

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC PLAN (REVISED)

FOR THE PERIOD 1999 - 2008

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SUMMARY

Australian Catholic University's Mission is to provide excellent higher education for its entire diversified and dispersed student body. Its ideal graduates will be highly competent in their chosen fields and ethical in their behaviour, with a developed critical habit of mind, an appreciation of the sacred in life, and a commitment to serving the common good.

This Mission identifies Australian Catholic University's unique role in Australian higher education. The University's Strategic Plan finds its meaning within its Mission which emphasises quality of learning and growth in personal formation.

The Plan defines the University's learning environment as one that develops experiences which lead students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves and become genuine members of "communities of learning", and co-sharers with staff and fellow-students in the act of discovery and the application of knowledge. A genuine learning environment truly enhances the culture of research and enquiry in the University as a whole.

In this Strategic Plan attention is paid to the critical problem of the University's financial dependency on government funds. Surveying anticipated market needs tests the strength of targeted possibilities for action and stated institutional priorities operate to help define those needs.

As matters of priority the University will enhance its Mission-focus in all its activities, implement distinct mechanisms to attract funding to the University, work to integrate effectively the culture of research into the University, increase its emphasis on flexible learning, extend community engagement and partnerships, target and emphasise internationalisation and international education, and expand its revenue-generating activities, including *ACUcom*. Structures seek to achieve a balance between national direction and local autonomy and the Plan serves to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the University's overall operations. Finally, the University works to embed quality obviously across all its endeavours, both academic and administrative.

Significant social and economic changes are altering the nature of Australian society and the place of this University within it. The Conclusions formulated and located in Section 11 of the Plan are designed to fit these changes and respond proactively to them.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origins

Australian Catholic University (ACU National) began operations on 1 January 1991 following the amalgamation of four Catholic tertiary institutions in eastern Australia. It is formed as a Company, limited by guarantee, under the Companies (Victoria) Code and has a constitution which clearly identifies its objects in education, scholarship and research as part of the mission of the Catholic Church. The institutions that merged to form the University had their origins in the mid-1800s when religious orders and institutes became involved in the preparation of teachers for Catholic schools and, later, nurses for Catholic hospitals. Through a series of amalgamations, relocations, transfers of responsibilities and diocesan initiatives, more than twenty historical entities have contributed to the creation of ACU National.

It 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 also its Board of Directors. The University is open to all, irrespective of religious belief.

1.2 Goals of this Plan

This Plan (2003) articulates an update of the initial Strategic Plan for the period 1999-2008, and establishes strategic directions for ACU National at the beginning of the new millennium. The previous Strategic Plan set new directions which took on board past achievements. This current version of the Plan focuses appropriately on newly developed aspects of the University which further highlight its Mission and places the activities of academic and general staff in that context.

Successful organisations promote a culture of “strategic readiness” and develop flexible plans which involve the entire organisation. They promote and support a culture of learning that accepts the need for ongoing change and improvement. This Plan is part of a process of such development, and attempts to engender a commitment to continuous improvement, by focussing and harnessing the energies of everyone in the organisation. The concepts of strategic readiness, lifelong-learning and community engagement encourage and support quality in all aspects of the University's performance and the conclusions of this Plan represent performance indicators or benchmark activities to address them.

2 MISSION

The following Mission was endorsed and approved by the Senate of Australian Catholic University on 13 August, 1998.

Australian Catholic University shares with 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 University's inspiration, located within 2,000 years of Catholic intellectual tradition, summons it to attend to all that is of concern to human beings. It brings a distinctive spiritual perspective to the common tasks of higher education.

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. The University explicitly engages the social, ethical and religious dimensions of the questions it faces in teaching and research, and service. In its endeavours, it is guided by a fundamental concern for justice and equity, and for the dignity of all human beings.

Australian Catholic University has a primary responsibility to provide excellent higher education for its entire diversified and dispersed student body. Its ideal graduates will be highly competent in their chosen fields, ethical in their behaviour, with a developed critical habit of mind, an appreciation of the sacred in life, and a commitment to serving the common good.

This Mission has guided the University, in particular through the Vice-Chancellor's statements which embed the University's future directions. Mission-purpose was a core element of the University's 2002 submission to the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) which evaluated the University very positively.

3 NATURE OF AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

3.1 Introduction

The past two decades have seen significant economic and social change in Australia; in particular, the education sector is now undergoing very substantial change and an ageing population is impacting upon the wider community. Far-reaching changes in both the education sector and the workplace are occurring, and they are contributing to significant changes in the occupational structure in Australia. Further, lifelong-learning is identified as a key means to enhance the quality of living across the life span.

3.2 Commitment of the Institution to its Mission and Catholic Identity

3.2.1 Mission and Catholic Identity

The University identifies itself with the Catholic tradition, as articulated by the Second Vatican Council, in a way that reflects the light of that tradition upon the wholeness of human learning and knowledge. It is faithful to the Catholic tradition and its beliefs, while claiming the right to act appropriately at times as commentator on them. Commitment is to a tradition of faith in a University community that allows for a variety of theological, institutional and cultural expressions. ACU National takes pride in being part of the tradition of the world's great Catholic universities.

The excellence of the institution is based on how well the University achieves its Mission and the learning endeavours which it is best equipped to realise. The Mission underlines the importance of liberal education and promotes values-oriented learning that seeks to infuse a deep concern for morality and ethics in all students whose personal formation is a core concern of the institution. The development of students is linked to dialogue between the various aspects of their lives – scholarly study, prayer, liturgical study, community service, growing awareness of the demands to serve the disadvantaged and mutual engagement in their communities. The University is an institution, characterised by its care for students and staff, with a distinctive sense of social responsibility, and concern for the moral and ethical implications of all that it does. The University visibly projects its values-orientation to all staff and students and to the community beyond. Its ethos is attuned especially to engagement of students, staff and members of the external community who mutually serve each other.

The nature and scope of the Mission are such that it requires the support of academic staff, general staff and students no matter what their religious affiliation or religious practice. If the University's vision is to be attained, all staff must be committed to its ethos. Australian Catholic University is a community of staff and students jointly engaged in their relationship with each other, and the University expressly invites all to pursue the University's special and distinctive goals.

3.2.2 Institution of Quality Learning

ACU National is concerned primarily with the progress of knowledge that is extended and disseminated through teaching, scholarship and research. Academic and general staff have a significant role in developing students' values and generic and professional skills, and they facilitate higher-level understanding of a wide range of disciplinary areas through which graduates are prepared for a full and meaningful life with definite moral and ethical purpose. Such skills contribute to students' personal, spiritual and moral development, especially through engaging them in analysis, evaluation, interpretation, objective appraisal of arguments, and identification of salient social justice issues. Through teaching and research, the University aims to encourage critical thinking, innovation and scholarly learning and to supply its graduates with education and training that are widely valued in employment and in the life of the community at large.

Integral to its nature as a university, ACU National seeks to develop and nourish inquiring minds among its students and facilitate a critical capacity as an essential ingredient of the learning process, of supervision, of teaching and of research endeavours. It attempts to hone this critical capacity in a context that is associated integrally with human and spiritual values. The nature of the University is marked by a demonstrated commitment to inter-disciplinary conversation at all levels and to the development of a research capacity that enhances the dialogue between disciplines, while preserving the specific strengths of each. Students' course and community-service experiences develop sensitivity to justice and injustice. Programs address the principles and values of justice, and it is the University's aim that its students will become highly responsible citizens in a world that is challenged ethically.

3.2.3 Importance of Spirituality

A Catholic university contributes to "an endless conversation between academic scholarship and Catholic faith and values"; conversations, however, have consequences which reflect the ability and willingness of staff and students to avail themselves of the Catholic tradition and its support structures. As a public university, ACU National's ethos reaches out to address the needs of society-at-large sensitively. Its Catholic and public character fuse coherently through the University's Mission. It looks at living and learning from a perspective rarely taken by other universities.

All students have the potential to realise the spiritual and personal values that underpin their capacity to achieve outstanding lives in their professions and in their personal and community relations. Activities which foster their spirituality include scholarly study, liturgical celebrations and participation in their communities, both inside and outside the University. The active engagement of students in their coursework promotes the formation of values. The core values of the institution reflect directly its Catholic ethos. These values in turn affirm human dignity, promote the good of the individual and the common good, and protect human rights.

