Recognised excellence truly matters. It is indeed gratifying that ACU National received such acclaim from the recent Carrick Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning, and it is fitting that some of the articles in this issue of acunique feature programs and academic staff recognised through these awards.

I am further delighted that the Commonwealth Government late last year saw fit to recognise excellence in teaching and learning at our University by awarding ACU National a top band ranking and a $2.11 million allocation from its 2006 Learning and Teaching Performance Fund.

Quality teaching in all its expressions has to be genuinely informed by research. It is research which ensures that our lecturers are passing on the most up-to-date knowledge possible, and in the most effective ways. It is research which provides the spark of excitement as our undergraduates, guided by their lecturers who are also researchers, make their own disciplined discoveries, so adding to the body of human knowledge upon which we all rely.

Yet, while it is tempting to look just to external bodies, such as government, for recognition and confirmation of our good work, we must not just rely on the views of others, but work strategically to expand our activities.

As the Commonwealth Government continues to implement the Research Quality Framework which will guide the research funding of all Australian universities, ACU National’s vision and influence must look to its challenges. We must continue to rigorously pursue our Mission, with its commitment to quality in teaching, learning, research and service to others, now and into our future.

Driven by our Mission, with its vigorous concern for human dignity and social justice, what is at stake is vital.

Ultimately, quality teaching and learning affects all whose lives are touched by our graduates as they step out into the world.

Enriched by 2000 years of Catholic intellectual tradition and by the predecessor colleges established in Australia from the 1850s which are our heritage, quality learning is transformational for all our students, including the disenfranchised. Our pilot work in bringing tertiary education to the Karen people on the Thai-Burma border, and for the homeless and marginalised men and women attending lectures given by ACU National academics through the Clemente Education for Homeless Program is changing lives.

Much of our work is collaborative. We welcome partnerships through our Institute for Advancing Community Engagement. Through engagement, we can be sure that the University is responding to real community needs.

In what other ways can we ensure that quality teaching and learning are taking place? For three years in a row, the Good Universities Guide has recognised the qualifications of our staff by giving them the maximum five-star rating. Significantly, the same publication has consistently given us five stars for Indigenous participation, and high ratings for student demand.

In the health sciences, in education, in human services, in business and in the arts and sciences, including philosophy and theology, the quality learning of our graduates enriches the lives of others in ways which cannot always be measured in just dollars and cents. Yet they are without question of immense value.

Ultimately, quality teaching and learning affects all whose lives are touched by our graduates as they step out into the world.

At the heart of ACU National, quality teaching and learning are of the essence. I commend to you this acunique, which presents to you just a glimpse of the life of our diverse and vibrant University.
ACU National’s “runs on the board”

ACU National’s academic staff are at the forefront in their fields, reflecting on the latest developments and contributing to them.

In keeping with our Mission, staff contribute particularly to research that advances the dignity of the human person and social justice. The impact of such research contributes potentially to a better community for us here in Australia, as well as internationally.

We rejoice in the advent of the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education with its citations and awards celebrating excellence in teaching and student learning and grants to enhance research into quality and innovative teaching and learning. Some of our award-winning teaching is featured on pages 7, 13 and 18.

Much of our research has strong links to our teaching and learning, and its advancement, particularly in areas of importance to the University, such as teacher education, nursing, midwifery, ethical business practices, the social sciences and practical theology.

I would like to highlight, by way of example, how our leading-edge research and scholarship, and related teaching and learning impacts on the quality of life of the wider community. Through the ACU National Flagship for Mathematics and Literacy Education, a major $2.4 million research project, funded by the Government and supporting 202 funded clusters of schools and industry partners between 2005 and 2008, is now breaking new ground. This is the Australian School Innovation in Science, Technology and Mathematics (ASISTM) Critical Friends Project, detailed on page 6. Earlier work from this flagship is now impacting on mathematics education in Canada, Germany and Scandinavia.

A number of other research projects within this Flagship have wide impact, including in rural and regional Australia, on how the use of new technologies can maximise learning outcomes. In other discipline areas, there are also many more such examples of research impact.

I can see our University having a strong future in terms of research in areas related to our Mission, including, for instance, advancing teaching and learning in higher education, developing Indigenous leadership and improving the quality of life for the disadvantaged.

We have the runs on the board. We are delighted to see recognition of this through the Carrick Institute and the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund, and also pleased that much of this work is in partnership with other universities and organisations.

ACU National Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs)
Professor Gabrielle L McMullen

Teaching and research “a potent blend”

A defining feature of a University is a commitment to the dual functions of teaching and research. In this regard, they can be differentiated from other educational institutions and other research centres.

It is critical during the current public debates about the value of the university in our society that we continue to advance this unique place of the university as an institution into our society.

When strong research and high quality teaching coexist, both functions are likely to have their maximum impact. While I accept that there are gifted lecturers who are not researchers, and vice versa, the blend of the two activities provides a potent set of opportunities. A fine example appears on page 14, while research features in many of the other award winning teaching projects detailed in this acunique.

A university ought to be a place where the acquisition of new knowledge is being pushed to the limits, where students are exposed to ideas as they emerge in an embryonic form to become tested in the real world, and where academics can convey to students the excitement of the participation in the advancement of knowledge and the production of creative works.

