VICE-CHANCELLOR’S MESSAGE

As we proudly celebrated Australian Catholic University’s (ACU) 25th anniversary in 2015, we also took the time to reflect on the difference your engagement made during the year. Over the past 12 months, your philanthropic support has made a notable impact that is visible across the University. Importantly, it is also seen across our local and global communities.

Thanks to our generous supporters, we have awarded nearly $300,000 in scholarships, bursaries, prizes and awards to more than 200 students. Your contributions have helped support much-needed programs in Timor-Leste and the Thai-Burma border. And your belief in ACU’s Mission has continued to fuel life-changing opportunities.

Four Sisters – ACU graduates who are senior nurses at the Holy Cross Hospital and senior lecturers at the Holy Cross School of Health Sciences and the International Institute of Health Sciences, in Jaffna, Sri Lanka – is just one of many examples of how the ACU community is committed to serving the common good. The Sisters, who depict the spirit and values of our University, received the overall Alumni of the Year award at our inaugural Alumni Awards in October 2015.

Thanks to your engagement with ACU, that spirit continues to flourish in myriad ways.

There were many significant achievements in 2015: we hosted more than 500 delegates from 57 countries at the 25th General Assembly of the International Federation of Catholic Universities on the Melbourne Campus; opened the doors to our first overseas centre in Rome; reached record enrolment across our campuses; and forged ahead with research intensification in the areas of theology and philosophy, health, education, and social justice and the common good.

While there is much to celebrate, we are also looking ahead. With your support, we will continue to expand opportunities for students in 2016 through the provision of merit and equity scholarships. As part of this, we will launch an equity scholarship fund to provide support to even more students from disadvantaged backgrounds to attend ACU. I believe this is one of the key ways in which we can live our Mission of social justice and equity of access.

The ACU Foundation will continue to support our vital community engagement programs internationally. These include the Thai-Burma refugee program and, in Timor-Leste, the Future in Youth and Barefoot Nurses programs.

We plan to continue investigating society’s biggest questions in health, education and social justice through the groundbreaking work of our research institutes. With your involvement and support, we will continue developing leading research programs that will enable us to maintain our commitment to the lifelong pursuit of knowledge through research, critical enquiry and active discovery. Learn more about ACU’s specific research programs in this report, and contact your state Development Manager to discover more ways to support our research.

Before you turn the page to read some of the philanthropic highlights from the year, I would like to take this opportunity to single out several 2015 donors for particular thanks:

- Ian and Marionne MacRitchie and The Emerge Foundation, who have raised nearly $1 million for ACU’s work in Timor-Leste by holding events over the past eight years
- Maev O’Collins, a former ACU staff member of more than 25 years’ service who donated to establish an endowed scholarship for social work and health sciences students at the ACU Canberra Campus
- The George Alexander Foundation, which renewed support for merit and equity scholarships for rural and regional students at the Ballarat Campus
- Bob and Margaret Frater, who have supported the professional development of teachers within Catholic primary schools who display leadership qualities and commitment to the profession.

We thank all of our supporters, for your involvement makes a difference – it helps build our community engagement programs, empowers our students and demonstrates the potential of education to transform lives for the better.

For 25 years, the ACU Mission has been alive in every one of our students, staff and donors. Thanks to your ongoing support, that spirit will prevail for many more anniversaries to come.

Professor Greg Craven
Vice-Chancellor
Support from the Mary Curran Scholarship enabled ACU nursing student Justine Roberts to deliver an immunisation education program to improve community health in Timor-Leste.

If Justine Roberts and Mary Curran have anything in common, it’s that one good deed begets another.

The opportunity to participate in ACU’s Train the Trainer program in Timor-Leste inspired Justine, a Bachelor of Nursing Practice Leadership student, to take further action to promote health in disadvantaged areas.

“While I was there I witnessed a lot of people suffering from vaccine-preventable diseases. They didn’t understand what immunisation was all about,” Justine says.

Her experience inspired Justine to develop a program to train local health care workers and village volunteers on the importance of immunisation. Though the program was endorsed by ACU, she faced financial hurdles when it came to travelling back to Timor-Leste to set it up.

“My husband and I are bringing up two children on a single income, so without some sort of financial assistance it just wasn’t going to happen.”

Fortunately the Mary Curran Scholarship provided Justine with the support she needed.

When Mary Curran was battling a potentially fatal illness, the kindness of ACU nurses inspired her to establish a scholarship for nursing students at the University. After emergency open-heart surgery in 2013, Mary spent three months at North Shore Hospital “literally teetering between life and death”.