3.2.4 Ethical Commitment

Ethical commitment is entirely consonant with the style and character of a public Catholic university which has a Mission-directed responsibility to provide an integrated conception of what is good. Early in their courses students learn the perspectives that core disciplines of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Education bring to a student's commitment to the Mission and to the relevance of moral concerns. These concerns pervade the broad curriculum. Nursing, teacher education, business, psychology and social work are among professional disciplines whose practitioners have to make moral decisions for which they require preparation; and the resolution and integration of the University's ethos into the curriculum, to which the University makes an ongoing commitment, help tangibly to achieve that objective.

3.2.5 Major Focus

The University's Catholic nature is visible at every level of its operation, and presents itself as a liberating, strengthening and dynamic force. The ethical commitment and outreach of the University are critically relevant to a broad range of issues of contemporary concern.

A major focus within ACU National is the education of persons able to exercise moral and professional autonomy in a pluralistic society. Learning-for-life in the University especially honours the legacy of wisdom from religion and the arts and sciences and attempts to instil a reflective way of knowing that encourages responsibility.

4 INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

Particular priorities emerge for the institution and mechanisms are put in place to pursue them. The major principles that need to be respected for the changes required are set out in the next section.

4.1 Key Priorities

The University expresses its distinctive identity by creating a welcoming environment. This expresses the University's special commitment to access, and highlights the primary values of human respect, dignity and freedom. Its working environment, exemplified through a specially devised Code of Conduct, reflects the University's ethos, expresses a sense of community, shows true ethical commitment, and demonstrates acceptance of genuine cultural diversity (see Sections 2, 3, 5 and 6).

To achieve these ends the University will aim to develop:

- Special initiatives to recruit outstanding staff and to increase student enrolment in selected programs that reflect the distinctive teaching and research strengths of the institution (see Sections 3 and 5).
- Significant commitment made by Faculties to enhance the research culture of the University as a whole (see Section 6).
- An overall academic environment to enhance intellectual and spiritual opportunities for students, staff and the wider community (see Section 3).
- International perspectives and experiences that emphasise the internationalisation of the University's preparation of students for employment in the world marketplace, and their distinctive learning experiences (see Sections 5 and 6).

- Enhanced multi-disciplinary approaches in teaching and research to enrich the nature of students' learning experiences (see Section 5).
- Outreach activities especially valued as an expression of the University's learning mission to off-campus audiences – for the contributions they make to scholarship, learning and research, and social justice, and for the opportunities distance learning creates for undergraduate and graduate students (see Sections 3 and 5).
- Expanded and improved information technology resources to facilitate strategically the teaching, research and service components of the University's Mission (see Section 5).
- Enhanced communication with the public to increase understanding of ACU National's expertise and contributions, create new opportunities for engagement with the community, and enlist the support of the Catholic and other communities (see Section 7).
- Special attention given to enhancing and extending ACU National's partnerships with church and other educational bodies, community and health sectors, Catholic and other higher educational institutions, and corporations as an expression of the University's commitment to institutional citizenship and community capacity building.
- Processes to ensure that the University's partnerships with educational, community and corporate institutions are based upon mutually beneficial agendas and outcomes, and incorporate processes that respect the different cultures, knowledge and expertise of the participating institutions.
- Moves to emphasise the nature of genuine mutual engagement of students, staff and the wider community.
- Enrolment policies to ensure that disadvantaged target groups are able to access the University's courses (see section 7).

In order to achieve these outcomes the following principles are overarching:

- There should be special focus on generating new sources of revenue to reduce the University's dependency on government funding.
- The University should adopt appropriate models of funding (see Section 8) that are attuned, within the context provided by its Mission, to the stated funding priorities of government.
- Particular emphasis is needed on the importance of internationalisation of the University, drawing on the strength of its international connections.

4.2 Funding and other Mechanisms for Achieving Change

Action will be taken to put in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure the realisation of all Mission-relevant changes that have been identified, with a prime focus on the generation of new sources of income. These include:

- Structures to maintain essential infrastructure and services.
- Processes and structures to optimise cost effectiveness and efficiency.
- Further change, as needed, to current structures to achieve the objectives as set out above (options for exploring this are contained in Section 9).
- Budgetary planning to differentiate on the basis of genuine quality and distinctive contributions which meet the special goals of the institution and its component parts.
- Budget planning strategies to be developed that address risk identification, risk minimisation and risk management.
- Budget modifications designed to improve productivity, eliminate the duplication of services and reduce or eliminate activities and programs that are of lower priority or unsuccessful.

- Assurance that academic, administrative and support units have transparent budget models that are incentive-oriented and facilitate strategic planning beyond a one-year time frame.
- Commitment of the most significant part of enhancement funding (drawn from the University's operating budget) to activities that foster academic excellence.
- Funding change initiatives reflecting investments associated with increased quality, improved productivity and reduced long-term costs.
- Identification of specific programs and activities for possible reduction or discontinuation to achieve the necessary funds for reallocation, undertaken through consultative processes involving Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Deans and appropriate budget executives.
- Funding models in which weighted student load contributes significantly to determination of levels of funding for academic activities.
- Processes to monitor and maximise enrolment numbers in terms of the University's profile - such priorities should operate within challenging but tolerable targets, and foster the recruitment of high quality students.
- Evidence that academic units are able to define and address the budgetary and/or resource implications (including space, facility, academic, administrative and other support requirements) of all program proposals.
- Evidence that units are able to bring forward opportunities for generating new revenue through programs or services that are consistent with and support that unit's and the University's strategic goals and overall Mission.
- Where budget modifications involve reductions, and personnel are involved, changes in personnel that are normally achieved through natural attrition, retirement or the reallocation of present vacancies.
- In applications for additional resources, rigorous evaluation of merit and or resource implications.
- Processes to ensure that a strategic approach is taken to planning for the overall property needs of the University.
- Special attention paid to enhancing coordinated communication of the University's policies, practices and activities throughout all its units.

5 THE PLACE OF "LEARNING" IN AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

5.1 The Concept of Learning

Australian Catholic University's future will depend critically on quality learning outcomes and the provision of well-resourced environments of study. In order to pursue quality learning, the University aims to develop further a particular and distinctive educational environment.

The future requires new models of learning and modes of knowledge transmission. New models of learning should be conceptualised in ways that allow for sufficient flexibility to cater for variations in learning styles. The focus on appropriate learning draws upon key principles which underlie liberal education and professional preparation. These are realised through the new Teaching and Learning Plan 2003-2005, the objectives of which are now being implemented.

ACU National encourages strong staff rapport with its undergraduate and postgraduate students, and aims to foster sustained, supportive interactions between staff and students. It is committed to a policy of flexible multi-mode delivery and is motivated to employ technology in innovative ways.

The University must focus on learning as well as teaching. The search for knowledge and education must continue even after students leave campus; hence it is vital that students learn how to apply knowledge and to think critically: critical thinking skills are essential education outcomes. The emphasis on learning requires constant re-examination of curriculum and variations to University structures and processes. This will be carried out through practical implementation of the University's Teaching and Learning Plan which will be monitored during the time of its implementation.

ACU National aims to create environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves. Students will become genuine members of national and international "communities of learning", and will be joint participants in the act of discovery and the application of knowledge. At the same time as the University seeks to increase its graduation rates, it aims to increase learning standards and capacities. Organisationally, Faculties, which are accountable to the Academic Board, examine how best to have their performance evaluated in learning terms. The University needs to examine continually what are the best structures, processes and practices that provide genuine evidence of learning and reward them accordingly. Quality learning demands constant evolution of suitable methodologies and technologies to promote student learning and success. ACU National needs to provide alternative learning technologies and explore best practice ways to harness technology in order to promote student learning. In all these ways, an emphasis on learning is strategically important to Faculty endeavours to implement practically the priorities the University has set for its future and which are explicated in this Plan.

The commitment to a learning model applies to all persons in the institution: students, and academic and general staff. In the learning process, all staff have a responsibility to understand the expectations of students, and share the responsibility for ensuring that the learning environment contributes to students' effective personal growth.