One of the great challenges in life is to accept the ambiguities that are inherent in our incomplete understanding of the world. An academic who engages in original research is able to help students meet this challenge through teaching which is guided or influenced by that research.

The content of class material is most likely to be at the limits of our knowledge when the teacher is also contributing to that body of knowledge.

These are notions which we ought to regard as precious, and worth defending as universities are faced with ever increasing pressures to justify their use of public funds. The distinctive feature of a university lies in the dual character of its purpose in our society.

ACU National Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and International)
Professor Peter H Wilson
Indigenous graduates from ACU National are now working as educators and health workers and in business and government. Their success is attributed to the learning environment, where Indigenous students’ cultural, personal, spiritual and academic needs are supported and respected. Passion, enthusiasm, understanding, flexibility and two-way learning between the students and Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff have combined to give ACU National an excellent record for enabling the students to develop confidence in their growing academic skills and achieve graduation.

Indigenous Education Programs co-ordinator Mr Evan Harris and Weemala Indigenous Unit co-ordinator Dr Nereda White, both from the Brisbane Campus, were awarded a Citation from the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education earlier this year. It was “for exemplary and sustained effort in providing a supportive and constructive environment enabling Indigenous student learning in ‘away from base’ education programs”.

Students enrolled in the Diploma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and the Bachelor of Education (Primary) (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) courses attend four on-campus residential weeks a year for intensive study as well as use distance education materials in their own communities.

“The courses are underpinned by a strong belief in the interconnectedness of culture, spirituality and learning,” Mr Harris said. “Our approach fosters and supports the students’ intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth.”

“We are aware of and responsive to the fact that Indigenous cultural and community knowledge is respected and shared through personal stories, oral presentations, artwork and poetry readings, some of which are presented within the context of assessment,” explained Dr White, herself an Indigenous member of staff who holds both a Master’s and doctoral degree from ACU National.

“They gain a lot of confidence at ACU National,” she said. The growth in confidence is underpinned by a collaborative approach to student support. As students embark on their courses, they are given an integrated program of study skills and library research skills, while the courses, including assessment, are tailored to the students’ backgrounds.

“The results of our efforts have meant that the Indigenous communities have given us their full support so that our numbers continue to grow, students return after periods of leave, graduates keep in contact and some return to take up postgraduate study,” Mr Harris said.

“Our approach fosters and supports the students’ intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth.”

Students and graduates at the Brisbane Campus are from diverse communities from throughout Queensland and northern NSW. Students from Alice Springs, Darwin, South Australia and Western Australia have also attended.

ACU National’s Brisbane Campus Indigenous Reflection Space was provided through the generous support of the Pratt Foundation and designed with the help of the wider Indigenous community.

Indigenous students enrolled across ACU National’s Canberra, North Sydney and Strathfield campuses are supported at the Yalbalinga Indigenous Unit, while those at the University’s Ballarat and Melbourne campuses receive support from the Jim-baa-yer Indigenous Unit.

Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP met with award-winning ACU National academic staff and members of the Circle of Senior Indigenous Women during a recent visit to ACU National hosted by Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Sheehan AO.

ACU National Indigenous Education Programs co-ordinator Mr Evan Harris (left) with Professor Peter Sheehan AO; Circle of Senior Indigenous Women members Principal Policy Officer of the Indigenous Education Policy Team within the Strategic Policy and Education Futures Division of the Queensland Department of Education and the Arts Mrs Angela Leitch, Research Manager of the Centre for Clinical Research Excellence within the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council Dr Bronwyn Fredericks, and Creative Industries Precinct QUT senior research fellow Dr Wendy Brady; the Hon Julie Bishop MP; Circle of Senior Indigenous Women member Associate Professor Tracey Bunda from Flinders University; and ACU National Weemala Indigenous Unit co-ordinator Dr Nereda White. The Circle of Senior Indigenous Women is associated with a Carrick Leadership project on Indigenous women and educational leadership in which ACU National is a partner institution.
The “luminous” gift of learning is reaching some unusual students.

ACU National, Mission Australia and the St Vincent de Paul Society recently received a Carrick Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning for “transformational teaching and learning contributions within a unique Australian community-based tertiary education program for homeless and marginalised people.”

At the same time, a new group of students was putting aside questions of where they would spend the night to sit at a café in Fortitude Valley in Brisbane and explore Two-Dimensional Art Studies with ACU National Brisbane Campus Head of the School of Arts and Sciences (Queensland) Dr Lindsay Farrell.

They began preparing for their first exhibition, with the help of voluntary learning partners, in turn supported by their employer, legal firm Minter Ellison, Brisbane.

“This is a very positive experience,” said Dr Farrell. “I am pleased to increase student and community awareness of the diversity and the pervasive nature of visual languages, and how they influence the way we see our world. This program strengthens connections between students, industry, community and art workers.”

Meanwhile, at the St Vincent de Paul Society’s Vincentian Village in East Sydney, ACU National School of Arts and Sciences (NSW) lecturer Associate Professor Michael Griffith was presenting Sacred Australia to marginalised students.

This new more advanced course follows his introductory course in English and Australian Literature earlier this year at the Mission Australia Centre in Surry Hills involving people who are homeless. That course climaxed in a successful staging of scenes from A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Sacred Australia, on which the ABC is preparing a documentary, will finish with a staging of Michael Gow’s Away.

