

# Strategic Plan

**2020-2023**  
Impact through  
empathy



# Message from the Vice- Chancellor and President

## Impact through Empathy

Since Australian Catholic University first opened in 1991, it has been an institution committed to delivering excellence in education, research, and engagement. As a result, the university has progressed from strength to strength. ACU now has eight campuses in Australia and another in Italy. It is also currently ranked in the top 2% of all universities and is among the world's top 10 Catholic universities. This impressive achievement stands testimony to the efforts of the many people who have served ACU with passion and dedication over the past 30 years.

The ACU Strategic Plan 2020-2023: *Impact through empathy* was launched in 2019 by my esteemed predecessor Professor Greg Craven AO GCSG.

This plan articulates ACU's mission, vision, focus, and strategic priorities for the coming years. Significant steps have already been undertaken to meet its objectives. Few could have foreseen the levels of global disruption and economic uncertainty which occurred in 2020. However, the ACU Strategic Plan's vision, with its focus on hope, faith, and reason through opportunity, innovation, and ethics, proved to be robust and relevant during this challenging time.

As the new Vice-Chancellor and President of ACU, I am proud to be continuing with this plan as we commence the next stage of the ACU journey.

As a university community, our collective purpose is neatly captured in the title of the plan – *Impact through empathy*. This phrase reflects our intent to make a positive, lasting, and measurable difference to students, staff, communities, and societies.

As we move forward, we will create impact by adhering to our Catholic mission and remaining committed to the pursuit of knowledge, the dignity of the human person, and the common good. We will continue to offer our students an inclusive, ethics-based education, and we will search for solutions to local and global challenges through mission-aligned research. We will also support the broader community and advocate for those who are unable to advocate for themselves.

As we work towards these shared objectives, I know that our hope, faith, and reason will provide us with the fortitude we require to face any challenges which may lay ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zlatko Skrbis'.

**Professor Zlatko Skrbis**  
Vice-Chancellor and President



# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the First Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways. We recognise their spiritual and ongoing cultural connection to Country.

We respectfully acknowledge Elders past and present and thank them for their wisdom and guidance as we walk in their footsteps.

*Artwork designed for ACU by Gilimbaa*

# Our mission

## In truth and love.

Within the Catholic intellectual tradition and acting in truth and love, Australian Catholic University is committed to the pursuit of knowledge, the dignity of the human person and the common good.





# Our vision

**Hope, faith and reason through opportunity, innovation and ethics.**

All our endeavours, grounded in mission.

ACU will create future opportunity, foster innovation and embrace ethics with hope, faith and reason. All our endeavours are built on an enduring commitment to our Catholic mission and values. The dignity of the human person and flourishing of society will engender every facet of our impact on learning, research and operations.

Our education will enrich lives, embrace technology and stimulate minds. We will stand up for people in need and for causes that matter to a better common future for humanity. We will nurture ethical leadership, guided by the principles of respect, honesty, courage and sustainability. Our research quality will be without compromise, focused and embedded. We will cultivate a vibrant academic life and dynamic campus experience. We will be deeply engaged with industry and society, tackling big questions to create tangible results.

As a Catholic university, we will strive to be a university for the people, both individually and collectively. We will reflect the diversity of our communities. We will embed our commitment to reconciliation and sharpen our efforts toward sustainability. Ours is a vision to make new, to break down barriers and to look on the totality of our endeavours with hope, faith and reason.

# Our focus

Our mission, vision and strategic priorities are underpinned by three key focus areas: opportunity, innovation and ethics.



## Opportunity

**Our focus is to enrich lives through learning and knowledge.**

We create opportunity and stand for those in need. We believe society is enriched through education, and that everyone should be treated with dignity. We aim to inspire and connect people, and act with empathy and courage. We foster a vibrant intellectual life for students and staff, and seek new knowledge which has a tangible impact on real world challenges.



## Innovation

**Our focus is to cultivate the imagination and defy expectations.**

We animate hope on the pillars of faith and reason. We are enterprising and bold, we are unique and agile. We stand for reason and for the betterment of society. We invite, explore and embrace new and creative ways to make a difference.