During that precipitous time, ACU nurses cared for Mary – and one other member of her family. Says Mary: “I used to live next door to the University and I have a cat called Cicero, who often prowled the campus.” All the nurses and some ACU staff knew Cicero and kept an eye on him during Mary’s convalescence.

“When I got better I decided I wanted to do something for the nursing community at ACU who looked after me and Cicero – something permanent and ongoing,” she says.

That was when Mary established the Mary Curran Scholarship. As the first recipient in 2015, Justine was given the opportunity to travel to Timor-Leste to deliver her immunisation education program.

“It went really well,” says Justine. “The Timorese were keen to take part and understand how it all worked. My aim was to help them to become advocates for change in their community, to explain what vaccination and immunisation are all about and how they can protect Timorese children from disease. The people I have met on these journeys have influenced my worldview and reinforced my desire to continue studying, to become a leader in my field and ultimately to benefit others.”

Mary says she’s “really thrilled to have set up the scholarship at ACU. “Having been fortunate in my life, I’ve always been keen to give back something, particularly to somewhere like a university where people are learning and so can subsequently give back in their own way. I really can’t think of a better way you could have your money used.

“Justine is a very worthy recipient. I can hardly believe how much a relatively small sum of money has been able to help her and how much good it’s done.”
It’s due to the commitment and generosity of people such as Margaret and Peter Gill that ACU is able to provide more academic possibilities to students. The Gill family supports one scholarship and two bursaries, and is particularly passionate about providing educational opportunities for Indigenous students, also recognising the long-term benefits this has for their communities.

“I’ve always been proud of the educative role that the Catholic Church has played for so long and I’m really pleased that a Catholic university has been set up and how well it’s growing,” says Margaret Gill, a former nurse and midwife as well as an ACU alumna.

The family’s involvement with ACU spans generations. Both Margaret and the couple’s son are ACU graduates. Peter Gill, a leading commercial property agent, is a voluntary member of the ACU Victoria Chapter, which acts as an advisory body to the ACU Senate on local issues.

Says Margaret: “I’ve been a nurse and our son went through ACU as a nurse and he’s married to a nurse from ACU, so we know that the nursing school at ACU is doing great things and we wanted to help it in a small way.”

The Gills support the Gill Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship, the Gill Family Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Bursary and the Gill Family Bursary.

Since completing her Social Sciences degree at ACU, majoring in pastoral counselling, Margaret has also become a Catholic chaplain. “One of the things I heard while I was a student was that some of the Indigenous students were finding life at university a bit difficult. I know from my own time at uni how difficult it could be… So we thought that Indigenous students would benefit from a scholarship and so would their communities.”

Margaret says ACU takes “a major role in promoting social justice.” Keen to make a positive impact by helping students achieve their goals, the Gill family’s scholarships and bursaries also reflect ACU’s core values.

“I just think education is the best thing we’ve got,” Margaret adds, “and for Indigenous students it’s their best pathway to success.”

Paving pathways to success for nursing students

I just think education is the best thing we’ve got.

Mrs Margaret Gill
Receiving the 2015 Sophia Scholarship enabled David Tubb to continue making a difference to the lives of homeless people.

Contributing to the common good is one of ACU’s core principles and it’s one that ACU graduate David Tubb follows on a daily basis, one clean shirt at a time.

Completing a Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary)/Graduate Certificate in Religious Education in 2015 at ACU’s Brisbane Campus, David is also a board member at Orange Sky Laundry, an outstandingly original, registered non-profit organisation.

Started in 2014 by David’s best friends, Orange Sky Laundry is a free mobile laundry service operating custom-fitted vans with washing machines and dryers. It offers a complete laundry service to homeless and disadvantaged people seven days a week, day and night, all across Australia. Services are currently provided at parks and community drop-in centres in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Sydney, Melbourne, south-east Victoria and Perth, with more services to be rolled out throughout 2016 both in Australia and overseas.

“Orange Sky is Australia’s first mobile laundry for the homeless and a world-first initiative. Every week our team of 400-plus volunteers complete almost four tonnes of laundry for those that need it most, and it is a privilege to oversee such a positive organisation,” David says.

David’s devotion to community service – which goes beyond Orange Sky Laundry – is why he received the 2015 Sophia Scholarship, awarded to ACU students and alumni for outstanding contributions to the common good. In addition to his responsibilities at Orange Sky Laundry, David teaches maths and science at a high school in Brisbane and mentors Indigenous students and students from refugee backgrounds.

