INSTITUTES UNVEILED
Meet five of ACU’s new research institutes

MORE THAN JUST BAD BEHAVIOUR
Could your child be suffering from conduct disorder?

GAME OF GENDERS
An examination of fantasy, females and Game of Thrones

DIVINE RECRUIT
Theology graduate Father John Sanderson on his calling to Afghanistan

www.acu.edu.au/insight
Welcome to the latest issue of *Insight*, our dedicated staff and student magazine. I hope you will enjoy reading about ACU’s growth, fascinating research, talented students, and the work of our graduates.

I am fairly certain that no matter how long I remain Vice-Chancellor, I will never cease to be amazed by the achievements of our students.

In this issue you can read about our five students who competed in the recent Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. I am personally hopeless at sport. At school I played a little rugby, not because I was good at it, but because all that was required was a sort of suicidal courage. This is clearly not the case for our elite athletes, who performed admirably and already have the next competition in their sights.

Then there are our students undertaking legal pro bono placements, teaching soccer to children in East Timor, and volunteering in Cambodian health clinics.

Student research is also as intriguing as ever. An avid *Game of Thrones* fan, I thoroughly enjoyed reading about Caitlin Sara’s research into the rewriting of stereotypical female characters in the fantasy novels.

Research is an area that has received a lot of our attention this year. Since 2008, student numbers at ACU have nearly doubled in size. We have gained a campus, a law school, many new staff members, and a plethora of buildings and teaching and learning spaces.

Now we are focusing on research. While the University has always had a respectable research base, we have now prioritised the intensification of research over the next five years. We are aiming for better performance in priority research areas, leading to improved research reputation, ERA results and overall research rankings.

The initial phase of growth has included the establishment of five new research institutes, which are already producing some impressive work. And an additional two institutes are in development.

In 2015, ACU will reach a particularly special milestone – 25 years of people, learning, and achievements that continue to bring about real change in our communities.

The anniversary will be marked by a series of events in the week of 27 to 31 July 2015. All staff and students are invited to attend, and I look forward to celebrating and reflecting on ACU’s rich history with you.
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NICOLLE HEALY, ACU MELBOURNE NURSING/PARAMEDICINE STUDENT

“As part of my degree at ACU I recently took part in a volunteer program in Cambodia called Health for Happiness, which is an initiative of ACU’s Institute for Advancing Community Engagement (IACE) and Challenges Abroad Australia (CAA).

The aim of the program is to promote routine health procedures and to teach basic hygiene skills to reduce illness and disease in Cambodia’s Battambang region. International aid work is something I hope to do when I finish my degree so this was the perfect opportunity to gain a real sense of the healthcare system in a developing country.

There were 10 ACU nursing and paramedicine students on the trip and the study component was supervised by Associate Professor Thomas Harding.

We volunteered in a variety of health clinics in the local community where we had the opportunity to work alongside doctors and nurses to assess patients with mental health issues, administer immunisations and observe prenatal care.

Health care can be difficult to access in Cambodia. We performed basic health checks with both children and adults – looking at their heart rate, blood pressure, blood sugar levels, weight and height. Many of the patients were presenting with medical issues which required far more assistance than we were equipped to provide, which was frustrating at times.

The most confronting aspect of the trip was witnessing so many children in poverty. Many had been abandoned by their parents who had mainly left for Thailand to find work. It was not rare to see children wearing dirty oversized clothes, or no clothes at all. It made me sad and I couldn’t help but contemplate their future.

Having Associate Professor Harding with us made the Cambodia experience both educational and fun. He played an instrumental role in teaching us the necessary skills to help overcome the language barrier between English and Khmer (local language). He was constantly quizzing us and prompting us to ensure we were gaining adequate knowledge.

I love the way he recognised us as capable undergraduate clinicians and pushed us to make the most of the experience.

We also had the opportunity to assist at a local organisation called Children’s Action...
find out that people had been bludgeoned to death and tossed into the caves during the rule of the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s. This experience really opened my eyes to the pain and suffering that the people of Cambodia are still struggling to overcome.”

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR THOMAS HARDING, HEAD, SCHOOL OF NURSING, MIDWIFERY AND PARAMEDICINE (NSW/ACT)**

“Although Battambang is classified as Cambodia’s second largest city, I would still consider it to be relatively small. My reason for visiting was to supervise a group of ACU students and to ensure that they were meeting all the required competencies for their clinical unit in primary healthcare. But our key objective was to try to help build the health capacity of the local community.

I saw the trip as an opportunity to make a small contribution to the health of a developing nation while providing a culturally enriching experience for ACU students. We really wanted the local community and health centres to benefit from the initiative just as much as our students.

ACU students benefited immensely as they were exposed to a completely different cultural context. They were required to think differently, apply their knowledge differently, and use their resources more effectively. They had the opportunity to reflect on their practice and on how they could better work with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Essentially, the students were learning about the best scope of practice, appropriate communication skills, demonstration of appropriate cultural awareness, and the integration of knowledge for appropriate diagnosis and strategies. The students also had a unique opportunity to treat patients who were presenting with a variety of health concerns typical to a developing country.

We saw young women beginning to display degeneration of the joints and osteoarthritis due to lifting and carrying heavy water bottles. There were cases of people with severe gastric problems due to poor diet, and we also came across people with mosquito born infections such as malaria. It was great just to be there, and to be able to contribute in a positive way.

ACU students had been actively involved in fundraising for supplies so we were able to provide items that could really make a difference. We went out and purchased coloured pens and pencils to support the children’s learning, and basic necessities to assist with personal hygiene such as toothbrushes, lice combs and shampoo.

The health clinics were relying on quite archaic technology so it was good to be able to donate some slightly more sophisticated equipment, including a blood pressure machine and an instrument designed to measure the foetal heartbeat.

There was a degree of culture shock for some of the students as it was their first time out of Australia and they were put in a situation that was so different to what they were used to. Basically, they were confronted by the reality of life in a developing country – the heat, the rubbish, the disease, the poverty, the lack of infrastructure, all of it. I was genuinely impressed by how well they coped and adapted. Even under the most trying circumstances they managed to keep their sense of humour and the feedback from the locals in the area was extremely positive.

There were plenty of opportunities for the students to just enjoy themselves as well. In between volunteer sessions they visited the local cafés for iced coffee and fruit shakes, and there were other recreational activities available such as cycle tours with the locals. In my spare time I took a ride on the Bamboo Train, which is one of the major tourist attractions in the local area. I even managed to squeeze in a Cambodian cooking class and learnt how to make three dishes which was wonderful.

Nicolle was really excellent with the children and this was an area where she really shone. She had a lovely way of working with them. I remember one day when she had a group of children singing and clapping their hands with such enthusiasm. All of the students were wonderful and I was incredibly proud of them.”
Political participation is about more than voting. But when young people engage in politics their actions are deemed illegitimate. This is the supposedly apathetic generation that never gets off the couch, but when they do they are told they are acting inappropriately. ‘Slackers’ or delinquents: in popular conceptions of ‘the youth’ of Australia, there is no middle ground.

This was brought into sharp relief this year by protests across the country against the federal budget. The harshest impacts hit those who are marginalised in various ways: women, unemployed, disabled, pensioners, students and, of course, the young. They are marginalised in formal politics too. This isn’t a coincidence.

At a Melbourne protest against cuts to higher education earlier this year, 15-year-old Tallulah was carried away by three police officers. The Herald Sun ran a photograph on the front page above the patronising headline, ‘Hey mum, look at me.’ Tallulah was one of many tertiary and high school students protesting budget cuts and new debt that would directly affect their futures.

‘GOOD GIRLS’ DON’T PROTEST

In response, Melbourne Lord Mayor Robert Doyle said it was ‘inappropriate’ for a schoolgirl to be protesting. He added: “I mean, who likes seeing a schoolgirl being dragged away by police officers?”

Doyle suggested that writing a nice, polite letter to the prime minister would be more effective. This pearl-clutching response to the age and actions of the protesters was echoed by Victorian Police Inspector Paul Binyon, who was “surprised at the age of some of them”.

These reactions tell us a lot about dominant ways of understanding and discounting political engagement by young people. There is an understanding that ‘children’ shouldn’t protest in this way, that it is somehow offensive to a stable moral order.
There is also the obvious gendered implication of an older man policing the behaviour of a young woman: good girls don’t protest. This is the tone of the critique: good girls do what they are told.

On the same day, Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Education Minister Christopher Pyne cancelled a visit to Deakin University amid concerns they would be the targets of student protest. Pyne said the decision was in part due to concern “about the safety of the innocent bystanders who might be impacted upon by the Socialist Alternative.”

Without the protest even occurring, these students could be narrowly defined as potentially dangerous: as a threat to those in power, as well as broader society. These young people were discussed and described by adults acting to limit the sphere of potential participation in a particular, exclusionary way.

National Union of Students (NUS) president Deanna Taylor noted this pre-emptive construction in her response: “The Prime Minister and Minister Pyne are trying to portray protesting students as violent rabble rousers out to cause trouble.”

Such constructions of these events carry the implication of a correct and incorrect form of political engagement. Writing a letter is correct, protesting on the street is not. Tallulah told the media that: “the budget cuts are wrong … I may not be able to go to university, which I want to do for my future and for my family’s future.”

Marginalising the Voices of Youth

A 15-year-old cannot vote. When she engages in one of the fundamental freedoms of democracy – protest – she is told she cannot do that either.