“We talk about the way that ordinary events conceal extraordinary dimensions ... What is needed is our attention, our willingness to look, feel, imagine ... and then we uncover the luminous quality of the moment we are attending to,” Associate Professor Griffith said.

“It was so good to see that the class had so much to share about these issues, and when they got down to their creative work towards the end of the session there was really focused attention; you could have heard a pin drop.”

“The fragility of the student cohort constantly reminds us of the gift of life, the importance of education and the influence one person can have on another.”
"The quality teaching provided demonstrates that, given the opportunity, marginalised people’s potential and capacity to learn can be realised with enormous benefits to these students and to society."

"Because I am able to put journal articles, web links, book reviews and even video links into ACU National’s marvellous website, these students are now resource rich."

Importantly, the introduction of Associate Professor Griffith’s blogging tool “LiveJournal” means the “marginalised” students are able to network with full-time on-campus students and feel a part of a wider community the moment they commence the course, some making new friends. Details are at http://michaelgriffith.livejournal.com/

Elsewhere, international networks aimed at making tertiary education more accessible for the disenfranchised grew stronger as representatives from Mission Australia, the St Vincent de Paul Society, ACU National’s Institute for Advancing Community Engagement, the University of Calgary in Canada and the University of Limerick in Ireland met to share their experiences in engaging the disengaged. "They have done some work already in Canada, and Ireland is starting to look at how they can support students from diverse backgrounds. This program is bringing an international network together," said Clemente Education for Homeless co-ordinator ACU National senior lecturer in the School of Education (NSW) Associate Professor Peter Howard, whose colleagues Associate Professor Peter Bastian, Dr Graham English and Dr Ross Keating were also recognised in the Carrick Citation, along with Associate Professor Griffith.

“Our program has become the model for the way in which the University can interact purposefully with the community,” Associate Professor Howard said. “Through a Linkage grant we hope to track students over a two-year period and compare results with what is happening internationally.”

In November 2005, the first students completed the four undergraduate units required for a non-award Certificate in Liberal Studies offered by ACU National, inspiring others to take up studies, while three students who began in 2003 and completed last November graduated earlier this year.

“Their perseverance to achieve success is testimony to the effectiveness and influence of the teaching, student support and program structure,” said Associate Professor Howard. “One student has re-engaged to complete her Master’s, two others are enrolled in Bachelor courses and another has begun postgraduate study at UTS.

“The fragility of the student cohort constantly reminds us of the gift of life, the importance of education and the influence one person can have on another. "The quality teaching provided demonstrates that, given the opportunity, marginalised people’s potential and capacity to learn can be realised with enormous benefits to these students and to society.”

National Manager of Research and Social Policy for Mission Australia Anne Hampshire said: “It’s very exciting to see the great capacity of these students being realised, to see them achieving good academic results, but more importantly, to see them engaging with other students, lecturers, learning partners and the broader community. The program shows what is possible when you give people an opportunity.

“The program is still very fragile, but it is beginning to make a significant impact.

“There are lots of complexities, but it is very promising, and we are looking to expand the program even further across the country and to offer it to a range of other individuals and groups.”

School of Arts and Sciences Associate Professor Michael Griffith (front, left) with student Michael Evans, research assistant Luke Egan, and students George Szabo, Rosemary Astill, John Van Gulick and Tom McRoberts
Adding value for Australia

A $2.4 million project, boosting innovation in the teaching of mathematics, science and technology in Australian schools, is being coordinated by ACU National’s Flagship for Mathematics and Literacy Education.

ACU National was invited to coordinate the “Critical Friends” Project for the Australian School Innovation in Science, Technology and Mathematics (ASISTM), by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, through the Curriculum Corporation.

“Critical friends” play a crucial part in helping project co-ordinators and school leaders determine their aims, and the research tools by which they might measure their achievement, as well as providing an important support role in report writing.

ACU National’s role involves recruiting and training “critical friends”, and researching their work and impact. To date, 128 “critical friends” from 31 Australian universities have been involved, including 22 from ACU National.

Flagship director Professor Doug Clarke heads the project, supported by project manager Pam Hammond and project officer Liz McKay from the University’s Melbourne Campus.

Representatives of 640 schools have attended project briefing days, along with 400 non-school partners from universities, the CSIRO, businesses and other organisations. Some 300 individual projects have been funded so far. The project began in 2005 and is expected to run until 2008.

Thinking about thinking

A teaching unit which encourages students to “think about thinking” has received a 2006 Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning from the Carrick Institute.

“Quality learning is individual and active,” said School of Business and Informatics (NSW) lecturer Alanah Kazlauskas, who devised the unit with her Business and Informatics colleagues Tim Davis at ACU National’s Brisbane Campus and Dr Theda Thomas from the Melbourne Campus.

“Quality learning allows each student to develop their own understanding and to be able to explain that understanding to others,” Mrs Kazlauskas said.

The unit focuses on enhancing students’ abilities to use diverse modes of thinking such as systems thinking, higher order problem solving, creative thinking, reflective thinking, ethical thinking, analytical thinking, consequential thinking and reasoning.

“It introduces students to metacognition – thinking about thinking,” Dr Thomas said.

While traditional courses teach students skills in generic ways, the new unit contextualises skills within relevant examples from the Information Systems (IS) discipline. Importantly, assessment within the unit is discipline-related. Two carefully constructed major assessment tasks guide students through preparation stages and towards a critically reasoned piece of written work.