“It was a great privilege to be awarded the scholarship. I felt honoured and humbled to be recognised, but more importantly the funds allowed our organisation to grow quickly.”

David Tubb,
Sophia Scholarship recipient

“Sometimes the best thing we can offer our homeless friends is a non-judgemental conversation that positively and genuinely connects them with the community,” he said.
Tony and Mary Carroll help make university education more accessible to students in need.

Tony Carroll’s roots at ACU run deep. They were planted over a hundred years ago when his grandfather (JJ Carroll, who founded the legal firm Carroll & O’Dea in 1898) acted as the solicitor for the Good Samaritan Sisters. Tony originally joined the Board of Good Samaritan Teachers College (which in those days had a small enrolment of 60 students).

The Good Samaritan Teachers College merged into Polding College, which in turn merged into the Catholic College of Education. When ACU formed in 1991 it took over the role of Catholic College of Education, along with other colleges of advanced education down the eastern seaboard. Tony was a foundation member of the University Senate until 1998.

“Everyone had different agendas,” he says, “but we were all inspired by the spirit of cooperation to make the University and its Mission a success.”

That spirit of collaboration prevailed and Tony served as senator for seven years. When he and his wife, Mary, lost their 13-year-old son, Richard Charles Carroll, in 1979, they decided to keep his memory alive by establishing a scholarship at ACU.

Tony says he and Mary wanted to support the University without “putting any strings on it.” He adds, “I just wanted it to go to a student in need who the University thought worthy of recognition.”

Participating in the scholarship ceremony continues to be rewarding for the Carrolls. “We both find it a very moving experience, handing the scholarship to the recipient,” Tony says.

The Carrolls’ younger son, Robert, passed away suddenly at the end of 2015. The scholarship will be renamed the Robert and Richard Carroll Scholarship.

The whole Carroll family continues to look ahead to support the University. Tony and Mary’s son John has been a senator at ACU for 10 years and retires this year. He was Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee and a Member of the Standing and Finance Committee. The couple’s granddaughter, Christine, works at the University. Thus the Carrolls’ involvement with ACU spans generations, and for those who benefit from their generosity, the positive impact will span generations as well.

A multi-generational tradition of giving back

Beyond the Robert and Richard Carroll Scholarship, the Carroll family supports other programs at ACU. Tony Carroll’s law firm, Carroll & O’Dea, continues to be one of the University’s legal advisers. The firm also supports the groundbreaking Clemente program. Clemente Australia makes university accessible to Australians facing multiple disadvantages and social isolation. Those who successfully complete four units graduate with a Certificate in Liberal Studies from ACU.

Apart from financial contributions to the program, the law firm also provides mentoring.

“We are very proud of the young solicitors with the firm who mentor people who want to be part of the program,” Tony says. “They in turn get great joy out of mentoring. Everyone gets a lot of pride and self-esteem from doing it.”
Thanks to support from the St Vincent’s Private Hospital Melbourne Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nursing Scholarship, Louise McGoldrick can fulfill her dream of helping others.

“I want to be a nurse because I like helping people,” Louise McGoldrick says. “I really feel like it’s what I was meant to do.”

Louise belongs to the Walgulu people of the Tumut River region on the border of Victoria and New South Wales. After her first year as a nursing student at ACU she wasn’t sure if she could afford to keep studying. Luckily the St Vincent’s Private Hospital Melbourne Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nursing Scholarship was created for students like Louise.

The hospital’s Mission Integration Manager, Julie Wain, says St Vincent’s “had some very impressive applicants for the 2015 scholarship, and Louise was outstanding.”

The scholarship, which was established in 2010 to create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying nursing on the Melbourne or Ballarat Campus, reflects St Vincent’s values.

“The hospital has a strong mission to support the poor and the vulnerable,” says Julie. “For instance, we support the disadvantaged and isolated within our hospital, in our local community, and our Reconciliation Action Plan aims to support Indigenous people. Our Indigenous undergraduate nursing scholarship is an example of our hospital seeing, striving and serving something greater.”

Says Louise: “We had three months of placements last year, so that’s three months of no income… The scholarship really helped with day-to-day sorts of things like getting to uni and paying for textbooks. It made all the difference.”

Beyond financial support, Louise says the scholarship helped her stay focused on her studies. While other students were applying for jobs as they studied for exams, she had the advantage of direct entry into the hospital’s graduate program as part of her scholarship. With this reassurance, she could focus exclusively on her coursework.