Often when young people are discussed in relation to politics their participation is constructed in one of two ways. They are objects of concern, victims who need protecting, on whose behalf action is taken. Or they are potentially dangerous, out of (sanctioned) place, constructed as a threat.

Children and youth aren’t allowed to appear legitimately on their own terms in the political realm, and yet Tallulah’s protest is an expression of her participation and active membership in a political community.

Politics is an elite institution that excludes many people. Those in power get to set the rules of engagement. As Jason Wilson writes: “When popular anger intensifies, those at the centre … become all the more preoccupied with moderation and civility.”

Thus, Doyle and the Herald Sun with one hand are able to determine how children (generally (and Tallulah specifically) ‘should’ protest and with the other ensure that those means of protest are seen as ineffective. Engaging outside sanctioned forms of protest must inevitably, according to this view, be the response of disengaged, inappropriate and disruptive fringes of ‘proper’ society.

Political commentator and journalist Annabel Crabb reprimanded students for their ‘outdated’ protest tactics, asking: “How can it be, as even our phones get smarter, that protesters are somehow getting dumber?”

Apart from the patronising and insulting tone, this approach has two effects. While Crabb wants students to explain the consequences of fee deregulation, she reiterates a pre-cast, expected performance by these students: young people are ‘getting dumber’ and their protests are an inauthentic, unproductive and useless engagement.

Former Howard government education minister Amanda Vanstone also used her privileged platform in a national newspaper to call students ‘selfish thugs’ and ‘bullies’ – again, a dichotomy of lazy, self-indulgent, young people or disobedient, uncooperative youth.

If those with power – whether politicians or media columnists – act to silence students’ voices and discredit their actions, and in doing so disrespect the political agency of young people, why should they sit quietly on the sidelines in supposed ‘respect’?

The terms of debate are being set up to pre-emptively discount young people’s experiences, voices and contributions. No place is being left at the table for them. So while Crabb extols the virtues of ‘innovative’ protest, and Doyle proffers pen and paper to write a letter, it would seem no amount of innovation or letter writing is going to get young people the mutual respect and participation they deserve.

A Right to Fight for Their Future

Being on the margins of formal expressions of politics does not mean young people are marginal to the politics of our nation. They are protesting against the budget because it will directly affect their future. Those on the margins without access to platforms and privilege use what is left to them: their bodies.

This embodied politics that occurs on the streets, in the everyday, cannot be accounted for in dichotomies of victim or delinquent. Despite the best efforts of those in positions of power and privilege, the youth of Australia cannot be swept away by exhortations to manners and politeness.

Regardless of what the old guards of the media and political institutions might say, the protests have demonstrated that Australia’s young people are politically engaged and they defy easy categorisation as ‘lazy’ or ‘delinquent’.

The predictable, outdated reaction to a young woman fighting for her future in the only way available to her prompts the question: if our accounts and understandings of politics miss youth, what might be missing from our accounts and understandings of politics?
A key aspect of ACU’s Core Curriculum program is giving students the opportunity to learn beyond the walls of the university classroom. Students now have the chance to apply to visit London in January 2015.

Heythrop College, located in the heart of Kensington, forms part of the University of London and will host up to 25 ACU students. The students will complete UNCC300: Understanding Self and Society – taught by ACU staff travelling with the group.

The Core Curriculum in London program is offered in addition to the existing Paris and Florence programs. A highlight of the international Core is the opportunity to engage issues of human dignity in the local context. While students can enjoy the cultural highlights, they also get to view the city through the lens of those who work with some of its more vulnerable inhabitants.

UNCC300 in London will commence via webinar in Australia on January 2, 2015. Students then work in LEO full-time for a week prior to departure for London. The international component of the unit will take place between January 12 and 23. Applications to be part of the Core in London can be made through ACU International. Information sessions will be held in October, 2014.

For more information visit acu.edu.au/thecore

PhD student Lynette Riley from ACU’s Institute for Positive Psychology and Education (IPPE) has won this year’s Three Minute Thesis competition.

Lynette’s study into the school performance of Aboriginal students in NSW found high-achievers had a strong and positive sense of their cultural identity. The finding is part of her thesis on Conditions of Success for Aboriginal Students.

“Research has shown that Aboriginal students are up to 36 months behind their non-Aboriginal peers in learning. We need to close this gap,” she said. “For kids to succeed, they need a strong and positive sense of their cultural identity as well as supportive parents who understand how the education system works and are able to guide their children through it.”

“I found that successful students are taught by long-term teachers who are competent in their craft or are taught by competent new career teachers with greater world experience who, therefore, understand cultural difference.”

A Wiradjuri and Gamilaroi woman from Dubbo and Moree, Lynette has more than 30 years experience working as a teacher and in Aboriginal education and administration at schools, universities, TAFEs and state education offices across New South Wales.

3MT is a research communications competition, held at universities around the world. Students have just three minutes to present a compelling oration on their thesis and its significance in language appropriate to a non-specialist audience.

For more information visit acu.edu.au/3MT

ACU’s Barefoot Nurses program trains local nurses, pharmacists and health care workers to be more adequately informed and equipped when caring for people in isolated regions of Baucau, Timor-Leste.

Earlier this year an ACU team went to Baucau to provide some training as an introduction to the formal program which will be open to people from Baucau and surrounding villages.

The ACU team consisted of Sr Monica Whelan LCM, ACU nursing lecturer Christian Pedrosa, Helen Peters from IACE, and a group of eight ACU nursing, midwifery and paramedicine students.

“We covered a lot of ground in the six days,” said Sr Whelan. “We looked at how to treat fractures, burns, cuts and wounds. We addressed diarrhoea, malnutrition, worms, nutrition for children and babies and skin problems. We also taught a unit in cancer care, lung conditions, infectious diseases and immunisation.

“The Farmacia in Baucau is one of the health clinic sites for the Barefoot Nurses program and our focus on this clinic has given the people of Baucau a new confidence to access good health services.”

The Barefoot Nurses program is an initiative of ACU’s Institute for Advancing Community Engagement.

For more information visit acu.edu.au/iace
The ACU community is mourning the death of the former Archbishop of Sydney and the founding Chancellor of ACU, Cardinal Edward Bede Clancy AC.

Cardinal Clancy died in August in Sydney, aged 90.

In his more than six decades dedicated to the service of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Clancy held an 18-year tenure as Archbishop of Sydney during which time he oversaw the completion of Sydney’s St Mary’s Cathedral. He also spent four years serving as Bishop of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, 14 years as President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, and held membership with several Vatican bodies.

For Australian Catholic University, Cardinal Clancy played a central role in creating ACU as a national university through the amalgamation of several colleges in three states and the ACT. He served as Chancellor from 1990 to 2000 and always remained a strong supporter and close friend of the University.

Cardinal Clancy was born in Lithgow in 1923 and was educated in several Catholic schools around the state before entering the seminary. He studied philosophy and theology at St Columba’s College, Springwood, and St Patrick’s College, Manly, and later studied in Rome, graduating with a Licentiate in Theology from the Angelicum University and a Licentiate in Holy Scripture at Rome’s Pontifical Biblical Institute.

Ordained in St Mary’s Cathedral at 25, he held roles in Sydney, the Blue Mountains and Canberra through his steady rise as a shining example of devotion to the Church and each parish in which he served.

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MR JOHN FAHEY APPOINTED CHANCELLOR

Former New South Wales (NSW) Premier, The Honourable John Fahey AC, has been appointed as the new Chancellor of ACU.

He will be the fourth Chancellor in the University’s history, succeeding His Excellence General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd), who is now serving as Governor-General of Australia.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Greg Craven said it was a great coup for the University to have secured the services of such a prominent and well-respected Australian.

“Mr Fahey has been a figure in public life for more than 30 years, and has shown exemplary leadership and integrity in a vast range of fields. He has had a stellar political career, contributed extensively to business and industry growth, and his impact on the sporting world is unquestionable,” Professor Craven said.

“It is these leadership skills, commitment to serving the common good, and immense experience which will prove invaluable in helping the University build on its reputation of quality teaching and research.”

Mr Fahey was NSW Premier from 1992-95 before entering federal politics, and serving as the Minister for Finance and Administration in the Howard government until 2001. As Chairman of the bid team, he was instrumental in securing the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games.

In 2002 Mr Fahey was made a Companion of the Order of Australia for his work in the political arena, and for facilitation of industry growth and industrial relations reform.

Five years later he became President of the World Anti-Doping Agency, a position he held until November 2013. In this role Mr Fahey was a driving force behind moves to increase and enhance drug testing in sport around the world.

He currently chairs the Australian Government Reconstruction Inspectorate, which oversees state reconstruction projects following natural disasters.

Mr Fahey said it was a great honour to be appointed to the prestigious role at Australia’s only truly national university.

“ACU has a proud history of empowering its students to think critically, ethically and to bring about change in their communities and professions,” Mr Fahey said.

“As the University’s fourth Chancellor, I look forward to supporting a tradition of excellence in teaching and research and a devotion to the dignity of all people and the common good.”

Mr Fahey, who lives in Sydney with his family, commences in the role of Chancellor from 4 September 2014 for a five-year term.
A CU historical theologian Dr Bronwen Neil has been awarded a prestigious Australian Research Council (ARC) Future Fellowship for her project Dreams, Prophecy and Violence from Early Christianity to the Rise of Islam.