## Ethics

**Our focus is to strive toward a better future for humanity.**

Our ethical focus gives us a wide and generous view of the common good. We celebrate diversity and welcome different ideas. Our mission, founded in Catholic faith and tradition, makes a rich contribution to ethics and our ethical approach.



# Our strategic priorities

**Our mission is at the heart of everything we do. It guides our approach to education, research, academic excellence and service.**

We strive toward building a better world through each of our strategic priorities. We engage the Catholic intellectual tradition to bring a distinct perspective to higher education in Australia and across the world, supported by our focus on opportunity, innovation and ethics.



# 1.

## All our endeavours, grounded in mission

- 1.1 Ensure all our endeavours are grounded in mission, inspired by our Catholic character and informed by ethics.
- 1.2 Foster an inclusive community that welcomes all people, and engages every individual to the full extent of their human and intellectual potential.
- 1.3 Sustain and deepen staff understanding, engagement and formation with our mission and Catholic character.
- 1.4 Deliver a distinctive, enriched and authentically Catholic educational experience.
- 1.5 Engage the pursuit of truth, human dignity and the common good throughout our leadership, scholarship and research, integrating faith and reason.
- 1.6 Facilitate a demonstrably positive impact on society through the quality and effectiveness of our community engagement programs.
- 1.7 Advance the ACU Reconciliation Action Plan.
- 1.8 Strengthen our leadership role in creating and sustaining child-safe organisations and the prevention of harm to children, through education, research and industry partnerships.



## 2.

# Distinctive, inclusive, dynamic and student-centred education

- 2.1 Design and deliver a diverse portfolio of courses and programs, aligned with student needs and focused on preparing students for a bright future.
- 2.2 Deliver an engaging, technology-enriched and immersive student experience.
- 2.3 Enact mercy and create opportunity by increasing participation and outcomes for those from low socio-economic communities.
- 2.4 Widen participation, outcomes and deeply embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into our curriculum.
- 2.5 Deliver a high quality, student-centric approach that ensures every student has the opportunity and support they need to succeed and graduate at ACU.
- 2.6 Enable dynamic, rich and comprehensive engagement with university life through learning communities, student leadership and co-curricular programs.
- 2.7 Strengthen the breadth, depth and impact of our portfolio of offerings through non-award and pathway programs in industry-relevant education.
- 2.8 Equip all our graduates to be knowledgeable, skilled and ethical, sensitive to injustice and motivated to work toward the common good and dignity of all people.
- 2.9 Enrich learning through community engagement and the Core Curriculum as distinctive elements of an ACU education.



## 3.

# World-leading research, with impact

- 3.1 Achieve global recognition as a world-leading research university in our areas of specialisation.
- 3.2 Uphold and sustain the highest standards of integrity, ethics and compliance in research and research training.
- 3.3 Translate research into economic, social, environmental and cultural impacts to advance social progress and effect positive change in our communities.
- 3.4 Enable research-informed learning and teaching that is innovative, engaging and responsive to the changing demands of society.
- 3.5 Forge strong and mutually beneficial local, national, international and industry partnerships to develop practical research outcomes that benefit the wider community.
- 3.6 Activate early career and higher degree research to support our talent pipeline and cultivate professional growth, in accord with academic excellence and research quality.



## 4.

# Vibrant academic culture, enriched by innovation and discovery

- 4.1 Cultivate a vibrant academic culture throughout the university that embraces collaboration, academic freedom, excellence and innovation.
- 4.2 Enhance academic and research reputation and profile in Australia and in key locations across the world.
- 4.3 Build, attract and retain academic talent in institutes, faculties and schools, with a consistent focus on quality.
- 4.4 Strengthen the connectedness of academic expertise and talent across institutes, faculties and schools.
- 4.5 Expand and embed value-adding scholarly engagement and activity throughout faculties and schools.
- 4.6 Continuously review, improve and assure quality through effective academic governance.
- 4.7 Develop and mature ACU's impact on the arts and humanities through curriculum, art collections and community engagement, reflective of our Catholic character.



