Areas of research

The Australian Government’s recent and ongoing changes to higher education have a major focus on quality research. Australian Catholic University is strongly supportive of this program and is committed to quality research, to the generation and dissemination of new knowledge, and to the education, training and development of world-class researchers.

ACU’s research strategy concentrates on four areas, all of which aim to benefit the community:

• theology and philosophy
• health
• education
• common good and social justice.

It has grouped many scholars into dedicated centres to create intellectual capacity in discipline-specific research areas. These centres include six University Priority Research Centres, each with extensive collaborative networks both nationally and internationally, to provide major research contributions. These are supported by 10 other centres/ institutes and by faculty teams of research scholars.

University Priority Research Centres

• Centre for Early Christian Studies
• National Centre for Clinical Outcomes Research
• Centre for Creative and Authentic Leadership
• Mathematics Teaching and Learning Research Centre
• Institute of Child Protection Studies
• Quality of Life and Social Justice Research Centre

Other centres/institutes

• Asia-Pacific Centre for Inter-religious Dialogue
• Centre for Indigenous Education and Research
• Centre for Learning and Teaching
• Centre for Physical Activity across the Lifespan
• Golding Centre for Women’s History, Theology and Spirituality
• Institute for Advancing Community Engagement
• Institute for Catholic Identity and Mission
• Institute of Legal Studies
• Plunkett Centre for Ethics
• Public Policy Institute

Research statistics

Research income*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian competitive grants</td>
<td>$499,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other public sector funding</td>
<td>$298,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry and other funding</td>
<td>$1,873,039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,671,427</strong></td>
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</table>

Research outputs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book chapters</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refereed journal articles</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refereed conference papers</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>280</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2008 figures. Research publication and income data for 2009 is being collected during the first quarter of 2010 for submission to the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.
Research grants and partnerships

**Australian Research Council grants**

**Australian Research Council Discovery grants**

The University achieved a success rate of 33.3 per cent in the Discovery grant round, with total funding of $338,946. The following are the successful projects.

- **Professor Pauline Allen and Dr Bronwen Neil, Centre for Early Christian Studies**, were awarded $262,000 over three years for the project **Approved crisis management in late antiquity: the evidence of Episcopal letters**. This project anchors contemporary management of crises in their historical antecedents, and will develop existing links with scholars in Japan, Korea, Belgium and South Africa.

- **Dr Stephen Buckle, School of Philosophy**, was awarded $76,946 over two years for the project **Hume's sceptical materialism**, which intends to give a broad understanding of the intellectual movements of Hume’s time.

**Australian Research Council Linkage grants**

The University achieved a solid success rate of 40 per cent with two grants totalling $592,000 of Australian Research Council funding and $828,191 in partner cash contributions.

- **Professor Elizabeth Warren, School of Education**, and external partner investigators (Ms Eva De Vries, Mr Stephen Thomson and Ms Thelma Gertz) were awarded a total of $420,000 over four years for a study, **Young Indigenous students’ numeracy learning: oral language, mathematical representations and engagement**. Partner organisations are BWGC, Coleman Community School, Shalom Christian College and Townsville Catholic Education Office. The project confirms the importance of high-quality early-childhood education for Indigenous students, and of the support of parents and community, with pilot results giving evidence that young Indigenous students are mathematically capable learners.

- **Professor Ruth Webber, Quality of Life and Social Justice Research Centre, Professor Christine Bigby, La Trobe University and Professor Barbara Bowers, University of Wisconsin-Madison (USA)** were awarded $172,000 over three years for the project **Increasing organisational capacity of community residential units to facilitate ageing in place for people with intellectual disability**. Partner organisations include Catholic Homes, the Gill Family Foundation, National Disability Services Victoria, the Office of the Public Advocate (Vic), St John of God Health Care (Vic) and Wesley Mission Melbourne. The research aims to improve the capacity of disability group homes to respond to the health and ageing issues of older people with intellectual disabilities, to improve their quality of life.

**Other research awards**

- **Professor Mike Gaffney and Associate Professor Michael Bezzina, School of Educational Leadership, and Dr Rhonda Faragher, School of Education**, were awarded three separate contracts from the Catholic Education Offices of Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory with core funding of $440,000 for the pilot project **LAND – Leading Aligned Numeracy Development**, funded by DEEWRR.

- **Professor Mike Gaffney and Associate Professor Michael Bezzina, School of Educational Leadership**, were awarded $434,000 for a sub-contracted project from the Australian Principals Primary Association entitled **Principals as literacy leaders**.

- **Mrs Anne Forbes, School of Education, was awarded $50,000 from The Ian Potter Foundation for the project **MyScience sustained: expanding and enhancing teaching and learning in science**.

