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Acronyms used in the Portfolio

ACU	Australian Catholic University
ACU <i>com</i>	Continuing Education Division of ACU (Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane)
ACU <i>link</i>	A joint program involving ACU and schools in the Parramatta diocese
ACU <i>web</i>	ACU On-line Education provider
ARC	Australian Research Council
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
AVCC	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
CPG	Core Planning Group – Membership includes the Vice-Chancellor, the three Pro-Vice-Chancellors, the Executive Director, University Services, and the Director, Personnel Relations
CQAHE	Committee for Quality Assessment in Higher Education
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DETYA	Department of Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (now DEST)
DIMIA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
EFTSU	Effective Full Time Student Units
EIP	Evaluations and Investigations Program, DEST
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
ESOS	Education Services for Overseas Students
GCCA	Graduate Careers Council, Australia
GDS	Graduate Destination Survey
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HR	Human Resources
HRMIS	Human Resource Management Information System
ICDL	International Computer Driving Licence
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ITCS	Information Technology and Communication Services
KPMG	An external accounting and professional advisory organisation
NextEd	NextEd Limited provides systems infrastructure to ACU <i>web</i>
OSP	Outside Studies Program – for Academic Staff
PCs	Personal Computers
PELS	Postgraduate Education Loans Scheme
PRD	Personnel Relations Directorate
QMC	Quality Management Committee
QTAC	Queensland Tertiary Admissions Committee
SPARC	Social Policy and Advocacy Research Centre (St Patrick's Campus, Melbourne)
SRC	Student Representative Council
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UAC	University Admissions Committee (NSW)
UNILINC	UNILINC is a Consortium of University Libraries
URRTMC	University Research and Research Training Management Committee
VTAC	Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre

Overview

Australian Catholic University (ACU) is in its twelfth year of operations, having been formed in 1991 from the amalgamation of four Catholic tertiary institutions in eastern Australia. ACU contributes significantly and in a unique fashion to the diversity of higher education in Australia by placing *values* based on its Catholic traditions at the core of its teaching and research activities, by its *national* focus with campuses in each of the Eastern States/Territory of Australia, and through its profile of teaching and research related to *specific professional fields* with a strong emphasis on *humanities and social science*. ACU is a publicly funded member of the Australian Higher Education system and is open to staff and students of all beliefs.

The *Performance Portfolio* reviews the structures, operations and outcomes of ACU in the context of its development from amalgamation to become a single, integrated University with distinctive qualities, achieving standards of national and international excellence in its chosen fields.

The *Strategic Plan 1999-2008* provides the basis for ongoing development of the institution. The Plan seeks to embed Quality processes throughout its activities, with each organisational area of the institution incorporating *quality management* plans in its *strategic implementation plans*. The planning approach used by the institution follows a cyclical process of *development-implementation-review-improvement*. Formal reviews of all major areas of activity have been (or will be) carried out, with changes introduced on the basis of their findings. In 2001, formal reviews of each of the three Faculties were completed. Concurrently, an Internal Quality Review was conducted by all of the University's organisational areas, co-ordinated by the *Quality Management Committee*. The findings of all reviews have contributed in major ways to the preparation of this Portfolio.

The Portfolio structure and contents reflect the priorities for development based on the Strategic Plan with major emphases on:

- coherent and integrated national development of the academic activities across the multiple campuses of ACU through the Faculties with policies administered by the Academic Board and its committees,
- provision of enhanced administrative and support systems required for the implementation of the University's core academic activities through integrated University-wide systems and procedures,
- embedding the Mission of the University in all of the institution's activities.

For each area of activity reviewed in the Portfolio, *achievements* in the ongoing development of the Strategic Plan directions are identified, with reference to supporting evidence. *Priorities for improvement* specified for each area represent the consensus findings emerging from the various reviews carried out recently,

including the Faculty Reviews and Internal Quality Review.

The Portfolio findings show that the University continues to place a major emphasis on its teaching-learning strengths, with considerable evidence from external and internal data of consistently positive outcomes in terms of graduate satisfaction and high employment rates.

In accord with its Mission, and based on the established traditions of its predecessor institutions, the University remains firmly committed to *engagement with the communities* which it seeks to serve within Australia and overseas.

The Portfolio sets out the development of ACU's Research activities, with evidence in support of continuing progress in accord with the Strategic Plan priorities. The priorities for improvement in this area are supported by strategies designed to develop further the institution's profile in this area.

Considerable progress is demonstrated in the complex task of integrating administrative and support systems across the University so as to provide quality support for teaching and learning and research activities. Significant achievements are identified, and action on the stated priorities is being pursued continuously.

ACU is committed to quality assurance and quality enhancement and has adopted a process in which *quality management plans*, incorporating *quality assurance systems* and *quality improvement plans* are developed and implemented on a continuing basis by all organisational areas of the institution. The processes of review associated with the preparation of the Performance Portfolio are therefore seen as part of a continuing process of quality enhancement which is integral to the development of the University, and which will be ongoing.

Section A: Nature and Context of Australian Catholic University



1.0 Nature of Australian Catholic University

Australian Catholic University (ACU) is in its twelfth year of operations, having been formed in 1991 from the amalgamation of four Catholic tertiary institutions in eastern Australia. ACU is open to all irrespective of religious belief, and is a member of the publicly funded national system of Australian universities, the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the International Federation of Catholic Universities. The Vice-Chancellor is a member of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) and a member of the AVCC's Board of Directors. The Memorandum and Articles of the University, a company limited by guarantee established under the Companies (Victoria) Code, identify its objects in education, scholarship and research as part of the mission of the Catholic Church.

ACU aspires to be a special kind of university placing values, drawn from the long tradition of Catholic intellectual reflection, at the heart of its academic pursuits. The Mission Statement¹ articulates this:

The University's inspiration, located within 2000 years of Catholic intellectual tradition, summons it to attend to all that is of concern to human beings. It brings a distinctive spiritual dimension to the common tasks of higher education.

The University is open to persons of all beliefs and *'seeks to make a specific contribution to its local, national and international communities ... The University explicitly engages the social, ethical and religious dimensions of the questions it faces in teaching and research, and service.'*

As stated also in the Mission:

Australian Catholic University shares with other universities world-wide a commitment to quality in teaching, research and service. It aspires to be a community characterised by free inquiry and academic integrity.

The goal of embedding the University Mission in its academic activities and in the ethos of the institution presents a unique challenge to the University in the economic and cultural context of Australia in these times. This challenge is manifested in the ongoing 'conversation' within the University community at all levels about the nature of the University and the means for advancing the Mission. For example, the *Report of the Strategic Review Committee for the Period 1999-2008*² described the 'Nature of Australian Catholic University' (Section 3) in detailed fashion. Inter alia, it states:

(The Mission) implies the importance of liberal education and promotes values-oriented learning that attempts to infuse a deep concern for morality and ethics in all students. It is a caring institution, with a distinctive sense of social responsibility and concern for the moral and ethical implications of all that it does. (p6)

In a recent paper, *Some Special Challenges Facing a Contemporary Catholic University*,³ Vice-Chancellor Peter Sheehan identified eight principles affecting the formation of a Catholic university.

Three key challenges for ACU are also identified in the conclusion of the paper:

- *The integrative formation of a Catholic identity that is oriented around the growth of the human person;*
- *The constant search for the spiritual meaning and purpose in life;*
- *The need to engage with the community in a scholarly but active way.*

¹ Mission Statement – Appendix 1

² *Report of the Strategic Review Committee for the Period 1999-2008* (Oct 1998)

³ Sheehan, P. *Some Special Challenges Facing a Contemporary Catholic University*, The Australasian Catholic Record, Vol. 79, April 2002, pp131-139 – Document 1

2.0 Integrating the Mission

Integration of the Mission into the life of the University involves committed participation of staff and students through the academic and other activities in which they engage. The way in which the academic curriculum of the University is infused with the Mission is described in a recent paper *How the Mission Statement of Australian Catholic University is Reflected in its Curriculum (2001)*.⁴

The University's Academic Board has accepted the principle of ensuring that all of ACU's degree programs involve Mission-focused units and areas of study and communicate visibly and forcibly the integrative force of the University's institutional Mission. (p82)

The ways in which each of the three Faculties endeavour to integrate the Mission in the curriculum are described and exemplified. The paper identifies seven general approaches including *core and elective units, multidisciplinary units, professional experience placements, service-based activities, and the commitment of Faculty and other staff to the values presented in the curriculum.*

The process of integrating the Mission into the life of the institution involves continual assessment, following each period of implementation.

3.0 Contribution to Higher Education in Australia

ACU contributes significantly and in a unique fashion to the diversity of higher education in Australia, in the following ways:

- (a) ACU's Mission places *values* at the core of its teaching and research activities, with the purpose of inspiring its graduates to be good citizens manifesting high ethical and moral values in their professional and community lives.
- (b) ACU's *national* focus with campuses located in four States/Territory enables it to provide for specific communities, including Catholic and Indigenous communities, as well as the wider Australian community, through collaborative engagement with these communities at both regional and national levels.
- (c) ACU's profile of teaching and research is oriented towards the professions serving educational, health-care and social needs of the community. There is a strong emphasis on humanities and social science fields of study in the teaching and research programs.

In the preface to the recent Ministerial Discussion Paper on Higher Education in Australia,⁵ the Minister for Education Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson states:

In considering reform, consideration must be given to the critical importance of humanities, social sciences, languages, fine arts, literature and philosophy. These areas do not find it easy to source non-government funding though they play a key role in moulding our values, beliefs, the way we relate to one another and see our place in the world.

It is precisely in the areas of values, beliefs, the humanities and social sciences, including the arts, theology and philosophy that ACU locates its emphasis.

Again, in the section *Purposes of Higher Education* the Discussion Paper declares:

The Government sees the purpose of higher education as much greater than preparing students for jobs. It regards higher education as contributing to the fulfilment of human and societal potential, the advancement of knowledge and social and economic progress. (p1)

⁴ McMullen G. *How The Mission Statement of Australian Catholic University is Reflected in its Curriculum*, Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education Vol 22 No 1 Fall 2001, ACCU, Washington DC – Document 2

⁵ *Higher Education at the Crossroads*, Ministerial Discussion Paper, DEST, Canberra, April 2002.

This accords with the central theme of ACU's Mission and priorities, where commercial and utilitarian objectives are perceived within the broader goal of holistic and values-based development of students.

In the section *Engagement of Universities with their Communities* the Discussion Paper further states that:

Engagement needs to become part of what a regional university does, not an adjunct to its existing functions. (p23)

ACU has well-developed collaborative relationships with its communities – regional and national – which include major Catholic education communities, health-care and welfare organisations, Church communities, Indigenous communities and disadvantaged communities in Australia and overseas.

In summary, the University does not seek to replicate other Australian institutions' missions, but rather offers a distinctive values-based approach to academic activities, with a commitment to an holistic, including spiritual, concept of human endeavour.

4.0 Development of the Institution's Strategic Intent and Quality Management

As noted earlier, although its predecessor colleges had a long and reputable tradition as places of high quality teaching and learning, ACU is a relatively new University. The first phase of development of ACU was focused on the establishment of governance and management structures designed to provide a sense of cohesiveness among the eight campuses of the emerging university, while simultaneously ensuring that essential academic processes and systems were developed to enable the institution to be accredited fully as an autonomous university. A five-year sponsorship arrangement with La Trobe University assisted the institution in this phase of its development, culminating in the acceptance by the Commonwealth Government of ACU as a full member of the national system in 1996.

The second phase of ACU's development commenced with the adoption by the Senate in November 1998 of the Strategic Plan 1999-2008.⁶ This Plan "revises the previous Strategic Plan and sets new directions which take on board past achievements". (p4) The Plan includes the revised Mission Statement, approved by the Senate in August 1998.⁷ The strategic directions, priorities and recommendations contained in the Plan are aimed at advancing the purposes inherent in the Mission of ACU through the development of new priorities and targets to achieve the institution's major objectives, as referred in its Mission Statement.

ACU is firmly committed to a process of *continuous quality improvement* through formal quality management systems and procedures as an intrinsic part of its search for excellence in teaching-learning and research. The establishment of the position of Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Quality and Outreach) supported by the Quality Office ensures the centrality of quality management in the University's planning and operations. The *Strategic Plan* highlights the importance of pursuing quality outcomes and emphasises the aim that Quality Management should be embedded and integrated within each area of the University. (Recommendation 16, p26)

The development of the University is an ongoing process in which quality achievements at each stage are enhanced through continuing review and improvement. Achievements are therefore evaluated in relation to the actual

⁶ ACU Strategic Plan 1999-2008 – Document 3

⁷ See Appendix I

University context and with recognition of the realities of the institution's prior strengths and weaknesses. The development of the University's current strategic plan was open to the input by all staff.

4.1 Development, Implementation, Review and Improvement Cycle

The University has adopted a cyclical model of operation which may best be described as *development – implementation – review – improvement*. This model is exemplified in the process of strategic planning and implementation. Thus, at the end of the first strategic development phase, the University commenced a process of review of progress, in which the University community, including the Senate, Chapters (see 6.1), Academic Board, staff and students were invited to contribute to the work of the *Strategic Review Committee*. Consultation continued in the process leading to the *Report of the Strategic Review Committee for the Period 1999-2008*.