“The use of a peer review process after the preparation of a draft assignment and prior to the development and submission of the final assignment has proved a valuable experience for students,” Mr Davis said.

Additional activities in class and online ensure that students are able to apply their new skills in different communication modes. Student reflections provide the lecturers with a window into students’ thinking. One student praised the experience, saying it had allowed for a constructive way of exploring a current IS topic through reasoned debate.

“The evaluation process helped me to improve my report and present it in a more comprehensive state. I have learnt that proof-reading your work in most cases is not enough and that a reader-review can help stimulate a better report which is very helpful.

“I learnt much about the way an argument and rebuttal can operate and how conclusive evidence is so important in the subject matter of a report.

“Reviewing somebody else’s assignment was also a big bonus. It allowed the class to experience the report writing process from a reader’s point of view and gave them extra information and ideas to help them construct their own report better.”

Based on both their own reflections and those of the students, the lecturers agreed that this unit has provided a foundational learning experience for students in the first semester of their first year of university.

“The unit lays down a firm base for future undergraduate studies and other professional learning, providing strong support for the learners’ future activities, both at university and in the workplace.”
A team of academics from across ACU National is working together to enhance quality teaching through best use of online technologies and the most effective principles of learning.

Tapping into and sharing knowledge of existing online techniques within the University, and evaluating and adapting methods used elsewhere, the team is supported by a benchmark Carrick Institute Leadership Program Award of $186,000 for enhancing learning.

“This is a very exciting time to be involved in education,” said Associate Professor Paul Chesterton, leader of the development of distributed institutional leadership capacity in online learning and teaching project and Director of the University’s Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (IATL).

“Never before has so much information been literally at our fingertips. The challenge now is to open our minds to all the possibilities, and to go ahead and use new technologies most effectively to achieve quality learning in every way.”

In the continuing climate of rapid change, a new kind of leadership must emerge.

“The fundamental role of leadership is now to make it safe to take risks and to stretch the boundaries of thinking and doing,” he said.

“This project seeks to create the space in which a group of staff can build the capacity to develop and share leadership of a culture of innovative online teaching and learning within and across the University’s faculties.”

Six academic staff (pictured) have been seconded as online advisers, and are attending a series of three-day workshops with internal and external specialists in online pedagogy, leadership and evaluation. Their growing knowledge of a wide variety of tried and tested successful e-learning teaching and learning techniques, and their creative ideas of how to adapt and evaluate them locally and across the University, will support their colleagues to better harness the University’s resources and infrastructure.

“This project has the capacity to ensure all voices are heard, that the faculties and the University’s schools are involved, and that the needs of staff are supported,” Mr Matejka said.

Mrs Kazlauskas said she was inspired by “the richness of the ideas that we exchange”.

“Quality learning is active,” she said.

“It builds new knowledge for both individuals and communities. The well-known saying ‘live and learn’ points to the importance of learning as part of living. A quality living community will be well aware of the importance of learning to the community.”

For Dr Schneider, the project “has implications for all of us”. “If the outcome of this project is that the whole ACU National community can reflect collaboratively on its approach to change and the leadership of it, and see that there are many ways of improving what we do and how we do it, then I believe the project will have been successful,” she said.

“Never before has so much information been literally at our fingertips. The challenge now is to open our minds to all the possibilities.”

“Developing confidence with the technology is always a challenge, but to see its use as part of a broader inquiry into what makes teaching and learning effective is also a challenge.

“This is a great opportunity to enhance our professional conversations about teaching and learning and how we can best meet the needs of our colleague learners, the students and staff here at ACU National.”
“Quality teaching and learning requires theory, practice, and interaction between students and staff.”
Sessional academic staff member
Jennifer Kotek, North Sydney Campus

“Quality learning is meaningful and relevant to an individual’s needs, encompassing subject matter that is current to allow immediate use of the knowledge gained. It must be taught in a manner which allows understanding and encourages questioning.”
Bachelor of Business student and Acting Team Leader, Timetabling, Examinations and Results Carol Bradley, Brisbane Campus

“I continually use my research experience and findings to enhance my teaching – for example, in the content of units, illustrations and case studies, and teaching of academic skills.”
Associate Dean Research, (Research Training and Partnerships), Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Dr Jan Seruga, North Sydney Campus

“As an overseas student, ACU has made my experience worthwhile through providing quality education. It provides a good environment for studies, work experiences, talented and helpful lecturers, library, internet facilities, social functions, supportive services to students which all are included in quality education.”
Bachelor of Nursing (Honours) student Kanu Priya, Melbourne Campus

“Quality teaching and learning develops highly competent and engaged citizens, professional leaders who are committed to serving the common good and addressing societal issues.”
Brisbane Campus co-ordinator of community engagement Associate Professor Nasir Butrous, School of Business and Informatics (Queensland)

“Quality learning is when passion is ignited, when passivity becomes action, when students begin to question and proactively pursue answers. Quality learning for me is when monologues become dialogues, when the pursuit of knowledge is embraced both inside and outside the university classroom.”
Academic co-ordinator Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Business School of Arts and Sciences (Queensland) and lecturer in Drama Dr Tracey Sanders

“Quality teaching has shown me how to continually keep up to date with best practice, and that is changing all the time.”
Third-year Nursing student Adam Terrey, North Sydney Campus

“Quality learning is about processes and outcomes. It requires quality teachers and the willingness of students to participate.”
Third-year Nursing student Ximena Wilkie-King, North Sydney Campus

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Many faces of quality teaching and learning
“Nothing quite matches that ‘ah-ha’ moment when the student gets it, when you affirm to each other, ‘The truth will set us free’, and when the student looks at you with joy and liberation as if to say, ‘I can do this on my own from here. Thanks.’ It doesn’t happen in every class, and neither does it happen with every student, but it is the spark that makes routine teaching worthwhile.”