- **Dr Karen Page and Professor Linda Worrall-Carter, School of Nursing and Midwifery, received $49,877 from the Nurses Board of Victoria for their study Nurse-led (CVD) risk intervention screening clinic**.

- **Professor Paul Fulbrook, School of Nursing and Midwifery, received $60,000 from the Queensland Catholic Education Office for the study **Able-bodied children: development and education (ABCDE) project**.

- **Professor Paul Oslington, School of Business, and Professor Neil Ormerod, School of Theology, co-chairs of a group of theologians and economists based at ACU, received US$30,000 from the Metanexus Institute, funded by the Templeton Institute, for a project titled **The trans-disciplinary vision of Bernard Lonergan: theology, economics and finance**.

- **Dr Noah Riseman, School of Arts and Sciences, received a grant from the Australian Army History Unit for his project **Defending Australia, defending Indigenous rights: Australian Indigenous soldiers since World War II.**

- **Professor Sandy Middleton, National Centre for Clinical Outcomes Research, received $30,000 from the Sax Institute for the project **GMCT scoping study: determinants of effective clinical networks**.

- **Dr Sue Webster, School of Nursing, received $10,000 from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia-Thailand Institute) for the project **Developing, delivering and evaluating the Australia/Thai primary health care and nurse practitioner role.**
• Professor Ruth Webber, Dr Robyn Hartley and Dr Kate Jones, of the Quality of Life and Social Justice Research Centre, received $60,000 from Centacare Catholic Family Services Victoria for the project, Catholic bushfire community recovery response.

• Professor Jude Butcher CFC, Director Institute for Advancing Community Engagement, received funding from several Catholic Education Offices for research projects in the field of religious literacy assessment.

• The Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS), funded under the Commonwealth Communities for Children scheme, presented its important findings during the year on the day-to-day experiences of vulnerable parents with low incomes and how they use services in Canberra.

• Aged Care Associate Professor Fran Mcinerney was awarded $50,000 to explore Victoria Division 1 registered nurses’ perceptions of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.

Visiting researchers

The University supports visits by internationally recognised scholars through its Distinguished Visiting Research Fellowship Scheme.

Visiting Research Fellows arranged for 2009 included:

• Professor Johan Leemans, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, Belgium
• Professor John D’Arcy May, Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland
• Professor Philippe Obert, Professor in Physiology and Physiopathology of Cardiovascular Adaptations to Exercise, University of Avignon, France
• Professor Fred Woods, Brigham Young University, USA.

Looking to the future

The assurance of support from the Australian Government promises an exciting decade for research. ACU is committed to increasing research quality and productivity, and has invested heavily in strategic planning and resource development to this end.

In 2009, ACU reconfigured the role of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (PVCR) and strengthened the Office of PVC (OPVCR) through recruitment of key senior personnel and management restructure. The OPVCR gives crucial support to coordinating and generating research programs.

Programs targeted to drive research productivity over the next five years include:

• re-organisation of Research Centres to ensure a specific research focus
• instituting of the Accreditation of Research Supervisors program, which ensures all research students are mentored by faculty supervisors with acceptable training and/or experience

• establishment of the Beginning Research Supervision program, which provides training of faculty to meet the standards required to be an accredited Research Supervisor
• establishment of a Mentoring for Research program for early career researchers to accelerate their research productivity and professional recognition
• funding of proven research effort and potential research ability through realignment of the conditions for awards through the International Conference Travel Grant mechanism
• development of a broad, competitive internal funding program to boost research activity
• funding of infracutural and cross-disciplinary research teams and provision of financial support for ACU staff to complete higher research degrees.

Other OPVCR plans are being implemented to provide additional research-oriented training courses in 2010 and to raise the standard of research outcomes by progressively adopting international benchmarks.

Steps have been taken to increase the number of superior researchers, to improve research training, to generate a pervasive research culture and to allow multiple entry points to a career in research at ACU.

ACU will continue its substantial investment in research leadership, personnel and training to participate in the dynamic transformation of research in Australia and to aim for national and international recognition for excellence in research.

Publications by staff

• Sophronius of Jerusalem and seventh-century heresy by Centre for Early Christian Studies Director Professor Pauline Allen
• Andrew Fisher: an underestimated man by Associate Professor Peter Bastian
• Beyond the word of a woman: recovering the bodies of the Syrophoenician women by biblical studies lecturer Rev Dr Alan Cadwaller (see photograph opposite), which won the Australasian Theological Forum Book of the Year award
• Leo the Great by Dr Bronwen Neil
• United Nations reform: heading North or South by Professor Spencer Zifcak
• Under the influence: a history of alcohol in Australia co-authored by Professor Ross Fitzgerald.