“It was a massive stress relief to know that I would be employed at St Vincent’s Private as a graduate nurse,” Louise says. “I had the benefit of knowing that I had secured a position already… It definitely contributed to me passing the course.” Louise started her graduate year at St Vincent’s Private in February 2016.

The 2016 St Vincent’s Private Hospital Scholarship recipient, Liam Cunningham, is an Indigenous third-year nursing student from Yorta Yorta Nations, Victoria, studying at ACU’s Aquinas campus in Ballarat.

Liam also engages actively as a Jim-Baa-Yer Student Ambassador, representing Jim-Baa-Yer and ACU to the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and promoting ACU and its Indigenous support functions. He proved to be a standout applicant, as he continues to impress in his studies since being awarded the scholarship.

While reviewing applications, Julie noticed that the generosity of the applicants themselves clearly embodied St Vincent’s values.

“What struck me when we interviewed students for the scholarship was the attitude they expressed about their fellow applicants,” she says. “Each of them said more or less the same thing in different ways: if they didn’t get the scholarship they wouldn’t mind because they knew it would go to someone who needed it just as much as they did. That’s such a gracious and magnanimous perspective. Their greatest concern is for their community and their family.”

As a result of the support from the St Vincent’s Private Hospital Melbourne Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nursing Scholarship, Louise and Liam can cultivate that perspective as they devote themselves to their communities as nurses.
Sowing the seeds of opportunity

As the recipient of a George Alexander Foundation Scholarship, Rose Booth plans to stay connected to her rural roots while helping people lead healthier lives.

Growing up more than three hours away from the nearest major hospital, Rose Booth is acutely aware of the paucity of health care services in rural and remote regions.

“I've had friends who had to travel a long way to get medical help,” says Rose, reflecting on her home near Hay in New South Wales. Calling herself a ‘country girl’, she adds: “It’s a passion of mine, to go back and work as a nurse in a rural setting.”

Thanks to scholarship support from The George Alexander Foundation, Rose's dream is nearing fruition. She is in her second year as a nursing and paramedics student at ACU’s Ballarat Campus.

Inspired by the nurses who treated her when she broke her arm as a child, Rose says it wasn't hard to find the right place to study.

“I looked at lots of courses but the best recommendations came from people who had done the Nursing and Paramedics course at ACU. They couldn't speak highly enough of it.”

While Rose had the drive and determination needed to pursue her studies, she knew it wouldn't be easy on her and her family.

“Financially speaking, studying has been hard on me and my parents, so I was on the lookout for a scholarship that might help us get through it,” Rose says.

She says support from The George Alexander Foundation “has made a great deal of difference – even more than I expected.”

That difference goes beyond helping her buy textbooks. The scholarship has also enabled Rose to spend time serving disadvantaged communities. Last year she went to Battambang, Cambodia, as a volunteer for Challenges Abroad and gained valuable nursing experience working in a health clinic.

“It was wonderful to be able to help them out and it was a great eye-opener for me, not only personally but professionally.”

In addition to her work in the clinic, Rose contributed to community education by running information days about personal hygiene, food preparation, signs of malaria and other health issues.

Keen to gain as much experience as she can to make an impact on communities in need, Rose embodies George Alexander's (1910–2008) legacy. George emigrated to Australia as a child and became a successful entrepreneur and businessman who believed that you do not own the possessions you have. Rather, “you're just minding them”. The George Alexander Foundation scholarships provide access to education for promising young students from rural and remote areas, especially those demonstrating exceptional leadership potential and community participation.

George's belief in the notion of “planting seeds and hoping they would grow into pretty big trees” forms the basis for the Foundation. For students like Rose, there is plenty of fertile ground. Those seeds are just what she needed to pursue her career as a nurse and ultimately help others lead healthier lives.
Honouring the strong social justice values of its nameake, the Laurie Daniels Scholarship continues to change lives – including those of scholarship recipients and the countless people they will encounter in their chosen careers.

When a heartfelt letter of thanks arrived from the 2015 Laurie Daniels Scholarship beneficiary, the Daniels family knew that their scholarship was really changing people’s lives.

Laurence ‘Laurie’ John Daniels was a senior public servant and policymaker. He was appointed Secretary of the Department of Social Security in 1973 and went on to become Secretary of the Department of the Capital Territory. After 47 years in public service, Laurie played an active role in ACU’s establishment in his retirement, serving on the first Senate of the new University.

“He believed that you should use the skills and opportunities you have to give back to the community and try to make society better,” says Rita Daniels, one of Laurie’s daughters. “He had very strong social justice values.”

