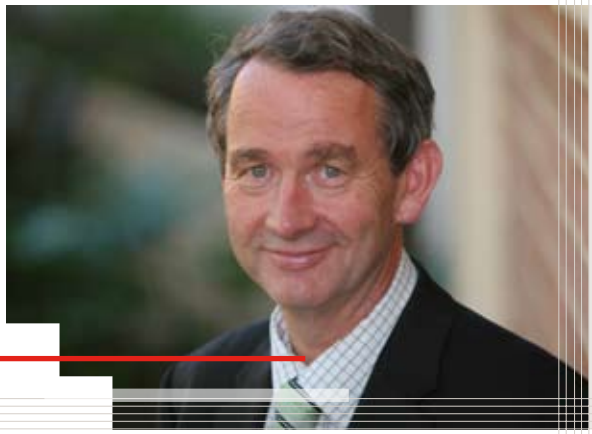

Professor Greg Craven
Vice-Chancellor

Vice-Chancellor's report

This year has seen Australian Catholic University continue to explore its fundamental dual reality that it is inextricably both Catholic and a university, with each element mutually reinforcing the other within the oldest of Western university traditions.

As Vice-Chancellor, my first year has been one of challenge and experience. I am deeply grateful for all the assistance I have received and hope that the University's staff, students and supporters will continue to support me in the future.

The year has been one of significant innovation within the University, while also laying the groundwork for yet more exciting developments over the next period. After many years of discussion, Senate approved the establishment of a Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, emphasising a fundamental characteristic and strength of the University.

This was only one important component in a fundamental restructure of the University. Closely connected to the creation of the new faculty was the establishment of a Directorate of Identity and Mission to drive the University's character as a Catholic university.

In terms of management, the restructure saw fundamental change to the roles of the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, with new portfolios in the areas of Research, Students, Learning and Teaching and Administration and Resources being created. All the Pro-Vice-Chancellors will be co-located at the North Sydney Campus with the Vice-Chancellor for the first time, from 2009. Senior management responsibilities for the campuses will reside with Associate Vice-Chancellors (Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane) and Campus Deans (Canberra and Ballarat).

Even more widely, the University has moved to greatly enhance and develop its planning capacity. An Office of Planning and Strategic Management has been established and a new Strategic Plan developed.

The University is also moving to ensure that it has an appropriate and attractive suite of offerings for prospective students. In particular, it has commenced the process for the establishment of further courses in the field of allied health, including courses in physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

The University was greatly engaged in World Youth Day in Sydney, with about 400 of our students taking part as pilgrims and 100 as volunteers. This was a unique opportunity for the University publicly to express its character to the Church and the nation as a whole.

A major initiative has been the establishment of the Early Achievers' Program, which has allowed early selection of students, both school leavers and non-school leavers, with strong academic results or professional experience, and equally strong records in community engagement. More than 1,000 applications were received in the first year of the scheme's operation and this partly underlies what appears to be an exceptionally strong enrolment performance into 2009.

Next year will see similar levels of activity, to a significant extent building upon directions established in 2008.

A vital matter for the University will be to respond effectively to the recommendations of the Bradley Review of Higher Education. Our enhanced capacity in strategic planning will be vital in this respect.

There will be extensive work involved in the full implementation of the University's restructure. One of the first important aspects of this will be the roll-out of the Directorate of Identity and Mission and its commencement of work in such contexts as formation and core curriculum.

Fundamental to the University's success will be the embedding next year of a faculty-connected research culture under the leadership of the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research). This will see the University increasingly focusing its research into designated areas of speciality: theology and philosophy; health, with an emphasis upon care and the disadvantaged; education, especially in relation to the poor and vulnerable; and social justice and the common good.

The University will also look towards the establishment of its fifth faculty, with the national School of Business being translated to faculty status with a corresponding review of its operations and programs.

Major physical expansion of the University will be also under consideration. The strength of demand for places, in particular at the Melbourne Campus, will necessitate new developments and initiatives.

In a challenging higher education climate, the University is well placed in terms of human resources, offerings, finance and prospects to make a major contribution to Catholic higher education in Australia.

Professor Greg Craven
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