Winners revealed
Playing table tennis at the Olympics, preserving Australia’s water supply, and getting Indigenous kids reading... meet our Alumni Award winners.

Q&A with Oscar Martin
One-on-one with the co-founder of Pedestrian.TV.

Life in the conflict zone
Seeing the world as a Red Cross nurse.
Hundreds of Indigenous kids around Australia have taken up reading thanks to ACU graduate and alumni award winner Daniel Billing.
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ALUMNI AWARD WINNER
When I joined Australian Catholic University, I set out my idea of what would make us successful. We would need to be supremely good at only two things – at being Catholic, and at being a university. There could be no choosing between these two ambitions – both matter and both are inextricably linked.

This idea has been embodied by some of the great universities of Europe and America for centuries, though it has taken some getting used to in Australia, where we are not so familiar with the tradition of Catholic higher education.

Pursuing success has required a dedicated effort, on multiple fronts. We’ve gone out in the world with a stronger focus on research, and developed a deeper engagement with the international community of scholars and global industries. We’ve grown our student numbers, introduced a Core Curriculum, and worked to give all Australians equal access to higher education.

Most recently, we’ve conducted an inward-looking exercise to better understand ourselves and our strengths and aspirations – what do we want to achieve, and why?

We’ve now reached the stage where we can confidently outline a new brand proposition for ACU, the essence of which is captured by the phrase ‘Impact through empathy’.

‘Impact’ signifies that we are a community of staff, students and partners who are dedicated to making a real and positive difference in society as a whole, as well as in the lives of the individuals with whom we interact.

‘Empathy’ reflects how our desire to improve society and the lives of individuals isn’t born of some purely intellectual, social, or political position. Instead, it’s from a fundamental conviction of every human being’s value.

Of course, inherent in the expression ‘Impact through empathy’ is a profound reference to our Catholic values. But even beyond that, these words have a relevance and appeal that is truly universal and urgent in society – and I hope they will guide us towards engaging meaningfully with people of all backgrounds and religious beliefs.

‘Impact through empathy’ has inspired us to evolve the way we communicate. But the implications of this brand proposition run even deeper than that. It will truly shape the reality we live in: from curricula, to our research priorities, to our choice of partnerships, and how we interact with each other.

I am very proud of what Australian Catholic University has achieved so far. I believe this new brand proposition will give us a valuable clarity of focus in the exciting years ahead.

Professor Greg Craven AO, GCSG
Vice-Chancellor and President
A greater vision.
Through greater clarity.

We’ve taken a closer look at who we are, and why we do what we do. As a result we have a new brand proposition, the essence of which is captured by the phrase ‘Impact through empathy’.

At ACU we pride ourselves on offering a welcoming environment for everyone – irrespective of their socio-cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs or aspirations.

At the same time, we are a university committed to standing for something clear. We want to be the university for people who look beneath the surface, and are stronger than external expectations and superficial measures of success. For people who march to the beat of a different drum – a beat that comes from within themselves. It pushes them to pursue a lifelong journey of personal growth, to engage with curiosity and generosity of spirit, and ask what makes a life worth living.

As a university, we have a number of strengths and characteristics we can truly call our own. In the rebrand of ACU, we’ve distilled these to tell a bigger story of who we are. They form our ‘pillars’ – our points of distinctiveness, and our commitment to our students, staff and community.

Nathan Lansakara
ACU student
01

We see the whole person

We’re an inclusive community where everyone is valued and encouraged to thrive to the full extent of their human and intellectual potential.

02

The world is our campus

We’re a dynamic institution with a fast growing national and international footprint. We strive to put our students and staff at the centre of a vibrant global network of scholars, partnerships and opportunities.
03
We’re deeply engaged with industry and society

We’re closely integrated into our communities and professions, working with them to answer the big questions, as well as to create tangible results with true mutual value.

04 Education with a bigger purpose

Our intellectual pursuits are inspired by a heartfelt ethical position: we stand up for people in need and causes that matter on our quest for a better common future for humanity.

In order to be agents of change in the world, we all need to see life through the eyes of others. We believe that our role as a university is to inspire and equip people to make a difference – and that means cultivating their ability to act and think empathetically.
Daniel Billing’s light bulb moment came in the form of his then seven-year-old son, Luka. The ACU social work graduate was inspired to get Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids excited about books and improve their literacy rates when he saw how reluctant reader Luka first responded to using a mobile device. “He started out just being fascinated by the technology, before becoming more absorbed in reading actual stories,” Daniel said. “I thought, we’ve got to try using technology as a way of connecting kids to the power of storytelling.” From this small idea, the Indigenous Reading Project (IRP) was born.
In 2015, only 31 per cent of Indigenous kids from remote communities met the national minimum standard for reading, compared to 93 per cent of non-Indigenous children. Inspired to turn this around, Daniel’s not-for-profit literacy program lends Indigenous kids their own Android tablet with access to the IRP cloud-based library, which is filled with more than 1,000 carefully curated e-books. With a helping hand from teachers across Australia, the young participants’ reading progress is monitored closely and if they improve, the tablet is theirs to keep, otherwise it’s handed back like a regular library book and given to another child.