Further consultations within the University community led to the finalisation of the ACU *Strategic Plan 1999-2008*, which was approved by the Senate in November 1998.

The University's Strategic Plan places a strong emphasis on *future directions* for the institution. At the same time it recognises the importance of *maintaining and improving quality* in its core academic activities underpinned by effective administrative and support systems. Quality management is intrinsic to the Strategic Plan itself.

Implementation of the Strategic Plan is monitored and reviewed regularly by the *Strategic Review Committee*, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor. This Committee sets short to medium term priorities and specific targets, with regular revision on the basis of review, the results of which are formally drawn to the attention and consideration of Senate.

4.2 Quality Management

Within ACU, quality management is defined in terms of two major components, *Quality Assurance Systems* and *Quality Improvement Plans*. These two components are managed through the University's organisational units with the *Academic Board* and associated *Faculty Boards* and *committees* having a central role in relation to the quality of teaching-learning and research. The senior management team comprising Pro-Vice-Chancellors (3) and the Executive Director, University Services, under the direction of the Vice-Chancellor, has responsibility within defined portfolios for policy development, Strategic Plan implementation and oversight of line management and budgets. The main organisational units and boards/committees are set out in the Portfolio documentation.⁸

The *Quality Management Committee (QMC)*⁹ is the vehicle for promoting and co-ordinating quality management across the University, and its membership comprises the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Faculty Deans, Dean of Students and the Executive Director, University Services, and the Directors or Heads of units. The QMC acts in an advisory role to the Vice-Chancellor on all aspects of quality management, and provides a forum for overseeing the development and implementation of quality management plans throughout the institution.

The QMC has adopted an approach to quality management that involves the embedding of quality management plans within the overall strategic implementation plans of each organisational unit. Thus, for each Faculty, Directorate or other unit, a plan, including *quality assurance systems (or*

⁸ *Governance, Management and Committee Structure – Document 4*

⁹ *Quality Management Policy, Terms of Reference and Membership – Document 5*

¹⁰ *Listing of Strategic Implementation Plans – Document 6*

procedures) together with *quality improvement priorities*, has been developed.¹⁰ The plans are intended to be implemented over a period of 2-3 years. Several organisational units, including the three Faculties, have already completed one or more cycles of quality management planning and implementation.

In the Faculty of Health Sciences, the School of Nursing (Victoria) and the School of Exercise Science (Victoria) have achieved accreditation under ISO9001 quality standards. The Faculty now plans to extend the ISO9001 accreditation to its Schools in Sydney. The Victorian office of ACUcom also has achieved ISO9001 accreditation.

4.3 Formal University Reviews

In addition to the ongoing process of quality management, formal reviews are carried out as scheduled by the Vice-Chancellor, in relation to major organisational areas of the University. For such reviews, the procedures include the establishment of *terms of reference*, and the appointment of a Review Panel, membership of which includes expert consultants external to the University, together with selected internal members. Details of recent and current reviews are included in Section B. The report of each review is circulated to staff and decisions on implementation of recommendations are made by the Core Planning Group (see 6.1).

4.4 Faculty Reviews and Internal Quality Review

In 2001, the eleventh year of ACU's operations, it was considered timely to conduct formal reviews of the activities of the three Faculties.¹¹ Because of the intrinsic relationship of quality to strategic planning, it was decided to initiate a parallel process of *Internal Quality Review* of all organisational areas including the Faculties. The Quality Management Committee co-ordinated the quality review process, establishing guidelines for the self-review to be undertaken by each area.¹² To assist the process, an external consultant with expertise in Internal Quality Reviews of this nature, Dr Neville Withers, University of Waikato, New Zealand, was engaged by the University.

When the University was notified that the AUQA External Quality Audit was scheduled for 2002, it was decided that the Internal Quality Review and the Faculty Reviews would be adapted as the basis for preparation of the University's Performance Portfolio.

5.0 Preparation of Performance Portfolio

The Internal Quality Review involved each organisational area of the institution in a self-review of quality procedures and outcomes with involvement of staff within each unit. A self-review report was prepared, including identification of strengths and areas for improvement. Each report was then reviewed by the quality consultant assisted by a small review committee of University staff, and feedback provided to each unit head or director. In addition, the review committee visited several campuses, meeting with a cross-section of staff and students to explore perceptions about strengths and weaknesses in processes and systems across the institution. The feedback to units was informed by these interactions with staff and students.

In addition to providing feedback to each unit, the Internal Quality Review team prepared a report for the Quality Management Committee (QMC) on quality-related issues of University-wide importance.¹³ While it was emphasised

¹¹ *Terms of Reference, Faculty Review – Document 7*

¹² *ACU Internal Quality Review Guidelines, (April 2001) – Document 8*

¹³ *Internal Quality Review: Report to the Quality Management Committee, Jan. 2002 – Document 9*

by the consultant that this report was necessarily limited in its data base, the QMC drew upon its findings and recommendations in the process of identifying key priorities for quality improvement for the University as a whole.

Based on all of the feedback and information gained from the Faculty Review Reports,¹⁴ and other formal reviews, each organisational unit finalised a summary self-review report, in which strengths and priorities for improvement were noted. Priority goals for quality improvement over the next 2-3 year cycle were identified. These self-review reports provided a major part of the groundwork for the Performance Portfolio and are contained in the accompanying documentation.¹⁵

As part of the Internal Quality Review process the procedures used by the Academic Board, Faculty Boards and other committees were reviewed, identifying strengths and areas for improvement in academic procedures.

¹⁴ *Faculty Review Reports* – Documents 10-12

¹⁵ *Performance Portfolio Submissions* – Document 13

5.1 Achievements and Priorities for Improvement

The approach of ACU to strategic development and quality management is reflected in the content of Section B of the Performance Portfolio, with the University's *achievements* in recent years being acknowledged, and associated *priorities for improvement* identified in accordance with the principle of continuous quality improvement. These achievements and improvement priorities represent the consensus outcomes emerging from all of the formal reviews including the Internal Quality Review and Faculty Reviews.

Section B: Quality Review Findings



6.0 Governance and Management

Australian Catholic University is a unique public university as it is constituted a public company limited by guarantee under the Corporations Act and is thus subject to the corporations law of Australia. Its constituent members are its various founding archdioceses, dioceses and religious institutes throughout Australia. It is the only true multi-State university in Australia, reporting to three State Education Ministers and the Commonwealth. Senate is the Board of Directors of the Company. The constitution of ACU provides that, subject to certain reserve powers that relate to the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor and the Chancellor and subject to the Corporations Act, all the activities of ACU and all of its powers are managed and exercised by the Senate.

6.1 University Senate

In 1996 Senate considered governance issues raised in the Hoare Committee *Higher Education Management Review Report of the Committee of Enquiry*, (Hoare Committee Report), AGPS, Canberra.

In 1996 Senate considered governance issues raised in the Hoare Committee *Higher Education Management Review*¹⁶ and convened a working party to review the size, composition, functions and duties of Senate and its committees. Part of the review included a self-evaluation questionnaire. Among other changes, Senate accepted recommendations for a 16-member Senate (replacing the existing 25-member Senate) with a maximum membership period of three full terms. The Members amended the Company Constitution accordingly, being specifically guided by the advice of the Hoare Committee.

The Senate meets at least four times each year and is assisted by designated committees of the Senate. In March 1999, following a review of the committee structure, Senate resolved to amend the Statutes to create an Audit Committee and to combine the former Standing and Finance Committees. The terms of reference of the new *Standing and Finance Committee* were widened to enable it to deal with urgent issues between Senate meetings without having a specific reference from the Senate. Senate is fully informed of all matters considered by this Committee which meets seven times each year.

The *Academic Board* meets five times a year and is responsible for administering and implementing academic policies. Senate retains authority for approving course proposals as recommended by the Academic Board.

The *Audit Committee* meets three times annually to advise on the work of the external auditor and to review the University risk management practices.

The *Goals Committee* meets as deemed necessary (six to eight times a year) with a primary role to consider the continuing relevance and effectiveness of the University Mission Statement. The Vice-Chancellor is a member of this Committee which is chaired by the Chair of the Academic Board.

The *Honorary Awards Committee* normally meets twice a year and reviews the rules governing honorary degrees and other public awards of the University. In addition, Senate receives reports from four State/Territory *Chapters*, which meet up to four times a year, to give local advice and continuing reference to Senate.

In 2001, Senate continued its formal scrutiny of the strategic directions of the University and their associated outcomes. The strategies and targets to achieve those outcomes were reviewed and incorporated into a statement on *Governance Issues* which is included in the Portfolio documentation.¹⁷

Senate decided in April 2002 to review the broad strategic directions of the University further, in the context of the current review of Higher Education

¹⁶ *Higher Education Management Review Report of the Committee of Enquiry*, (Hoare Committee Report), AGPS, Canberra.

¹⁷ *Governance Issues: A Statement approved by Senate April 2002– Document 14*

initiated by the Commonwealth, by means of a strategic retreat planned for June 2002.

Senate has delegated authority to the Vice-Chancellor for management of the institution, and to the Academic Board for administering and implementing academic policies. The Vice-Chancellor is supported by the senior management team, comprising the Executive Director, University Services and three Pro-Vice-Chancellors (located in each of Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney). Faculty Deans are responsible for management of the three Faculties and report to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) who also chairs the Academic Board. Administration and support areas are managed by Directors, including the Academic Registrar, who report to the Executive Director, University Services. The Dean of Students and Director of Ministry, and the Director of Marketing report directly to the Vice-Chancellor. A management organisation chart is included in the submitted documentation.¹⁸

¹⁸ See Document 4

Academic policies and procedures are administered by the Academic Board. Management and administrative policies are evaluated and considered by the *Core Planning Group (CPG)* and recommended for approval to the Vice-Chancellor. The CPG meets about eight times each year. The *Executive Team* comprising academic and administrative heads, acts as a major consultation and communication forum, and meets regularly to facilitate communication of decisions and consultation on emerging management issues.¹⁹ Specified policy approvals (e.g. Code of Conduct, financial and staffing delegations) are made by Senate.

¹⁹ See Document 4

6.1.1 Achievement

The size, composition and functions of Senate and its committees are conducive to assisting the process of governance. The delegations to the Vice-Chancellor and Academic Board are clear. The Senate is kept informed of all important matters by the Vice-Chancellor and University officers, and takes seriously its responsibility to ensure due diligence. The relationship of the Chancellor and Senate to the senior officers and Academic Board is interactive, with care taken in relation to the role of the Academic Board as the key body for development of academic policies, procedures and initiatives. The Senate's deliberations are assisted by the outcomes of the formal reviews that have been undertaken.²⁰

²⁰ *Senate Documentation – Document 15*

6.1.2 Priority for Improvement

The Senate has decided to hold a Senate strategic retreat in June 2002 to review the broad directions and strategies of the University. In addition, a self-review process which focuses on the role and objectives of Senate has been initiated with a view to further improving the governance procedures to be used by the incoming Senate following recent elections.

6.2 Strategic Planning

The development of the University is guided by its Strategic Plan (see Section A). With the appointment of the second Vice-Chancellor, a new Strategic Plan was developed with input and consultation from staff, students and other stakeholders. Specifically, the Vice-Chancellor sought input from all staff and selected external experts on issues relating to the Mission, profile and potential directions for the institution. State/Territory Chapters and Senate members were additionally involved in the process. The processes for consultation and communication followed in the development of the Plan are provided in the portfolio documentation.²¹

²¹ Strategic Plan Development Sequence – Document 16

Through analysis of the processes of communication, the recent reviews have revealed that communication offers a demanding challenge, considering the range of the University's operations, involving staff, students and other stakeholders. There is a need to encourage an effective level of pro-active participation on the part of staff and students and improved communication by middle managers.

²² See Document 3

The University *Strategic Plan 1999-2008*²² (adopted formally by Senate in November 1998) is an evolving document, revisited regularly by Senate. Implementation of the plan is overseen by a Strategic Review Committee, comprising fourteen members from senior management and chaired by the Vice-Chancellor. Priorities and targets are reviewed and amended regularly.²³

²³ ACU Strategic Plan Priorities and Targets 2002 – Document 17

6.2.1 Achievement

The procedures for developing and implementing the Strategic Plan give serious attention to the involvement of staff, students and other stakeholders through frequent consultation and opportunities for input. Ongoing monitoring by the Strategic Review Committee and Senate ensures that priorities and targets are regularly reviewed.

6.2.2 Priority for Improvement

The formal reviews that have been conducted (e.g. the Internal Quality Review process, and the Faculty Reviews) have found that, while there is a great deal of anecdotal and informal feedback about many aspects of University activities, the use of systematic quantitative and qualitative data in reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of procedures and academic activities across the institution is important. Accordingly, the Core Planning Group and Academic Board have decided to place a high priority on developing a "culture of evidence" throughout the University. To assist this development, the Quality Management Committee proposes to carry out a project to determine a limited number of academic-related key performance indicators to be used commonly by Faculties and Research Services. At the same time, the Directorates will seek to clarify a small number of key indicators relevant to their core activities, which will be monitored on an annual basis commencing in 2003. The initiative has been especially funded by the Vice-Chancellor.