5.2 The Role of Research

ACU National is very strongly committed to the highest standards of quality in research and scholarship and to the significant enhancement of its research and scholarship outcomes and genuine integration of research and scholarship with excellence in teaching and learning. The University has and seeks to develop further a culture that is dedicated to a love of learning, respect for scholarship, and intellectual engagement in scholarly research and inquiry.

This Plan assumes that Faculty members who are themselves engaged in an active program of research and scholarship are most likely to inspire students and enthuse them with a love of learning and a spirit of critical reflection and inquiry (see Section 3.2).

5.2.1 Growth of Research

There has been an impressive growth in research orientation and output by ACU National staff and that performance will be further improved.

To encourage research further, the University has established the Institute for the Advancement of Research and has created Research Centres at the level of Faculty, University and Senate. It has also established Flagships which profile, together with the major centres of research, the strengths of the University's scholarly research pursuits.

The University applies funds and physical resources to facilitate research in those areas where the Faculties excel and where focus exists on specific research thrusts. These areas include early Christian studies, theology, ethics, spiritual, moral and religious

education, lifelong-learning, educational leadership, nursing, exercise science, mathematics education, family/youth studies, and social policy. Flagships have been established in six of these areas. The thrust of our research focus may also be extended to the areas of ageing and quality of life. The University aims explicitly to encourage interdisciplinary research that fosters a real-life orientation and invites community-relevant results. To take just one example, after a two-year period as a special project, there has been established, within the Institute for the Advancement of Research, an interdisciplinary centre for women's history, theology and spirituality which is now aiming to establish its research profile. Faculty Honours programs facilitate the transition between undergraduate studies and postgraduate research programs. Research training of staff needs to be given much greater emphasis so that the priority given to research by the University can be realised within the life of this Plan. Research excellence is formally recognised and rewarded by the institution; and physical and electronic research infrastructure will be strengthened where research strength is particularly evident.

ACU National seeks to develop strong links with the great Catholic universities of the world, universities that are comparably recognised for the standards of their postgraduate research training and facilities. ACU National will benefit from their example.

5.3 International Education

In line with the priority for international education, Faculty and student exchange programs with overseas institutions will strengthen existing contacts in areas of mutual interest and/or complementary areas of strength. Such contacts help the University to realise and achieve international standards. A specially constituted International Policy Committee has been established to develop future priority targets. The University has adopted the following definition of internationalisation:

For Australian Catholic University internationalisation is the process, which integrates an international dimension and an intercultural dimension into the University's teaching and learning, research and research training, and community engagement.

5.4 Information Supply

Libraries and study centres of the modern university should access and provide access to significant information resources electronically. The future belongs to those libraries that implement strategies to deliver information, held elsewhere, seamlessly to a learner/researcher upon request. Libraries will continue to be central and relevant in the provision of information at ACU National, and action needs to be taken to build capacity through electronic sources.

5.5 Information and Communication Technology

Increased reliance on the production, distribution and utilisation of information to produce various goods and services has led to the "information society". The information society in turn relies on computer technologies to augment mental labour. There is little doubt that the development of a fully-fledged information society is producing dramatic changes in existing social structures and relationships.

ACU National, with its multiple campuses in four jurisdictions, will benefit from this ongoing revolution as it views and treats information and communication technology as a means toward enhancing "teaching, research and scholarship". This technology might

very usefully provide additional opportunities for staff across a range of disciplines and campus locations to engage with each other. Increasing sophistication in information technology is an ongoing key priority. The Mission of the University will determine the nature of its impacts on the institution's future.

5.6 (Other) Administrative Support Areas, Facilities and Campus Services

The educational environment of ACU National is shaped not only by students' formal learning experiences but also by their interactions with administrative and academic support units of the University (eg Student Administration, Student Services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support Units, the Library). All these units contribute to the quality of the overall learning environment in which students operate and need continually to review the effectiveness and quality of the services they provide and the congruence of their policies and practices with the University's Mission.

The University is aware that the students' physical environment is an important factor in the process of learning and is committed to maintaining and improving facilities with effective operating systems, efficient day-to-day management, and high levels of regulatory compliance including those relating to occupational health and safety and environmental standards. This involves also development of student residential accommodation consistent with the planned growth in international and rural student numbers.

6 THE FACULTIES

6.1 Commitment of the Faculties to the Institution's Mission and Catholic Identity

Multiple examples of the Catholic identity of Australian Catholic University and the University's embodiment of its Mission are evident within the teaching and learning, research and scholarship, community engagement, and the operations of the Faculties as well as Student Representative Council activities. The Faculties offer specific courses and course units pertinent to Mission identity. Their research and scholarship include close and extensive collaboration with Church organisations and they seek to inculcate a spirit of service in staff and students. The University's ethos is being embedded explicitly into curriculum and this will be further encouraged in ways that benefit the professions. In their structures and operations, Faculties typically stress the importance of close interrelationships among staff, among students, and between staff and students in ways that reflect the Christian values of the University as a whole.

6.2 The Value of Learning

The operations of the three Faculties highlight the value of learning and the students' learning experience. These are now embedded within the newly formed Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning which begins its operation mid-2003.

6.2.1 Values Orientation

The Faculties are communities of scholars who, through their scholarship and research, teaching and learning, and community engagement, are committed to the pursuit of knowledge and truth. The focus of the Faculties is the values-oriented education of persons able to exercise moral and professional autonomy in a pluralistic society. Each of the Faculties achieves this in comparable but also in different ways. Collectively, the Faculties offer distinctive curricula for a society that is becoming increasingly secular.

6.2.2 The Learning Paradigm

Students' active engagement in the processes of their own learning facilitates the personal development in them of the key attributes of University graduates highlighted in The Place of "Learning" in Australian Catholic University (see Section 5). These same attributes are referenced by the University's new Teaching and Learning Plan, 2003-2005.

In this regard, the three Faculties are continuously engaged in:

- Reviewing the focus on learning and modes of learning in all their courses.
- Developing a range of ways of achieving outcomes which place greater responsibility on learners, encourage independence and co-participation, and provide a sense of personal responsibility.
- Using information and communication technologies to increase options for learning.
- Directing more resources to developing flexible modes of delivery of units which better contribute to the encouragement of autonomous learning opportunities.
- Examining assessment policies and processes so that emphasis is on key learning outcomes and on communications skills.

6.2.3 Liberal Education and Professional Preparation

The University seeks to inspire and motivate its staff to develop their existing strengths in learning and teaching, to encourage students to be critical thinkers and life-long learners, to be aware of broader social issues and complexities in local, national and global contexts, and to establish a collaboration across disciplines to introduce students in their learning to a broad range of contemporary issues. It is particularly important that Faculties encourage, develop and enhance student education through a multidisciplinary approach and actively encourage staff to value and sustain in their courses a liberal education orientation in curriculum development and implementation. This is one of the major aims of the University's Teaching and Learning Plan which will itself be subject to ongoing evaluation.

6.2.4 Centrality of Research

Being a university that has a relatively recent research history, ACU National continues to increase its research and publication profile significantly. To accomplish this, Faculties will seek to attract more postgraduate research students and continue to increase timely completions. The Faculties will also continue to encourage and support staff to complete their doctorates and increase their contributions to the Institutional Grants Scheme by attracting external research funds and by publishing in quality outlets (eg refereed journals and commercial books). Staff will be encouraged to engage in collaborative research across faculties and across campuses.

6.2.5 Flexible Paths in Postgraduate Education

Faculties have highlighted their ongoing commitment to provide postgraduate courses which meet the needs of industry, the community and the professions, particularly in those areas that relate to the University's specific concerns for Catholic education, health care and social justice. The University will address especially the use of flexible delivery at the postgraduate level so that small enrolments at different locations of the University can be combined for teaching purposes. Such an approach will contribute significantly to expanding learning opportunities and improve access to the University's courses.

6.2.6 Overview

The Faculties in their teaching, learning, research, scholarship and creative expression are engaged in the study, interpretation and development of learning across a range of disciplines. In these endeavours they are committed strongly to fostering a culture of inquiry in which staff and students reflect critically on their academic studies in a context of religious ideas and practice. Faculties recognise their capacity to enable students to reflect upon and form their values and ideals, and acknowledge their responsibility not only to provide a quality university education but also to seek to inculcate in their graduates a spirit of service and the location of meaning and purpose in all that they do.