“We can see the number of books they’re borrowing and how often they’re borrowing. We can even see how many pages they’re turning in each book,” Daniel said. “Plus, we get feedback from their parents, teachers, and the kids themselves. We reinforce to the kids that this is an achievement program. They know they have to put in the work if they want to succeed.”

Like Daniel’s own son, reading didn’t come easily to him as a kid. “I grew up in a working-class family in rural Queensland. There wasn’t a lot of reading going on at home and I wasn’t the greatest school student,” he said. “I started reading books when I was about 18. I remember it was such a leap forward for me when I discovered all sorts of things about the wider world through reading that I couldn’t learn at home or where I lived. With books, you go places you can’t go and you meet people you can’t meet. You just realise there’s so much more than your immediate environment and that’s a really powerful thing.”

IRP is now seeing big results. “When they start, most of the kids are reading for less than an hour a week. On average, the kids bump up their reading time by 110 per cent,” Daniel said. “For some, that might be from one to two hours a week. This might not sound like a lot, but for a below-average, reluctant reader, that’s a big achievement. Some kids find a new confidence with their reading abilities and it changes their whole attitude, not just to reading, but to their self-worth at school. They start to see themselves as capable learners, rather than being at the margins of the classroom.”

Daniel has high hopes for IRP and is aiming to introduce even more kids to the program.

“I would love for us to build the biggest children’s digital library in the country and I want us to be supporting more than 1,000 kids on a permanent basis,” he said. “Our method is a proven one. We’ve done it with almost 900 kids now and we know it can work.”

Daniel said that running IRP as a voluntary organisation without secure funding was difficult, but the satisfaction of helping so many kids made it worthwhile. “Talking to parents after their kid has had a breakthrough, or thinking about what the program might mean for a family that’s never had a child at university or has difficult family circumstances is quite moving,” he said. “Having literacy bedded down means that child will have a chance to progress through school and make their way in the world and not get locked in a cycle of disadvantage, that’s the biggest thing. It is unbelievable seeing a kid just grow and take off when everything around you is saying it’s too expensive, it won’t work, this is going to fail. I still get really excited about what we do.”

While he didn’t know just how much work would be involved when he first started IRP, Daniel said he had no regrets. “If you’ve got a unique and special idea, don’t be frightened to test it out. If you believe in something, you should be absolutely fearless in pursuing it.”

Winning the ACU Alumni Community Engagement Award was a welcome surprise for Daniel. “Being acknowledged for your work motivates you to keep going and it helps shine a light on what you’re doing,” he said. “I’m not the sort of person who’d nominate themselves for an award, I’m a get-stuff-done guy. But it’s important to acknowledge these awards and I’m very humbled and very proud to have gone to ACU.”

To find out more about the work of IRP, visit irp.org.au
For most of us, a game of table tennis is about mucking around in a garage with friends, or something you did once or twice in primary school and haven’t given much thought to since. But one quick YouTube search of professional table tennis players giving it their all and you know this sport is as athletic and sweat-inducing as they come – just ask Milly Tapper.

While she recently pulled off the incredible feat of being the first Australian to compete in both the Olympics and Paralympics, table tennis pro Milly admits she is used to defending her game. “Everyone is always surprised it’s a real sport. So many people say to me, ‘Yeah, I can take you on’ until they understand what it’s all about,” she said. “I wish people understood how difficult it is.”

In spite of her disability, table tennis came easily to Milly when she picked up her first bat in primary school. Diagnosed with Erb’s Palsy resulting from complications during her birth, Milly suffered significant nerve damage in her right shoulder and arm, which restricted development, movement and strength. “The added benefit of table tennis for me is it’s a one-hand dominant sport,” she said. “I’m used to doing things one handed, so the technique came easier.” Not that she ever thought back in primary school that she’d one day be representing Australia as a professional table tennis player. “Originally I dreamt of making it to the Olympics with athletics like Cathy Freeman,” she said.

Finding her niche with table tennis and making both the Olympic and Paralympic teams in 2016 took Milly years of focused training – she is far from an overnight success. “It was a whole 16 years’ worth of trying to achieve at each qualification event, and trying and failing or falling short. Then to actually have it happen, I had to ask myself, ‘Is this for real?’” she said.

While she didn’t medal at either of the Games, Milly remains optimistic and proud of her achievements. “I knew I had done absolutely everything possible beforehand to prepare myself. That’s what helps me sleep well at night. I know I couldn’t have done any better,” she said. “Plus, at the Olympics I drew a Brazilian player who was 200 world ranks ahead of me. It was really tough, but I played a lot better than what I should have. Just to enjoy the whole experience and have a stadium of 5,000 people cheering for every point was incredible.”