ARC Future Fellowships support research in areas of critical national importance by giving outstanding mid-career researchers incentives to conduct their research in Australia.

Dr Neil’s four-year project begins in September 2014 and is focused on the ARC-targeted research area of Understanding Culture and Communities.

The project will uncover the common themes in dream literature from pagan and Jewish antiquity to early Christianity and early Islam, aiming to show how dreams and prophecy have been used to increase religious control and justify violence since the period of Late Antiquity.

Dr Neil said the project would benefit Australia by building intercultural understanding between contemporary Jews, Christians and Muslims.

“It will stress the common cultural roots of Judaism, Christianity and Islam by uncovering the crucial role of dreams and prophecy in increasing the authority of religious leaders, and the use of dreams to justify inter-religious violence.”

Dr Neil will be based at the Centre for Biblical and Early Christian Studies in Brisbane which is part of ACU’s Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry. She will also conduct research at Harvard University’s Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Studies Center and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem’s Center for the Study of Christianity.

“It’s a hugely exciting prospect, and I’m grateful to the many colleagues at ACU who encouraged me to apply.”

Professor Wayne McKenna, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), said the Fellowship was a great honour for both Dr Neil and ACU.

“We extend our warmest congratulations to Dr Neil – this is a tremendous achievement. It is recognition of both the quality of her past research and the excellence of the work of the Centre for Biblical and Early Christian Studies.”

For more information on Find & Connect visit findandconnect.gov.au

Find & Connect is a website which allows Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and their families to access information about the institutions in which they spent their childhood. It provides links to archival resources, newspaper articles and legislation which can help them make sense of their past.

Developed as a response to the 2009 Federal Government Apology to these two groups, the web resource is funded by the Department of Social Services and builds on expertise developed through the Who Am I project, an Australian Research Council (ARC) funded project between researchers from ACU and the University of Melbourne Escholarship Centre.

Professor Shurlee Swain, Chief Historical Investigator for Find & Connect, and NSW state-based historian Dr Naomi Parry were informants for the program on actor Jacki Weaver (pictured left). Professor Swain also appeared in the program.

WA state-based historian Dr Deb Rosser was an informant for the program on actor and musical star Lisa McCune. And SA state-based historian Dr Karen George appeared in the program on comedian and actor Paul McDermott.

Professor Shurlee Swain said the historians’ contributions to the program were an exciting development for the project.

“This is great evidence of how the research which has built the web resource has not only provided a valuable site for Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and the various support and advocacy services that work with them, but is also making an ongoing contribution to knowledge about Australian history.”

CU academics have featured in the SBS series Who Do You Think You Are? The popular series, where well-known Australians play detective as they go in search of their family history, featured the expertise of historians involved with the Find & Connect web resource project.
The latest event in the ACU Voice public debate series tackled the weighty topic of obesity and public health.

Held at the Australian Museum in Sydney, the evening was hosted by award-winning journalist, Geraldine Doogue. The panel included Professor Joseph Ciarrochi, Institute of Positive Psychology and Education, ACU, and co-author of The Weight Escape; Associate Professor Samantha Thomas, public health advocate, University of Wollongong; Dr Joanna McMillan, Today show nutritionist and founder of Get Lean; and Christian Marchegiani, boxing and conditioning coach for the Sydney Swans and ACU graduate.

The panel discussed the complex issues around obesity and public health and considered the different methods of weight loss, and how Australians can make the changes needed to live a healthier life.

Keynote speaker, ACU’s Professor Ciarrochi, is an advocate of Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT). He said that ACT, which is based on mindfulness, can be effective in encouraging some people to lose weight and lead healthier lives.

MINDFULNESS IS A WAY OF HELPING PEOPLE NOTICE THEY ARE IN A TOXIC FOOD ENVIRONMENT AND BE ABLE TO PSYCHOLOGICALLY ‘STEP OUT’ OF THAT ENVIRONMENT AND MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES,” he said.

“We live in an environment that seeks to punish, blame, and stigmatise people who are overweight. Research suggests that such an environment actually demotivates people. People are not motivated by criticism. They are motivated by kindness.”

Professor Ciarrochi said that people often do not have a clear understanding of why they want to lose weight.

“Research suggests that if people feel pressured to lose weight, or are just losing weight to impress others, they are unlikely to stick with it. Instead of thinking about diet as something we do for others, we need to focus on how diet is beneficial for ourselves. How can you connect weight loss to what is meaningful and important in your life?”

ACU also launched The Weight Escape by Joseph Ciarrochi, Ann Bailey and Russ Harris at ACU Voice.

To watch the debate visit acu.edu.au/acuvoice

Professionals and academics have been working on the issue of deaf people serving as jurors.

Professor David Spencer, Acting Executive Dean of the Faculty of Law and Business and Academic Director, Office of the Provost, has taken part in a groundbreaking trial investigating the feasibility of deaf citizens serving as jurors.

Professor Spencer, together with colleagues from the University of New South Wales and Heriot-Watt University in the UK, conducted an Australian Research Council project on the impact of having an interpreter in a jury room and whether it affects the dynamic and communication between jurors.

Although current NSW legislation does not directly exclude deaf people from jury service, no deaf person has ever sat on a jury trial in Australia.

Despite the fact that interpreters are bound by a strict code of ethics which requires them to remain impartial and uphold confidentiality, there is a long held common law principle that there cannot be a non-juror ‘stranger’ as a 13th person in a jury room.

Previous research by Professor Spencer and colleagues has shown that deaf jurors are not disadvantaged by relying on sign language interpreters and show comparable levels of understanding to other jurors.

As part of the new research, the team organised a drug-related mock trial at the Sydney West Trial Courts in Parramatta, with the support of the NSW Department of Attorney-General and Justice, NSW Police and NSW Legal Aid.

The court was presided over by a retired district court judge, with actors playing the roles of the accused and his family. A mock jury, with 11 hearing jurors and one deaf juror observed the trial, interpreted by a trained Auslan interpreter.

Following the trial, investigators interviewed all participants and held a focus group with the hearing jurors.

Professor Spencer said the mock trial was a great success in terms of replicating a genuine jury trial.

“Having genuine court officers, prosecution, defence, informants and a jury, all set in a real NSW District Court gave a real sense of authenticity to the proceedings.”

He said that if the evidence collected from the mock trial showed that the impact of having a deaf person on the jury is negligible then the research team will be in a position to make submissions to the various attorney-generals across Australia.

“This will remove another layer of discrimination currently suffered by the deaf members of our community.”
Game of Genders

It’s the world’s most pirated TV show, attracts millions of viewers every episode, and had the twittersphere in an uproar for days after that wedding. But Caitlin Francis was looking closely at Game of Thrones long before everyone was talking about it, Alisse Grafitti writes.

Caitlin Francis didn’t really have much of a choice when it came to liking fantasy fiction. Not only are her parents huge fans, but they owned a science fiction and fantasy bookshop while she was growing up in Perth.

“Fantasy has always been my go-to genre. I love the imagination behind the stories, and the detail that goes into creating these elaborate and complex worlds so that they become believable. Fantasy is generally so far removed from reality that it allows you to explore or imagine other possibilities. It is such a creative medium, anything can happen.”

“I had read George R. R. Martin’s A Song of Ice and Fire series [on which the HBO show Game of Thrones is based] in high school and it had always been a favourite. It was different to the vast majority of fantasy novels out there – the characters were complex, and many of the women challenged preconceived ideas about beauty and femininity.”

The Bachelor of Arts (Honours) student decided to focus on the series of epic fantasy novels for her final thesis, exploring them under a feminist lens. She found that while traditionally there had been a lack of heroic female figures in the fantasy genre, Martin had demonstrated that it was in fact possible to have a female protagonist who performs heroic acts and is not helped by or because of her gender.

“Archetypal female characters were often divided into four types – the mother, the witch, the virgin or the seductress. So for a long time, female characters in fantasy were slotted into one of these roles and really just used to support the male protagonist.”

“There are stories of warrior princesses, but again they tend to focus on their beauty rather than their deeds or strength, and in the end they always fall in love with a knight.”

“Take Eowyn from The Lord of the Rings for example. Her beauty is one of her defining features, and although she is tough, after she kills the Witch King of Angmar she doesn’t continue as a warrior. Instead she marries Faramir and presumably settles down to married life.”

“It seemed as though these female characters were tough when the circumstances required, but in general they were protected by men, or desired by men, and were rarely a pivotal character.”

Caitlin focused on Martin’s character Brienne of Tarth to demonstrate the changing female stereotype.

“One of Brienne’s defining differences is her appearance. She is described as extremely tall, and ungainly, with a flat chest and coarse features. Yet she is also a strong and talented fighter, who chooses to live her life as a knight and adhere to a knight’s ideals.”

“Brienne is not bound by gender expectations. She doesn’t wear feminine clothes, isn’t in need of rescuing, and doesn’t use her sexuality to get her way or influence others. She isn’t a wife, or a lover, or a mother. Rather she represents an independent version of womanhood that doesn’t require male approval or support to succeed.”

While it may be a while before empowered women in fantasy become the norm, Caitlin said the genre was constantly evolving, and there had been a decided shift towards more realistic and contemporary portrayals of complex individuals.

“It’s a change that has been coming for a while now. There are many more strong females in the public sphere, and a lot of Young Adult fantasy is targeted towards girls, so writers are seeing the need to reflect this in their novels.”