The importance of these objectives flows consistently from external reviews each of the Faculties and AUQA have conducted to assess the quality of what the University does. In keeping with the specific recommendation of AUQA, the annual plans of the Faculties will link each proposed strategy to specific goals of the Strategic Plan to ensure that the successful implementation of Faculty plans will also reflect the successful implementation of the University's Strategic Plan.

6.3 Major Themes for Faculty Development and Implementation

Teaching and Learning

- Central to the daily life of the University is a concern with issues of social justice and ethical behaviour firmly embedded in the Catholic ethos and philosophy. As such, ACU National provides excellent opportunities for teaching and learning and individual attention in an environment that fosters development of the whole person. The University will present its Catholic nature to students and to staff as liberating, strengthening and dynamic, as these characteristics are at the essence of Christ's legacy to all.
- Academic disciplines will encourage the existing common interest in theological, philosophical and ethical discourse on a broad range of issues of contemporary concern.
- The best in the Catholic tradition will be perceptibly present and effectively operative in the institution. Disciplines will explore and foster the intrinsic relationship between academic, and religious and spiritual elements.
- The Faculties will establish strong partnerships with Churches and community groups to ensure that students and staff, through course delivery, become involved in meaningful community engagement in ways that reflect their commitment to the University's ethos.
- With reference to the University's new Teaching and Learning Plan, 2003-2005, each Faculty's Teaching and Learning Committee will be responsible for: evaluating and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the Faculty; staff development relating to teaching, learning and assessment; the use of technology in teaching, learning and assessment; the nexus between teaching, learning and research; knowledge about relevant research on teaching and learning; and matters arising through liaison with both the University Teaching and Learning Committee and relevant external bodies.
- Courses offering professional training will have an obvious ethical and social justice focus.
- The Faculties will maintain their strong student-staff rapport, while using information technology as a tool to enhance student learning.
- The Faculties will continually review their course and unit requirements, including consideration of appropriate workload and assessment requirements.

- The Faculties will utilise a combination of teaching modes to address student learning needs, including needs that derive from prior educational disadvantage.
- The Faculties will actively collaborate with academic support services (for example, for staff - the Institute for the Advancement for Teaching and Learning; for students - academic skills advisors, librarians, counsellors, campus ministers and disability advisors).

Research and Scholarship

- Each Faculty through its Research Management Plan will continue to develop mechanisms to improve the Faculty's research output, research grant income and research students' completion rates.
- The Faculties will develop a limited number of Faculty Research Centres to reflect areas of demonstrated research strength. Staff in the Faculties will involve postgraduate students in interdisciplinary collaborative research.
- All Faculty endeavours will consistently reflect the University's integrated Research Management Plan.

International Education

- There should be a University-wide strategy to address the particular needs of our international students. International students are highly valued by the University for what they bring to the University culture, and also for the opportunities they present to staff. It is recognised that they have specific needs and have much to offer to the University community.
- The University, through its Faculties, will develop further its international outreach via programs offered on-shore and off-shore, and through the participation of Faculties and students in appropriate international activities.
- New sources of international fee-paying students must be investigated. The Faculties will set annual targets for additional fee-paying EFTSU.
- Faculties will harness their energies in a dynamic way to develop undergraduate programs with a sharp "business edge" to attract international fee-paying students and to prepare Australian students for their participation in the global community.
- The focus of postgraduate coursework offerings will be on fee-paying courses able to attract international as well as domestic students and to provide ACU National with increased revenue streams.
- New fee-paying programs will build on Faculty strengths, and provide an educational experience that is in line with the University's Mission.

Quality Assurance

- Faculties will continue to implement a co-ordinated evidence-based approach to course implementation and articulation including consideration of student participation, progression, retention and course-satisfaction.
- Faculties will continue to seek regular feedback from industry concerning their courses.
- The Faculties will concentrate scarce resources eg DEST EFTSU, in areas central to the University's future development and the University's Mission.
- To maintain viability, the Faculties will assess the viability of units and sequences within courses and act on that assessment accordingly.
- Faculties will identify demand as well as need in any proposals for new courses.
- Faculties will use appropriate benchmarking, both within the University and across the sector to monitor performance.
- Faculties will use an evidence-based approach to the review and assessment of their units and courses.

7 INSTITUTIONAL DIRECTIONS

7.1 Course Structures

A major challenge for professional education in the future is to address the perceived needs of professions for broader education while still meeting specific training needs. The University has taken one approach to meeting these needs by means of dual degrees which entitle the graduate to two awards. Typically, liberal studies are combined with a professional qualification, and the graduate meets the requirements of two awards. These dual degrees flexibly meet professional needs and have been introduced systematically in line with the programs offered elsewhere in the sector.

Australian Catholic University will continue to offer appropriate qualifications that are the equivalent of the completion of the Honours programs for graduates from other universities. These and other initiatives allow ACU National to maintain its competitor status in providing training for the professions and to foster research training. The University will consider participating in degree programs, part of which involves the VET sector, under guidelines to be endorsed by the AVCC.

7.2 Quality

In 2002 the University was reviewed nationally by the AUQA whose report was both positive and constructive. The Agency's audit has validated ACU National's commitment to quality management and assurance. Recommendations for further improving quality will now be part of a precisely implemented work plan covering the next five years.

7.3 Equity

As an integral part of its Mission, ACU National must ensure that the diverse nature of Australian society is reflected in all aspects of its employment and education. A fundamental concern for justice and equity and for the dignity of all human beings guides all its endeavours. In seeking to make a contribution to its local, national and international communities, ACU National should make a strong and visible commitment to access and equity which is now profiled more visibly in the sector following the Federal Government's response to its *Crossroads* review.

Some groups in Australian society are seriously under-represented in higher education and, therefore, less able to access the benefits of satisfying and appropriately paid jobs and the other social and economic benefits that flow from education. Particular groups include those from an Indigenous background, from low socio-economic backgrounds, with disabilities, and from rural and isolated areas. As the University succeeds in reducing its financial dependency on government funding it will parallel that success with further initiatives to support those in the categories mentioned.

7.4 Indigenous Education

Education of Indigenous students remains a very high priority in ACU National's equity plan. The University is committed to the objectives expressed within its Statement of Commitment to Reconciliation (1998). In addition to offering specifically designed undergraduate Diploma and Bachelor courses for Indigenous students the University will expand opportunities for postgraduate students and research training for Indigenous students. The University will also engage collaboratively with Indigenous communities in research activities relevant to the needs of those communities. Specific strategies

aimed at increasing the number of Indigenous persons employed by the University will be implemented.

In order to embed access and equity as core values within ACU National, equity principles and practice will be mainstreamed. Under a new structure adopted to do this, appropriate mechanisms will be developed to ensure that all sections of the University are committed to these core values. The implications for the composition of the student body, modes of decision-making in the University, the manner in which knowledge is developed and disseminated, and the way in which competence in disciplines is assessed will be addressed and mechanisms put in place to realise this goal. Resource distribution is recognised as an important tool for achieving equity within the University community.

Particular strategies that will be targeted to allow the University to realise its commitment to equity are associated with staff induction and staff development. The principles of equity also affect academic programs, statutory compliance, student admissions and property development.

7.5 Community Engagement

Participation of both students and staff in community activities that reflect concern for the welfare of society is an essential part of the University's *raison d'être* and staff and students' identification with it. Such participation is viewed as an integral component of the concept of community engagement in which the mutuality of staff, students and community needs should be met. Consistent with its Mission, the University will engage in substantial analysis of contemporary issues in which its expertise can be publicly manifest.

Commercial research activities provide an excellent way to link with community needs and to improve the research performance of ACU National. Mission-focussed consultancies that are undertaken with the sponsorship of the University may further enhance engagement with the community.

The University has introduced an award for staff recognising excellence in community engagement. It is presented annually and has rigorous procedures and processes in place so that the criteria and procedures for candidate selection can be better understood and relevant attributes valued.

7.6 Partnerships

The University respects the diversity that different groups bring to its partnerships and joint ventures in terms of expertise, knowledge, cultures and religious values. In the context of this diversity the University will join with the community in research partnerships which are outcome-focussed, ethically informed, and values-based.