When Milly isn’t in training, she’s a proud supporter of Standing Tall, a mentoring program in her home town of Hamilton in rural Victoria. “It’s a fantastic program. When I go home I love to talk with the kids or visit their schools to see how they’re doing. Standing Tall makes sure the kids in my town have the best opportunities they can get,” she said.

Even with all of her incredible achievements, winning the ACU Young Alumni of the Year award came as a total surprise to the Bachelor of Exercise Science graduate. “It was very exciting when I found out. I don’t do what I do for accolades, so to be recognised was a huge honour for me,” Milly said. “It’s still funny to think that people look up to me. I’m just doing what I would normally do.”
Winner: ACU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Award
Old solutions to new problems

Story: Christina Sexton

Right from the start, Bradley Moggridge was a scientist at heart. “As a little boy, it began with dinosaurs and went from there,” said the hydrogeologist and ACU graduate.

These days, Bradley’s left the dinosaurs behind to focus his attention on Australia’s water resources, after a slight detour in geology. “I always had a passion for earth science,” he said. “But through my geology studies, I found myself in the Great Sandy Desert looking for uranium in a national park and it just didn’t feel right. While I was there, it clicked that this was probably not my career. I came home and switched to environmental science at ACU.”

Bradley was in ACU’s very first environmental science cohort, and is still in touch with some of his former lecturers and classmates. A masters in hydrogeology soon followed and he has since begun a PhD.

Credible scientific research is a critical part of Bradley’s studies into Australian water systems, but as a Murri from the Kamilaroi nation in north-west NSW, blending traditional Indigenous knowledge with western science is at the heart of his work.

“I’ve always been interested in seeing if these two elements could work together to help us better manage our natural resources,” he said. “This is me doing my bit for my ancestors. They managed the landscape for thousands and thousands of years sustainably and we don’t have the same concept of water management at the moment. My drive is to change that.”

Bradley has always believed in looking to the past to secure our future. “Australia is the driest inhabited continent on Earth and we have access to the oldest living culture on the planet,” he said, “and we don’t listen to it and we don’t allow that knowledge to get to the table. My journey is making sure that knowledge is heard.”

Bradley said he had faced some initial skepticism to his work, but he knows he’s on the right path. “People understand what I’m all about after they hear me talk, and I’m trying to build a body of evidence that demonstrates how Indigenous knowledge can inform water management through my PhD,” he said. “While there’s still some doubt about what I’m trying to do, I worked for the Australian Government for many years and speak their language. I am scientifically trained and I know what I’m talking about.”

Bradley’s latest achievement is winning ACU’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Award, which he described as a humbling experience. “It’s an honour to be recognised in this category,” he said. “A lot of my work is making sure Aboriginal people get a fair shot and are respected for who they are. Everything is for my people; the ones who’ve gone before me as well as the next generation.”
Q&A with Oscar Martin, co-founder of Pedestrian.TV

Story: Alisse Grafitti
Tell me about Pedestrian.TV

Today Pedestrian is Australia’s largest youth-focused media brand, or website. We basically create pop culture news, and news relevant for a younger audience. I guess you could look at it as a younger version of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, written in a tone that you would use to talk about news with your friends. It seems to have struck a chord because it’s relevant, funny, smart, and all those great things.

Was that the plan from the start?

It definitely wasn’t the original idea, and that’s the beautiful thing about business, who knows where it’s going to end up. We always say even if your idea is bad, if you’re passionate and believe in it and work hard at it, you will end up somewhere better than not doing anything at all.

The original idea for Pedestrian was a DVD magazine back in 2005. This was before the days of YouTube, before you could jump online and watch an interview with a band or model, or anything you wanted. We filmed a whole bunch of content with people that we liked, and we went around and pitched to advertisers to advertise on this brand new medium, the DVD.

We started putting some content online and we were like, hang on, we can put this content online and find advertisers to advertise on there, and it’s been a much smarter solution, and better for the environment too.

And we’re on track for over $13.5 million revenue this year.

Is it true that you first started working out of your bedroom?

Yeah, the first office was at my mother’s. I lived with my mum and we turned the bedroom into our office, and the lounge room, and everywhere else. And then we went to my business partner Chris’ parent’s basement, and then to my dad’s. And then we got an office in Surry Hills and it went from there.

What’s your role in the company?

The official title of Chris Wirasinha, (co-founder) and myself is managing director. So we are across the entire business. Our main goals are to drive the business forward, grow it, look for all sorts of different revenue opportunities, have good staff, and make sure they are happy.

What gives you the most amount of satisfaction in the work that you do?

I think it’s the people that we work with to be honest. We’ve brought together a bunch of very talented staff, so I get my satisfaction in seeing them grow in their roles and get better and really drive the business. We are nothing without our staff. There’s also the satisfaction of growing a company from nothing to something pretty significant. Making my parents proud and all that.

What will you be working on in the future?