ACU National Institute of Legal Studies Professor of Law Dr Frank Brennan SJ AO

“Quality teaching means easy interaction between student and lecturer.”

First-year Bachelor of Exercise Science student Chris Dunne, Melbourne Campus

“Quality teaching and learning is fuelled by a great melting pot of ideas, a community minded environment and friendly lecturers.”

Brisbane Campus student association president, second-year Arts student Madal McBarron (centre)

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Second-year Theology student Tom Guinane, Canberra Campus

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Fourth-year Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Business student Marcon Bituin, Melbourne Campus

“Quality teaching is based on relationships. It embraces partnerships between students and teachers. Quality teaching prepares students for their future by encouraging deep critical thinking, productive collaboration and personal lifelong learning.”

Mission Engagement team member Joanne Rix, Ballarat Campus

“Quality teaching requires an environment where my thoughts and ideas are refined and valued. It means I am equipped to live life with knowledge. It has been said that knowledge is power. Quality learning is knowledge. It becomes a means of empowerment.”

Third-year Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Business student Monique Riviere, Melbourne Campus

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“Quality learning ideally develops in students a critical habit of mind, promotes a greater thirst for knowledge and ultimately results in the promotion of lifelong learning.”

Lecturer in the School of Exercise Science (NSW) Dr David Greene, Strathfield Campus

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Against all odds – dreams and determination

A collaborative project to help Sudanese refugees pursue tertiary education at ACU National is changing lives.

The Sudanese Pathways Project, also called Community Futures Australia, is supported by ACU National, the Parramatta and Sydney Catholic Education Offices (CEOs), the Independent Education Union and the Catholic Primary Principals Association. Donations from diverse individuals and organisations currently total $132,000.

“For refugee students, balancing life, work and family is a very significant challenge.”

ACU National designed special units to help Sudanese students learn more about Australian society, and ease their transition to tertiary study after members of the Sudanese community, interested in pursuing higher education, met with CEO and ACU National staff to discuss their goals and assess their current qualifications and English language skills.

CEO Sydney university-school liaison officer Mark Rix, and ACU National School of Education (NSW) lecturer at the Strathfield Campus Mrs Maya Cranitch have managed the project with the support of the Head of the School of Education (NSW), Dr Marea Nicholson.

This year, 22 Sudanese students are enrolled in nine different degree programs at the North Sydney and Strathfield campuses. Five of the teacher education students have found work in NSW schools as teachers’ aides.

“It’s still really challenging for them,” Mrs Cranitch said. “The students have had a lot of difficulty managing study, mostly because of their background as refugees. Many are recent arrivals with a history of starvation, torture and trauma.

“Although all have significant English language skills, the teaching and learning methods they encounter are quite new. In addition, many students face financial hardship, due to their financial commitments to family members both here and back home. Many find getting part-time work difficult due to lack of experience in Australia.

“For refugee students, balancing life, work and family is a very significant challenge. Many students have succeeded, but some are still struggling. The ones who are still with us are very committed, very positive and very determined.

“In any access and equity program, an institution has to be flexible in order to respond to the different challenges posed by disadvantaged students. Together with our students, the staff at ACU National are learning how to turn that disadvantage around.”
James Padiet, 26, of Guilford West, now studying first-year Nursing at ACU National’s North Sydney Campus, was forced from his Sudanese home when he was 12.

“I was born in Sudan in 1980 and lived there until 1992, when my home country was attacked. I fled to Kenya and lived in Kakuma Refugee Camp. I was lucky that I got my education in Kenya. Life was hard in Kakuma, because it’s in the desert, and always windy and dusty. It was like living where no one else wanted to live. Nothing grows there.

“My prayers were to go somewhere that I could enhance my education, somewhere I could live in peace, so I applied to the Australian High Commission and they accepted me.”

James recalls how it felt to receive the news of his new life. “When you get your approval letter, you feel happy, because you are living in hardship and you know you are going somewhere people think is like heaven. Australia is a good country.”

James said after 22 years of civil war, refugees are returning to Sudan. The northern and southern Sudanese signed a peace agreement to share power in January 2005, but he believes some are refusing to share power, and they are still practising Sharia law, a cause of contention.

James was sponsored to come to Australia in 2004 by his cousin, who arrived in Australia in 2001, sponsored in turn by his brother, who had been sponsored by the Australian Government in 1996.

“I worked for one year and sent money back to my mother and to friends still living in the refugee camps.”

James heard of ACU National’s Sudanese Pathways Project, and enrolled in ACU National’s preparation for study course in 2005, where he improved his English and writing skills.