Reflecting those social justice values, the Daniels family established the Laurie Daniels Scholarship, following his death in 1994, through a pool of donations. Set up to be a scholarship in perpetuity to support disadvantaged students, it is now offered to nursing students at ACU’s Canberra Campus.

“He would have been happy and proud that the scholarship is supporting people who, under normal circumstances, might not be able to afford to study,” says Rita. “Here in Canberra we live in a relatively privileged environment where it’s easy to access tertiary education, but that’s certainly not the case for some of the people who live out in rural New South Wales. It’s a much bigger commitment for them.”

That sentiment couldn’t be more true for Kate Brennan, the 2015 scholarship recipient who hails from an area located 45km outside of a farming town called Crookwell in New South Wales. The first in her family to attend university, Kate faced financial hardships that could have prevented her pursuing higher education. Thanks to this scholarship, she can continue her studies as a third-year nursing and paramedicine student.

“We were delighted to receive Kate Brennan’s letter of appreciation and to know how much the scholarship meant to her,” Rita says.
Through a long-running scholarship at ACU Brisbane, the Presentation Sisters support Indigenous students who in turn support and lead their own communities.

The Queensland Congregation of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary provides the funding for one of the longest-running scholarships offered at ACU Brisbane. Each year the scholarship supports two Indigenous students studying at undergraduate level.

The sisters work with the Indigenous Higher Education Unit on ACU’s Brisbane Campus and with other ACU staff to shortlist and select students for the scholarship.

Linda Eggert, a midwifery student and descendant of the Boorabarongal clan of the Darug People, received the scholarship in 2014. In her memorable vote of thanks, she related how the founder of the Presentation Sisters, Honora ‘Nano’ Nagle, who almost singlehandedly brought Catholic education to the poor in Ireland in the 1700s, had influenced her.

“Nano Nagle has inspired me to believe that from the small actions of one person, great things can happen,” Linda says. “Like her I would also like to help those in my community by helping improve the prospects for positive outcomes for birthing mums and their bubs.”

Sister Marlette Black, Congregational Leader of the Queensland Presentation Sisters, says that the intention of the scholarship is “to try to support candidates who will be going back to their communities to exercise leadership in terms of improving the social conditions for women and children”. Linda is a prime example, as is the 2015 recipient, Tara Croker.

“The Nano Nagle scholarship has helped to ease my financial burden while studying. I have worked closely with the Reconciliation Action Plan team at my work to improve the Indigenous issues within the media industry and my office. I have also been working with some not-for-profit Indigenous organisations who assist university students to gain industry experience. I am passionate about my culture and heritage and hope to give back to my community in the future by helping younger Indigenous students and being a role model for others,” Tara says.

The Presentation Sisters of Queensland are part of the International Presentation Association, which has NGO status at the United Nations. One of the Association’s major commitments is to support Indigenous peoples. In Australia they have been championing Indigenous human rights for many years.

“The focus of our founder, Nano Nagle, was to transform the structures that kept people poor and marginalised,” says Sister Black. “So when the Presentation Sisters came to Australia from Ireland in the late 1800s our focus for many years was working in education. Since then we have broadened this to other ministries such as social work, working in advocacy areas, adult education and particularly with ministries for women, but our focus is always to be a supportive presence standing with those who are poor and marginalised.”

The ACU scholarship is one of many ways they embody that mission.

Improving social conditions for women and children

“The Nano Nagle Scholarship has helped to ease my financial burden while studying.”

Tara Croker, 2015 Nano Nagle Scholarship recipient
Making connections, one student at a time

Through cultural, academic, administrative and social support, the First Peoples and Equity Pathways Directorate encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to enrich their university experience.

ACU’s First Peoples and Equity Pathways (FPEP) Directorate reflects the University’s commitment to providing high-quality transformative education by supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as they navigate university life, and by advising the University on related issues.

“We want to create a culturally safe environment and a sense of belonging for our students,” says FPEP’s Director, Jane Ceolin.

Beyond cultural, academic and administrative support, the Indigenous Higher Education Units also provide computer facilities and tutorial assistance. They serve as a social hub for students too, and offer mentorships.

“We have Indigenous Elders and cultural mentors present on each of the campuses,” says Jane. “They promote the wellbeing of the students and make sure that they’re comfortable with who they are, in terms of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity.”

FPEP and the Indigenous Higher Education Units, through a Commonwealth Government-funded program, also offers Away from Base (AFB) multimode courses that combine residential and online learning. The courses enable students to continue to fulful family and community responsibilities while pursuing their studies at ACU – something they might not be able to do without the flexibility and support of the AFB programs.