Philanthropy. We launched a section of Pedestrian called ‘Pedestrian Help’. Our first initiative was to raise money for Youth OffThe Streets by putting on a music event and auction. I’ve been so fortunate in my life and my next phase will be centred around giving back and helping others. I’ve got ideas to launch a clothing label that can be paid for with charitable donations... I have a huge desire to raise awareness and funding for cancer research after recently losing my father to a year-long battle with the disease, and watching my mother fight breast cancer. Oh and I’d also love to turn a studio in my house into an artist residency program... where artists are given the studio at no cost in exchange for donating a work, which would then be sold for charity. I also like to paint, so I see a lot of colour in my future!

Oscar Martin completed a Bachelor of Commerce at ACU.

(L) Photo: Oscar and colleague at Pedestrian. TV. (R) Photo: Oscar and co-founder Chris Wirasinha. Image supplied.
The high-tech language of emotion

Just 20 years ago sharing pictures meant ordering double prints from a roll of film – a laughably antiquated notion for your average digital native. But the way images are now exchanged instantly and effortlessly online has led to a huge shift in how we communicate, and it’s a change that’s left children from disadvantaged backgrounds particularly vulnerable. According to Professor Kathy Mills from ACU’s Learning Sciences Institute Australia (LSIA), these kids need critical literacy skills to help them express their emotions through digital modes and media in order to thrive. Enter the SELFIE Research Project.

Professor Mills’ Strengthening Effective Language of Feelings In Education (SELFIE) Research Project gives primary school students from low socio-economic backgrounds the opportunity to learn how to express their emotions through digital technology. Working closely with teachers, principals, and the not-for-profit media company Big Picture Industries, young project participants are being taught how to professionally produce their own digital images, as well as posters, animations and films.

“In this day and age it’s really important for children to be able to communicate in the online world, where emotional expression is not about writing with a pen and paper,” Professor Mills said. While it’s easy to assume these kids are just playing around taking selfies during class, the project runs much deeper. Professor Mills’ aim is to improve long-term academic and social outcomes for these children because often they encounter more threats to their emotional wellbeing.

“The research shows that middle-class children have a much higher linguistic vocabulary,” she said. “It’s the kids from low socio-economic and socially disadvantaged backgrounds that actually need a broadened repertoire of vocabulary to discuss their emotions.”

While the kids have fun taking part in SELFIE Research Project activities and relish the chance to work with experts and use professional equipment, Professor Mills and her team ensure everything they do is purposeful and connected to the students’ regular school work.

“What we’re teaching them to do with digital imagery, animations, and activities on the iPads relates back to what their teachers are working on with their writing,” she said. “It all links to their curriculum. Using different modes and media, it’s about these children learning to show their emotions in new ways.”

Primary school is tough for any child, not to mention their parents and teachers, but Professor Mills and her team are seeing big results from the project.
“We know with NAPLAN that kids have to be able to write well. This means creating characters that show emotions,” she said. “So, instead of the children just writing 'The boy was sad', we’re teaching them to show how the character was sad. They’ve learnt to write things like he turned away, he slumped forward, or tears began to well up and trickle down his cheeks. We also work a lot on body language and facial expressions in their descriptions and visual work, teaching them how to actually show rather than just tell how a character feels.”

Teachers working with Professor Mills have noticed the project making an impact. “They’ve told me their students’ vocabulary has really improved and they don’t have to do as much of the heavy lifting,” she said. Professor Mills said these children are living in a very different world to the one many of us grew up in. “If you ask the kids in this age group what they want to be, many of them will say something like ‘I want to be a YouTuber’.”

And while they may not be old enough for social media profiles, sharing images among their friendship networks, often through iPads, has already begun.

“In today’s society, kids are bombarded with more images than ever before, so they really need those critical literacy skills to be able to discern what’s useful and what’s appropriate,” she said.
When most of us would run from crisis and conflict, Ruth Jebb has spent more than 10 years running towards it. The Brisbane-based nurse and midwife has been deployed to some of the world’s most dangerous hotspots with the Australian Red Cross. She’s fallen asleep to gunfire ringing in her ears, and survived a carjacking in Sudan. This year she was awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal for exceptional courage and devotion to the sick, wounded or disabled in conflict and disaster zones.
What inspired you to become a nurse and aid worker?
After very early exposure to the realities of poverty and humanitarian need in the world, I decided at a young age that I wanted to do something meaningful with my life. I was just five years old when I told my grandfather I wanted to help sick children in Africa. I never gave up on this dream and since I joined the Red Cross, I haven’t looked back.

What was it like when you first joined the Red Cross?
I have to confess; I was one of those people with a romantic ideal of what I was about to experience going into my first mission. I can honestly say this dramatically changed the minute I arrived on my first deployment. Crashed planes from the week before lined the runway when I landed and continual gunfire kept me awake that first night. I was homesick and completely overwhelmed.

However, the minute I started working and doing what I was there to do – caring for the large numbers of wounded combatants and civilians who had spilled over the border from the conflict in South Sudan – this completely changed. For me this was a defining moment, which became my drive to keep going.