6.3 Development of an Integrated University Structure

From the inception of ACU in 1991, Senate and management have been committed to the development of an integrated University structure and academic profile, which aims for efficiency and coherence while meeting the local needs of communities in each State/Territory where ACU's campuses are located. The complexity of this endeavour has been challenging, given the separate identities, missions, governance and cultures of the predecessor institutions, with the then eight (now six) campuses dispersed across huge distances and different jurisdictions. External hurdles to integration include the need to accommodate three different State-based tertiary selection processes, varying state employment and accreditation requirements for professions including nursing and teaching, differing legislative frameworks and State Government priorities. In the initial development phase addressed by the first Strategic Plan,²⁴ an emphasis was placed on establishing a single Academic Board, cross-campus Faculties (3), research committees and support systems, and University-wide management policies. This phase was characterized by a process of *consolidation* of the four preceding institutional structures

²⁴ ACU Strategic Development Plan 1995-2000 (March 1995)

into a single academic institution. Quality systems and procedures were informed and advanced by three major external influences:

- The contributions by the sponsoring university, La Trobe University, to all aspects of the development of the University in the initial five years of its existence;
- The external quality reviews conducted by the *Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CQAHE)*;
- Annual reports on Quality Improvement submitted to DETYA within the overall Educational Profile Submissions.

The second phase of the University's development commenced in 1999 with the adoption of the new *Strategic Plan 1999-2008* in 1998. This aims to achieve *fully integrated* structures, so enabling the University to have a more coherent and visible national profile.

The University sees as critical, the roles played by the administrative and support services to the achievement of the academic teaching and learning and research goals of the institution. The interrelationship of these units with the Faculties is intended to contribute in a seamless fashion to the core academic activities of the University.

6.3.1 Reviews of Academic and Administrative Areas of Operation

The process of *formal reviews*, with participation of external experts, has been adopted as a key quality mechanism. It is the intention of the University to review all areas of its activities on a cyclical basis. For each review, terms of reference are decided by the Vice-Chancellor with advice from the Core Planning Group (CPG) and input from the relevant organisational area manager. The membership of the review committee includes ACU personnel and external members with particular expertise in the area under review. Generally, the review committee meets with a wide cross-section of staff and, where appropriate, students and other stakeholders. The review report is considered by the CPG and usually the Academic Board. Opportunities are provided for staff response to the report recommendations. Recommendations are considered and acted upon as appropriate after feedback has been received.

The following formal reviews have recently been completed:

- Information Technology and Communication Services (Dec 1998)
- Position Classification System (Sept 1999)
- Student Administration (Feb 2000)
- Internal Quality Review (Dec 2001)
- Faculties (3) (Dec 2001- Feb 2002)
- Campus Ministry, Student Services and Access and Equity (May 2002)
- International Education (to commence later in 2002).

Reviews of Research and Academic Staff Development are scheduled for 2003.

In addition to formal reviews, in which external experts play key roles, a wide range of less formal internal reviews is conducted, where it is perceived that they will assist the process of development. A listing of recent reviews is provided in the portfolio documentation.²⁵

6.3.2 Achievements

- The procedures for development and administration of academic policies involving Academic Board, Faculty Boards, the University Research and

²⁵ *List of Reviews (1998-2002)* – Document 18

²⁶ Sample Academic Board Minutes
– Document 19

²⁷ Student Administration Mapping
document – Document 20

Research Training Management Committee (URRTMC), and other committees of the Academic Board provide a coherent and well-articulated process for policy development and administration.²⁶

- The implementation of formal reviews has provided a sound basis for developments and many of their recommendations have been implemented with positive outcomes.²⁷ The complexity of the tasks involved requires continuing attention including clarification of additional resource requirements and ongoing communication with those implementing or affected by the changes.
- Significant progress has been made with the integration of University-wide systems, notwithstanding the constraints and requirements of the geographical and jurisdictional dispersal of campuses.

6.3.3 Priorities for Improvement

- Implementing the Strategic Plan has resulted in substantial University-wide changes in infrastructure, systems and procedures in the past few years. Reviews have revealed that staff on various campuses are not always fully aware of these institutional aspects in advance of the changes, or provided with sufficient information to address the changes co-operatively and constructively. To improve the process, it has been decided that the implementation of significant changes affecting a substantial number of staff or students will be accompanied by *communication strategies* about the initiative including *feedback mechanisms* from staff implementing the procedures and from the 'clients' of the new procedures. Middle managers will thus be encouraged to ensure that communication to staff and students is provided and that staff are encouraged to be pro-active in the process.
- Some of the reviews have highlighted that, while there existed accurate sources for most policies and procedures, access was sometimes difficult, and this would be facilitated by development of a central register of University policies and procedures. It has been decided to establish a central *Register of University Policies and Procedures* as a matter of priority. The initial edition of the Register will be made available on the ACU Intranet by October 2002 and will be updated systematically.
- All existing committees throughout the University will be reviewed as a priority with the aim of clarifying the purpose and role of each committee. Committees which have outlived their usefulness or which are not strictly required will be terminated. For specific tasks, consideration will be given to the setting up of working parties with a limited life-span. Terms of reference, membership and action plans will be documented and made available to relevant staff and students. The review has commenced with a focus on Academic Board committees and will be undertaken in other areas with a completion date of December 2002.

6.4 Consolidation and Improvement of Campuses

In the first phase of University development, efforts were made to improve the facilities at the then existing eight campuses. Rationalisation of course offerings was initiated to consolidate resources, and capital improvements were undertaken on some campuses. Minor works allocations were provided for essential improvements on all campuses, which were generally old and adapted from their original use.

The current Strategic Plan acknowledged the need to enhance the quality of campuses and to consolidate and update them. Three major initiatives were

approved by the Senate in 1998-9 as follows:

- The closure of the Castle Hill Campus in Sydney and the transfer of courses, students and staff to the remaining two Sydney campuses (MacKillop Campus, North Sydney and Mount St Mary Campus, Strathfield). This initiative required major capital works on the North Sydney and Strathfield campuses;
- The consolidation of operations at the two Melbourne campuses (Mercy and Christ Campuses) to a new campus (St Patrick's Campus) close to the Melbourne city centre. This major project involved capital works in the order of \$35m.
- The opening of a new Brisbane campus, with closure of the existing smaller campus at Mitchelton (McAuley Campus), on the 100 acre site of the former Catholic seminary at Banyo. This project is due to be completed in 2002 with the new campus due to open for the start of the 2003 academic year. Capital works of approximately \$20m are involved.

In arriving at these campus rationalisation decisions, the Senate carried out feasibility studies in relation to the Melbourne and Brisbane initiatives. Capital works plans were prepared, including long-term cashflow projections.

The rationale for these major initiatives was based on the need to configure the University for future developments and to provide facilities for teaching-learning and research which would be adequate for the purposes of university education in the twenty-first century. It was recognized that the consolidation of campuses in major metropolitan regions in Sydney and Melbourne was necessary for cost-effectiveness and to ensure that academic units and support services would be improved. In Queensland, projections indicated that the student population at the Brisbane campus would grow substantially beyond the capacity of the existing Mitchelton campus.

Major extensions were also built at the Strathfield campus, including an expansion of the library. Substantial reconstruction at the North Sydney campus enabled the School of Business to incorporate courses in Information Systems with appropriate levels of computer laboratory access. Similarly the science laboratories were upgraded to accommodate the Bachelor of Environmental Science.

The overall outcome of these major changes in campuses has been to transform the University buildings and facilities from the limited resources previously available to an array of modern, exciting and purpose built campuses. The reactions from students, staff and external stakeholders, particularly in relation to the new St Patrick's Campus, confirms the view held by Senate and senior management about the positive benefits accruing to the University from these changes.

6.4.1 Achievement

The consolidation of campuses has resulted in much improved facilities for teaching-learning and research, and assisted the process of integration of the University. The replacement of the two small Melbourne campuses by the new St Patrick's Campus has added markedly to the quality of the University's teaching-learning, research and community engagement. It is a vibrant, energetic campus on the edge of the business district of Melbourne. The enhanced efficiencies available in administration and services enable higher levels of service and support to be offered to students and staff. Synergies

²⁸ St Patrick's Library Consolidation Statement – Document 21

in the academic activities on the new campus have led to major course rationalisations and innovations. Library services are much improved and the significant reduction in duplication in holdings has enabled the development of more in-depth collections.²⁸ It is anticipated that the new Banyo campus will similarly enhance the University's presence and attractiveness to students and staff in Queensland, while providing for long-term growth on that campus.

6.4.2 Priorities for Improvement

- Current financial plans for new campus buildings, plant and infrastructure will be reviewed and co-ordinated more closely within the University's capital plan, recognising the commitments now made by the University. Initiatives for gaining non-Government funds for capital needs will continue to be encouraged as part of the capital planning process. Risk management strategies will be incorporated into all capital planning.
- The Strathfield campus in Sydney requires continued expansion to accommodate additional research activities, and to enable further rationalisation and growth of courses. A recently purchased property adjacent to this campus will be refurbished as funds permit, to enable facilities on this campus to be enhanced as the University develops its profile, including growing international student enrolments.

6.5 Communication

Formal mechanisms are used to communicate with staff about outcomes of deliberations of Senate, Core Planning Group (CPG) and Academic Board. After each Senate meeting, a *Senate Digest* is sent to campuses and posted on the Web. Immediately following Senate, a report on matters reported to the Senate by the Vice-Chancellor, or discussed by him with Senate, is released by him to all staff. Academic Board Digests are circulated electronically after each meeting and posted on campus noticeboards.²⁹ Decisions on policy and other major matters decided at CPG meetings are formally notified to staff. Directors, Deans and other managers communicate developments through normal channels including Faculty Board meetings and meetings of Directors with campus-based managers. Management Advisory Groups, comprising Heads of Schools and local managers, meet regularly in each State/Territory, providing a useful additional channel of communication. Reviews have indicated that, despite the use of formal communication channels, the issue of communication remains as an ongoing challenge across the six campuses given the unique outreach of the University. Steps are being taken to meet this need, including the use of the intranet with buttons for "News and Events" and an up-to-date Register of University Policies and Procedures. Specific initiatives to address the issue are also being developed by the Director, Marketing.

The Strategic Plan identified the importance of communicating with the outside community and external organisations as a key priority:

Communication with the public should be enhanced to increase understanding of ACU's contribution... (p7)

Marketing consultants were engaged to explore ways in which the University's profile might be better articulated and projected in the public arena. Arising from this study, a new Director, Marketing position was created reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor. A re-imaging and re-positioning exercise was undertaken in 2001, including research by the specialist Marketing Consultants into prospective and current student and staff perceptions of the University. In 2002 a series of marketing and media initiatives has been implemented at

²⁹ Academic Board and Senate Digests – Document 22

national and local levels, including the implementation of a re-positioning of the University with a new visual identity and as ACU National. The new identity is being applied across all visual communications – publications, media and internal relations, merchandise, an interim (updated) web-site, and from the second half of 2002, advertising, follow the new visual identity. Expenditures on various marketing and public relations activities including undergraduate student recruitment, events, media, internal communications, new income generation and merchandise, which have occurred at various levels around the University, are now in the process of being coordinated within a communication and marketing strategy.³⁰

6.5.1 Achievement

ACU Marketing has made significant progress in projecting the University's profile during the last 12 months. To enable this profiling a series of strategies has been developed and implemented, and will be tested during 2002. These strategies include the following: 2002 Change of Preference Campaign, National Undergraduate Recruitment Strategy, National Merchandise Strategy, Non-Fee Income Generation Strategy, Advertising Strategy, National Media Strategy, National Issues Management Strategy, and a range of publications in the new visual look.³¹ ACU Marketing has utilized a number of communication tools in promoting these strategies. These tools include the intranet, face-to-face presentations, and electronic and paper updates.

6.5.2 Priority for Improvement

Corporate Web – the corporate web project was commenced in late 2001 with the appointment of a Web Project Manager in October and an audit in November and December. The interim (updated) site was launched on 15 April 2002 with an announcement to the University community that the project would be finalised by August 2002. The National Steering Committee met for the first time on 8 May 2002. Protocols are being finalised. ACU Marketing regularly updates University staff.

7.0 Teaching and Learning

The offering of undergraduate and postgraduate courses annually to over 10,000 students on six campuses and through off-campus modes of learning is the most important core activity of the University. The quality of these courses and the teaching-learning activities in which staff and students engage is critical to the University's Mission and goals. The University Senate has devolved the main responsibility for course development and review to the Academic Board, while reserving decisions on approval of new courses. Initiatives involving significant investment of additional resources, or major changes in the overall content and aims of an existing course are advised to the Senate.