“It’s definitely a positive change. As someone who reads fantasy, and as a woman, I find it quite boring and insulting that the female characters are constantly defined by their beauty and their role as a potential lover or conquest.”

“A character like Brienne is refreshing because it shows that yes, we can have female characters, and yes, they can do all the same things a boy can – and we can leave it at that. She can be good, and tough, and still get things done. It’s a positive message.”

Photography courtesy HBO
Baseball is generally low on the list of sports that Australian kids play – after rugby, cricket, and swimming. Growing up in Kempsey, a town on the NSW mid north coast, a young Tim Atherton played soccer. But luckily, there just happened to be a baseball pitch next door.

In the entire history of professional baseball in the United States, only 31 Australians have crossed the white stripes to play in the major league. Soon there may be one more, Alisse Grafitti writes.

His first year playing baseball, he made the Australian team for the Cal Ripken Junior World Series. He trained at the NSW Institute of Sport, and played for state and national teams. At the end of one under 18's tournament, he was spotted by an American scout and signed to the Minnesota Twins.

Now 24, Tim lives in California and pitches for the minor league baseball team, the Stockton Ports. He is also completing a Bachelor of Education (Primary) (Indigenous Studies) at ACU.

“I love everything about playing baseball,” he said. “I love that I get to wake up every day and train and play sport for a living. I love the feeling of winning and having a great game. But the losses and bad games are the games that keep you coming back.

“I love the places it has taken me all over the world and the opportunities it has given me. It has been my dream to play professional baseball and I love the fact that I get to do this every day.”

Tim is a starting pitcher – the pitcher who takes the mound from the first inning in a game and throws the first pitch. He is currently two levels away from the major league.

“We don’t get many off days so every week my routine is basically the same,” he said. “I pitch every five days in the game. The rest of the week is a mix of long distance running, gym workouts, throwing, and practice games.

“Each day I’m at the field for about 10 hours. Being a starting pitcher entails throwing most of the game – or at least two thirds. It takes a lot of mental strength and physical ability but it comes easy when it’s all you want to do.”

While not too many Australian children may be dreaming of playing in the major league yet, there’s no question that the sports’ presence is growing.

There is already an Australian Baseball League, and Australian Baseball Federation. Australia trails only the USA, Canada and Mexico in terms of Little League participation. And just this year, the Arizona Diamondbacks and Los Angeles Dodgers kicked off the Major League Baseball season at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

“I do hope that baseball becomes more popular in Australia,” Tim said. “I think there is a huge talent pool of players that take up cricket that could be great baseball players. I also would like a more frequent opportunity to pitch in front of my family and friends.

“Apart from missing home I really like living in America. I get spring and summer conditions all year round, and I love exploring new places when I get the chance. I enjoy being a tourist.

“I only have six days off in six months, but I make the most of it. I’ve been to Hollywood, Beverley Hills, surfed Malibu, driven the Pacific Coast Highway from San Francisco to Los Angeles – and got engaged along the way. I’ve been cliff jumping in Santa Cruz, hiking at Lake Tahoe and wine tasting in the Napa Valley.

“I’m not saying this to boast, but rather to motivate. I live every day to the fullest and get as much out of life as I can. Baseball was my dream and I pursued it through the good times and the bad. I want fellow Indigenous Australians to follow their dreams as well because the world will give you many opportunities if you are open to them.”
The members of Studio ARTES may have a few extra life hurdles to overcome, but you’d never know it from browsing their art gallery, Alisse Grafitti writes.

In several colourful classrooms in the Sydney suburb of Hornsby, you’ll find students hard at work sculpting, weaving, printmaking and drawing. Some are dancing, singing, or improvising in drama class. Others are learning the basics of production, design, or beauty therapy. All of them have a focus and determination that is impressive.

Emma Donovan is an ACU graduate and the Managing Director of Studio ARTES, an independent, not-for-profit organisation that offers creative programs for adults with disabilities. The 140 students in her care range from 18 to 80 years old, and have physical and intellectual disabilities that include Down’s syndrome, cerebral palsy and autism.

This isn’t just art therapy however. Classes are serious, and the results are remarkable. Studio ARTES has held both national and international exhibitions in major art colleges, universities and commercial galleries. Work is also displayed and sold in the dedicated gallery at Hornsby.

“There is so much incredible talent among the members of Studio ARTES,” Emma said. “Over the last couple of years individuals and the Studio ARTIST program have been recognised by significant institutions including Arts NSW – who fund projects of the highest artistic calibre and support artists considered to be key cultural producers.”

While disability organisations are increasingly offering art as part of their programs, Studio ARTES is unique in its growing contribution to contemporary art in Australia, through the Studio ARTIST program in particular.

“The Studio ARTIST program is a professional development initiative which caters specifically to members who have come through the recreational art program and have a vocational interest in the arts. It was developed in response to the quality of the work that was being produced.

“One of our students, Daniel, has autism and can’t speak in sentences of more than a few words, but he speaks through his painting. Because Daniel receives no government funding, Studio ARTES supports him to attend so that he can have access to opportunities to speak creatively, such as undertaking an artist’s residency with Historic Houses Trust. During this time Daniel painted a portrait of Her Excellency, the Governor Marie Bashir, which was presented to her at Government House.”

Emma began working in the disability sector when she was 18. She originally planned on a career in counselling or psychology before realising she was already working right where she wanted to be. She completed ACU’s Graduate Certificate in Management of Not-For-Profit Organisations before taking the lead role at Studio ARTES in 2014.

“I am very lucky to have the opportunity to be somewhere that is alive with creative energy and a strong sense of community,” she said. “The best part of my job is being part of that community, and seeing the outcomes of our programs in the lives of the people we support.

“While the mission is to provide creative programs for adults living with disability, what we also do is provide an inclusive environment for people to express themselves that is safe and encouraging, that gives people a sense of belonging while fostering independence. Creativity is used to help people develop skills in all areas of life and to facilitate social and recreational activities. Studio ARTES also advocates with and on behalf of people living with disability to create positive change and promote rights.

“People attending Studio ARTES find positive outcomes in many areas of their life, from the amazing artworks they create and the life skills they learn, to the connections that are made.”

Despite the studio’s impressive output and obvious benefits, Emma said securing sustainable funding was the most significant challenge.

“Fundraising in the not-for-profit sector is always difficult due to intensifying competition for the charity dollar. Another issue that is increasingly affecting us is the inaccurate perception by the public that donations to disability services aren’t as necessary now thanks to initiatives such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

“We support people from all over Sydney – from Central Coast to Vaucluse, hills to beaches. For some of them creating art is not a choice but a natural activity that comes instinctively. For many it is a learning tool. For many it is simply fun. Studio ARTES caters for them all.”

To find out more about Studio ARTES visit studioartes.com.au
Photography: Tristan Velascoo / Chello

Photography: Sara Coen

People with this disorder also have quite a number of illnesses. They tend to have personality disorders and mental illnesses including law-breaking activities, substance abuse, and unemotional traits are more aggressive, show more severe aggression that harms others, and their aggression is more premeditated, or for personal gain or dominance compared to other children and adolescents with severe conduct problems,” he said.

“Secondly, children with callous-unemotional traits are less sensitive to punishment and often don’t show the normal emotional arousal to others’ distress, which contributes to their problems in developing guilt and empathy. Thirdly, these children often don’t respond as well to treatments typically used to treat CD but they do respond to intensive interventions implemented in early development.”

“Intervening early in the developmental trajectory of CD is key for preventing later serious aggression and antisocial behaviour.

“My future research plans are to test how early signs of risk factors to CD can be identified, even as early as infancy in the way the infant reacts or fails to react to his or her environment, so that corrective measures can be implemented as early as possible. I also want to test large scale prevention programs for CD in young school children, before the behaviour problems become too severe.”

Professor Frick’s research is unique in several ways. He is investigating how various types of causes, such as genetics, biology, emotions, parenting, and neighbourhood may interact to negatively impact the developing child. And rather than focusing solely on schools, he is working to improve assessments and interventions for children with serious emotional and behavioural problems in various settings – including mental health clinics and in the juvenile justice system.

Professor Paul Frick from the University of New Orleans and ACU’s Learning Sciences Institute Australia is probably the best person on the planet to fill you in.

More than just ‘naughty’ when they may actually have a behavioural disorder. Sara Coen spoke to Professor Paul Frick about his cutting-edge research into conduct disorder.

A tention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) are all familiar household terms. But have you heard of conduct disorder (CD)? If not, Professor Paul Frick from the University of New Orleans and ACU’s Learning Sciences Institute Australia is probably the best person on the planet to fill you in.

Professor Frick has been researching CD for more than 24 years, since he took up his first academic job at the University of Alabama in 1990. In 2004, he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Orebro University in Sweden in recognition of his research. In 2008, he received the MacArthur Foundation’s Champion for Change in Juvenile Justice Award for the US state of Louisiana. The USA’s National Institute of Mental Health, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and John T. and Catherine D. MacArthur Foundation have all funded his work.

Professor Frick said CD is a repetitive and persistent pattern of behaviour that violates the rights of others, or in which major age-appropriate societal norms or rules are violated. Such patterns of behaviour include stealing, aggression, vandalism, running away from home and school truancy.

“More than three per cent of children and six per cent of adolescents in Australia have been diagnosed with CD,” he said. “Children with untreated CD are at risk of developing a range of problems during their adult years including law-breaking activities, substance abuse, personality disorders and mental illnesses.