“Language is still a problem, but I think it’s improving,” he said. “It’s difficult to study, especially for those coming from non-English backgrounds. Things other students do in one minute can take me an hour to do. I study hard. I work on my English skills myself, listening to the news, going to the BBC website, and trying to help myself with dictionaries, improving my reading, writing and pronunciation.”

James became interested in Nursing after working with Médecins Sans Frontières and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Sudan, immunising against polio and educating communities about the importance of filtering their drinking water.

James is glad to be a Nursing student at ACU National. “It is fantastic to study,” he said. “The lecturers are really wonderful. The main thing I like at the uni is that it’s a Christian institution and everyone is helpful. So I enjoy studying Nursing here. You can get help any time you want it, because it’s a small institution.”

James said that when he finishes his studies and begins his profession, he hopes to be in a position to help others in need, just as he has been helped by the Community Futures Australia project.
TRUE COLOURS SHINING THROUGH

Isaac Zuneua, 42, of Blacktown and in his first year of a Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree at the Strathfield Campus, is enjoying study. Originally from Equatoria in Sudan, most of his own primary and secondary studies were in English.

Isaac worked as an accountant in Sudan, but also enjoyed working as a volunteer in schools. As the civil war continued, Isaac fled to Egypt where he worked as a volunteer and then primary teacher in an American school for refugees, St Andrews, in Cairo.

When he came to Australia three years ago, Isaac studied information technology at Blacktown TAFE and some units in mathematics at ACU National, before taking ACU National’s transition course last year.

He said his current education coursework had many similarities with the material covered in schools in Sudan, such as teaching colours, using picture books and learning about grammar.

NEW HORIZONS

David Chadar, 44, of Fairfield, a teachers’ aide at St John’s Primary School in Auburn, is in his first year of Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary) studies at the Strathfield Campus.

David, who speaks Dinka, Arabic and English, has been in Australia for nine years, after fleeing to Egypt where he studied law.

“It is very difficult for me. Because there were no scholarships, I would be working.”

When they arrived in northern Uganda they were looked after by Red Cross and then the United Nations in Kitgum, a refugee camp. “We stayed until 1990 and then were shipped by the Red Cross to a place called Masindi in West Uganda, where I stayed until I came here.

“Life wasn’t easy. The place was too crowded. There were many diseases. Many children were dying from whooping cough and polio. Many people were dying.”

The power of nursing

First-year Nursing student Jennifer Odur, 21, of Blacktown, came to Australia from Uganda in March last year. Born in Sudan, Jennifer was a young child in 1989 when she had to flee her village with her family and neighbours.

“It took many days, struggling through the bush, hungry and thirsty,” Jennifer said. “There was no water, and we were running and running. As people were running, they were getting shot. Sometimes your mum or dad was shot, but you had to continue going ahead.”

It was this experience of the power of nursing to help others that inspired Jennifer to study the profession herself.

Jennifer recalls nurses coming to immunise people and educate them about maintaining personal hygiene. It was this experience of the power of nursing to help others that inspired Jennifer to study the profession herself.

Although it takes Jennifer an hour each way to travel to her lectures at ACU National’s North Sydney Campus, it is one thing that’s not new to her, as she recalls walking long distances.

“If I had stayed in Uganda it was really going to be hard for me. Because there were no scholarships, I would be working.”

Jennifer likes the staff at ACU National. “They are so helpful. They make everything easier for you.”
Preparing for care

ACU National’s innovative nursing education program, which immerses students in the reality of the clinical environment through simulation, continues to receive accolades.

The School of Nursing (NSW and ACT) has received a 2006 Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning from the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

The award is for “successfully assisting undergraduate students to identify as nurses through the development of the Virtual Health Environment”.

The School has also achieved recognition from the University’s Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning through the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Scheme (see page 18).

Hands-on, student-centred experiences help ACU National’s Nursing students integrate and reflect on their growing knowledge and build their confidence, said School of Nursing (NSW and ACT) senior lecturer Dr Jennifer Hardy, who received the award with School of Nursing (NSW and ACT) lecturers Peta Drury and Astrid Frotjold.

From day one, students “identify as nurses”, working with high fidelity mannequins in a simulated laboratory which looks like a ward in a hospital.

Each mannequin is linked with a “patient scenario”. Lectures, workshops and tutorials revolve around the various and changing patient scenarios. Students use a Virtual Health Environment (VHE) website to access relevant resources including the latest treatments, policies and procedures.

“This is about quality learning,” Dr Hardy said. “We encourage inquiry-based learning and critical thinking skills.

“Students cannot only learn on real patients. Our system prepares students to assess and prioritise the care they are going to deliver for real patients.”

“We encourage inquiry-based learning and critical thinking skills.”

While many other health-related educational systems are modelled around disease management, at ACU National the focus is on the individual patient.

“Our students learn to look at the person, and ask themselves what it is they need to know about the patient, and what competencies they will need to have to treat that person.

“There’s a whole series of facts you need to understand, but quite often there’s a gap between theory and actual practice. This is about trying to bridge that gap and ensure our students are as well prepared for the practice as possible.”

First-year students are told that they are nurses as well as students. “Each time students come into the lab, it is as if they are coming on for a shift. They receive a handover, but prior to that they will have been prepared for the type of patients they are going to encounter.”