The Academic Board has overall responsibility for ensuring that the quality of courses is maintained and that teaching-learning activities are appropriate and responsive to the needs of students. Faculty Boards and the relevant course committees have the task of ensuring that these policies and procedures are implemented fully. The existing *Policy on Teaching and Learning*³² was revised, following review, in May 2002. A Teaching and Learning Plan is currently being developed.

Academic Regulations, Research Degree Regulations and the Student Code of Conduct are approved and reviewed by the Academic Board. Such regulations

³⁰ Details on ACU Corporate Website (<http://intranet.acu.edu.au/repositioning/>)

³¹ International Student Publication, and copy of recent Chronicle – Documents 23-24

³² *Policy on Teaching and Learning (May 2002)* – Document 25

³³ *Academic Regulations, Section 6, Review and Appeals*. Details on ACU Corporate Website (<http://www.acu.edu.au/Handbooks2002/index.htm#generalinfo>)

apply to all students irrespective of Faculty. Faculties have delegated authority to formulate Course Requirements and Rules, consistent with the Academic Board regulations. The regulations incorporate mechanisms for students to seek reviews or to appeal against the award of grades in their courses.³³

7.1 Faculties

Faculties have the responsibility for all aspects of teaching and learning, including the development, implementation and review of undergraduate and postgraduate courses and units, with the exception of the Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Philosophy research degree programs, which are administered by the *University Research and Research Training Management Committee (URRTMC)*.

Most of the University academic staff are assigned to one of the three Faculties, and are based within a School. Academic staff are accountable in the first instance to the Head of School, who in turn reports to the Dean of the Faculty. Recently, new positions of Deputy Dean have been established to assist in the work of each Faculty.

The *Faculty of Arts and Sciences* is the largest of the three Faculties with responsibility for a wide range of disciplines fields, including *Arts, Social Sciences, Science, Business, Informatics and Philosophy and Theology*. Within the Faculty, there are two sub-Faculties, namely, *Business and Informatics*, and *Philosophy and Theology*. Courses are offered at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

The *Faculty of Education* is responsible for courses in the discipline fields of *education*, including pre-service teacher education, religious education, adult and community education and postgraduate courses in education including the Doctor of Education.

The *Faculty of Health Sciences* is responsible for discipline fields in Health Sciences, including undergraduate and postgraduate courses in *Nursing, Midwifery and Exercise Science*.

As well as offering courses within their respective fields of study, each Faculty provides units of study to meet specific discipline requirements in courses offered by the other Faculties. Some courses of a multidisciplinary nature are offered conjointly by two Faculties (e.g. Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching).

The *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs)* has oversight responsibility for the Faculties and also Chairs the Academic Board. Each of the Faculties provides an annual report³⁴ on Faculty activities to the Vice-Chancellor and Academic Board.

³⁴ *Faculty Reports – Documents 26-28*

7.2 Course Development and Review

The development of new courses and their review follow a cyclical process matching the general quality process for the institution of *development – implementation – review – improvement*. Common procedures for development and review of courses are followed in all Faculties, in accordance with the approved Academic Board document *Procedures for Course Approval, Development and Review*³⁵ generally referred to as the “Blue Book”. This document was revised in March 2001 and sets out the key requirements for course development and review. The Faculty Deans oversee the establishment of Course Development and Review Committees, including sub-committees where necessary to meet the specific needs of State/Territory clientele, including employer bodies and Government agencies. Where a new course is proposed,

³⁵ *Procedures for Course Approval, Amendment and Review* (29 March, 2001) – Document 29

an initial Course Proposal is prepared setting out the rationale, proposed student catchment and resources implications statement, including staffing, library and other resource requirements. This Course Proposal is considered by Academic Board which recommends approval to the Senate. The latter may approve or send back the Course Proposal for further consideration by the Academic Board. Following approval, the Curriculum Plan is then prepared in full detail, for approval by the Academic Board. Faculty Boards play a key role in relation to quality assurance issues, and it is at this level that many of the practical and academic issues are debated and resolved.

Overall, the recent internal and external reviews found that the procedures are generally implemented with care by relevant course committees, Faculty Boards and Academic Board. Two exemplars illustrating the processes followed in practice are included in the portfolio documentation. The first relates to the review of the postgraduate Doctor of Education program³⁶ and the second to the substantial undergraduate course, Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Arts course,³⁷ designed to meet specialised teaching needs in NSW secondary schools.

³⁶ EdD Review details – Document 30

³⁷ BTeach/BA Review details – Document 31

7.2.1 Achievement

In general, the procedures for developing, implementing and reviewing courses are systematically and effectively applied in each Faculty. Oversight of these procedures by Academic Board and Faculty Boards is maintained with detailed attention to the procedures and to the appropriateness of the Course Proposals and Curriculum Plans.

7.2.2 Priority for Improvement

The Faculty Reviews found that, despite the requirements for cost-effectiveness in course planning, some instances of small numbers of enrolments in courses or course units continue to occur. A review of enrolments has been commenced and will be carried out during 2002. Strategies have been initiated to improve the cost-effectiveness of course offerings, in line with Strategic Plan priorities, and to cease offering units where appropriate.

7.3 Teaching – Learning Processes

The Faculty Reviews attest to the strong commitment amongst academic staff in all Faculties to maintaining and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Data for undergraduate programs available from CEQ surveys confirm the general picture from course and unit evaluations and from employers, which is reflected in the relatively high employment rates for graduates as evidenced by GCCA graduate surveys. CEQ and GDS graduate survey data are presented in **Appendix II**.³⁸

Course Co-ordinators have responsibility for ensuring that the course unit offerings are matched to student needs, and liaise with Lecturers-in-Charge of the units. Unit Outlines are provided at the commencement of the semester to each student. These Outlines provide key information about the pattern of teaching, including lectures, seminars, laboratory workshops and field experience activities. Also specified are the assessment modes and requirements. Course Committees monitor the outcomes each semester, and ensure that student results are processed appropriately.

Lecturers are generally pro-active in developing new methods of teaching including those which encourage students to become more independent learners. The University provides *Teaching Development Grants* each year to

³⁸ GCCA Course Experience Questionnaire and Graduate Destination Survey Data – Appendix II

³⁹ Exemplar of external Award to Teaching Staff – Document 32

encourage and support the development and dissemination of innovative approaches to teaching and learning. These have led to innovative practices being implemented in each of the three Faculties.³⁹ Each year up to three awards for excellence in teaching are given on the basis of recommendations of the Excellence in Teaching Awards Committee. To meet changing patterns of student needs, including those of postgraduate students, more flexible modes of teaching-learning are being adopted, including Summer and Winter Schools, off-campus intensive workshops and residential sessions on campus. The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is increasing and a range of postgraduate courses is now being offered fully online through the University's *ACUweb* site. The University has recently decided to enhance access by lecturers and students to web-based resources, by the development of a *digital library* and the resourcing of a *learning shell* for online delivery of courses.

The Faculty-based model for managing courses tends to encourage disciplinary teaching. There is scope to develop further interdisciplinary approaches involving lecturers from different fields. The Academic Board is specifically addressing the issue of cross-Faculty teaching and disciplinary studies with the assistance of a working party drawn from the three Faculties.

7.3.1 Course and Unit Evaluation

Faculty Boards and Course Committees take seriously the process of improvement of unit and course offerings using a wide range of feedback sources and mechanisms. Individual lecturers are encouraged to utilise regular student surveys, conducted by the Academic Staff Development Unit, to provide feedback to them on teaching-learning for course units.⁴⁰ CEQ and other data in relation to graduate perceptions are used increasingly. In some Faculties, for example in the School of Arts and Sciences (NSW), systematic student evaluation data are collected and evaluated by Course Committees.

The Faculty Reviews and Internal Quality Review showed that, while there was a wide range of informal and formal feedback being used by relevant staff and committees, there was considerable variation in the way formal data were gathered and utilised within and across Faculties. The reviews recommended changes in the course evaluation processes including the separation of student data being used for individual staff development purposes from those designed primarily for course and unit reviews.

7.3.2 Achievements

- The quality of teaching-learning activities is generally of a high standard throughout the Faculties as demonstrated through CEQ responses.⁴¹ Various teaching-learning approaches are used effectively by teaching staff. Course Committees evaluate courses regularly, taking account of staff and student feedback.
- Particularly at postgraduate level, there have been several positive initiatives to enable students to have more flexible modes of access to learning. These include Summer and Winter Schools and week-end workshops, use of print-mode for distance education students and intensive study programs in off-campus settings. Recently, a range of postgraduate courses has been made available and taught fully online.⁴²

7.3.3 Priorities for Improvement

- Existing procedures for obtaining systematic student feedback on teaching-learning for use by individual lecturers will be maintained but expanded.

⁴⁰ Details on Survey Instrument and data on use of student surveys by staff – Document 33

⁴¹ Course Experience Questionnaire Data – see Appendix II

⁴² *ACUweb* Courses brochure and listing of courses – Document 34

Faculties will develop new survey instruments specifically to gather student and staff evaluative information on a systematic basis for course and unit implementation and review purposes. Data from these surveys will be made available to Course Committees to assist in the regular evaluation of units and courses. Use of these survey instruments in all Faculties will commence in 2003.

- To ensure that equivalence in standards of courses is maintained, that use of benchmarking of student outcomes across campuses; which occurs for some courses, will be extended, with the use of moderators to assess standards particularly of final year units. For example, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences has implemented the use of external moderators at Honours degree level.
- Increased use of ICT to assist teaching-learning activities will be facilitated within each Faculty. Specifically, the University will provide co-ordinated support for the use of a learning shell for online education in courses, to complement the ACU *web* Online Education provision for some postgraduate courses. Lecturers will be provided with further opportunities for developing skills in the use of web-supported and fully online teaching.
- Each Faculty will review its procedures for monitoring the numbers of students enrolling in individual units and courses as part of the continuing efforts to improve the cost-effectiveness of course offering.
- The use of flexible learning modes, including cross-campus teaching, will continue to be encouraged. More initiatives involving interdisciplinary approaches and cross-Faculty courses and units will be undertaken.

8.0 Research and Research Training

The Strategic Plan includes a firm commitment to research as a critical component of the Mission and goals of the University. In December 2000, the Academic Board consolidated research and research-training aspects under a single Committee – the University Research and Research Training Management Committee (URRTMC), which is a formal Standing Committee of the Academic Board. The membership of this Committee has been expanded to include the Chairs of Faculty Research and Research Training Standing Committees, the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee and a postgraduate student.⁴³

The URRTMC oversees quality aspects of higher degree studies and provides limited grant support for researchers within the institution. It has responsibility for the appointment of higher degree by research supervisors. The Committee assists in the development of academic staff through time release for research and for the completion of research higher degree studies (where appropriate). It also makes available research training opportunities for postgraduate supervisors.

The major responsibility for overseeing the development of research activities lies with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and International) who is assisted by *Research Services*.⁴⁴ With most of the academic staff being located in Faculties, the Deans of the Faculties also carry significant responsibility for research development. The structural arrangements for management and development of research at ACU with an emphasis on the URRTMC of the Academic Board are detailed in the Portfolio documentation.⁴⁵

⁴³ *Terms of Reference and Membership of URRTMC – Document 35*

⁴⁴ Details on ACU Corporate Website (<http://www.acu.edu.au/research/contacts.html>)

⁴⁵ Details on ACU Corporate Website (<http://www.acu.edu.au/research.html>)

8.1 Research Flagships and Centres

The Strategic Plan places an especially high priority on research development and enhancing the nexus between research and teaching-learning. The University has established a limited number of research centres:

Early Christian Studies

Lifelong Learning

Mathematics Teaching and Learning Centre

Spiritual, Moral, Religious and Pastoral Dimensions of Education

Plunkett Centre for Ethics in Health Care

Social Policy Advocacy Research Centre

Environmental Restoration and Stewardship

Key areas for research development have been identified as *Flagships*. They were chosen as areas which reflect (together with the University's major research centres), the University's defined areas of strength. Directors of Flagships have the expectation that they will expand the research performance of the University in these areas, and Flagships act as stimuli for research activities in their respective fields.

Currently the areas recognized in this way are:

Early Christian Studies

Catholic Educational Leadership

Lifelong Learning

Mathematics Teaching and Learning

Palliative Care

Spiritual, Moral, Religious and Pastoral Dimensions of Education

Youth Studies

Progress of these Flagships is regularly monitored by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and International). An evaluation in May 2002 recommended, on advice of the URRTMC, that the Mathematics Teaching and Learning Centre be elevated to Flagship status.

8.2 Research Degrees

The University continues to build its research degree profile at Master's and Doctoral levels, while being careful to ensure that the quality of supervision available to research students is appropriate. Incentives have been offered to enable staff to complete their own Doctoral studies, where appropriate. Research Services provides active support and encouragement for individuals and Faculties to apply for research grants through ARC and other external funding bodies, and to increase publications in refereed journals.