“CD is a serious mental health concern. People with this disorder also have quite a negative impact on schools and are costly to society in general, because they often engage in criminal behaviour.”

CD, as a mental health diagnosis, simply documents that a person shows a pattern of problem behaviour that leads to substantial impairment in major life areas. Existing treatments have had only moderate success, and Professor Frick’s research is aimed at better understanding the causes in order to improve interventions.

He has found at least three common developmental pathways to CD. One starts in adolescence and seems to be an exaggeration of the normal teenage rebellion that most adolescents go through. The two other pathways tend to start in early childhood and are more likely to continue through adolescence and into adulthood.

“One of these early starting pathways involves children who have trouble controlling their emotions or behaviour, so they act impulsively without thinking of the consequences,” said Professor Frick.

“The other pathway that starts in early childhood involves children who show problems in the development of guilt and empathy and other aspects of conscience. ‘Prosocial’ emotions, such as guilt and empathy, often help to inhibit behaviour that hurts others and violates major rules.”

Children who lack prosocial emotions and who show callous-unemotional traits have been a major focus of Dr Frick’s research.

“My research has three key findings. Firstly, I have found that children with conduct problems who also show callous-unemotional traits are more aggressive, show carve

MORE THAN JUST bad behaviour

Many young Australians are being labelled ‘naughty’ when they may actually have a behavioural disorder. Sara Coen spoke to Professor Paul Frick about his cutting-edge research into conduct disorder.
ACU ATHLETES IN FORM AT COMM GAMES

Five ACU students headed to Glasgow recently in pursuit of medals, memories and personal bests. Caitlin Ganter caught up with them after the 2014 Commonwealth Games.
ANABELLE SMITH
BACHELOR OF EXERCISE AND HEALTH SCIENCE
DIVING

The 21-year-old competed in the women’s 3 metre springboard and synchronised 3 metre springboard, and made it to the finals for the 3 metre springboard (ranking 8) and synchronised 3 metre springboard (ranking 3).

Anabelle said she was relieved to have made the 103-strong team which represented Australia at the games.

“It was a stressful qualifying process and it was such a weight off my shoulders when I performed well at our trials and made the team,” she said. “The games were a great experience because the city was beautiful, the atmosphere was amazing and the competition was really fierce. I had an amazing time.”

Anabelle represented Australia at the last Commonwealth Games in Delhi, winning bronze, and also participated in two World Cups, two World Championships and the 2012 London Olympics.

The exercise and health science student juggles a heavy load of competing, training, studying and family, but Anabelle said ACU’s support has helped her stay on top of her workload and allowed her to fit in exams while she is in the country.

MADISON WILSON
BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRIMARY)
SWIMMING

The 20-year-old entered the women’s 100 metre backstroke, 200 metre backstroke and 50 metre backstroke, and made it to the finals for the 50 metre backstroke (ranking 8), 100 metre backstroke (ranking 7) and 200 metre backstroke (ranking 6).

Madison’s first international competition was at the 2005 Pacific School Games in Melbourne. In 2010, she won the National Age Group Championships in the 100 metre backstroke and picked up two relay gold medals in the Youth Olympics. She said one of her greatest achievements to date was winning a gold medal and two bronze medals at the World University Games 2013 in Russia.

Madison is currently training at St Peter’s Western Swim Club and is coached by Michael Bohl, an internationally renowned swim coach.

JESSICA ASHWOOD
BACHELOR OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND DISABILITY STUDIES
SWIMMING

The 21-year-old entered the women’s 400 metre freestyle and 800 metre freestyle, making the final for the 800 metre freestyle (ranking 6).

“Commonwealth Games was a fantastic experience; I always get a rush out of taking part in the bigger competitions,” she said.

“All the athletes were very motivated and ready to go, and all the volunteers were so supportive. I always get a rush out of taking part in the bigger competitions.”

The highlight of the games would have to be sitting in the stands cheering for my team mates, and also singing the national anthem whenever we won a gold medal. I feel like that’s what the games are all about. It was also amazing to visit Glasgow, it’s a beautiful city and I’m always grateful for these experiences.”

JESSICA ASHWOOD
BACHELOR OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND DISABILITY STUDIES
SWIMMING

The 21-year-old entered the women’s 400 metre freestyle and 800 metre freestyle, making the final for the 800 metre freestyle (ranking 6).

“He always plays a very demanding and highly taxing sport, not only physically but also mentally and emotionally,” Jarrod said.

“However, it is also very rewarding. To date my memories of the sport are mostly great ones, and I would not be where I am today without the down times.

“Participating in the Commonwealth Games was a fantastic experience and I can’t wait for the next big competition.”

Post-Glasgow, Jarrod has set his sights on the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, and smashing the 10-second barrier in the men’s 100 metres.
Professor Wayne McKenna, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), is leading the revitalisation of research at ACU.

"Over the next five years, the University will prioritise, champion and nurture research to achieve better performance in priority research areas – leading to an improved reputation in research, improved ERA results and overall research rankings," he said.

"The current government wants universities to focus on the research and innovation that will best serve and educate our society. At ACU, we haven’t traditionally prioritised research. But that must change if we want to survive. We can’t afford to be seen as a ‘teaching-only’ university."

Professor McKenna said the University would now focus on supporting outstanding research, particularly in its priority research areas of Education, Health, Theology and Philosophy, and Social Justice and the Common Good.

"It’s about quality rather than quantity," he said. "It’s a chance for us to redefine who we are and remodel our research environment and culture. This will ensure that we are best placed to apply for the funding and partnership opportunities which will allow us to shine."

Professor McKenna joined ACU in 2013 from the University of Western Sydney, where he held a variety of roles including Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Research), Executive Dean, College of Arts, and Provost of the Bankstown Campus.

Originally from New Zealand and then the seaside town of Brighton, England, Professor McKenna holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in English and a PhD from the University of Leeds, UK. As an early career researcher, his interests included the work of Charles Lamb and W.J. Turner. More recently, he has focused on wider humanities research, particularly looking at the impact of the digital age on the humanities.

Professor McKenna came to Australia with his wife in 1975, around the time of the dismissal of the Whitlam Government.

"It was an interesting time and quite an introduction to Australia, but we decided that we liked living here so decided to stay."

Professor McKenna said he had been considering retiring after UWS, but had been far too interested in the ACU role to pass it up.

"ACU’s impressive growth in recent years provides a golden opportunity for it to build on its existing strengths, develop new talent, and build a highly successful research environment."

A key part of this has been the establishment of five new research institutes – the Institute for Health, the Institute for Social Justice, the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education, the Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry, and the Learning Sciences Institute Australia.

Two more institutes – the Institute for Religion, Politics and Society, and the Institute for Health and Ageing, have also been recently announced.

"The institutes include some of the very best researchers in the world," Professor McKenna said. "They each focus on a different priority research area and each embodies the mission of the University.

"Staff will be able to be part of successful grant applications and receive mentorship and training from world-class researchers. There will be plenty of opportunities for early career researchers in particular."

Professor McKenna said that while taking a new direction in research would create exciting prospects for both staff and the University, he was also well aware of the challenges.

"It’s a big cultural change for us and we are asking people to think differently about their careers and their own research. But we remain committed to supporting existing researchers – genuine excellence will continue to be nurtured."

And in just the first six months of research intensification, success stories are already beginning to appear.

The Institute for Positive Psychology and Education, under the direction of Professor Rhonda Craven, has brought in $1.2 million in funding for three ARC linkage projects. And Dr Bronwen Neil from the Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry was recently awarded a prestigious ARC Future Fellowship.

"This is just the beginning but there will be much more," said Professor McKenna. "The future looks bright."
INSTITUTES UNVEILED

A key part of ACU’s research intensification program has been the establishment of five new research institutes – with more on the way. Amy Ripley takes a closer look at the ambitious projects already underway.

INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH

A sad event in Professor Simon Stewart’s childhood led him to devote his career to health research.

“My father spent a lot of time in hospitals and, unfortunately, died at an early age. This experience ultimately inspired me to try to make a difference to other people’s lives. I wanted to help people stay out of hospital, live longer, and die with dignity.”

Professor Stewart is the Director of the Institute for Health. Established in April 2014 and based in Melbourne, the Institute is committed to research which promotes health and wellbeing for all Australians.

“We aim to be Australia’s premier research institute focused on health services research,” said Professor Stewart. “Our research programs aim to make a difference to people’s lives, especially those in our society who are affected by inequality and disadvantage.”

Born and brought up in England, Professor Stewart moved to Australia when he was 16, with his mother and brothers. In Australia, he first trained as a primary school teacher, before switching to nursing, where he said he found his niche.

“During my time as a nurse, I won a number of awards in hospital-based training programs and this encouraged me to undertake advanced training in intensive care and coronary care. This led to a position as a Nurse Educator and then research around chronic disease management, based on adult learning theory.”

Professor Stewart was particularly interested in health services which focused on how best to help people with chronic disease (particularly heart failure) avoid repeat hospitalisations and live longer.

He went on to complete a PhD at the University of Adelaide, where he was supported by the National Heart Foundation of Australia Scholarship and then awarded the Foundation’s prestigious Ralph Reader Overseas Post-Doctoral Fellowship. The latter supported him to receive advanced training in epidemiology and public health with a world-renowned group at the University of Glasgow in Scotland.