The Citation follows other awards. “We are at the forefront,” Dr Hardy said. “We have presented at the national SimTecT 2005 Healthcare Simulation Conference, Brisbane, at international conferences in Europe and Asia, and are often invited to present on our system at other universities. In addition, numerous visitors have toured the simulation laboratories. It is very labour intensive, but it is worth it. Our graduates are well prepared for entering the profession.”

More nursing places, nationally

ACU National’s acclaimed Bachelor of Nursing degree has been extended to the Canberra Campus, with 50 places available from next year, to be offered in articulation with the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT).

The University has also received Commonwealth funding for 85 additional nursing places at the Melbourne Campus and for 35 additional places at each of the Brisbane and Ballarat campuses.

ACU National is the second largest provider of nursing graduates in Australia, with approximately 2,000 nurses graduating from five ACU National campuses each year.
A fine example is the passion for research into the use and misuse of 19th century rescue literature that two Melbourne Campus lecturers are sharing with their keen Arts and Teacher Education students.

The research has revealed a cruel twist of fate. Stories of hope featuring children rescued from despair can be seen to have influenced welfare policies around the world, leading to Australia’s “stolen generation” of Indigenous children.

The magazines tugged at the heart strings of well-meaning readers, much as charities of today focus fund-raising ventures around images of needy children in parts of Africa.

Children’s literature specialist Associate Professor Margot Hillel OAM, Head of the School of Arts and Sciences (Victoria), and her colleague Associate Professor Shurlee Swain, who specialises in the history of childhood, have received a three-year Australian Research Council grant to research “child, nation, race and empire” through primary sources in the UK.

“I love immersing students in information from another time and place,” Associate Professor Swain said. “You see their eyes light up, and it’s terrific. Students always love it when they sense your enthusiasm for your subject.”

Many such magazines were published by Barnardos and like organisations from the late 1800s in London, making their way to Canada, Australia and other corners of the British Empire, where they can be seen to have influenced child welfare policies.

“We are mining material held in London, Liverpool, Canada and Victoria,” said Associate Professor Swain. She and Professor Hillel share their findings with keen students in historical aspects of children’s literature, a unit which Associate Professor Hillel developed some years ago and now shares with Associate Professor Swain.

“I love immersing students in information from another time and place,” Associate Professor Swain said. “You see their eyes light up, and it’s terrific. Students always love it when they sense your enthusiasm for your subject.”

In this unusual combination of studying children’s literature and other historical sources together, the professors have discovered that the flow of ideas was not simply one way. Ideas influencing child welfare policy also flowed back to England from the colonies.

The philosophy which allowed philanthropists to institutionalise orphans and remove abused children from their families in England was also used to break up Indigenous families in the colonies, even though the Indigenous children were “trained to be menials”.

In time, “rescue” literature was also used to build support for child migration to Canada from the 1860s to the 1920s, and to Australia in the 1940s, ‘50s and ‘60s.

“‘Rescued’ children played a large part in the building of ‘great British nations abroad’.

“Looking back, it is easy to damn these policies, but at the time, it was often the best of some very bad alternatives,” Associate Professor Swain said.
Current international adoption agencies and charities still use pictures of innocent children to attract donations. The research is aimed not at undermining philanthropy, but at “being truly informed”.

“In a sense, our research is very current. It’s about making an informed decision about what’s happening. We must ask what is in the best interests of the child, and see them as individuals and future citizens, not just assume that their best interests are served by what a local ‘do-gooder’ suggests.

“It is about improving the situation on an individual scale and on a larger level. Rather than simply plucking children out of third world countries, we should also be focusing our efforts on improving conditions in their countries.”
Deep in the jungle on the Thai-Burmese border, 15 young Karen refugees were awarded a Diploma in Business from ACU National earlier this year.

Despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles, the unique combination of remote learning technology, teamwork and vision made the pilot program a success, paving the way for expanded course offerings in the future.

The Karen population of some 150,000 displaced people has been literally in the wilderness, living in refugee camps for up to 50 years.

The Refugee Tertiary Education Committee (RTEC), responding to the refugees’ request for tertiary education, includes members from Jesuit Theological College in Melbourne, ACU National, the Baptist Union of Victoria and RMIT University. In time, the committee hopes to expand the program to offer tertiary education to refugees in other parts of the world.

For the ACU National lecturers involved, the program has been inspiring.

“We often talk about the fact that being involved in education is life changing for us, but for me the big learning was how much of a change it created in these students,” said Ms Ellen McBarron, a lecturer in Business at the Brisbane Campus.

“It created in them a thirst for knowledge that I haven’t experienced before. Their hunger to learn and their hunger to know was evident from the very beginning.”

The course was based on materials prepared for remote learning programs for some of ACU National’s Australian Indigenous students.

ACU National Head of the School of Business and Informatics (NSW) Dr Bob Compton, who taught some of the online units, described how the experience transformed the students.

“When we first met the students three years ago they were the essence of despair,” he said. “Many didn’t know their age and had spent most of their lives in the camp. Others had arrived later in their short lives. They were pretty much without any hope or any sort of future.

“By the time they completed their studies they had the freedom to leave the camp for the first time in their lives. They still can’t go into Burma, but they can move around Thailand. In our wildest dreams we never thought the program would be so successful. It is pretty satisfying.”