Recent Faculty Reviews have accepted that ACU is a relatively new university with a discipline profile in Education, Health-care, Humanities and Social Sciences. The Strategic Plan has set priorities for research development and specific targets which are achievable and which will ensure that the Faculties have a significant research focus. It is in the context of the Strategic Plan objectives that the following achievements and priorities for improvement have been identified.

8.3 Achievements

- Research performance as measured by DEST indicators shows that there is consistent growth in research, with accelerating increases in research degree enrolments and research income from grants and other sources. (see **Appendix III**)⁴⁶
- Close monitoring of enrolments of candidates in research Master's, Doctor of Education and Doctor of Philosophy degree studies has shown satisfactory completion rates and positive indicators in respect of the quality of supervision provided. Procedures for ensuring quality in candidature selection, appointment of supervisors, and examination of research theses are appropriately implemented. **Appendix III** summarizes data in relation to research degree enrolments, progression and completion.
- The University has expanded significantly the range of community-related research activities in recent years. Initiatives include ARC Linkage-funded projects involving a range of partner institutions, a State Government Grant of \$333,000 from the Victorian Government's Adult, Community Education and Further Education Board, and a range of collaborative projects involving community partnerships.⁴⁷
- Jointly sponsored appointment of Chairs in Educational Leadership, Philosophy, Exercise Science and Aged Care has provided increased opportunities for research collaboration with Catholic Education Offices, hospitals and other agencies. As emerging areas of research importance are identified, these appointments ensure a more integrated approach to such research with a focus on the needs of partner organisations. The *Plunkett Centre for Ethics in Health Care*, jointly sponsored by ACU and St Vincent's Hospital Campus, Sydney, is an exemplar of collaboration with industry in research and professional development in the area of ethics.⁴⁸
- Initiatives to encourage staff to gain higher degrees, including research degrees have been successful, with the proportion of academic staff holding Higher degree awards having increased to 93.1% in 2002, in comparison with the National Average of 67.2%⁴⁹. Approximately 50% of staff have achieved Doctoral awards.

8.4 Priorities for Improvement

- Systematic evaluation of research students' progress, including *academic progress reviews* and the introduction in 2002 of a *postgraduate survey for research students* to be administered annually during candidature, will provide improved data on issues important to research students' progression, including the quality of their supervision experience and the achievement of the University's graduate attributes.⁵⁰
- Greater emphasis will be placed on Faculty networks and co-operative projects with other institutions and organisations in seeking access to research funds and projects.
- Development of a 'research culture' in all Faculties will continue to have high priority, with incentives and staff development opportunities for staff to achieve improved levels of performance, especially research publications in DEST-recognized categories.
- For those staff, who have recently achieved Doctoral level qualifications, supervisor training schemes will continue to be provided so as to enable them to undertake supervisory roles with research students.

⁴⁶ *Research Data – Appendix III*

⁴⁷ *Listing of Collaborative Projects – Document 36*

⁴⁸ *Details on the Plunkett Centre – Document 37*

⁴⁹ Table d3, p 77, *Higher Education at the Crossroads*

⁵⁰ *Statement of University's Graduate Attributes – Document 38*. Further details on ACU Corporate Website <http://www.acu.edu.au/research.cand.html>

A formal review of Research has been scheduled for 2003 and it is anticipated that the above priorities will be revisited as part of the review process.

9.0 Community Engagement

The tradition inherited by ACU from the predecessor colleges, in which many members of religious institutes taught, had a strong focus on meeting the needs of the community. This tradition is reflected in the Mission Statement:

Through fostering and advancing knowledge in education, health, commerce, the humanities, the sciences and technologies, and the creative arts, Australian Catholic University seeks to make a specific contribution to its local, national and international communities.

⁵¹ Community Service Management Plan 1996

A *Community Service Management Plan*,⁵¹ setting out objectives and strategies for community-related activities was adopted by the Academic Board in December 1996. This document provided the first formal basis for Community Service activities across the University, and within Faculties. Faculties include specific contributions by individual academic staff in their Annual Reports. Recognition is given to the contributions to the community in the promotional criteria for academic staff. Encouragement is given to staff contributing to professional and academic bodies for their respective fields of study. In 1999 an annual *Outstanding Community Service Award*⁵² was instituted as a recognition of exceptional and continuous contributions to the community by an individual and Awards have been given in 2000 and 2001 following an application and evaluation process.

⁵² Community Service Award 2002 – Document 39

In addition to *individual* contributions, the University has sought to make *institutional* contributions to the community through its teaching and research activities. Major courses offered by ACU, including nursing, teacher education, psychology, social sciences and youth studies, are specifically focused on the needs of communities. In all undergraduate courses, there is an emphasis on the ethical and social justice dimensions relevant to that field of study. Many courses include elective or compulsory learning modules or units in which students engage in direct learning activities in community settings. An exemplar of an initiative in community learning is the community-based projects of students in the School of Education (NSW).⁵³

⁵³ School of Ed (NSW) Community-based projects – Document 40

As well as the contributions provided through major courses, the University has identified communities experiencing significant disadvantage for special attention. Among these are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities located in the various States/Territory where campuses are situated. Courses designed specifically to meet Indigenous community needs have been developed and offered in close collaboration with the Indigenous communities. Significant success has been achieved in this area, with approximately forty (40) Indigenous students graduating each year.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Outcomes for ATSI Students – Document 41

Courses specifically designed to assist in the preparation of professional educators and carers in the areas of intellectual and physical impairment, and aged-care are offered in two States: Bachelor of Education (Habilitation) in NSW; Diploma in Arts (Disability, Age, Residential Care) in Queensland. At the international level, the University has sought to assist communities with specific needs through the offering of relevant courses and professional contributions of staff in East Timor, South Africa, Papua New Guinea and Pakistan.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Report on the Pakistan Project – Document 42

The intrinsic nature of service to communities in the activities of the University was recognised in a *Statement on Community Service* adopted by the institution in 2000.⁵⁶ The statement defined the place of service to the community in ACU's teaching and research activities and also emphasised the importance of individual contributions by staff.

A significant outcome of the Faculty and Internal Quality Reviews has been the decision to redefine conceptually the nature of the University's relationship with the communities with which it is involved. Reflection on the nature and scope of community activity has led to the adoption of the concept of *Community Engagement*⁵⁷ in place of the previous concept of *Community Service*. The concept of *engagement* is seen as representing a more interactive and collaborative relationship between the University and each community, through which the needs of both partners are addressed with each partner bringing particular strengths and capacities in a collaborative process. Faculties and other areas of the University will review their community-related activities and adapt their approaches to reflect the philosophy and orientation of the new statement, commencing in 2003.

9.1 Achievements

- The links between Faculties and key communities for which major courses are designed to prepare students for entry to relevant professional fields are actively maintained and are responded to in addressing needs and educational outcomes required of graduates.⁵⁸ Interactions of both formal and informal kinds through which Deans, Heads of Schools and other relevant personnel communicate with key professional and employer bodies occur on a regular basis, with feedback from such bodies being incorporated into curricula through course reviews and other means.
- The collaborative links with Indigenous community representatives in each of the States/Territory in relation to specific educational needs and programs for Indigenous students are ongoing and effective, using a variety of informal and formal means of communication and co-operation. Staff of the University also play significant leadership roles in external bodies and community organisations involved in Indigenous educational issues.
- Initiatives such as the ACU-Lutheran Church Agreement for the preparation of primary and secondary teachers for Lutheran Schools are supported pro-actively by the University, with regular monitoring and feedback from the Agreement partner so as to ensure quality in the educational outcomes.
- Co-operation with other tertiary educational providers has led to productive collaboration such as Agreements with Brisbane Institute of TAFE, NSW TAFE, Australian National University and the University of Queensland. Each of these initiatives is directed towards specific educational outcomes including the offering of joint degree programs.⁵⁹
- Flagships and Centres are actively engaged in community-related research and teaching activities. The *Social Policy and Advocacy Research Centre*⁶⁰ carried out a demographic and social study of the community in Fitzroy, Melbourne, at the time of opening of the new Melbourne campus; findings have been used by Faculties to develop initiatives with a particular focus on local community needs. A similar study has been funded by the Vice-Chancellor and is being carried out in the Banyo-Nudgee communities near

⁵⁶ *Statement on Community Service (2000)* – Document 43

⁵⁷ *Statement on Community Engagement (2002)* – Document 44

⁵⁸ Details of ACS/ICDL Program at Signadou Campus – Document 45

⁵⁹ *Exemplars of Agreements with tertiary institutions and educational bodies* – Document 46

⁶⁰ *Details of SPARC / Faculty Community Links* (<http://www.acu.edu.au/sparc/>)

⁶¹Chapman, J. Toomey R, et al
*Lifelong Learning and Teacher
Education*. EIP Project Completed,
DEST (2002)

⁶² Butcher, J., Howard P.,
McMeniman M., Thom G. *Engaging
Community – Service or Learning?*
EIP Project Completed, DEST (2002)

the location of the new Brisbane campus at Banyo. The recently established *Centre for Lifelong Learning* is actively involved in studies of the needs of learners in a variety of professional and community settings. For example, a DETYA-funded Commonwealth EIP research study on Lifelong Learning has also recently been completed.⁶¹

9.2 Priorities for Improvement

- Each of the Faculties has committed to further strengthening community engagement through formal linkages with industry partners, professional organisations and other tertiary institutions for enhancement of course offerings and delivery modes, articulation of awards, and collaborative research initiatives. Research Centres and Flagships will strengthen collaborative partnerships in research and professional development activities.
- The Faculties and University management will further encourage individual staff to contribute their academic and professional expertise to professional organisations and other relevant bodies. Performance indicators to monitor the effectiveness and breadth of such individual contributions will be developed and implemented across the institution.
- Benchmarking of community engagement processes and outcomes will be initiated in Australia and internationally with a special focus on major international Catholic universities. A research project focusing on benchmarking in one area has been undertaken in the Faculty of Education.⁶²
- Opportunities for students to develop understandings and values relevant to community engagement will be strengthened, through formal curriculum initiatives such as those being implemented in specific Schools within each Faculty.

10.0 International Education

The *Strategic Plan 1999-2008* emphasises three priorities in relation to the international activities of the University:

- International perspectives and experiences to prepare students for employment and to “project the impact of students’ distinctive learning” (p7);
- Developing strong international links with major Catholic universities, through Faculty and student exchange, so as to enable the University to achieve international standards (p10);
- Increasing the University’s income through fee-paying international students to assist in reducing the financial dependency on Government funding. The importance of this priority was highlighted in Recommendation 3 of the Plan (p24).

Two organisational units of the University, the *International Education Office* and *ACUcom*, are responsible for the implementation of strategies and procedures in the area of International Education. Initially, *ACUcom* focused on the teaching of ELICOS programs for which marketing, administrative support and other aspects were managed separately from other elements of international activities. The International Education Office focused on marketing, recruitment, enrolment and administrative support for fee-paying award course students. These two units have recently been brought into closer relationship under the management of the Director for International Education

within the portfolio of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and International). The roles of Faculty Deans and Heads of Schools are seen as crucial to the effective implementation of international education strategies, and increased emphasis has recently been placed on a collaborative approach of Faculties with the Directorate of International Education.

The University provides support for international students, taking account of cultural and language needs. At the same time, international students are required to meet the same standards of academic achievement as all other students.

With the recent expansion of all aspects of international activities, a formal review of International Education activities and systems, including the work of the International Education Office and *ACUcom* will be undertaken during 2002.

The provision of services is guided by the *AVCC Code of Practice for the Provision of Education to International Students* and procedural requirements of the DEST, DIMIA as a consequence the ESOS Act 2000. The International Education Office has engaged the services of an independent Student Grievance Conciliator.

10.1 Achievements

- Improvements in marketing of specific award courses have been achieved in recent years via greater co-operation with Faculties.⁶³
- The procedures for marketing non-award and award courses to international students are carefully monitored to ensure ethical standards are maintained in relation to potential students.
- Procedures for welcoming, orienting and supporting international students are implemented with an emphasis on the cultural and academic needs of these students. On the Sydney campuses, the University has developed a successful program for the larger numbers of students. Smaller groups of international students in Melbourne and Brisbane have been received in a more individual way by International Education Office and/or Faculty staff.
- The flexibility and quality of customised semester programs of study designed to meet the needs of specific cohorts of students have proven to be attractive, creating increased demand for such programs.
- Faculties have been pro-active in undertaking University mission-related initiatives to meet educational needs of specific communities in several countries, including East Timor, Hong Kong, Singapore, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Mauritius and South Africa. These initiatives are motivated by community needs rather than that of income generation, and are run by Faculties.
- Exchange agreements have been achieved with a broad range of universities, including Catholic universities, in Asia, Europe and North America, leading to significant numbers of exchange studentships.⁶⁴ A significant network of universities having similar profiles or missions to ACU has been created. For example, Australian Catholic University co-sponsored with the University of Notre Dame, the 2001 International conference of the International Federation of Catholic Universities, in Western Australia.