“For example, teaching students might be teacher aides at home in their community,” says Jane. “A course like this means they can still get an income while studying. They come to university four times a year and the Government funding enables travel costs and accommodation to be provided.”

Above all, FPEP strives to empower students so they can give back to their communities. Jane says that 2014 saw FPEP’s first Indigenous midwives graduate, some of whom were from regional and remote communities. They are now working as midwives in communities.

FPEP continues to provide support to students throughout their higher education. “The feedback from our students is that they are confident and comfortable at the University and we encourage them to become more involved in university life,” says Jane.

ACU Foundation supports the University’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through the provision of dedicated scholarships for the cohort. The demand for these scholarships is high, and each year we receive more applications than we have scholarships to offer. If you are interested in supporting an ACU scholarship that offers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students a life-changing education experience, please contact your local ACU Foundation Development Manager as listed on the inside back cover of this report.
ACU’s intense focus on research reflects the University’s commitment to its Mission and key values.

‘Research intensification’ at Australian Catholic University (ACU) is about building a research profile characterised by excellence, and ultimately about improving lives for people in Australia and around the world.

ACU’s schools and research institutes respond to the University’s priority areas of research in theology and philosophy, health, education, and social justice and the common good. They build national and international partnerships and secure significant grants to advance research. That research activity translates to everyday impact, improving public policy and education, promoting healthy lives and addressing social inequities.

Our seven new research institutes are working to make a difference on people’s lives and communities, all for the common good. Read on to find out how.

Bringing research to life

The Learning Sciences Institute Australia (LSIA) focuses on generating and disseminating new knowledge to improve the learning outcomes of children and young people.

A proposed data-linking project at the LSIA aims to link existing NAPLAN and health datasets on children with learning difficulties and chronic health conditions, such as ADHD, asthma, diabetes, anxiety and depression, to address the knowledge gap about their impact on education and health outcomes. This new knowledge aims to help inform social policy, and monitor and evaluate intervention and prevention actions.

The Institute for Social Justice (ISJ) is a creative space for rethinking our highest social ideals: justice, equality, freedom, democracy, public goods and the very meaning of our humanity. This complex and multi-faceted endeavour aims to expand horizons of understanding and open new possibilities for living together in the challenging conditions of the 21st century.

Dr Naser Ghobazadeh is mapping competing discourses and practices in the Muslim world. This research project involves conceptualising the possibility not only of the co-existence of religion and secularity, but also of the need to recognise the religious roots of an emerging model of secularity in the Muslim world.

The Institute for Religion, Politics and Society (IRPS) addresses contemporary issues of religion, political conflict and solidarities, and examines contributing factors to happiness and wellbeing.

ACU’s Dr Tom Barnes and Adjunct Professor Lisa Heap, in collaboration with Professor Bryan Turner of Wayne State University, in Detroit, are examining the impact of the declining automotive industry in Melbourne and Detroit, and those cities’ attempts at revival.

The Institute for Health and Ageing (IHA) investigates the impact of experience on the ageing process. Research focuses on improving the quality of life of older people and those who support them, in settings such as acute and hospital care, residential care and the community. The institute’s research spans the spectrum of age-related health issues, from musculoskeletal health and built environment through to cancer and health economics, as examples.

Professor Ester Cerin is the chief investigator of the National Health and Medical Research Council-funded Centre of Research Excellence in Cognitive Health. The centre brings together a diverse combination of world-leading expertise to address complex issues in cognitive health promotion and prevention of cognitive impairment that cannot be addressed by individual scientists or single projects.

The Institute for Positive Psychology and Education (IPPE) undertakes research to positively influence the lives of individuals, families, communities and organisations.

Professor Rhonda Craven is leading ACU’s bid for an Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Thriving Futures. This proposed centre will significantly advance scientific
research which will deliver real benefits for Indigenous Australians. Research will occur across four interrelated research programs: educational thriving, physical thriving, psychological thriving, and family and community thriving. These programs reflect primary drivers that are fundamental in enabling Indigenous children and youth to achieve the most out of life and enjoy thriving socio-economic futures.

The Mary MacKillop Institute for Health Research aims to identify critical gaps within community and health care services, with an explicit goal of improving health outcomes. Professor John Hawley is currently researching ‘sarcobesity’ – the co-existence of diminished muscle mass and increased fat mass, which is an escalating problem as the proportion of older, inactive adults increases. Exercise-nutrient interventions to prevent sarcobesity are being developed by a collaborative, cross-disciplinary and multi-institutional research team to address this growing issue and its dramatic impact on the lives of an increasing number of the population.