Effective partnerships are a priority at all levels of the University and are suggested in ways which acknowledge their current and future potential.

The University acknowledges the importance of its partnerships with Catholic and other education, community and health sectors, with other higher education institutions nationally and internationally, and with industry and business. Engaging with these organisations and institutions in planning teaching, research and community initiatives is essential to advance the Mission of the University and in addressing its own and its partners' priorities.

The University values its relationships with Indigenous communities and organisations and acknowledges their importance in addressing equity issues. Partnerships which best meet the needs of regional areas through Aquinas and Signadou Campuses are a priority for developing the regional character of the University. Partnerships which facilitate the University's engagement with marginalised groups in Australia and internationally are integral to its commitment to justice and equity. Where partnerships are highly strategic there may need to be additional resources allocated to support them.

The unique learning that occurs from joint community-university research provides key sources of knowledge in the University's teaching and learning, and scholarship and research, and its assisting the community in addressing issues and problems of concern to the community helps to ensure that the University does not become self-referential. Accordingly, ACU National develops partnerships with universities and other institutions which give priority to learning and research through community engagement in ways that enhance a community's well being and capacity, and prepare graduates who are engaged citizens and socially and morally responsible professionals.

7.7 Corporate Communication

Effective communication is the role and responsibility of the whole University community. The primary and ongoing aim of the University's Communication Plan must be to improve, through mutually beneficial two-way communication, knowledge and acceptance of, and support and respect for, ACU National among its relevant publics. There are a number of ways this process can be enhanced and these will be targeted in line with the University's implementation plan for the AUQA audit recommendations.

Within this strategy seven main objectives are highlighted in relation to communication. The objectives are:

- To facilitate the commitment of present students and staff to the Mission of ACU National as a caring institution infused by the Catholic ethos and dedicated to academic excellence.
- To attract potential students to a university which offers a values-oriented education that also leads to rewarding career opportunities.
- To stress the benefits of ACU National's Mission and its educational philosophy to the population at large.
- To promote the Mission of the University to the Catholic community in particular.
- To profile the special advantages of a public, Catholic university.
- To attract collaborators and partners for projects in keeping with the Strategic Plan of the University.
- To capture the commitment and generosity of specific donors to the University.

ACU National will continue to initiate forums and relationships between itself and the corporate sector to encourage closer interaction of business with the University. All Faculties need to make real and effective links with the business sector.

8 FINANCIAL STRATEGIES TO REDUCE FURTHER DEPENDENCY ON GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Australian Catholic University competes for funding in times of declining government assistance and increasing costs. Arguably, of great financial significance is the University's commitment to its future capital development. Cost containment and sound resource management are vital to this goal. However, the most powerful

opportunities for development rest in the growth of non-government revenue. It is critically important that ACU National embraces opportunities that draw it away from excessive dependency on government funds.

8.1 Comparative Statistics

The data compellingly illustrate the University's high dependency on Federal Government funding. Excluding specific Federal and State Government capital contributions to the McAuley at Banyo campus development, statistics show that in 2000, 80.4% of University income was DEST reliant.¹ In 2001 this reduced to 79.2% and to 75.8% in 2002. The projection for 2003 is higher at 78%. The latest published statistics indicate that in 2001 the sector wide dependency was 61%. Of comparable significance is the University's growing salary base, which is the major area of its expenditure.

Critically, the University must embrace the concept of generating revenue growth. Particular activities, which achieve this, must be endorsed fully by all staff.

8.2 Strategies for Revenue Growth

The following are suggestions for revenue growth in the areas of fee and other income.

8.2.1 Fee Income

The University has accepted domestic fee-paying undergraduate students for some time. Continuation of this practice is consistent with government recommendations flowing from its *Crossroads* review. It is important that the University be entirely consistent in this regard with its Mission and, because of its special Mission, ACU National should continue to enrol fee-paying undergraduate students in ways that express that consistency.

Building on market research and a marketing plan, there are niche opportunities, both domestic and international, whereby ACU National can further develop its full fee-paying programs and these should be pursued. Growth in international student numbers for immigration purposes (e.g. Bachelor of Nursing, Masters of Information Systems and Business Administration) serve to meet world shortages of professionals. With the strong focus by ACU National on professional training and development, nursing and education programs provide growth opportunities that need to be realised. ACU National has further options, for example, to look into the provision of business and educational administration courses directed at school and institutional business managers, Catholic and other churches' agencies and the wider market. The University will ensure that courses on each campus will be appropriate and attractive to international as well as domestic students.

The introduction of performance measures to allow an objective assessment of course viability is essential as is the potential closure of non-viable programs. For every new course ACU National aims to add, it needs to consider whether existing courses should be continued. Non-viable courses can no longer be sustained. Performance measures, however, should not be limited only to academic units, but should also include all functional units. The process of monitoring should provide structural units and staff with incentives to improve their performance and enhance the accountability of their units, so contributing towards establishing self-sufficiency. Performance criteria should be linked to the distribution of resources (human, financial and technological) amongst

¹ Reference includes HECS

the various structural units (academic and general) at all levels. This will work to improve the quality of units' activities and create greater equity in resource distribution amongst the various units themselves.

The University needs to maintain its current focus on marketing to broaden its exposure and increase its capacity to meet economic pressures. The special identity of the University has to be profiled explicitly. Targeting countries, for instance, that are predominantly Catholic may offer ACU National a particular strategic advantage. Equally, Catholic university education is often valued in countries where Christianity is a minority faith, making ACU National potentially a popular choice in Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist countries.

On-line education provides the University with further opportunities to build on an already developed electronic infrastructure. Distance education programs can be integrated, as appropriate, into campus-based courses as is already happening in some instances.

ACUcom, as a valued University-wide activity, continues to provide a range of opportunities for the University to develop educational services through contract arrangements or on an individual fee-paying basis. *ACUcom* will further extend its initiatives in appropriate areas of vocational education certificate/diploma courses, internship programs and customized courses targeted to specific niche markets in Asia, America and Europe. Corporate and community-related programs, run in cooperation with Faculties, have great potential to be expanded in cities where the University is located. With reference to the development of community related programs, and in line with its initiative in Ageing and Quality of Living, the University should examine the needs of, and target, that particular market.

8.2.2 Other Income

The Foundation continues to provide highly valued support for Professorial Chairs and scholarships, which lift the profile of the University. The Foundation has also been asked to make significant contributions to campus consolidation and relocation, as well as assisting with library resources and other initiatives. These activities need to continue to grow and new revenue streams need to be identified to maintain and increase current income levels and replace those threatened by the conclusion of past initiatives.

Research grant income provides an important flow-on effect to the levels of the Institutional Grants Scheme (IGS), the Research Training Scheme (RTS), and Research Infrastructure and Equipment and Facilities funding (RIEF). All research activity should be recorded and maximized to ensure that the University gains its share of research revenue from these sources. Furthermore, ACU National must actively pursue submissions for ARC Discovery and Linkage programs and NH&MRC and other research schemes, and support in a more targeted way development of applications in areas which are likely to be successful.

State Government grants and grants from major education and health care providers are important examples of valuable income sources. At the same time, industry grants and consultancies (while favouring institutions with science and engineering programs) should not be overlooked.

The University will explore, through Campus Operations, further use of its campus facilities after business hours (where legislation permits) and in vacation and weekend time slots so as to deliver programs to those students and graduates who require flexible

study hours. Clubs, business associations, community services and weekend business workshops are all potential users of ACU National's facilities. The University must tap into appropriate opportunities, analyse the cost/benefits, and resource the labour needs.

These and other strategies to reduce the University's dependency on government funding are vitally important to ACU National's future. In addressing this issue, budget targets should be set for the short- and long-term. The whole University community must endeavour to contribute to fulfilment of this strategy, with Faculties, particularly, having a primary role in its achievement.

9 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

9.1 A Major Challenge

ACU National is the only university in the country which is genuinely trans-state in character. Its name projects a national identity, and its different campuses signal six locations that have to function efficiently and collaboratively. The University seeks to offer students and staff a cohesive, intellectual vision driven by commitment to a single Mission whilst respecting the regional needs of its different campuses. The University thus needs to achieve a considered balance between national direction and local autonomy. One element of that consideration is evaluation of co-location of services and/or functions, where such is judged to be appropriate.