Your work with the Red Cross has taken you around the world – Kenya, the Philippines, Haiti. Which country made the biggest impact?
In 2007 I was deployed with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on a nine-month mission to Gereida, Darfur, in the western part of Sudan. Gereida was home to nearly 145,000 internally displaced persons. Most had moved into camps to ensure they had access to basic necessities, such as shelter, food, clean water, and healthcare.

My job was to manage ICRC's Therapeutic Feeding Centre. I was responsible for managing referrals, admissions, discharges, transfers, and the nutritional and medical care of malnourished children and lactating and pregnant women. It was a challenging mission, not only a result of looking after so many undernourished and often dying children, but also because of the ongoing security risks that were a reality of our day-to-day life.

On one occasion, my vehicle was hijacked at gunpoint while I was still in it. I was allowed to leave the vehicle unhurt, but that incident had an ongoing and significant impact on our ability to do what we were there to do. This was definitely the hardest and in many ways the most rewarding mission I've done.

What are the biggest challenges you've faced as an aid worker?
There are so many challenges to humanitarian work. It can be incredibly frustrating to be held back by security incidents that involve life and death situations among the community I'm there to assist. And looking after critically ill patients with limited resources is always hard, particularly in developing contexts.

What has brought you the most satisfaction?
I realised early on in my career that I had far more to learn and gain, than I had to offer. I've had moments where I've asked myself, 'What on earth am I doing?' But each time these feelings have completely paled in significance when I begin to care for those in need. There is an overwhelming feeling of satisfaction that is often difficult to describe as it also comes with an awareness of not being able to do enough. The difference you make is not always visible until you stop and look at the individuals you've helped.

How did it feel to be awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal?
It was both overwhelming and incredibly humbling. Humanitarian work has been my passion for more than a decade now, so to be acknowledged with an award of this prestige is such an honor.

Ruth Jebb studied midwifery at ACU.
Q&A with Zachary Thomas, archaeologist

Story: Alisse Grafitti
Archaeology is often romanticised, traveling the world and stumbling across long-lost artifacts etc... is it really like that?

It would be a bit cynical of me not to admit that there are elements of that, yes. But it’s important to note that even Indiana Jones (whom I’m professionally obligated to mention at some point) would have looked a bit outdated even in the 1930s when most of his movies are set. Archaeology in the years leading up to World War II was starting to take shape as the profession it is today. It’s a combination of hard physical work, careful recording, data processing, scientific analysis, theory and intensive library research. We’re obligated to excavate and record the results with care and precision, which is interesting but obviously very different from nabbing an idol from a Mayan temple. Archaeology can seem a long way from that romantic ideal, but that’s ultimately a good thing, and it’s still a lot of fun and very satisfying.

Why is archaeology important?
Archaeology is important because understanding humanity is important, and the state of the world now is the sum of all that history of humanity that has come before. At the moment the Middle East is facing a real crisis in terms of the preservation of its incredible but very vulnerable heritage, especially in places like Syria and Iraq. The situation there has really thrown light on why archaeology and archaeologists are indispensable.

What got you interested in archaeology?
I started thinking about going into archaeology when I was studying theology. I was focusing on biblical studies and the most interesting thing about the Bible is without a doubt the cultural and historical context it comes from. That was my first exposure to the archaeology of ancient Israel, and I discovered it was both complex and fascinating.

Where is the dig you have been working on over the northern hemisphere summer?
This year will be my second summer at Tel Abel Beth Maacah, in the Huleh Valley in the far north of Israel. The word ‘tel’ means ‘mound’ in Hebrew, so it’s basically a large artificial hill made out of human occupation. The site has a long history of occupation, perhaps as far back as the third millennium BC, but its main period as a city as far as we can tell was in the Middle Bronze Age and the earlier part of the Iron Age.

Have you found what you expected?
Effectively, yes, but there are always complications that emerge in archaeology that can affect what a site will reveal about itself. At Tel Abel Beth Maacah for example, the highest part of the mound, which would usually be a prime target for excavation, is partly covered by a couple of old Israeli army bunkers, so that’s a bit frustrating.

What has been the most exciting moment for you at this site?
Last year I supervised a section of my area right near those old army bunkers, and we found part of a large wall from the Iron Age. It could be a defensive wall, which means there was likely something serious going on around this part of the tel. This happened over the course of a week, mind you.

What’s like living with your colleagues during the dig?
We live on a kibbutz (originally communal farming villages) during the season. Obviously it doesn’t have all the comforts of home but I do get to dig with a very enjoyable group of people who I like working with very much. The kibbutz is very pleasant and we have some fun in our downtime.

Who are your colleagues?
It’s a relatively small group compared to other excavations in Israel and has many graduate students like myself, mostly from Israel and the US. You also get volunteers who come just for the love of digging or the experience. Our fearless leaders who direct the dig are Professor Bob Mullins of Azusa Pacific University in Los Angeles and Drs Nava Panitz-Cohen and Naama Yahalom-Mack of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

What is a typical day on the dig like?
Our excavation takes place in the Israeli summer, so to avoid the heat we have to wake up very early, around 4.30am, dig until breakfast, and then dig again until lunchtime. We then return to the kibbutz and after lunch do office work and wash all the pottery we collected the previous day (you find a lot of pottery). We also sort the pottery according to the period it’s from. After dinner we sometimes have a lecture, or just chill out.