The Optimising Heart Disease Prevention and Management program aims to deliver cost benefits derived from the development of newer and more effective prevention and disease management programs to tackle the persistent and evolving epidemic of heart disease. Led by ACU Professors Simon Stewart and David Thompson, and Griffith University’s Professor Paul Scuffham, the project’s goal is to positively influence health policy, clinical guideline development and health service delivery.

The Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry (IRCI) extends the traditional forms of philosophy and theology, and delves into fundamental questions and issues associated with what it means to be human. The institute held its first major seminar – Laudato Si: The Greening of the Church? – at ACU’s new Rome Centre, where leading international eco-theologians, Biblical scholars, ecological ethicists and moral theologians came together to explore the strengths, weaknesses and implications of Pope Francis’s papal letter on the environment from a variety of ecclesial and academic perspectives.

A research project investigating the origin, purpose and reception of the New Testament writings in Biblical studies will provide the first comprehensive study of how Jewish and Roman worldviews interacted to generate the self-identity of Christianity.

Ramping up ACU’s national research profile

In December 2015, the Australian Research Council (ARC) announced the results of the national assessment of research quality, the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA). The results highlight how research at ACU has gained significant traction in a short time.

In 2015, ACU:

- earned distinction as the country’s most improved institution in research
- increased its ‘excellence index’ ranking from 35th to 21st
- achieved scores of five – the highest score possible – in the fields of Psychology and Cognitive Sciences, Human Movement and Sports Science, Nursing, Public Health and Health Services, and Psychology, making the University equal best in the country in these fields of research
- achieved equal best in Religion and Religious Studies.

Discover more about ACU’s important research activities; keep up to date with the latest news; and find out how you can get involved at research.acu.edu.au

Interested in supporting a specific area of research? Please contact an ACU Foundation staff member as listed on the inside back cover of this report.
The Future in Youth program in Timor-Leste and the Thai-Burma program engage with international communities in need. 2015 saw the Future in Youth program take significant steps to further the local management of the program. On the Thai-Burma border, more than 50 students graduated from the program, with many entering employment as teachers.
In their own words:
By Anthony Whitty, Program Manager and Acting Deputy Head of School, School of Exercise Science, Melbourne

In 2015, the Future in Youth program in Baucau, Timor-Leste, made significant inroads towards its pursuit of empowering the local community to take ownership of the program. Of importance, the program transitioned from ACU staff and students taking the lead, to the local people of Baucau becoming active participants and taking ownership – a progression that occurred in three key stages during the year.

Firstly, Future in Youth was taken into the schools, as recommended by local community leaders of the program. This saw 28 teachers and coaches, 16 schools and more than 1,300 children take part in 2015. The training sessions took place in ‘Bairos’, which is the most intimate part of the local community; hence we saw places we have never been before. One day we drove off the main road into a local field and were met by 100 children in formation, greeting us with their local school song and dance. It was the most amazing thing our students and staff have witnessed – a truly humbling experience and one we will be eternally grateful for. The teachers and coaches took part in a five-day Physical Education (PE) teacher training course, as many of the local teachers asked for training “for sports”. The workshop started with a general overview of teaching PE to large numbers, and then narrowed to educate about teaching specific soccer sessions, drills and programs for students ranging from 8 to 14 years of age.

Secondly, 2015 saw the establishment of a steering committee for the after-schools soccer program. The committee includes representatives from the church, the district administrator’s office, the sub-district administrator’s office, representatives from the Ministry of Education in Baucau, local NGOs, local coaches and teachers, ACU, and Ponte Leste (the local youth centre which runs the program in Baucau). Pleasingly, ACU is no longer ‘in charge’ of the program or its direction, and is now just a single voice on the committee.

The committee met four times in 2015. One of the major recommendations for 2016 was to focus the program on the sub-districts, which are the poorer, more rural areas of Baucau, and perhaps provide support for other sports, as well as improve planning and communication to ensure progress continues.

Thirdly, we witnessed the renaming of the program in country. It is now referred to as the Central Baucau Football Junior (CBFJ) program. In 2015 the program saw 42 teams participate in the competition that had started in July and finished in December. The finals were attended by the school children, families, and school representatives, such as principals. Eighteen all-girl teams competed in the CBFJ program, with each team deciding on their team’s name, colours and uniform. Every team wore uniforms during the competition, and all coaches and teachers are responsible for their equipment, uniforms and program planning.