ACU’s Institute for Health is comprised of four semi-autonomous centres, each reflecting a different theme within the University’s priority research area of health.

The NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence to Reduce Inequality in Heart Disease, led by Professor Stewart, focuses on improving the heart health and outcomes of groups and communities including regional Australians, Indigenous Australians, and low to middle income countries such as South Africa and Mozambique.

The Centre for the Heart and Mind, led by Professor David Thompson, focuses on the psychological aspects of heart disease and how patients and their carers cope accordingly.

The Centre for Primary Care and Prevention is led by Associate Professor Melinda Carrington. It focuses on the role of innovative primary care and regional strategies (eg nurse-led clinics) in delivering cost-effective healthcare to prevent cardiovascular disease.

The Centre for Health and Social Research is led by Professor Sandra Jones. It focuses on the role of social marketing techniques to promote health from childhood to adulthood and across a range of risk factors and health conditions.

The Institute will also work to develop the potential of early career researchers and higher degree research students.

“We want to attract the very best talent and are committed to nurturing our students and staff. Our vision is to develop teams of researchers who are capable of working within a multidisciplinary environment and can use excellent research skills to develop cost-effective health services,” said Professor Stewart.

“ACU already has a significant health sciences research presence in the form of many hospital and community-based collaborations and affiliations. Our relationship with St Vincent’s Hospital and the University of Melbourne at the Cardiovascular Research Centre is an excellent example of this. We will continue to work closely with our current partners, as well as building and developing new relationships.”

Professor Stewart said he was thrilled that the Institute had a home at ACU.

“It is an exciting time to be here, given the University’s current research intensification agenda. ACU’s mission reflects our own vision – undertaking quality health research to improve the life chances of all Australians.”
When people ask Professor James McLaren why he chooses to dedicate his career to research, his answer is simple. “A fundamental principle of the function of a University is the pursuit of learning, simply for its own sake. I often explain to people that I like working at ACU because it is a place where my passion for research is readily accepted as part of my job description.”

As Acting Director of the Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry, Professor McLaren is immersed in learning and scholarship on a daily basis. Based in Melbourne, the Institute was established in January 2014 and is an integral part of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy. Professor McLaren said that the Institute was a clear example of ACU’s commitment to research in the priority areas of theology and philosophy.

“We aim to promote interdisciplinary and collaborative research in philosophy and theology and also in other disciplines that, in different ways, interact with or relate to them, and which, in turn, enrich and extend the traditional forms of philosophy and theology.”

Professor McLaren was educated at the University of Melbourne and University of Oxford. His own research interests include biblical studies and ancient history and he said he is passionate about bringing the past to life.

“I try to engage directly with the voices from the past, to try to place myself in their shoes. I believe that to explore the past is to understand who we are today and what we might be able to achieve and aspire to in the future.”

There are four focus areas of research in the Institute – Biblical and Early Christian Studies; Catholic Thought and Practice, including Inter-religious Dialogue; Moral Philosophy and Applied Ethics; and Philosophy and Phenomenology of Religion.

The Institute is currently undertaking seven varied funded research projects in these areas. These include Professor Francis Moloney FAHA and his team investigating the origin, purpose and reception of New Testament writings.

“The project will provide the first comprehensive study of how the Jewish and Roman worldviews interacted in order to generate the self-identity of Christianity,” Professor McLaren said.

Professor Pauline Allen FAHA is heading up a team investigating how leading bishops in East and West between 400 and 700, in employing correspondence to address conflict between themselves on theological and organisational issues, asserted their power and position within the church, in order to model new ways of dealing with current religious conflict.

And Professor Neil Ormerod is leading a team investigating the possibility of a Christian philosophy.

“The team will examine the ways in which the three major Catholic thinkers, Etienne Gilson, Bernard Lonergan and Joseph Ratzinger – who is, of course, Pope Benedict XVI – have appropriated their thoughts to contribute to the development of Catholic thought in the 20th century.”

“It’s a rich mix of subjects and a real privilege to work alongside such talented and dedicated scholars,” said Professor McLaren.

The Institute is already off to a flying start. Earlier this year historical theologian, Dr Bronwen Neil FAHA, was awarded a prestigious ARC Futures Fellowship for her project Dreams, Prophecy and Violence from Early Christianity to the Rise of Islam.

Dr Neil’s four-year project began in September 2014 and is focused on the ARC-targeted research area of Understanding Culture and Communities.

The project will uncover the common themes in dream literature from pagan and Jewish antiquity to early Christianity and early Islam, aiming to show how dreams and prophecy have been used to increase religious control, and to justify violence since the period of Late Antiquity.

Professor McLaren said the Institute was keen to attract new talent to its doors and that it had a lot to offer researchers interested in theology, philosophy and the place of religion in society.

“We are a vibrant community of scholars, committed to bringing together key international leaders in theology and philosophy, providing opportunities for early career researchers and higher degree research students, and offering sustained support for a wide variety of research projects.”
INSTITUTE FOR POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION

As Director of the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education (IPPE), Professor Rhonda Craven has a lot to smile about.

The Institute, established in February 2014, recently scooped up a cool $1.2 million in funding for three ARC Linkage Projects.

“It’s been a great start – we’ve really hit the ground running,” she said.

Based in Strathfield, the IPPE is ACU’s largest research institute. It focuses on leading world-class scientific research in positive psychology and education that encourages disadvantaged individuals and groups to thrive and flourish.

Professor Craven has previously secured more than $7.9 million in national and highly competitive funding for 47 large-scale research projects, including 30 ARC grants.

She said that the IPPE research ethos was an excellent match for ACU.

“Our research echoes the ACU mission and we aim to make a difference. We are committed to enhancing and promoting the common good and working with disadvantaged groups to promote justice, equity, diversity and dignity in all human beings.”

IPPE’s focus is on eight research programs which span a variety of areas – Indigenous Culture, Education, and Well-being; Mindfulness, Compassion, and Action; Physical Activity; Sport, and Health Psychology; Positive Education; Positive Organisational and Social Context; Positive Psychological and Social Development; Positive SELF and Well-being; and Substantive-Methodological Synergy.

And it’s quite a lot of ground to cover.

“We have a great deal of expertise within the Institute,” Professor Craven said. “Our researchers have a common focus on finding out what helps people, communities, and organisations thrive and then using this information to help people be all they can be.”

The IPPE’s recent ARC funding success was the strongest performance in psychology from any university in Australia.

The three projects that IPPE researchers are currently working on are May the Force Be With You: Furthering Fresh Futures for NSW Police Psychological Strengths, Wellbeing and Retention; Cultivating Capability: Explicating Critical Psychosocial Drivers of Educational Outcomes and Wellbeing for High-Ability Aboriginal Students; and The Helmsman Project: Giving at-risk adolescents skills to navigate life’s journey and make a difference.

May the Force Be With You is a landmark project which will assist the NSW Police Force in developing fresh solutions to help officers become more resilient, and support those suffering from stress-related illness.

Professor Craven is heading the study that brings together representatives from the NSW Police Force and researchers from ACU, the University of Western Sydney, and three international universities. The group has a diverse range of expertise including psychology, management, policing and criminology.

They will survey more than 20,000 serving police officers and conduct further study to develop, for the first time, an information-based scientific analysis of the NSW Police Force.

Professor Craven said the project will investigate police commands in NSW to determine how to maintain an officer’s wellbeing in the face of adversity. Findings of the study will be used to further develop psychological tools to help the entire workforce deal with stress and trauma.

“Every day the NSW Police Force puts their lives on the line to protect and serve all Australians. They are unsung Australian heroes. We aim to find out what factors protect and enhance the health and wellbeing of our NSW Police Force. This will enable research-derived strategies to cultivate the capability of and further futures for the police force.

“By emphasising a scientific understanding of what makes police officers fit and well, the aim of the project is to develop a new approach driven by positive psychology, which will help to stop our police from becoming ill from mental health problems”.

Professor Craven said the Institute was incredibly busy but staff were very much looking forward to working with their new colleagues at ACU.

“We are absolutely delighted to be here and I’d encourage any colleagues that would like to find out more about our work to get in touch. If you’re based in Sydney, do drop in and see us for a cup of tea.”

Name: Institute for Positive Psychology and Education
Director: Professor Rhonda Craven
Aim: To lead world-class scientific research in positive psychology and education that empowers individuals and groups to thrive and flourish
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Professor Nikolas Kompridis came late to academia’s ivory towers. Originally from Canada, he studied music at the University of Toronto and Yale.

He worked as a percussionist, artistic director and composer for Sound Pressure, one of Canada’s leading contemporary music ensembles, before he was drawn into academia by an invitation to the University of Frankfurt from Jürgen Habermas – Germany’s most important philosopher.

“My transition from music to academia is hard to explain, even now, but much of it had something to do with the pull of certain intellectual questions to which I could not respond so long as I remained in music,” he said.

Today, Professor Kompridis is based in North Sydney, where he is Director of the Institute for Social Justice.

The ISJ, which was established at ACU in April 2014, focuses on researching social justice issues in the broadest possible terms.

“The 21st century faces challenges that are both fundamentally different from and at the same time far more urgent than those faced by the preceding century,” Professor Kompridis said. “This requires rethinking our highest social ideals – justice, freedom, equality, democracy, public goods and the very meaning of our humanity.