⁶³ *Data on International Students 1999-2001* – Document 47

⁶⁴ *List of International Exchange Partners* – Document 48

10.2 Priorities for Improvement

- A disproportionate number of international students choose to study at the Sydney campuses and this has imposed pressures on student support services. These are being augmented by cooperation between International Education and Dean of Students. Strategies designed to increase the numbers of fee paying international students enrolling in courses, specifically in Brisbane and Melbourne, have been implemented and will be evaluated during 2002-2003. Additional student recruitment staff have been appointed in Brisbane and Melbourne. Student support services will be increased in proportion to these strategies.
- Existing procedures to facilitate co-operation between the International Education Office/ACUcom and the Faculties will continue to be strengthened. Faculties will be more pro-active in adapting existing courses to meet the needs of international market niches.
- Faculties will continue to offer, on a limited basis, courses to students in offshore programs. Emphasis will be placed on meeting specific community needs relevant to the University's Mission and social justice commitment. Quality assurance processes, including active involvement of ACU academic staff, will be reviewed and strengthened to ensure that academic standards continue to be maintained.
- Initiatives to develop collaboration in research and teaching with selected international universities, especially Catholic universities, will be given increased priority. Establishment of a Distinguished Visiting Fellowship scheme in association with existing Outside Studies Program (OSP) opportunities will enhance scholarly exchange at institutional level.
- Opportunities for greater numbers of ACU students to undertake a period of exchange in overseas institutions will be actively encouraged. International Education Office staff are promoting student exchanges during Orientation Week and semester presentations to students and staff.
- For international agents promoting ACU courses, an Agents Procedures Manual will be prepared and circulated by December 2002. In the regular review of Agents' contracts, the degree of compliance with these procedures will be assessed.
- A consolidated manual of procedures used in relation to all international students, including advisement and enrolment, administrative and support services, and liaison procedures within the University, will be prepared and circulated to Faculties and relevant directorates by the International Education Office by June 2003.
- A comprehensive approach to orientation of ACU staff to cultural aspects and special needs of international students has been implemented by the International Education Office, with awareness programs to be offered for staff on each campus on an annual basis.

⁶⁵ See Appendix II

11.0 Student Support, Equity Groups and Indigenous Support Services

At ACU, education and learning occur in a context that values, fosters and supports the growth and development of the whole person in community. ACU has a strong commitment to providing support for students and there is much evidence of the care for students as demonstrated by student and

graduate responses to surveys.⁶⁵

Under the leadership of the Dean of Students, specific support in the areas of *Counselling, Academic Skills and Campus Ministry* is provided. Support for development of the Student Representative Councils is also provided through this portfolio. *Disability Services* are delivered by the Equity and Equal Opportunity Unit.

The overarching function of Student Services is concerned with the provision and delivery of a range of support services that seek to enhance the intellectual, spiritual and personal life of students at ACU. The delivery of service is shaped and directed by the values of the Mission Statement and aligned to the recommendations and directions of the Strategic Plan (section 3.2.3, 4.1 and recommendation 24).

Through a range of procedures and mechanisms the Student Services unit aspires to provide a quality service. Staff are professionally qualified and engaged in ongoing professional development. Staff members involved in the emotional, psychological and spiritual support of students are required to have external professional supervision. Counsellors and Campus Ministers have developed guidelines and Codes of Practice to maximise safe and professional practice. A written annual report⁶⁶ including statistics, goals and plans for the future is required of the services on each campus. Evaluation of services occurs through external and internal surveys, written and informal feedback. A range of data and statistical collecting mechanisms is operating within the Academic Skills and Counselling services. Campus Ministry is in the process of developing an appropriate tool.

Professional standards and commitment of staff in this area are excellent and on each campus co-operation of Student Services with academic School personnel, other operational areas, and Student Representative Councils (SRC) is actively pursued. Student Services involvement with SRC activities and major events on campus is highly regarded by staff and students and represents a core component of the spirit of community that characterises the University.

⁶⁶ *Exemplar of Student Services Annual Report – Document 49*

11.1 Equity Groups

Overall, there is strong policy, management and practical support for an increasingly multicultural student body, a thrust which is endorsed by the Mission of the University and supported by the University in multiple policies (e.g. its Policy on Cultural Diversity).⁶⁷ Special support units operate across the University for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and these are addressed below. Government has specially commended the University for its performance in this area. The University seeks to address the educational and support needs of a wide range of equity groups. For example, in Sydney the *ACUlink Program* is designed to encourage students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to attend university. The mix of socio-economic backgrounds of students varies depending on the difficulties that exist in the statistical methods used to collect information.

Disability Advisers are employed by the University to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are met through the provision of equipment and other resources, and with the co-operation of teaching staff. Access for such students has been given particular attention in the design of the new St Patrick's Campus in Melbourne and the new McAuley at Banyo campus which is currently being built in Brisbane.

Following the recent departure from ACU of the inaugural Dean of Students

⁶⁷ *Policy on Cultural Diversity – Document 50*

and Director of Ministry Sr Rosemary Lewins OP in early 2001, the opportunity has been taken to conduct a review of Campus Ministry, Student Services and Access and Equity. The Review report has been completed (mid-May) and will be circulated within the University for comment prior to consideration of its recommendations by the Core Planning Group.

⁶⁸ *ACU Statement on Reconciliation*
– Document 51

11.2 Indigenous Students

The University has developed a significant profile in the area of Indigenous Education, with specific courses offered for Indigenous students in Sydney and Brisbane, and support for Indigenous perspectives in all courses on each campus. All undergraduate teacher education students undertake a core unit in Indigenous cultural perspectives. Three Indigenous Support Units located on Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne campuses provide comprehensive academic and personal support for Indigenous students undertaking courses. Indigenous advisory committees in each State provide input from Indigenous community representatives and students in relation to all aspects of the University's strategies in the area of Indigenous Education. The University *Statement of Reconciliation (1998)*⁶⁸ is indicative of the strong commitment by the institution to reconciliation and to the overall thrust of its strategies.

11.3 Achievements

- The values underpinning the practice of Student Services are closely linked to the ACU Mission Statement and Strategic Plan. Student Services developed an overarching mission statement in 1996 drawing direction from the University's Mission Statement. Each functional area within Student Services has developed a mission and vision statement to direct the activity of that function in line with the values and ethos of ACU.
- Students who access Student Services report high levels of satisfaction with the service provided according to external and internal surveys conducted in 2000 and 2001.⁶⁹ When applying benchmarks developed by McKinnon, Walker & Davis (2000) to the survey findings, the Academic Skills Unit performance in particular achieved consistently high levels. Counselling and Campus Ministry performance was well within satisfactory benchmarking levels.
- Support for the ongoing development of SRCs is provided through the Office of the Dean of Students and staff of Student Services. This has resulted in a growing professionalism among the SRCs, evidenced by adoption of accountability practices, desire for ongoing leadership formation, training and skills, and an openness to explore mission-focused activities and projects.
- Systems and processes of support for Indigenous students are provided by experienced and professional staff, across all campuses of the University. The quality of academic and professional assistance for students offered by the three Indigenous Support Units and through residential workshops has contributed to strongly positive educational outcomes in this area.

⁶⁹ *Student Services Surveys* –
Document 52

11.4 Priorities for Improvement

- Consideration will be given to the recommendations of the recently completed Review of Campus Ministry, Student Services and Access and Equity, with particular reference to the enhancement of co-ordinated student

services on each campus.

- The need for a user friendly, interactive Student Services web site to address issues of access, information sharing and service delivery to postgraduate, rural, international and campus-based students was endorsed at the Student Services Annual Conference 2001. Funding for the project has been procured and development will begin by Semester 2, 2002.
- The development of a University Student Grievance Procedure is in process and is due for completion in Semester 2, 2002.
- Indigenous units will increase the levels of support for on-campus students undertaking courses other than special Indigenous programs. Mentoring support will be provided for those Indigenous students choosing to study at postgraduate levels, where learning needs differ significantly from those of undergraduate students.
- Improved co-ordination of research initiatives in areas particularly relevant to Indigenous issues and communities will be undertaken, with the establishment of a cross-Faculty Indigenous Research Co-ordination Group, with implementation by 2003.

12.0 Library

ACU commenced operations with eight small libraries which had significant variations in policies and practices. Collections were limited, contained much duplication and had an emphasis on supporting teaching rather than research activities. Following a Review of the Library in 1996 an integrated management structure was set up with the appointment of the Director, Libraries who now reports to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs). Library-wide committees have been established to oversee policy development/implementation and all six libraries now operate under a set of cooperatively developed policies.

However, overcoming the difficulties of operating on such small, widely dispersed locations remains the key challenge for the Library Service. This has been partially met by an increasing use of electronic resources, which are available to all staff and students regardless of their campus and which now can be accessed remotely from outside ACU. In 2002 35% of the acquisitions budget will be used to purchase electronic resources. This has been supplemented by the creation of Electronic Reserve, which allows academic staff to have printed material digitised and made available online to their students. The Library is in the process of implementing a content management system, which will enable the creation of a true digital, or online, library made up of material taken from a variety of formats – print, video, audio, graphic, etc. This will be further supplemented by the purchase of a *learning shell*, which will enable the University to offer full online courses to its undergraduate students. When operational, this will supplement the current *ACUweb* operation which delivers a range of postgraduate fee-paying courses through a partnership arrangement with NextEd Pty Ltd, a specialist provider of online education services worldwide.

12.1 Achievements

- The establishment of a single Library service in 1996 has enabled the development of University-wide policies, which are overseen by specialist working parties that include representatives from each of the campus libraries.

The Library Committee, supported by the work of local Library Advisory Committees, provides guidance and input to the process of policy formulation.

- The shift to electronic resources offered online has meant that more resources are available to more students regardless of their location.
- The Library has always provided a high level of personal service which is both timely and relevant to users throughout the University. However, there is now a notable orientation amongst library personnel towards innovations and embracing the new technologies as exemplified by the *Information Literacy Project*⁷⁰ and other innovative activities. Electronic modes of support such as *Ask-a-Librarian Service* (online reference service) and *Web-Ezy* (online self-instructional tutorial) have enhanced the scope of these services.⁷¹
- The use of consortial arrangements has made it possible for the Library to operate more effectively. For example, the Library, through its membership of UNILINC, was able to install a new automated system, Aleph, without the need for any major capital outlay. The Library has joined with a number of other universities in subscribing to Web of Science and Current Contents, a significant electronic database that will be of particular value in supporting research activities.
- The Library is now developing its own databases, the first of which is CathLINK Australia, a service created to assist individuals, researchers and organisations to locate Catholic information resources across Australia. It can be found at <http://cathlink.acu.edu.au/>

12.2 Priorities for Improvement

- The Library already gathers feedback from staff and students using an extensive range of surveys and other data sources. However, the quality review showed that these are not sufficiently comprehensive or related to an overall plan. As an initial response, the Library has now contracted services of an external consultant (Rodski Research Group) to conduct a comprehensive client survey that can be externally validated. It will be completed by mid-2002. Rodski will conduct a similar survey in a number of other Australian and New Zealand libraries, thus enabling our Library to be benchmarked against other similar services.
- The Library has begun the process of developing a Library Strategic Plan. The target date for completion of the plan is mid-2003. It will be finalised in consultation with Library staff and user groups and will include explicit quality assurance systems. One key emphasis will be on enhancing the research culture of ACU. The first stage will be the identifying and prioritising of needs of research users, with input from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and International) and the Research Office. The Collection Development and Document Delivery Committee will review and update policies on collection development as part of this process.
- Some variability in the levels of service across campuses has been identified as part of the quality management process. To improve the uniformity of services, two initiatives will be given priority in the next twelve months. Firstly, the Deputy Director, Libraries will pilot a program to address information services. Secondly, a service level agreement will be negotiated with the ITCS directorate to cover the support of the Library computing facilities and another will be negotiated with the Library's external printing/

⁷⁰ *Information Literacy Project Report* (2000) – Document 37

⁷¹ Details on ACU Corporate Website (<http://www.acu.edu.au/library>)

photocopying facilities provider UNICARD.

13.0 Staff Development

Staff development policies and procedures have been developed separately for academic staff and general staff, reflecting the different roles and responsibilities within each category. All staff have the primary responsibility for undertaking professional development. Academic staff are expected to develop their understandings and skills in relation to teaching-learning and research, with assistance provided through the Faculties. The *Academic Staff Development Unit*, supported by the Academic Staff Development Consultative Committee, has been established to promote, facilitate and co-ordinate access to professional development opportunities in areas identified as being of high priority to the University. This unit is located within the portfolio of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs). A *Policy on Academic Staff Development* has been approved by Academic Board.

The Personnel Relations Directorate (PRD) oversees policies and procedures for facilitating staff development for general staff. Workshops and other staff development opportunities are organized and facilitated by the unit. Where appropriate (e.g. information technology skills) the PRD and Academic Staff Development Unit conduct joint staff development activities.

13.1 Achievements

- A wide range of development opportunities is available to academic staff, enabling and encouraging them to extend their higher degree qualifications (where appropriate), advance their knowledge and skills in teaching and research, and acquire skills in new areas including the use of information technologies.⁷²
- A significant array of staff development mechanisms and processes is available to general staff. They are currently being updated and linked to the Performance Management Program, which has been adopted at policy level by the University.