Some of the refugees have been able to use their awards to gain employment or pursue tertiary education at other universities. For example, Open Universities Australia is considering offering scholarships to students using the Diploma as an entry qualification. Some of the refugees are hoping to become full-time students at ACU National within a year, and others have entered Assumption University in Thailand with scholarships.

ACU National now plans to begin a second phase pilot study, offering a Certificate in Theology.

“This project is central to the Mission of our University in terms of providing tertiary education to a group of people who are disenfranchised,” said RTEC member and course co-ordinator Associate Professor Pam Gibbons, ACU National’s Associate Dean (Teaching, Learning and International) in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

ACU National Dean of Education Professor Marie Emmitt, who taught English at Mae La camp before joining...
the University, believes the greatest strength of the program is that “it shows it can be done”.

“The individual students were determined and found all sorts of ways of learning, and our staff went to great lengths to support them,” she said. “We are committed to continuing to explore options. It is wonderful to see what is happening there.

“The individual students were determined and found all sorts of ways of learning, and our staff went to great lengths to support them ...”

“RTEC is exploring how a consortium of universities, with ACU National playing the lead role, can provide a range of courses and units to suit students’ needs and interests. However, funds are required to provide the on-the-ground support to students.”

Tax deductible donations may be made to RTEC’s Refugee Fund by contacting The Secretary, Refugee Tertiary Education Committee Fund, PO Box 6149, Hawthorn, Victoria, 3122, Australia.

ACU National lecturer in Business at the Brisbane Campus Ellen McBarron (top left) with Refugee Tertiary Education Committee convenor Reverend Dr Michael Smith SJ of Jesuit Theological College in Melbourne (top, second from right), ACU National Head of the School of Business and Informatics (NSW) Dr Bob Compton (top right), tutor Danielle Kirk (centre), and Karen students
ACU National’s Teaching and Learning Enhancement Scheme (TALES) recognises outstanding achievements and initiatives which enhance quality teaching and learning.

The scheme fosters collaboration between the University’s Schools in innovative teaching and learning.

Each year, schools within each faculty are invited to make submissions describing practices which demonstrate excellence in teaching and learning, together with strategies to improve teaching and learning, including developing a focus on student-centred learning.

TALES links funding incentives to promotion of quality and innovation in teaching and learning across Schools, while the University’s Teaching Development Grants fund projects proposed by individuals or small teams of staff.

These schemes are among a range of initiatives administered by the University’s Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (IATL), which foster excellence in teaching and learning at ACU National and highlight the nexus between teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and community engagement.

TALES encompasses both one-off initiatives to enhance teaching and learning, and strategic, longer-term projects that deliver or ensure quality teaching and learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TALES AWARD WINNERS</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Virtual Health Environment Systems Network</th>
<th>School of Nursing (NSW) – $20,000</th>
<th>Dr Jennifer Hardy, Astrid Frotjold, Peta Drury, Jacqueline Guy</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>Information and communication technologies (ICT) applications for enhancing student participation and interaction through a one-year teacher education course</td>
<td>School of Education (NSW) – $10,000</td>
<td>Christine Dennis, Dr Martin Maguire, Dr Paul White</td>
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<td>Promotion of quality and innovative teaching and learning for a cohort of international nursing students</td>
<td>School of Nursing (Victoria) – $10,000</td>
<td>Dr Michelle Campbell, Dr Carmel Seibold, Dr Colleen Rolls</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Strategies and Collaboration for Empowering Learning and Teaching</td>
<td>Centre for Lifelong Learning, Faculty of Education – $10,000</td>
<td>Dr Patricia Cartwright, Dr Mary Nuttall, Dr Josephine Ryan, Dr Caroline Smith, Dr Carolyn Broadbent, Dr Maureen Walsh, Janelle Young, Dr Anne Drabble</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>The creation of a clinical skills performance assessment system for nursing students</td>
<td>School of Nursing (NSW) – $10,000</td>
<td>Dr Jennifer Hardy, Astrid Frotjold, Olivia Unite, Peta Drury, Bronwyn Gordon, Dr Sharon Hildege, Donna Croweller, Jacqueline Guy, Susan Gallagher, June Casey, Peter Brown, Steve Guinea</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Fostering reasoning and critical thinking in Information Systems students</td>
<td>Schools of Business and Informatics (Victoria, NSW and Queensland) – $10,000</td>
<td>Dr Theda Thomas, Tim Davis, Alannah Kazlauskas</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>ACUMEN – ACU Meeting Ethical/Educational/Employability Needs</td>
<td>School of Business and Informatics (Victoria) – $20,000</td>
<td>Marcia O’Neill, Dr Jo Reidy, Friederika Kaider, Dr Theda Thomas</td>
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<td>Collaborative Relationships in the Arts: The McAuley Medieval Fayre Project</td>
<td>School of Arts and Sciences (Queensland) – $7,000</td>
<td>Dr Tracey Thomas, Judy Fromyhr, Trish Andrews, Andrew Beiers</td>
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<td>‘Beyond the Grade’: An innovative approach to Student Portfolios to manage sources of evidence, reflection and judgment to facilitate an individual’s entry into the profession</td>
<td>Schools of Education and Nursing (NSW) – $10,000</td>
<td>Christine Dennis, Des Mateja, Associate Professor Paul White, Dr Jennifer Hardy, Peta Drury, Paul McDonald</td>
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