“At the ISJ, we will be working to address these concerns and seeking practical solutions through partnerships with both local and international academic colleagues and with government, industry, civil society, and political and environmental organisations.”

Staff at the ISJ are involved in researching social justice issues under two broad themes – Rethinking Social Ideals and Addressing Social Issues.

Rethinking Social Ideals will examine the issues of Rights and Justice, Struggles for Freedom, Human – Nonhuman Relationships in the Anthropocene and Economic Justice, Care, and Well-being.

Addressing Social Issues will focus on Secularism and Religious Diversity, Democratic Processes of Public Reflection and Action, Migration, Indigeneity and Indigenous Governance and Gender, Race and Class.

Professor Kompridis said that an important part of the Institute’s work would be collaborations with other researchers.

“We will be working with some of the most prominent national and international scholars working in the fields of political philosophy, human rights, social sciences and law, and will be collaborating with important research centres around the world.”

The ISJ plans to establish a four-year PhD program in social and political thought to attract the very best doctoral candidates.

“This program will provide a level of research training unavailable in research-only PhD programs, and also a very strong sense of community among the Institute’s PhD candidates and ISJ academic staff. We will start with a year of extremely challenging seminars conducted by ISJ staff, including our international professorial fellows.”

The Institute is also planning an ambitious events program for 2015-16.

“We are developing events which will draw on the intellectual resources of our staff, including our international professorial fellows who are based at universities such as Columbia, Harvard, Birkbeck College, the University of Toronto, and the Centre for Study of Developing Societies in Delhi.

“These events will include an annual summer school for advanced studies in critical theory, an international conference on rethinking the relation between human and non-human life, and another international conference looking at secularism, religion, and democracy.”

Professor Kompridis said he was delighted that the Institute had become a part of ACU and looked forward to working with colleagues across the University.

“The members of ISJ are very excited and grateful to be joining ACU at a point in time when it is taking such bold and innovative steps towards becoming an outstanding research and teaching university. Our commitment to social justice reflects that of ACU’s own mission and this is very important to us.”

Professor Kompridis said that although he occasionally misses his life in music, his training as a composer has prepared him well for his career in academia.

“My musical training helps me to think about how things fit, or fail to fit together conceptually, and about the way I write – especially how I phrase sentences so that there is some kind of musical and rhythmic flow to my words. I have no regrets about choosing this path, although I do sometimes miss the intensity of musical life.”
LEARNING SCIENCES INSTITUTE AUSTRALIA

According to Professor Claire Wyatt-Smith, research is not about sitting in a dusty library, surrounded by piles of books.

"Research is generative, alive and organic. Essentially, it is about the generation and use of new knowledge and using new research-informed practices for social change."

Professor Wyatt-Smith is the Director of the Learning Sciences Institute Australia (LSIA).

Established in January 2014 and based in Brisbane, the LSIA focuses on research which aims to improve the learning outcomes, wellbeing and life chances of children and young people.

“We’re a community of scholars who share a passion,” said Professor Wyatt-Smith. “Our work attempts to identify, examine and remove the barriers to learning and life chances that some young people experience and to make a difference to their futures.”

Professor Wyatt-Smith was previously Executive Dean of the Faculty of Education and Arts.

Educated at the University of Queensland, she has a distinguished scholarly background in educational assessment and literacy, and has acted as a policy adviser to state, federal and international governments.

Professor Wyatt-Smith began her career as a teacher, quickly becoming a department head at a large school, where she was responsible for curriculum innovation and student assessment. She said it was this experience that sparked her interest in research.

“Education is not a standalone discipline. I’m interested in interdisciplinary and multitheoretical research. This includes working with areas such as law, health, social work and psychology to design interventions, systems and processes to bring about positive change in society and to support young people, both in and out of schools.”

The LSIA is comprised of eight research programs, spread over two domains – education and schooling and child and youth studies. The programs cover three broad themes.

“Firstly, our programs aim to advance and create new knowledge and understanding, which has implications for practice, policy and further research. Secondly, we aim to develop evidence on interventions. Finally, our research seeks to strengthen systems that support positive education outcomes, children, young people and their families.”

Professor Wyatt-Smith said the programs seek to address some of the challenges that Australian society currently faces, such as reported declining educational standards, young people dropping out of school, bullying, and the impact of technology on children’s learning.

The eight programs are directed by Institute-based chief investigators, all world-renowned experts in their fields.

Program one is Assessment, Evaluation and Student Learning, led by Professor Joy Cumming.

Program two examines Enhancing Literacy and Engagement for Overcoming Disadvantage, led by Associate Professor Clare Ng.

Program three is Mathematics Futures for All, led by Professor Carmel Diezmann.

Program four is Early Childhood Futures, led by Associate Professor Joce Nuttall.

Program five is Enhancing Children’s Safety and Life Chances, led by Professor Morag McArthur who also heads the Institute of Child Protection Studies.

Program six is Promoting Healthy Development and Inclusion in Families, Schools and Communities, led by Professor Sheryl Hemphill.

Program seven is Transitions and Youth at Risk, led by Professor Brendan Bartlett.

Program eight is Educational Semiotics in English and Literacy Pedagogy, led by Professor Len Unsworth.

Professor Wyatt-Smith said the programs were unique and interdisciplinary, bringing together the very best research talent to encourage social change and have a positive impact on young lives.

“Young people’s lives are not lived in schools, although they can have a profound effect. We’re interested in other contexts that might shape the lives of children and young people – their families and their communities.”

The LSIA has an enviable list of partnerships and is currently working on large-scale projects funded by the Australian Research Council, the National Health and Medical Research Council, the governments of the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland, the Criminology Research Council, and the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.

Professor Wyatt-Smith said that there were a multitude of opportunities for higher degree research students and early career researchers within the Institute.

“We offer talented students and emerging researchers the chance to collaborate with and be mentored by leading ACU researchers and international visiting scholars. It is a unique opportunity for aspiring researchers to develop their research skills.”
In Greek and Roman mythology, Hephaestus was the god of the blacksmith’s fire. A supremely skilled artisan whose forge was a volcano, he fashioned metal objects with creative flair. If he were around today, he would be known as Peter Nifakos.

The 84-year-old first fell in love with the blacksmith’s fire in Greece before he migrated to Australia at the age of 15 to pursue his passion for steel.

He intricately crafts objects from wrought iron and steel including gates, sculptures, grilles, fences, light fixtures, doors, and religious items.

“I do artistic steelwork, not mass production. I am an artist, not just a tradesman,” said Mr Nifakos.

His most recent work is the stunning French cross which occupies a sunny corner of the new St Albert’s Garden at ACU’s Melbourne Campus.

“Growing up in Greece, next to my school there was a blacksmith factory. I used to skip class to watch the welding fires, and I loved it. I trained in that factory as soon as I finished primary school and have never looked back. I love what I do.”

His impressive portfolio of decorative steelwork is scattered around the world and can be found at Melbourne’s Flemington Racecourse, Melbourne University, ACU’s Cathedral Hall, and even the Australian Immigration Department in Athens, Greece.

“In 1963 I made a door for the Minister of the Australian Immigration Department in Athens.

When I finished the job he persuaded me to go to Australia. He said the prospects were good there to start a business, so I learnt a little bit of English and got on a plane with not one dollar.

“I thought Australia was a place full of convicts and kangaroos but I took a chance on it anyway and have found so many good opportunities here to work with steel.

“The French cross at ACU is something really beautiful. I enjoyed making this one. You never see this type of cross here in Australia.

“Everything is steel, solid material. The diamond structure represents the body of Christ, the circle in the middle is his head, and the lines of steel extending outwards represent the light of Jesus. It took me about 40 hours to make this one.”

The intricately crafted piece is an exact replica of a French cross which particularly impressed ACU Associate Vice-Chancellor, Dr John Ballard, when he walked the Camino Francés in 2011.

Dr Ballard photographed the cross on the outskirts of Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, as he began the ascent of the Pyrenees into Spain.

The Camino Francés is one path of an ancient pilgrimage route which runs from France through Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port on the French side of the Pyrenees to Roncesvalles in Spain – winding through Pamplona, Logroño, Burgos, Léon, and Ponferrada – en route to Santiago de Compostela.

In medieval times, thousands of pilgrims walked the many paths of the Camino trail from all over Europe to reach the shrine of the Apostle, Saint James the Great.

“The new St Albert’s Garden at the Melbourne Campus has been dedicated to the co-patron of ACU’s Faculty of Education and Arts, St Albert the Great,” said Dr Ballard. “St Albert was a German Dominican friar, Bishop and Doctor of the Church. He was one of the Church’s most outstanding intellectuals and influential figures of his time. He was among the first and greatest of the natural scientists, with expertise in biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geography, metaphysics, mathematics, philosophy, biblical studies and theology.

“St Albert exemplifies the peaceful co-existence between science and religion, faith and reason. At the entrance to the new garden, the French cross creates a sense of serenity, in a space designed as a peaceful, reflective environment for ACU students to gather their thoughts and enjoy the afternoon sun en route to their classes.”
The Future in Youth program has grown beyond all expectations since its launch in 2010. Alisse Grafitti spoke to co-founder Dr Ross Smith about changing lives one training session at a time.

When ACU exercise science lecturers Dr Ross Smith and Dr Paul Callery were kicking around the idea of a soccer program to help young people in East Timor, they had no idea just how far it would go.