13.2 Priorities for Improvement

- Greater opportunities for general staff to access staff development have been agreed as part of the recent Enterprise Agreement. These provisions will be introduced fully in the next two years.
- With the implementation of the Performance Management Program for general staff in the next two year period, staff development needs will be identified more specifically and addressed on a more systematic basis.
- Academic staff will be provided with further workshops in the use of ICT in teaching, including the use of the new Learning Shell and Digital Library which will be introduced in the next 6-9 months.
- Further opportunities for training in research supervision and grant application skills will be made available collaboratively by Research Services and the Academic Staff Development Unit.

⁷² Outside Studies Program Guidelines (<http://intranet.acu.edu.au/staff/personnelrelations/>)

14.0 Administrative Services

The University recognizes that the quality of academic performance is underpinned by the quality of administrative support services. In the same way as those directly responsible for academic affairs, administration managers are asked to demonstrate the ongoing enhancement of quality processes, both within and between administrative functions.

Since August 2000, the Executive Director, University Services, has assumed responsibility for capital works planning, financial reporting, information technology support, personnel relations and student administration. This is a strategic position coordinating roles across geographic and functional boundaries, to ensure an effective interface of services between students, faculties and administration.

The following sections of the portfolio outline the important contribution by administration to supporting quality.

14.1 Student Administration

The Student Administration directorate, led by the Academic Registrar, has national responsibility across all six campuses for the key administrative functions relating to students including *student admissions (involving marketing of courses, advice to prospective students and applicants, liaison with Faculties and Schools, and assessing applications), enrolment of students and maintenance of student records, timetabling, examination and graduation processes, administration of HECS, PELS and fees liability, and ongoing provision of advice to students regarding their academic and financial status;* it is also responsible for provision of *policy advice to Faculties, Schools and Academic Board on student administration matters.* Student Administration also manages the application of the corporate student system – Banner – and ensures that appropriate support is provided to users. This requires close collaboration with the relevant ITCS Directorate (particularly Management Information Systems Section) personnel who manage the technical infrastructure.

The Student Administration directorate has undergone an iterative process of change from the commencing independent administration on multiple campuses located within four different jurisdictions, each with its own tertiary admissions procedure. This has involved Student Administration staff in setting up practices to be able to respond to the differing needs of the UAC, VTAC and QTAC admission systems. The integration process has been carried out in stages, during the first of which the lack of a central student administration computerised system limited the scope for consolidation. This was addressed by the implementation in 1995 of the Banner student system and its subsequent ongoing enhancement. The system currently services the essential student administration and records functions which underpin much of the University's core business. The University has made a significant financial commitment to upgrading and web enablement of the system over the next two years.

In accordance with the University's strategy of using external reviews as part of its quality management processes, a formal Review of Student Administration was conducted in 1999 by a panel of external experts. Key recommendations from the Review have been addressed, in consultation with staff and client groups. The operations of the directorate have been restructured to provide for more coherent management of the various

functions within three divisions; key aims of the restructure were to enhance service provision and to facilitate achievement of consistent services, processes and practices across all campuses.

14.1.1 Achievements

- There has been a major advance in all the procedures relevant to student administration, including progressive implementation of common procedures for administration, progression and records across the University.⁷³ The Banner software system has been progressively implemented with considerable success. Staff commitment and competencies have contributed to improvements in timeliness and efficiency of processing student data.
- Key functions of student administration including campus timetabling, production of student ID cards, ACU Handbook production and organisation of graduation ceremonies, are all operating within a 'national' framework and with improved co-ordination of processes.
- Co-operative processes with other areas including Campus Operations, Faculties and ITCS personnel have been implemented with positive outcomes in the period 2001-2002.

14.1.2 Priorities for Improvement

- Consequent on the Review of Student Administration and with the appointment of the new Academic Registrar, the organisational structure of this directorate has been changed to facilitate the implementation of coherent national procedures. There remain operational areas where lack of consistency exists across multiple campuses. This is a major priority for improvement, to be addressed by the newly appointed Heads of Division.
- Reliability of data can be improved. In conjunction with the Management Information Section of the ITCS Directorate, user requirements are being identified, and plans are being implemented for upgrading the Banner software system and for enabling web access to the system for staff and students.
- To provide an improved and more consistent quality of service, student offices will be established on each campus, with improved strategies for handling inquiries made in person or by telephone. In the medium term it is the intention to establish a national call centre to facilitate student inquiries across all campuses.
- Student feedback has been gained from focus group meetings in 2001. However, systematic collection of 'client' feedback has not occurred optimally in the past. Steps have been initiated for gathering feedback from students and staff. Procedures will be introduced for ensuring that such feedback is acted upon as part of a process of continual development and enhancement of services.

14.2 Personnel Relations

One of the most important resources of the University is its staff. ACU is proud of the quality of its staff, which manifests in a firm commitment to the Mission and goals of the University, the focus they place on each student's academic and personal development and wellbeing, and their academic or professional competencies. In accord with industrial agreements, employees are categorised as either *academic* or *general* staff. The University recognises

⁷³ Examples of Student Administration outcomes – Document 54

that there is significant scope for overlap of roles and functions across these categories, with many general staff having high level academic and professional qualifications and academic staff undertaking management or administrative functions. Insofar as possible, staff are encouraged to operate as colleagues within their Schools, campuses or other areas, where each member contributes to the core objectives of the University.

The *Personnel Relations Directorate (PRD)* is a University-wide organisational unit of nineteen staff that is responsible for providing a broad range of human resource management services to staff and management. Service points in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney cater for needs on each campus of the University. The principal functional areas within the PRD are:

- Employee Relations and Workforce Management
- Staff Services and Employee Systems
- Organisational Learning and Development.

The PRD has developed and implemented a broad range of codified policies and procedures within two broad categories, *internal* (i.e. those designed to enable the directorate to carry out its processes and functions) and *external* (those which apply to the University to enable staff and managers to carry out their employment obligations or responsibilities in staffing matters). In regard to the latter, the University has approved a comprehensive *Handbook of Personnel Policies and Procedures* which is available to all staff on the ACU Internet or Intranet.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Details on ACU Corporate Website (<http://intranet.acu.edu.au/staff/>)

14.2.1 Achievements

- The systems, policies and procedures pertaining to staffing matters, including appointments, progression, classification of general staff positions and academic promotions, are comprehensive; applicable nationally to all relevant personnel; readily accessible to staff and managers;⁷⁵ and consistent with equity principles and industrial agreements.
- Following re-organisation of the PRD to meet the needs of dispersed campuses, the PRD staff operate across the multiple campuses through a multi-streamed and mutually supportive team, providing consistent and timely information and professional services to the managers and staff of the University.
- Procedures for academic promotion at all levels are effectively operated on an annual basis, with appropriate quality assurance mechanisms. Feedback is provided to applicants by the Chairperson to assist them in choosing pathways for further development.
- While promotional opportunities for general staff are constrained by the dispersed location of campuses, a range of strategies is in place to provide such opportunities to staff. These include internal advertising of vacancies, and, where appropriate, reclassification of positions where there is evident change in the duties being undertaken.
- The initial draft of the *Australian Catholic University Code of Conduct*⁷⁶ applicable to all ACU staff has been prepared and the Code is now ready for consultation with University staff. The Code will ultimately be ratified by the Senate of the University.
- ACU enterprise bargaining strategy in the last round specifically focused on *work and life balance* with a view to supporting Mission principles and to

⁷⁵ Details on ACU Corporate Website (<http://intranet.acu.edu.au/>)

⁷⁶ *The Australian Catholic University Code of Conduct (Draft)* – Document 55

assist staff retention and strengthen the appeal of the University as an *employer of choice*. The University's achievements in laying these foundations were recognised nationally in late 2001 when it was awarded the inaugural Deutsche Bank Direct Choice 2001 Australian HR Award for Best Provider of Work and Life Balance.

14.2.2 Priorities for Improvement

- The development of a comprehensive computer-based Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) is currently at the planning phase. Supported by advice from an external consultant, the University will give priority to the implementation of a HRMIS over the next two year period. Within existing system constraints, it will be possible for the PRD to make enhanced use of available technologies to streamline service delivery and to improve the flow of communication across campuses; and to marshal relevant management information to support the *culture of evidence* and assist planning and decision-making.
- Implementation of the new Performance Management Program for general staff will be a high priority in 2002-2003. To facilitate implementation of the Program, management development is being given priority in the latter half of 2002.
- The current procedures for Position Classification of general staff positions has been reviewed and changes to the system will be introduced progressively in consultation with staff and as agreed in the new enterprise agreement during 2003.
- The University recognises that it is important for the development of the institution that opportunities for appointment of younger staff be provided. While respecting anti-discrimination legislation, for this matter to be appropriately addressed, the University will explore and implement strategies designed to provide greater flexibility for staff, thus enabling more opportunities for new staff appointments to become available. It is projected that progress on this issue will need to be sustained over a number of years. A review of staff recruitment, selection and retention strategies and associated policies foreshadowed for 2003 will assist in this regard.
- The Induction Program⁷⁷ for new staff has been introduced and implemented in recent years, and has proved to be of great benefit. Additional modules are to be added in 2002 and 2003 and adjustment to existing content informed by feedback is foreshadowed.
- Evaluation methods and indicators of performance in the human resource management area are multiple and varied. These are used to inform changes in the policies and procedures where appropriate. Following implementation of a new HRMIS it is anticipated that a more systematic approach to evaluation of performance in this area will become available.

⁷⁷ Staff Induction Program Guidelines
– Document 56

14.3 Information Technology and Communication Services

It was recognised from the beginning that the use of telephone, video conferencing and electronic communication offered an important approach to overcoming the problems of distance and varying size of campuses. The implementation of national information systems also assisted with integration of administrative services across campuses.

Major initiatives have been undertaken to improve the quality of the University's

⁷⁸ Details on ACU Corporate Website (<http://www.acu.edu.au/itcs/itcsprojects.html>)

⁷⁹ *ITCS Annual Report 2001 – Document 57*

⁸⁰ *Information Technology and Communication Services Quality Management Plan 2001-2004 – Document 58*

⁸¹ Details on ACU Corporate Website (http://www.acu.edu.au/itcs/css/css_rmequip.html and http://www.acu.edu.au/itcs/css/css_labs.html)

technology infrastructure and its information systems, in addition to state of the art facilities being installed during capital works for new campuses in Melbourne and Brisbane.⁷⁸

14.3.1 Achievements

- The restructuring of the ITCS unit and recruitment of new senior personnel in 2001 have enabled the provision of an increasingly integrated University-wide infrastructure and improved teaching-learning facilities.⁷⁹ A common level of technical services is now provided on all campuses, together with help-desk access providing rapid response to individual staff on campuses and duty officers providing teaching space support. The consolidation of procedures and their availability on the University Intranet have given a national focus to the services available on all campuses. The ITCS directorate has developed a Strategic Implementation Plan⁸⁰ that addresses the University's Strategic Plan priorities and targets in relevant areas, and specific achievements are contained in ITCS Annual Report 2001.
- High and uniform standards for equipment in ACU teaching/learning spaces have been set.⁸¹ The equipment and e-podiums in teaching spaces have been progressively upgraded and standardised, increasing usability and availability. The software and configuration in the University's public access computer laboratories have also been standardised across ACU, with 444 new PCs being installed using the new leasing arrangement, thus stabilising costs and increasing support efficiency.
- The ACU national network infrastructure together with local network infrastructure on each campus now provides the University with high quality network systems for both internal and external access. Significant upgrades have occurred to improve performance and accessibility for staff and students. Security has been increased through improved procedures and the implementation of authentication for staff and students accessing the ACU Computer Network and the Internet. The introduction of leading-edge technologies enabling the use of Voice Over IP telecommunications across all campuses has significantly reduced the costs of telephone calls.
- Staff and student access to information has been improved following the release of the Intranet site in early 2001, and the work done by ITCS and Marketing to improve the corporate web site. Business requirements are also being met through enhancements made to the national information systems, increasing functionality and decreasing manual effort in areas such as the upload of student results and the management of postgraduate research students.

14.3.2 Priorities for Improvement

- The ITCS Directorate will continue to develop, implement and document procedures which will provide for uniform high-quality services across the University. Staff in ITCS will be trained to ensure they have knowledge of the procedures to provide the services. It is aimed to complete this process of a University-wide service system by the end of 2003.
- Data will be collected for indicators in respect of each of the major services provided by ITCS, and performance on these indicators will be monitored on a regular basis, with input from the clients of the services. Analysis will be carried out on statistical data relating to use of existing resources so as to optimise the use of the resources. Data for indicators will be identified by September 2002, and other actions taken in the period up to the end of

2003.

- Improved mechanisms and processes for communication will be implemented to ensure that staff and students are made aware of developments before and during implementation, and to provide feedback on problems encountered with new initiatives. Service Level Agreements for major areas of University operations will be developed in respect to ITCS key functions. These processes and agreements will be introduced as rapidly as possible with the aim of achieving all objectives by the end of 2003.
- Procedures for developing the Intranet to enable Faculties and other organisational units to contribute to the provision of information and other databases will be communicated by ITCS during 2002 and 2003. Assistance and advice will be provided to personnel in Faculties and units to enable them to make better use of the Intranet facility.