Several changes introduced since the initial Plan was first formulated have improved the balance of central direction and local autonomy and have worked to achieve the institution's key priorities. Such changes include: initiation of a Core Planning Group (CPG); increasing the membership of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Team; adding to the responsibilities of Pro-Vice-Chancellors; restructuring the Directorates of Finance, Personnel Relations, Information Technology and Communication Services, Marketing, and Student Administration; repositioning the Property and Estate Planning Directorate; restructuring Faculties; Quality Management restructuring; and instituting major changes in organisation that have flowed from the many Faculty and unit reviews conducted. The CPG (the members of which hold executive roles and have major national responsibilities) considers institutional issues that span all the University's campuses, and an expanded Executive Team monitors issues and matters that anticipate and respond to potential national and local tension across the system. There is now increased communication among staff across campuses, especially in relation to budget planning and decision-making and a Budget Advisory Committee has been formed to offer more focused strategic advice to the Vice-Chancellor. Structures which facilitate interaction between Deans and Pro-Vice-Chancellors are in place but collaborative structures need to be developed further to reach the entire community. Increased opportunities for co-operation and interaction among staff across different campuses have resulted from planned academic restructuring from Departments to Schools; and Deputy Deans and Assistant Heads of School have been assigned to enhance implementation of the University's strategic intent (and to offer assistance to Deans and Heads of School, respectively).

Further change is necessary to achieve the overarching goal of a responsive, efficient and equitable multi-campus organisation which makes optimal use of both its centralized and local functions to support innovative efforts in teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and community engagement. Cost effectiveness is an issue not just in teaching, but in overall administration as well and the University is deeply conscious of its wide significance.

9.2 Some Options for Change

9.2.1 Structural Development

ACU National was created from a number of autonomous or federated predecessor colleges in 1991, and between 1991 and 1995 operated along Divisional lines. In 1995, the University carried out an Administrative Review and developed the 1996 administrative structure. It created a number of Directors (9) who together with the Deans (4), the Pro-Vice-Chancellors (3) and Rectors (2), all reported to the Vice-Chancellor, University Secretary or Director of Finance. The office of Principal (associated with Divisions) ceased, as did the Divisional structure.

Currently, the Vice-Chancellor, the Executive Director of University Services, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and International), the Directors of Finance, Personnel Relations and Equal Opportunity, Marketing, and Information Technology and Communication Services, the Dean of Health Sciences, the Dean of Students and the Secretariat are based in Sydney. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs), the Deans of Arts and Sciences and Education, and the Director, Libraries are based in Melbourne. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Quality and Outreach), Academic Registrar and Quality Manager are based in Brisbane.

Consistent with the formation of the CPG, the Executive Director of University Services and the Pro-Vice-Chancellors report to the Vice-Chancellor. Most other members of the Executive Team report to the Executive Director or relevant Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

The Rector of Signadou Campus reports to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and International), and the Rector of Aquinas Campus reports to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs). Their roles are defined by that relationship and their reporting lines are geographically congruent.

The members of the CPG, which is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, are: Executive Director of University Services, the three Pro-Vice-Chancellors, and the Director of Personnel Relations and Equal Opportunity. The CPG regularly asks the three Faculty Deans, the Dean of Students and the Director of Finance to attend its meetings.

9.2.2 Other Changes

Personnel Relations and Equal Opportunity, following a restructure, reinforces the concept of empowerment as an important element in creating the kind of organisation that enhances individual staff development. Where administrative or academic units are separated structurally or geographically, opportunities should be taken to co-locate these units so that proper synergy is achieved. The Library system provides major benefits because of its national focus and is well integrated with technological facilities that enhance both its outreach and impact. Information Technology and Communication Services has shown tangible benefits from its national operation and Student Administration is bedding down its national structure, with some flexibility to implement changes demonstrated to be necessary. Marketing has moved the University to a corporate identity reflected in focused advertising and other strategic activities. Ministry and student activities have a national focus, as do the University's equity programs.

Many local managers (e.g. Student Administration, Finance, Personnel Relations, Information Technology) receive policy direction from the Directors, from whom their budget derives. However, they formally liaise with the local Pro-Vice-Chancellor

and/or Rector; and the Executive Director, University Services has overall management responsibility for the services.

The University now is organisationally very different from what it was when the initial Plan was endorsed. The University will further examine general staff activities to explore opportunities for greater collaboration in provision of a quality learning environment and support for students.

It is generally agreed that ACU National needs to capture the good and reject what is not strategically focussed or Mission-related in what it has put in place, and available resources at all times limit the range of alternatives. Radical change requires dialogue with stakeholders.

9.3 The Place of Aquinas and Signadou Campuses within the University

The University's two regional campuses (Aquinas Campus in Ballarat and Signadou Campus in Canberra) have a significant role in the future of ACU National and special mention of them in this Plan signals their importance. The Review of the regional identity of these campuses will address these campuses' needs in more detail.

Each campus is in a significant location: Aquinas Campus is ACU National's only permanent interface with rural Australia; Signadou Campus is in the national capital with proximate outreach to rural ACT and NSW. The ongoing nature of the University's interaction with regional Victoria and with the ACT/NSW community neighbouring Signadou Campus (including the Federal Government and its associated services) opens up significant opportunities for community engagement. Research and professional development will be explored and further development will take on board those special initiatives highlighted in recent Federal Government announcements on restructuring of education. Incentives for regional funding have been announced in principle and seem especially important for the University in its national outreach.

Theology has a special role crossing the domains of teaching and community engagement at both sites. As stated in the initial Plan, Theology programs, offered both by distance education and on campus, will allow the University to serve the needs of rural communities facing reduced numbers of ordained ministers.

10 THE FUTURE

10.1 Introduction

Australian Catholic University is a distinctive institution of learning, committed to a unique Mission. The University is cognisant of important features of the Australian population and attempts to anticipate society's future needs. For example, it has made a commitment to lifelong learning for all. The population is ageing and the University considers it also has a special role to play in inquiring into the needs of an ageing population. Its defined research and teaching strengths are very relevant to this and other issues of national priority.

ACU National, directed and guided by a Catholic ethos and funded publicly, has a vital role to play in Australian society in this century. An attempt to define its identity in this context is articulated in this Plan (see Sections 2 and 3) and was a vital part of the University's submission to AUQA.

There have been significant economic and social changes over the past two decades in Australia. Globalisation, economic deregulation and an obsession with the 'money culture' have been seen as the major forces behind the many recent corporate collapses, within Australia and overseas. These corporate collapses have had dire effects on the communities affected by them. This has led to increasing public scepticism, a demand for transparency and accountability, and an emerging and critical interest in the role of business and the ethics of the economic enterprise.

Higher education is also undergoing radical change. The Federal Minister has introduced a reform agenda built on the concept of a 'learning entitlement'. It offers a new model for Commonwealth support of student places and it emphasises heavily individual choice in a partially deregulated sector. The Minister's proposals provide new opportunities for the University to gain additional resources. In particular, the freeing up of the sector is intended to make it more flexible and better able to respond to the challenges that Australian universities are facing, particularly financial ones. In the light of its proven track record of delivering high quality tertiary education in the areas of nursing and education, the University welcomes, in particular, upfront funding for increased places in these disciplines. It also welcomes and shares government's commitment to Indigenous education and is motivated to promote its teaching and learning excellence by accessing the Learning and Teaching initiatives in the federal budget which include the establishment of a National Institute for Teaching and Learning and additional Australian awards for quality of teaching. In advance of, but consistent with these initiatives, this University has established its own Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, which is responsible amongst other things for academic staff development programs, the Teaching Development Grants, and course unit evaluation; it already confers annual awards in Excellence in Teaching and will extend its scope in the future to further articulate its needs. Other initiatives to pursue include collaboration with community groups and external agencies, and accessing resources to advance regional identity. The details of the University's response to the 2003-2004 Budget will need to be formulated in the times ahead and the University should position itself to attract additional funding from 2005-2010. Negotiations about future funding will take place formally within government's Institution Assessment Framework, adopted from 2005.