What’s your favourite part of the job?
Finding something that contributes to the understanding of the site, and being able to discuss it with my learned colleagues right then and there. I also like that even as you’re just moving dirt, you’re always learning.

And the least favourite?
Getting up so early. Even if you’re a morning person it can be tough, and I’m not, but you get used to it (more or less).

Zachary Thomas completed a Bachelor of Theology at ACU.

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Zachary Thomas completed a Bachelor of Theology at ACU.
As a child growing up in Australia, Toltu Tufa's father made sure she learnt Oromo, a macro language spoken in parts of Ethiopia.

Yet when she was asked to help teach other children, she realised there were no books or learning resources printed in Oromo at all.

Despite being the fourth most widely spoken language in Africa, it is spoken predominantly in Ethiopia, and was outlawed under the dictatorship of Haile Selassie.

"Speaking the language attracted a prison sentence, and publishing in the language would have attracted the death penalty," said Toltu.

"Many people ended up escaping, leaving Ethiopia, and since the ban was lifted in 1991, there has been a real focus on literature for adults and trying to reclaim history, but there hasn’t been a focus on children."

She launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise $50,000 to print several children's books, and raised $120,000 in six weeks. Demand came not just from Australia, but from every continent.

"It’s mainly refugee communities, people who have escaped persecution and made a home in another country and are trying to maintain the language. Passing on that language becomes very important to those families, particularly the parents."

Toltu flew around the world to communities that had supported the appeal, to get their feedback on her ideas, and make sure she was on the right track.

"These are African children and it was very important that they see pictures and reflections of themselves in literature that's about them," she said.

"I wanted to preserve a culture and recognise that everyone has their own story. I involved people in developing the content, and I went and thanked them personally and brought them the books and the materials, and so people really felt a personal connection and they were really excited, that's how it spread even more."

"Refugee communities in Kenya and in Egypt contacted me and said we have no money because we are refugees, but we would like to pool some money together and hold a big party to raise awareness, and I’ll never forget that they had 500 people turn up to that event."

Toltu Tufa is completing a Master of Professional Psychology at ACU.
Older people still have sex but intimacy and affection are more important

Sexuality encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction and what we think, feel and believe about them. It has been a research focus for over a hundred years, and highlighted as an important part of the human experience. Since the first studies on human sexuality in the 1940s, research has consistently demonstrated that sexual interest and activity are sustained well into old age. However, only a fraction of the research has explored sexuality in the later years of life.

Most of the early research on sexuality and ageing looked at the sexual behaviours and biology of older adults, generally ignoring the wider concept of sexuality. When researchers did discuss sexuality more broadly, many referred to sexuality as the domain of the young, and emphasised this was a major barrier to the study of sexuality in older adults.
Sexuality in later life ignored
Towards the end of the 20th century, research expanded to include attitudes towards sexual expression in older adults, and the biological aspects of sexuality and ageing. Consistently, the research showed sexual expression is possible for older adults, and sustained sexual activity into old age is more likely for those who had active sex lives earlier in life.

By the late 1980s, there was a strong focus on the biological aspects of ageing. This expanded to include the reasons behind sexual decline. The research found these were highly varied and many older adults remain sexually active well into later life.

But despite evidence adults continue to desire and pursue sexual expression well into later life, both society in general and many health professionals have inadvertently helped perpetuate the myth of the asexual older person. This can happen through an unintentional lack of recognition, or an avoidance of a topic that makes some people uncomfortable.

Why does this matter?
These ageist attitudes can have an impact on older adults not only in their personal lives, but also in relation to their health needs. Examples include the failure of medical personnel to test for sexually transmissible infections in older populations, or the refusal of patients to take prescribed medications because of adverse impacts on erection rigidity. We need more health practitioners to be conscious of and incorporate later life sexuality into the regular health care of older adults. We still have a long way to go.

By ignoring the importance of sexuality for many older adults, we fail to acknowledge the role that sexuality plays in many people's relationships, health, wellbeing and quality of life. Failure to address sexual issues with older patients may lead to or exacerbate marital problems and result in the withdrawal of one or both partners from other forms of intimacy. Failure to discuss sexual health needs with patients can also lead to incorrect medical diagnoses, such as the misdiagnosis of dementia in an older patient with HIV.

It's not about ‘the deed’ itself
In a recent survey examining sexuality in older people, adults aged between 51 and 89 were asked a series of open-ended questions about sexuality, intimacy and desire, and changes to their experiences in mid-life and later life. This information was then used to create a series of statements that participants were asked to group together in ways they felt made sense, and to rank the importance of each statement.