14.4 Financial Planning and Management

Like other universities in the publicly funded national system, ACU reports annually to the Commonwealth Government in respect of financial expenditures. In addition, the University is required to meet the legislative fiduciary requirements pertaining to Companies. The latter requirement imposes additional accountability demands over those for other universities in the public sector.

The Finance Directorate has the responsibility for assisting University management, Standing and Finance Committee and Senate with information and advice in respect of all its financial planning, policy development and procedures. Responsibilities also include the development of annual budget proposals, business planning and administration of financial accounts, capital project finances and payroll and internal and external financial reporting.

The University Senate approves the University Budget and expenditure in respect of proposed capital works projects, with delegations to the Standing and Finance Committee for oversight of such expenditures. Acting as the Board of Directors of the Company, the Senate also approves the annual financial report of the institution.

The ACU Strategic Plan strongly emphasised the challenge facing the University in its dependence on Government funding and identifies strategies for revenue growth particularly from non-Government sources (see Sections 8, 10 and 11). The Plan recognised that a major change in the ways in which the University managed its resources was needed.

An important prerequisite of future enterprise revenue growth is the need for a change in culture. The University must embrace the concept of generating revenue growth. (p15)

The strategies identified in the Strategic Plan have been vigorously pursued by management and staff and there has been significant progress to date. To assist the strategic shift in culture major changes have been effected in the budget allocation and management procedures, and further changes to these procedures are currently being implemented. One major change has been the implementation of a weighted taught-EFTSU budget for the Faculties.

14.4.1 Achievements

- The Budget supported by the Capital Management Plan and Cash Flow Projection links budget resource management, capital funds management and cash flow projections in an integrated system, thus facilitating planning

and budget management decisions.

- The budget allocation model, including the weighted taught-EFTSU allocations to Faculties, provides the basis for distribution of funds and offers incentives for income generation.
- A high level of transparency in the budget and financial reporting systems now exists with active involvement of budget managers, helping the process of 'culture change' towards income generation and management of financial resources throughout the institution. Expenditure delegations and manager responsibility for managing within budget, combined with consultative approaches in the strategic priorities for future budgeting, have all contributed to a strong commitment to financial accountability. Financial controls are audited and administered appropriately, thus reducing risk and assisting managers to meet budget expenditure targets.
- The adoption of a long term capital works plan based on a strategic analysis of future needs has been helpful to the realization of Strategic Plan objectives with appropriate risk management provisions, and with significant impact on the quality of the University campus infrastructure.

14.4.2 Priorities for Improvement

- A revised model for budget allocation is being prepared for introduction in the 2002-3 budget cycle. This model will provide greater flexibility for managers to plan past the current year's budget cycle and refine elements in the current model with clarification of those budget expenditure categories and items which will be 'off-the-top' before distribution to cost-centres. The model will provide for a budget cycle in order to facilitate strategic planning within Faculties and other major cost-centres, and also to assist in prioritising capital-intensive projects including information technology infrastructure and software systems.
- A revised template for Business Plans to be used by Faculties in course planning and reviews is being developed and will be implemented in 2003 as part of the process of ensuring cost-effectiveness.
- The current Capital Management Plan will be expanded into a more comprehensive one identifying the priorities for capital planning including new developments, minor works on existing buildings and information technology infrastructure, and will include explicit strategies for risk management.
- A number of key performance outcome indicators will be identified in respect of financial planning and management. These indicators will be monitored and reported to the Core Planning Group, Standing and Finance Committee and Senate.

14.5 Risk Management

The University has always been conscious of the importance of managing risk in its operations. Over time the major risks faced by the institution have changed from those associated with the requirements to achieve full university status during the sponsorship phase, to the increasing risks associated with reductions in Government funding and legislative and policy changes affecting the sector.

The institution has adopted the general approach that by implementing formal quality assurance systems throughout its operations and by regular monitoring

and reviews, including formal reviews with input from external experts, the levels of risk would be reduced to acceptable levels, and issues requiring further action identified.

The ACU Senate in 1999 established an Audit Committee to audit the major operational processes of the University and to identify weaknesses and risks in these processes. The first initiative of the Audit Committee was to address the issue of risk management and to arrange for the Executive Team of the University to undertake a Risk Management Workshop facilitated by KPMG, the ACU auditor. The primary purpose of the review was to identify and prioritise the key risks that may prevent ACU from achieving its strategic goals and develop a formal risk profile to help ensure key risk exposures are being considered and reviewed on a regular basis. Key areas of risk were adopted as main priority targets of the ACU Strategic Plan.

A key area of risk is that of financial expenditure, not only in terms of the institution's viability but also in terms of ensuring that the financial resources are expended effectively in the interests of the University. A realignment of strategic priorities requires an appropriate adjustment to the allocation of available resources.

Another area of identified risk is in relation to staffing matters, where the dangers to the institution of inappropriate selection outcomes, staffing levels and conditions of work are ever-present realities as is the case for other universities. Again efficient implementation of policies and procedures is crucial.

The issue of Occupational Health and Safety has been identified as a priority for organisational action to meet legislative requirements and also to ensure optimum work conditions for staff and students. The introduction of a *Code of Conduct* for staff will assist appreciably in risk management in respect of moral and professional behaviours which have the potential of drawing the University into risk with students and external bodies.

One of the major safeguards in the University operations is provided by clear delegations of specified responsibilities to senior managers including Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Executive Team members. These delegations provide for strict controls on authorisations for initiatives in all areas of the institution. Major projects involving significant expenditure require the approval of the Vice-Chancellor or the approval of the Senate. The delegations register was reviewed and approved by Senate in July 2000.

14.5.1 Achievements

- Financial risk management is maintained carefully with strict financial control mechanisms at all levels, and regular oversight by the Standing and Finance Committee of the Senate. Comprehensive reviews of the Budget are provided quarterly to the Standing and Finance Committee. Business plans on proposed new capital developments are considered by this Committee while progress reports on major capital projects such as the McAuley at Banyo campus development are also reported regularly. Authority for approving initiatives is generally restricted to senior officers, with major projects requiring approval of Senate.
- Ongoing monitoring by the Strategic Review Committee of progress towards approved targets in the Strategic Plan⁸² and regular reports to the Senate provide adequate safeguards that emerging risk factors in the development initiatives is generally restricted to senior officers, with major projects

⁸² See Document 17



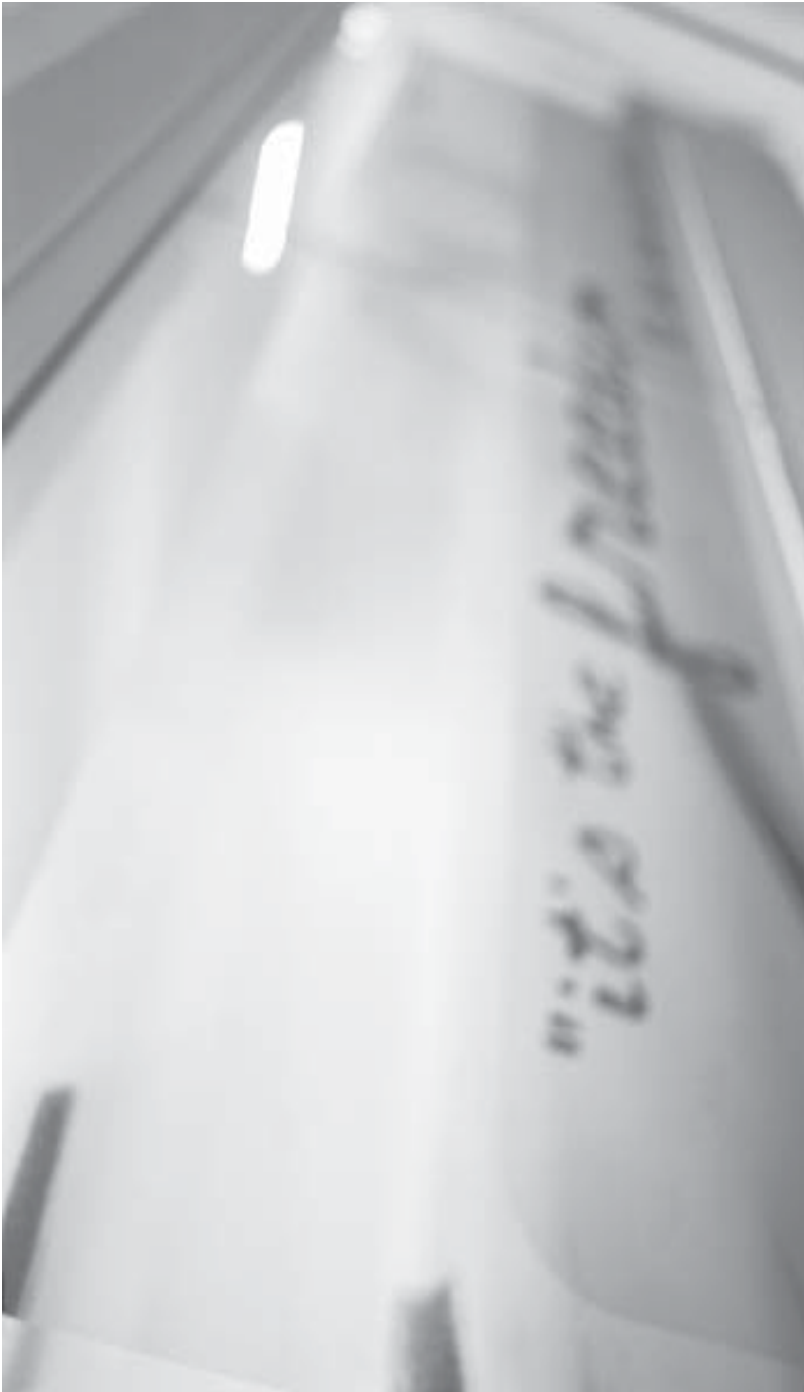
requiring approval of Senate.

- Ongoing monitoring by the Strategic Review Committee of progress towards approved targets in the Strategic Plan and regular reports to the Senate provide adequate safeguards that emerging risk factors in the development of the University can be identified.

14.5.2 Priorities for Improvement

- Occupational Health and Safety has been identified as a critical risk management issue affecting staff and students and an OH&S strategic planning committee established. The University will advance the work of this committee and ensure OH&S workplace committees operate on all campuses to comply with legislative requirements, by the end of 2002.
- A workshop on risk management was held in 2001 for members of the Executive Team. Further workshops will be held in 2002-3 including some to be provided for Heads of Schools and middle managers, with the purpose of facilitating the inclusion of strategies for risk management in future Strategic Implementation Plans for each organisational unit.

Section C: Conclusion



15.0 Conclusion

Australian Catholic University has from its inception sought to provide an alternative to the existing universities in Australia. The traditions of Catholic education in Australia and world-wide called the new institution to be distinctive in its ethos and mission. In addition, the formation of the new institution from four preceding colleges, each located within different State/Territory jurisdictions, presented a unique opportunity to develop an Australian university with a national as well as regional focus. As has been emphasised, there have been enormous challenges for the University in transforming the multiplicity of campuses, dispersed widely and with buildings, facilities and resources which were limited and sometimes less than satisfactory.

The external Faculty Reviews and the Internal Quality Review, combined with extensive reviews that have been conducted of other organisational units, have been a demanding and rewarding exercise, culminating in the preparation of this Performance Portfolio. The process of self-evaluation by academic and administrative/support organisational areas has been revealing and often challenging, as presented in the Internal Quality Review Reports, and in the portfolio submissions subsequently prepared by each major organisational area.

This Portfolio submission has sought to reflect an accurate picture of progressive achievements in structures, governance, management and scholarly outputs, as well as the progress made in developing a single coherent institution with a strong culture of quality teaching-learning, research and community engagement, and with a distinctive mission and values-based ethos.

The Strategic Plan and its implementation have been central to the search for enhanced quality in teaching and learning and research and to the embedding of the Mission in the activities of the institution.

Society is changing rapidly at national and global levels and the demands of higher education are becoming more complex as a greater proportion of the population seeks higher education through a lifelong learning process. To confront the necessity of this change, ACU aspires to making contributions to the development of a knowledge-based community with a particularly strong focus on values, ethics and moral standards. These aims are congruent with those often expressed in the public domain and they have been highlighted most recently in the Ministerial Discussion Paper *Higher Education at the Crossroads*. All universities seek to contribute to the development of ethical practices and norms, but few attempt to address them so pointedly in their structure and their activities. ACU places this aim at the centre of all of its activities.

Progress has been made and ACU is well advanced on its journey as a university in which teaching and learning and research are of the highest quality by national and international standards. It is accepted that much remains to be done, but the priorities for improvement outlined in this Portfolio underscore the seriousness with which the institution seeks to pursue enhanced quality in all that it does.