At the same time, rapid and far-reaching changes in the workplace are taking place. In the Australian context these changes are occurring as a result of industrial relations reforms, the increasing use of labour-saving and information technologies, and greater internationalisation of produce markets. These are all contributing to significant changes in the occupational structure of the Australian workplace, which is impacted as well by an ageing population. All those developments have important implications for participation in higher education. Labour demand is shifting away from primary production and manufacturing to the services sector (financial services, health care services, personal services, retail trade and the hospitality industry), and consequently there are increased demands for employees with skills to perform a variety of tasks. Australian employers are increasingly seeking a better-educated workforce as the number of persons employed as professionals and managers grows.

A key feature of this competitive labour market is an increased participation in higher education. The increased participation rates include both young people and older adults who are seeking or are being forced to retrain to increase their skills. In this context, the proportion of people with post-school qualifications has risen significantly. There is, at the same time, concern for more equitable access to and provision of higher education in non-metropolitan areas in particular. The emerging awareness of the nexus between higher education provision and regional development and prosperity is also an important factor motivating developments in this area. Further radical changes are anticipated for

the education sector as a whole; and although the detail of these has not been finalised by government, the thrust of them is now in place, and the University needs to relate to them constructively. They will be a key part of its financial future.

In many ways this reviewed Plan attempts to respond to the shifting contexts and to the demographic features of Australian society. However, it shapes the nature of the educational experience at ACU National in line with its Mission and strategic intent. It attempts to make research-based learning the standard in the University; it advocates removal of the barriers to interdisciplinary learning; and it urges the innovative use of marketing and information technology. It attempts overall to cultivate a genuine sense of community, involving both students (the University's highest priority) and staff. The rise of cultural pluralism and the growing world conflict have confronted learning environments with the dilemma of values education and the University needs to meet that challenge.

ACU National has a reputation for excellence in its provision of teaching and learning and that reputation must be sustained and allowed to grow (see Sections 5 and 6). The culture of research and scholarship needs to be enhanced, integrated and communicated even more energetically than before (see Section 5 and 6). As an institution that spreads across campuses and multiple State boundaries, ACU National needs to examine the balance between its national direction and its local autonomy. This balance is critical to its future, and its structures must relate meaningfully to it (see Section 9).

10.2 Key Challenges Ahead

There are major challenges ahead for all universities and they affect this institution, as they do others. Public resources to the sector are being allocated with a changing emphasis, and the degree of financial dependency of this University on government funding is far too high. Mechanisms must be found to reduce that dependency (see Section 8). At the same time, however, the nature of the student body, regionally-based growth in student numbers, the definition of professional training (which will be affected by the movement of funds from the public to the private sector and the increased opportunity for education from alternative [competing] training institutions), and the perceived value of university education itself are all changing. The future will show increases in the age of students, a lengthening in the time of access of students to employment, a narrowing of regions which have population growth, and shifts in the requirements of professional training in ways that will blur the boundaries of disciplines. Training will have to respond to the market needs of employers who will expect graduates to have greater communication and problem-solving skills. The increased role of market forces will mean an expanded choice in public sector activity and in how welfare is delivered and organised. Training and education that fit this scenario will be different, and need to be conducted, in a funding climate that is in the process of being reshaped by government.

10.3 Needed Change

The realities of effecting change are not clear at this point, especially as far as government, and the sector's response to government intent, are concerned but change is essential.

Change should be a continual strategic process, and it needs to progress in a determined, measured and prioritised way as this updating of the University's earlier Strategic Plan recognises. Though financial resources are finite, the way ahead should not risk in any way the established traditions of learning and scholarship that reflect the true nature of a university and it is essential that this University asserts its teaching and research identity

in the strongest terms possible. Change though should reflect strategic intent, rather than be routinely estimated in terms of available finances. While taking the forces of change into account, cost must be fitted to, rather than drive, the strategic intent of the University as a whole. Attention needs to be given also to mechanisms for supporting change especially for those who find the level and pace of change challenging.

ACU National needs to reassess the concept and strategies of learning (as defined in Section 5) to meet the forces of change. These must take on board, in a focused way, the lessons of the government's *Crossroads* review and the findings of the 2002 AUQA audit. As stated in the initial Plan, the employment record of the University's students is excellent, but what really matters to this University is the value added by the nature of students' experience at ACU National and prized by graduates and employers. Teachers of the future must be interpreters of the knowledge networks (often cross-disciplinary) that students have to traverse, and continued flexibility will be needed to achieve quality of learning across all professions. Change must relate also to members of the professions themselves who are redefining their boundaries.

Advances in technology are altering the face of learning itself. Technology will inevitably open up new opportunities for staff and students to contribute to society. Resources are needed, and should be allocated by the University, to train staff to use technology to its full advantage. The University, however, should not just be a technologically-sophisticated knowledge resource; it must also be an agent of genuine community reform. Technology can serve a valuable function in sifting knowledge to address particular problems in this context.

The University does not exist simply to respond to market demand. However, greater flexibility is needed also to help the University give its community what it requires. Distance and on-line education should be used more effectively to facilitate program-sharing across regions, states (and countries). At the same time, the University should have a firmer sense of its regional identity. It recognises the importance of marketing and supporting its marketing efforts. The University also recognises the importance of operating proactively to help shape the market's understanding of the unique, distinctive and valuable role that ACU National has in providing higher education. The University's programs overall must continue to lead students and staff down the path of caring for and valuing the society in which they live, and this University should motivate students to contribute to society.

ACU National has a special role to play in meeting all these challenges. It has the commitment afforded by its Mission to enhance students' personal formation, and it has a special capability to give to its students an ethical understanding of contemporary problems and issues. The University must use its identity knowledgeably and well; it must visibly project its perspectives outward to society; it must take advantage of its distinctive views about the outside world for the benefit of present and future students and reflect these to the corporate world.

The over-riding significance for ACU National is its existence itself. Its Mission Statement has been affirmed and reflects the continuing support it has from the community which it serves. At a time when values are recognised as increasingly relevant to tertiary education, this University uniquely positions itself not just to be responsive to market needs, but also to influence them. The stability of its Mission defines its core strength.

10.4 The Plan's Conclusions

The Plan's conclusions necessarily evolve from the major priorities for the institution that have been named and involve specific actions that should be taken to realise them.

The University will give more focussed attention to its financial dependency and it will survey anticipated market needs to test the strength of targeted possibilities for action. A corporate information strategy will assist the University in its decision-making.

A risk culture needs to be developed to handle the uncertainties of the sector's future. The University needs to define its quality of learning carefully and assist Faculties to put in place specific strategies to achieve stated institutional objectives. Communication also is a special problem for an institution which is spread so widely. All its units should work to synthesise teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and community engagement within a stimulating, workable environment of learning. Such an environment is one that develops experiences which bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves, perceive themselves as genuine members of "communities of learning", and makes them co-sharers with staff and fellow-students in the act of discovery and the application of knowledge. Faculties will formulate the strategies to achieve these aims, and importantly develop the tactics to implement them.

ACU National is especially proud of its community engagement in the areas of education, health care and welfare. To explore future possible needs, market testing ought to be conducted in the particular areas of business and informatics, ethics, leadership and health sciences; the review process can further guide the University in this area. Teaching strengths should be decided in relation to the institution's revised concept of learning, and research strengths should be encouraged as specified in the institution's Research Management Plan. Quality of teaching and research is especially important to ACU National, and particular challenges lie in the various recommendations and suggestions of the University's AUQA audit report.

Some of the major actions to achieve the institutional priorities that have been formulated in this updated Plan are:

- Enhancing the Mission-focus of all the University's activities.
- Implementing different mechanisms for University funding that relate meaningfully to and derive benefit from the *Crossroads* policy initiatives that have just been formulated.
- Conducting ongoing structural reform.
- Targeting internationalisation and international education more effectively.
- Placing an increased emphasis on flexible learning.
- Working to enhance and integrate the culture of research within the University.
- Increase the range and depth of community engagements and collaborative partnerships.
- Enhancing ACUcom activity.
- Embedding quality more obviously across all the University's endeavours and working to communicate efficiently a sense of that to all staff and to all units.
- Developing a "culture of evidence" across the University in support of its decision-making.
- Achieving a better balance between national direction and local autonomy, and being efficient in its overall operations.
- Working assiduously to put in place the best structures that satisfy the demands of its AUQA quality audit and enable the University to benefit from the government's new financial model.