The most important themes that emerged from the research encompassed things such as partner compatibility, intimacy and pleasure, and factors that influence the experience of desire or the way people express themselves sexually. Although people still considered sexual expression and sexual urges to be important, they were not the focus for many people over 45.

Affectionate and intimate behaviours, trust, respect and compatibility were more important aspects of sexuality than intercourse for most people. Overall, the message was one about the quality of the experience and the desire for connection with a partner, and not about the frequency of sexual activities. People did discuss barriers to sexual expression and intimacy, such as illness, mood or lack of opportunity or a suitable partner, but many felt these were not something they focused on in their own lives. This is in line with the data that shows participants place a greater importance on intimacy and affectionate behaviours, such as touching, hugging and kissing, rather than intercourse.

These results help us challenge the existing stereotype of the 'asexual older person' and the idea intercourse is necessary to be considered sexually active. They also make it clear researchers and health practitioners need to focus on a greater variety of ways we can improve the experience and expressions of sexuality and intimacy for adults from mid-life onwards beyond medical interventions (like Viagra) that focus on prolonging or enhancing intercourse.

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Let’s face it, first impressions count online.
We live in an age where most of us have an online presence. Many of us have numerous accounts on social and professional networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn. And singles among us are increasingly turning online to find love.

So how do the images we post of ourselves online influence the first impressions others form of us?

While it’s often said we shouldn’t judge a book by its cover, the reality is that we all do. It takes only the briefest glance of a face for us to form first impressions on a range of social attributes, such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, likeability and competence.

And it isn’t all in the eye of the beholder. There is a high degree of consensus in the first impressions we form of others from their facial appearance. This means many people will often form the same impression of another person based on their appearance.

**First impressions count**

It goes without saying that the extent to which you’re evaluated as attractive, trustworthy, likeable and competent can influence important personal outcomes, such as your love life and employment prospects.

But perhaps less intuitive is the fact that first impressions formed on the basis of an individual’s facial appearance can have important consequences for societal outcomes.

Within politics, first impressions of competence predict electoral success. Political candidates with more competent-looking faces win more votes and are more likely to win elections.

In business, competent-looking CEOs are more likely to be hired by large corporations and receive larger salaries. In the judicial system, individuals who have untrustworthy-looking faces are more likely to receive guilty verdicts.

**Face facts**

Given first impressions predict such important personal and societal outcomes, we’d want them to be highly accurate. The problem is, they’re not. Research has shown that people judge both criminals and non-criminals similarly in terms of their perceived trustworthiness.

The lack of accuracy in our first impressions is further illustrated by inconsistency in the nature of first impressions assigned to different images of the exact same face.

Consider the first impressions of facial attractiveness as an example. Stable, biologically based features of a face, namely symmetry, averageness (mathematically average for the population) and sexual dimorphism (masculinity and femininity) are well established markers of facial attractiveness. These are all attributes that remain constant across different images of a person’s face.

But research shows that separate images of the same face will often receive very different attractiveness ratings. The variability in attractiveness ratings across images of a single person’s face is on par with the variability in attractiveness ratings assigned to faces of different individuals.

Similar findings have also been observed for other first impressions, including trustworthiness and competence.

How is it that different images of the same face can create such different first impressions?

The answer lies in the fact that an important determinant of the first impressions we form from an image of a face, comes from changeable aspects of our facial appearance. That is, variations in our facial expression, facial viewpoint and eye gaze direction.

Facial expressions in particular have a profound influence on our first impressions. Smiling faces are evaluated more positively on a range of social attributes, including approachability, trustworthiness, and attractiveness.

The most negative evaluations are assigned to faces conveying negative emotions, such as anger. Even subtle cues to positive and negative emotion influence first impressions assigned to emotionally neutral faces in a similar manner. It’s an issue that those – including myself – who have been accused of suffering from ‘resting bitch face’, would be all too aware of.

So why do facial expressions play such an important role in guiding our first impressions?

**Express yourself, facially**

Facial expressions are important social signals giving information about the internal state and behavioural intentions of others. The ability to accurately infer this information from a momentary glance of a face enables us to regulate our social behaviour appropriately.

This capacity can be important for survival. For instance, the ability to rapidly detect emotions that convey threat, such as anger, can enable you to flee an attacker.

It appears that the extent to which a face is perceived to convey threat, as communicated by one’s facial expression, is directly related to our first impressions. For example, faces that are perceived as more threatening are considered less approachable than faces conveying non-threatening emotions.

From an evolutionary perspective, using this information when forming first impressions is clearly adaptive when we encounter strangers in person. This is particularly the case when it’s the only information we have available to guide our interactions.

But when we are forming first impressions of others from a brief glance of their images online, it clearly has the potential to lead us astray.

**Putting your best face forward**

So what does this mean for how we should present ourselves online if we want to make a good first impression?

The message is simple. The key to making a good first impression, whether we’re wanting to be perceived as attractive, competent, trustworthy or likeable all rests with a smiling face.

So if you’re looking for love, or on the lookout for a new job, go for the snap that makes you feel your best.