## 5.

# Deeply engaged, globally renowned

- 5.1 Achieve recognition as Australia's leading Catholic university, and top six globally.
- 5.2 Strengthen our reputation and profile in Australia, the Asia-Pacific and beyond, through academic excellence, research quality and ethics.
- 5.3 Strengthen industry and community engagement to create tangible results toward significant issues facing society now and into the future, through Catholic partnerships, mission-focused research and executive education.
- 5.4 Establish a successful and ethical alumni advancement and philanthropy program.
- 5.5 Strengthen our position as a vital feature of the Australian university landscape, and major player to drive ethical and informed public policy.
- 5.6 Deepen relationships with Catholic partners and the Catholic Church in Australia and around the world.
- 5.7 Successful establishment and operation of our Blacktown Campus.
- 5.8 Successful implementation of our internationalisation and Rome Campus strategies.



## 6.

# Service, stewardship and sustainability

- 6.1 Sustain effective corporate governance and management practice that underpins our highest expectations of accountability.
- 6.2 Cultivate a highly capable, people-focused, safe and ethical workforce in support of our mission, focus and strategic priorities.
- 6.3 Ensure long-term fiscal sustainability and ethical stewardship of financial and non-financial resources.
- 6.4 Ensure the development and continual improvement of adaptable, accountable and transparent business and service delivery models.
- 6.5 Develop and maintain a seamless and engaging student-centred environment throughout the student lifecycle.
- 6.6 Implement and monitor an agile, secure and reliable cybersecurity environment.
- 6.7 Underpin high quality student, academic and professional staff experience through quality information resources, learning spaces and physical infrastructure.
- 6.8 Take bold and decisive action on environmental, social and economic sustainability, and the eradication of modern slavery.

# Our principles

At all times, ACU staff and affiliates will behave in a way that upholds our mission both as individuals and as representatives of the university. We are committed to the following principles and outcomes.



## Respect

We are guided by a fundamental concern for justice and equity and for the dignity of all human beings. We are committed to creating a safe and inclusive place of work, teaching and learning, where we treat all people with courtesy and sensitivity.



## Honesty

We act on the fundamental principles of honesty and integrity. We are an institution devoted to the pursuit of excellence in student learning and teaching, research and service. We respect the value and dignity of each person.



## Courage

We are committed to the highest standards of ethical behaviour and the effective management of the organisation and its staff. Staff and affiliates are encouraged to be proactive, seek to continuously improve, and to suggest new and innovative approaches.



## Sustainability

We acknowledge the importance of responsible and ethical management for the long-term success of the university and the protection of the environment. It is the behaviour and actions of our staff and affiliates that make ACU an outstanding organisation.

**BALLARAT CAMPUS**



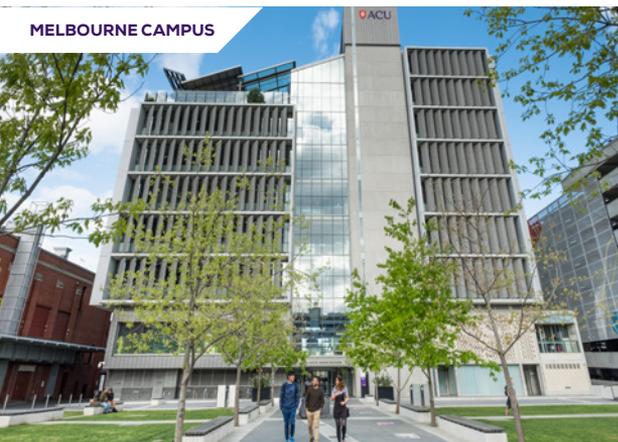
**BRISBANE CAMPUS**



**CANBERRA CAMPUS**



**MELBOURNE CAMPUS**



**NORTH SYDNEY CAMPUS**



**STRATHFIELD CAMPUS**



**ADELAIDE CAMPUS**



**ROME CAMPUS**



**BLACKTOWN CAMPUS**



OFFICE OF PLANNING AND  
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

[www.acu.edu.au/strategicplan](http://www.acu.edu.au/strategicplan)

ADELAIDE

MELBOURNE

BALLARAT

NORTH SYDNEY

BLACKTOWN

STRATHFIELD

BRISBANE

ROME

CANBERRA



*ACU is committed to sustainability.  
This document is printed on paper  
sourced from PEFC-certified,  
sustainably managed forests.*

*Disclaimer (February 2021): Information  
correct at time of printing. The University  
reserves the right to amend, cancel or  
otherwise modify the content without notice.*