- Instituting changes to ensure course structures that are flexible and efficient so that graduates can better meet shifting professional requirements.
- Recognising other institutions' pathways so that ACU National will make a special contribution to training for the challenges of the future.
- Putting in place a mechanism to pursue the objective of a dynamic sense of regionalism, especially at those of its locations where regional need is most transparent.

10.5 Future Growth

Growth in the higher education sector is likely to come from the following sources:

- Shift in demand for job-related skills as the pattern of employment and demographics of Australian society change, creating a context where different age structures require different skills for people to remain employed.
- Entry to tertiary study of mature age students. This source of students may decline in some areas, but most probably not among retirees.
- Return to further study by university graduates. This is in keeping with modern scholarship on whole-of-life learning. Such study can be at undergraduate or postgraduate level.

Technology is becoming increasingly important in provision of postgraduate education, including competition from off-shore universities and professional organisations as part of globalisation. This may have a negative impact on non-information technology-based postgraduate courses.

Examination of the sector suggests that future growth will come from students with an interest in what ACU National can offer and this should be a target area for specific marketing. Data suggest that customised course delivery should be a greater focus in the future.

The University faces enormous challenges and an exciting future with its move to a single Melbourne site, and the expansion of its McAuley campus to Banyo as well as anticipated changes in NSW and ACT and the promotion of Ballarat's regionality. All represent powerful opportunities to put the University's strategic intent into imaginative practice.

In all, the University's Mission defines the needs of the institution. The sense of Mission-purpose must continue to remain paramount in all discussions of the processes and procedures that will forge ACU National's future.

11 SUMMARY LIST OF CONCLUSIONS

Section 4 Institutional Priorities

- 1 The University should continue to provide an alternative model for University funding rationalised other than by historical precedent. It should complete the introduction of the model based on weighted taught student load by the end of 2004.
- 2 The University should formally endorse the continuing development of flexible learning activities within the institution and provide specialist support for these activities.

- 3 The University should address the significance and the strategic/financial implications of the institution's required efforts in the area of international education. Increased focus will need to be placed on surveying market needs and cost-benefit features will need to be explored. Faculties will contribute to this process and contribute to the resources needed to pursue this objective.
- 4 The University should restructure ACUcom to serve the University's strategic intent optimally. Specific plans for implementation will need to be developed.

Section 5 Place of Learning in Australian Catholic University

- 5 First and foremost ACU National must guarantee the quality of its programs and its core disciplines in the disciplinary mix that is argued to government for funding.
- 6 ACU National is known widely for the excellence of its teaching strengths. Quality is reinforced by its graduates' outstanding employment record. The University has recently endorsed a Teaching and Learning Plan. Teaching strengths should be judged, defined and listed in terms of the successful implementation of that Plan.
- 7 ACU National must continue to assist staff to develop further the University's research profile and to foster and reward outstanding research wherever it occurs.
- 8 Quality research by staff is of critical importance to the University. The University needs to expand opportunities for staff involvement in their own and joint research, in research centres, and in the supervision of student research in higher degree research programs. There is a special need to foster quality of training in those areas which define the University's research strengths (e.g. its Flagships and major research centres).
- 9 The University should address the following recommendations in relation to Information Technology:
 - (a) The need to develop a coherent and imaginative Information Technology and Communication Services Strategic Plan for the future. The CPG will be advised of progress through the Executive Director of University Services.
 - (b) A business plan addressing the development of Information Technology will be formulated. The development of such a plan will involve a review process.

Section 6 The Faculties

- 10 The University should address the following recommendations in relation to its Faculty activities:
 - (a) Enhance student learning across a broad range of contemporary issues through implementation of the Teaching and Learning Plan.
 - (b) Facilitate interdisciplinary teaching both within and across Faculties.
 - (c) Maximise student choice in areas desired by the market-place.
 - (d) Increase enrolments in postgraduate fee-paying coursework and higher degree research courses.

- (e) Offer courses in flexible mode to meet emerging student needs in a cost-effective way.
 - (f) Explore, expand and develop collaborative and interdisciplinary research and consultancy initiatives.
 - (g) Implement additional mechanisms to enhance Faculty members' research capability, particularly within Schools, Flagships and Centres.
 - (h) Establish a normative expectation within each Faculty of at least one publication per academic staff member each year.
 - (i) Implement the outcomes of the University's 2003 Review of Research.
- 11 The University needs to develop policies that will assist staff to gain more from their time commitment so that they can conduct worthwhile research. Deans and Deputy Deans should monitor progress of staff's availability for research and research supervision.
- 12 The University should consider further the move to differential career paths to assist academic and general staff in deciding their career potential. This is in recognition that all staff have specialist areas of knowledge and skills that require attention and further development.

Section 7 Institutional Directions

Course

- 13 The University should address the following recommendations in relation to Marketing:
- (a) The need to develop a coherent and imaginative Marketing policy. This will include the CPG being advised of progress on advice from the International Policy Committee to the Vice-Chancellor.
 - (b) Formulation of a business plan addressing the development of Marketing. The development of such a plan will involve a review process.
- 14 ACU National will seek to introduce and adapt qualifications that flexibly recognise cross transfer of other institutions' qualifications and to recognise actively the possible validity of both formal and informal pathways to higher learning.
- 15 ACU National will establish mechanisms that continue to identify and explore niche markets and their potential viability. Among areas which may be considered for future expansion are business and informatics, ethics, leadership, health sciences, aged care (including palliative care) and (youth) leadership.

Quality

- 16 Formal quality management should be embedded and integrated so as to enhance quality outcomes within each area of the University. The Quality Management Committee should ensure this occurs and work to help operationalise the major thrusts of the 2002 AUQA audit.

Equity

- 17 ACU National must demonstrate deep commitment to equity and social justice, and it must wholeheartedly endorse the spirit of reconciliation. In accordance with this commitment, the University should target financial support for low socio-economic students, foster Indigenous education, research and research training, and develop further initiatives in response to emerging needs.
- 18 The Staff Induction program is an important demonstration of the University's commitment to its Mission which recognises the principles of tolerance and respect for differences. Such a program emphasises the communal and engagement dimension of its Mission, and addresses the aspirations of a truly Catholic university. The program should guide staff to understand the Catholic ethos of the University.
- 19 The University should provide general staff with practical access to staff development opportunities. The Personnel Relations and Equal Opportunity Directorate will explore further this objective.

Corporate Strategy

- 20 The University needs to develop a corporate information strategy to coordinate and facilitate corporate access to data that are critical to its decision-making. Proper development of a risk-culture strategy requires such data to be in place. The Culture of Evidence project, initiated in 2002, must be embedded as an ongoing strategy for measuring progress.

Section 8 Financial Strategies to Further Reduce Dependency on Government Funding

- 21 The University needs to address as a matter of continued urgency the financial dependency on government funding and react constructively to the opportunities for increased funding that flow from the government's *Crossroads* review. The CPG (through the Budget Advisory Committee) will consider further ways to address this problem and to target additional revenue.

Strategies will be developed to motivate additional involvement in income-generation at the grass roots level. The University will continue to tap corporate and individual philanthropic support through the University Foundation.

Section 9 Organisational Structure

- 22 All units will continuously monitor and review the impact of their organisational structure, and in particular the balance between central direction and local autonomy, to ensure their efficient and effective operation.
- 23 Consistent with the commitment of the University to its students, student life should be enhanced through the provision of adequate facilities and effective student services. The links between students and staff will be strengthened to promote efficiency and good management in student associations. The spiritual welfare and development of students must always be of special concern.

- 24 There is acknowledged scope overall for synergy through collaboration between neighbouring universities. In particular, Aquinas Campus and Signadou Campus can capitalise further on their location. Evaluation of their potential contribution to government's emphasis on the importance of regionalism will be conducted.

Section 10 The Future

- 25 The future of the University will be monitored in terms of the operationalisation of the conclusions of this Plan. For that purpose, the Strategic Review Committee, under the Chair of the Vice-Chancellor, will continue to evaluate the University's performance against agreed goals and priorities.