There was also a representative team formed on completion of the finals that trained every day in January and February and played games in Dili in April against other teams from all parts of Timor-Leste. This was coordinated with the East Timor Football Federation and was managed by the locals, without any assistance from ACU.

2015 also saw ACU staff and students assist the people of Baucau in skills sets such as administration, coaching, planning, budgeting and finance, consulting, and communication.

Following is a sample of what ACU students had to say on their reflection day of the program:

“It’s not just about soccer. Life skills of fairness, equity and respect that can transfer off-field to the broader community are also promoted.”

“We are really engaging with the local community and making a difference.”

“I’ve learnt you don’t have to do it all alone, and that someone has to have my back.”

Mr. Anthony we feel happy because we could work together with you and have a good cooperation in our work. We also appreciate that it can help our kids in Timor-Leste, especially in Baucau. We hope that whatever that you have given us it will give a lot of benefits to our kids and also for our centre. Once again we want to say thanks for everything that you and donors have given to us, and we hope that this relationship [will] never end.”

Maria da Costa (Asi)
Financial Manager and Program Coordinator, Community Youth Centre, Baucau

To support this important work, please donate today at acu.edu.au/onlinedonation
For further information on the Future in Youth program, please go to acu.edu.au/futureinyouth

Train the Trainer in Timor-Leste

When Timor-Leste became an independent nation, community health provision in Baucau, the nation’s second largest city, remained minimal, especially for people in the local villages and hamlets. The Barefoot Nurses Train the Trainer (TTT) program provides training to village health workers in basic health, nursing and nutrition. This delivers health education designed to empower local health care workers and village volunteers in the provision of basic primary care, relating to the specific health care needs of the Timorese. Each topic taught focuses on practical demonstration as a method of instilling a more comprehensive understanding of basic skills in medical aid.

The program concludes with a ceremony whereby participants receive a certificate of participation endorsed by ACU’s Faculty of Health Sciences and the Institute for Advancing Community Engagement. The TTT program is conducted in Baucau and Maubisse with approximately 30 to 50 participants in Baucau and 20 to 30 participants in Maubisse.
ACU’s Thai-Burma Refugee program has offered tertiary education to Burmese students in refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border since 2004. Since 2009, students in the program have been offered the opportunity of enrolling in ACU’s Diploma in Liberal Studies, and since that time 133 students have graduated with the Diploma award. Ten further students have graduated with the Certificate in Liberal Studies. ACU’s Diploma in Liberal Studies students represent the brightest and most capable young people from the many thousands of refugees and migrants on the Thai-Burma border.

For refugees from the Thai-Burma camps, enrolment in the diploma provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to enter higher education and give back to their own communities, often through teaching or other development-related employment. Forty-one per cent of the 2014–15 Mae Sot cohort have gone on to become teachers. Findings from ACU’s 2015 Course Review of the Diploma in Liberal Studies show that no other program offers Diploma-level education in the locations that ACU’s Thai-Burma Refugee program serves, and no other Australian university has involvement in refugee education.

In their own words:
Professor Geraldine Castleton, Deputy Dean of Education and Arts

The program highlight in 2015 was the graduation of 51 students from the program. Thirty-three students were presented with a Diploma in Liberal studies and one student graduated with a Certificate in Liberal Studies, in Mae Sot. Twelve students graduated with a Diploma in Liberal Studies, in Ranong, and in Bangkok five students were presented with a Certificate in Liberal Studies.

Each graduation occasion was exciting and colourful. These celebratory events featured traditional dancing and food, with strong support from proud family members and friends of the graduates as well as from local dignitaries. Many of our graduates have found employment, some with NGOs, while a number of graduates are working in learning centres as teachers, including with the Marist Mission in Ranong.

Two graduates from Mae Sot have earned full-time scholarships at Hong Kong University.

I was both privileged and proud to represent ACU at these graduation ceremonies that leave no doubt about the value of the program ACU provides in the lives of young Burmese people, who have no other options when it comes to seeking an education beyond a low-level Year 10 qualification.

The program is highly valued by its graduates, their families and the communities they serve. All speak passionately about the significance of the program in their lives. In the words of one graduate, he has “not only gained an education, [he has] become educated”!

A further 50 young Burmese refugees began our program in June 2015 (35 in Mae Sot and 15 in Ranong) and all are making great progress.

For further information about the Thai-Burma Refugee program, please go to acu.edu.au/thai-burma

To support this important work, please donate today at acu.edu.au/onlinedonation
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