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Dr Megan Willis is a senior lecturer in the School of Psychology.
Terri Carberry

Terri Carberry is one ACU student who knows the difference a scholarship can make. Currently studying for a Bachelor of Nursing, she is a proud Wiradjuri woman from regional NSW who is determined to make an impact. “I want to help break the cycle of generational issues that young Aboriginal people face within my community, such as struggling with drugs and alcohol, domestic violence, and juvenile crimes,” Terri said.

So far, Terri has been awarded the Sisters of Charity Scholarship, the Dooleys Lidcombe Catholic Club Undergraduate Bursary, and the Mary MacKillop Foundation Scholarship. “After high school, I worked hard to save money to follow my dream of becoming a nurse,” she said. “These scholarships have allowed me to focus on my studies without having the added stress of financial hardship.”

In spite of the challenges she faced, Terri always knew what a tertiary education meant to her family. “Studying at ACU is a huge deal for me and my family as I’m the first one to graduate Year 12 and head off to uni,” she said. “I hope my success at university will continue to encourage and inspire them to follow their dreams. It’s paving a new path for all of us to follow.

“I chose nursing because of the opportunities it provides for me to give back to my community. My goal for the future is to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in rural and remote areas, specialising in paediatrics and midwifery.”

Creating Opportunity Fund

ACU’s newly established Creating Opportunity Fund helps students in need receive the education they deserve. By generously supporting our fund, you will be directly helping talented young people unlock their potential and explore their gifts and passions without limitations.

Since 2008, the number of ACU students has doubled from 16,000 to 32,000 – and the demand for scholarships has not kept pace. While we already offer nearly 400 scholarships for worthy recipients across all disciplines, the financial burden of full-time study has continued to increase. For some of our prospective students, university feels more out of reach than ever.

Last year, Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Greg Craven announced a contribution of $1 million from the University to establish the fund. Now, thanks to generous contributions from our alumni and other donors, the Creating Opportunity Fund has already begun dispersing scholarships. We will gradually increase the number awarded each year and our vision is to create at least 100 more scholarships for commencing and continuing students.

Preparations are underway for the 2017 annual appeal and we will reach out to our alumni later this year. To really make this a community project, for every gift you make we will match your contribution, dollar for dollar, doubling the impact of your donation.

Your support will help us continue building a university that values justice, equity, and the dignity of all human beings.

To make a donation, please visit acu.edu.au/giving.
A place where people go places

At ACU, it’s education, but with a bigger purpose. Our events, research, partnerships and everything we do is about seeing the world through the eyes of others. It’s about standing up for people in need, and causes that matter.

Scene on the street
Melbourne has long been known as the street art capital of Australia and ACU added to that canvas with a whopping 28-metre-long and 2.5-metre-high mural at Knox Place in Melbourne Central earlier this year. Hand painted by a team of talented artists over five days, the mural featured our graduates who are redefining success beyond income or possessions.

United by diversity
Have the courage to be curious about the culture and history of others, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said at ACU’s Parliamentary Interfaith Prayer Breakfast in Canberra in August. Mr Turnbull, Opposition Leader Bill Shorten and Greens Leader Senator Richard Di Natale each addressed more than 200 parliamentarians, leaders from 24 religious faiths, and other guests at the National Press Club. Five religious leaders delivered a prayer of faith and contemplation from their own tradition.

New leadership roles for ACU
Father Anthony Casamento CSMA has been appointed inaugural ACU Vice President, responsible for the Catholic-related operations of the University and bringing together new and existing Catholic functions. He will simultaneously hold the position of Director, Identity and Mission.

Professor Hayden Ramsay has been appointed Pro Vice-Chancellor Assisting the Vice-Chancellor and President and Professor of Catholic Philosophy. He will undertake high-level strategic projects as directed by the Vice-Chancellor and President, and provide intellectual leadership, particularly in the fields of philosophy and ethics.

Community approach to prevent child sexual abuse
A whole-of-community approach to preventing child sexual abuse is necessary to change the social conditions that excuse, justify or promote child sexual abuse, and to challenge the notion that it cannot be prevented – according to the findings of a report from ACU’s Institute of Child Protection Studies. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse commissioned the report, Help-seeking needs and gaps for preventing child sexual abuse. It was released earlier this year and examines the needs of people who seek help for preventing child sexual abuse.

VC honoured in Order of Australia Awards
ACU Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Greg Craven, was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in the General Division within the Australian honours system, earlier this year. He was recognised for his ‘distinguished service to tertiary education through leadership and representational roles with a range of institutions, to the Catholic Church in Australia, and to constitutional law’. 
Got questions?
We’re waiting with the answers

Do you have questions about returning to study? We’re running postgraduate one-on-one sessions so you can get the answers you need.

Career goals, finances, family commitments – we understand your situation is unique. So it makes sense to discuss your study options one-on-one with someone who can help.

We have after-hour appointments available, and you can meet us in person, or talk over the phone – whatever works for you.

Contact us at postgraduate@acu.edu.au to schedule your appointment.

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