“In 2010, we planned for about 300 youth to participate and 500 turned up. The following year, the numbers increased to 800 and then to 1,000. We’ve reached the stage where we need to limit the number of participants to ensure we are balancing quality with quantity,” Dr Smith said.

Future in Youth (FiY) is a community capacity building project that teaches leadership, health, and life skills to children and young people in Baucau, East Timor, through soccer.

Dr Smith said that when the program began, there was nearly 100 per cent youth unemployment in the region.

“It was a community frequently unsettled by hostility – primarily caused by gangs of unemployed youth,” he said. “FiY promoted the important principles of ‘fun, fair and respect’ that were transferable to off the field, and would help create a healthier and more harmonious community.

“We chose football as the means to promote these key messages as it is very much the nation’s sport of choice. Many youngsters go around wearing the stripes of Real Madrid and Barcelona, or treasured Messi and Ronaldo jerseys.”

Each year, the School of Exercise Science takes a group of third year exercise science students and staff to Baucau. They run coaching education programs for the young people, and a sports education program for the kids. Hundreds of Timorese children show up every day to train no matter what the weather. Many have no shoes or are sharing a pair, and some walk several kilometres to reach the field.

“Competition for selection among ACU students is fierce,” Dr Smith said. “Many of them have a truly life changing experience and wish to return at a later stage. In 2014, we even had one student pay her own way to come back and participate.”

This year also saw two major firsts for the program. The inclusion of an ACU nursing student on the team, and the participation of an accredited FIFA instructor.

“Our nursing student worked closely with a local person to deliver a series of basic health messages about washing hands, brushing teeth and drinking safe water. It’s an area that we’ll be developing further next year.

“While FiY has been run by ACU for five years, it is intended that in the long term the program will be organised and managed by the community. To achieve this we’ve held an annual coaching education program for local people who volunteer to coach a youth team, with great success.

“Following discussions with the Football Federation Timor Leste, a request was made to the International Association of Football Federations (FIFA) to conduct a coach education program in Baucau.

“FIFA agreed and paid for an accredited FiFa instructor to travel from Malaysia to conduct a five-day program for 32 coaches in Baucau. The course was the first of its kind in Timor Leste, and the participants felt privileged to have the opportunity, and worked hard to learn as much as they could.”

Dr Smith, a Brownlow medallist and AFL Hall of Fame inductee, said the challenge for the future was getting the Baucau community to really take responsibility and ownership of the program.

“ACU will continue to drive the program for now, but we are working hard to ensure it becomes an integral part of the activities in the community. Everything we hear from the coaches demonstrates just how important FiY is for the people of Baucau.

“I’ve had coaches telling me the children are being trained to play for peace, others saying they want to use their new skills to bring peace and stability to their society. One coach told me that the program has made the community so happy as their children, once so timid and shy, are now happy and free.”

For more information on the Future in Youth program visit acu.edu.au/futureinyouth
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ometime during the late eighth and early ninth centuries, the classic period Maya civilization began to collapse. Mighty cities were abandoned and fell into ruin, and the population eventually disappeared. For decades, researchers have been searching for the cause, with theories ranging from war, to natural disaster or disease.

ACU geographer Dr Duncan Cook travelled to Belize recently on a quest for answers.

The fall of the Maya is one of history’s greatest mysteries. Dr Duncan Cook from ACU’s School of Arts travelled to Belize recently to explore one of the more recent theories on their decline, Caitlin Ganter writes.

By studying the rainforests, savannahs and swamps in the north west of the country, he is investigating the role that climate change may have played in the Mayan collapse across Central America 1,000 years ago.

“The project is focused on study sites across the Orange Walk District. Here, a series of fault lines create a fascinating mix of upland and lowland rainforest, karst landforms, savannah grasslands, and swamps and riverine environments,” said Dr Cook.

“Humans have occupied these diverse landscapes for at least several thousand years, while the Maya have called this area home for around 2,000 years. It’s a perfect region to study how humans have lived in tropical environments over long periods.”

The research project is in collaboration with the University of Texas, and is funded by an ACU Early Researcher Award (2014) and a National Science Foundation grant to ACU Honorary Professor Tim Beach.

“We’re looking to gain insights into how the Maya here survived, and even thrived, during the periods of prolonged drought that most scholars believe brought about the rapid decline of the Maya after 900 A.D.,” said Dr Cook.

“The connections between climate and human society were complex in the past, just as they are today. The idea that prolonged drought across the lowlands of Central America was responsible for the collapse of the Maya has been a hugely influential paradigm in archaeology for over a decade. However, with more and more cities being excavated and studied, we find that the collapse of the Maya around 1,000 years ago was a much more complex period of history than previously imagined.

“We now know that notable Maya settlements survived during the period of mega-droughts after 900 A.D., while other cities actually thrived and new settlements even sprung up. It’s my opinion that the drought-collapse theory urgently needs new datasets from these key sites that didn’t collapse.”

Dr Cook and his colleagues examined evidence preserved in the landscape surrounding sites such as Lamanai – a Mayan city that never collapsed and has a history of uninterrupted occupation for more than 3,000 years.

“Here I’ve been looking for clues that might explain how the Maya modified land uses in response to past climate change. The careful management of natural resources around Lamanai may help explain how the Maya adapted to climate change that was so severe it was thought to have crippled other cities across lowland Central America.”

Dr Cook completed the fieldwork as part of a team of researchers and students from Australia and the United States.

“Our work focused on mapping and sampling soils, and collecting lake sediment cores in a variety of landscapes surrounding some fascinating Maya sites. We also date the deposits so we can match the timing of when the environment was modified by the Maya, with the archaeology of nearby sites.

“We will begin analysing our samples soon, so it is still a little too early to know what stories they will tell. But they should provide a much more detailed record of how and when the landscape here has been modified by the ancient Maya in response to past climate change.”

While the research itself went smoothly, Dr Cook said there were plenty of memorable moments with the local wildlife.

“One lake in particular where I wanted to collect a sediment core had to be ruled out because it was full of crocodiles. That was quite enough to convince our team to pass up working at that site.

“However Belize is a fascinating country to explore, and having access to the very latest excavations of Maya sites across the area was amazing. Nothing beats seeing ancient temples being reclaimed from the jungle in front of your eyes.”
Ever adored a book only to see it torn apart by a professional review? Intrigued by the vast differences in opinion, Dr Marguerite Nolan from the School of Arts started looking into the ‘ordinary reader’ – and where better to do so than a book club.

“I first became interested in this idea of book clubs after the furore surrounding the publication of Kate Grenville’s award-winning novel, The Secret River. It’s a historical novel that tells the story of William Thornhill, a convict transported to New South Wales in 1806 for theft. Through Thornhill the reader sees the early years of settler-Indigenous relations.

“Many of my non-academic friends were reading it and saying how much they loved the book, and how it had impacted upon their understanding of Australian history.

“However, when I looked at the reviews, I was surprised to find that academic readers of the novel were scathing in their assessment. They were also worried that ordinary readers would gain incorrect historical information from the book.

“I found this so fascinating – how could there be such a profound difference between the way academics and ordinary people read the book? That got me wondering – who are these ordinary readers? And do the academics really need to be so worried about them?”

In collaboration with Dr Robert Clarke, University of Tasmania, and supported by ACU’s History Concentration, Dr Nolan began the project Fictions of Reconciliation: Book Clubs and Australian Historical Fiction.

“Looking at the way book clubs read novels seemed a good way to consider larger questions related to readers and their responses to historical fiction. We were really interested to know how literature shapes people’s understanding of Australian history and reconciliation.

“Since we began this project, we’ve been really surprised how many book clubs there are in Australia. They are one of the largest bodies of community participation in the arts in Australia. Indeed, we have seen their popularity through television shows such as ABC TV’s The Book Club and Radio National’s Books and Arts daily. Yet, given they are such a significant force in the marketing and consumption of literary books, book clubs have not received the kind of scholarly attention they deserve. Indeed, they are often trivialised.”

The research looks at two key topics – how book club members read and discuss their books, and, how non-professional readers understand and discuss issues of reconciliation as they appear in literary and other texts.

“We’ve been working on a pilot study for the last two years using The Secret River, and the findings have been fascinating. We found five book clubs that had read the book and conducted interviews framed around the participants’ recollection of their impressions of The Secret River and the discussions they shared.

“The participants in this study are typically middle-class women, well educated, middle-aged or older, who have had long and durable involvement in their book clubs, and who highly value their affiliations with these groups and the friendships they have made through them. Moreover, as reflected in the focus group data, all participants are passionate readers.

“We have been struck by how important the book clubs are in their readers’ lives. They are a forum for social connection and one of the few spaces members can discuss contemporary concerns. They see their book club as a way to enact a kind of literary citizenship, and the club provides a context to express, explore and challenge different views and opinions.”

Dr Nolan said for all participants, the book club was valued for the way it allowed ideas to be tested, and new perspectives and knowledge to be encountered.

“Certainly in the case of The Secret River, book club members’ responses were rarely as simple as some academics may have feared. Their readings are often open-ended, and they are willing to have their ideas and opinions altered through dialogue. And, unlike in academic readings, there is no requirement to produce a final, definitive reading of the novel. Rather, participants in book groups create a conversation that begins with the book but moves beyond it to include the personal connections and emotional resonances they discovered.

“They also didn’t seem to have any trouble differentiating between fiction and history, and tended to reject the claim they worked in opposition. In fact for some, historical fiction made the history feel emotionally engaging and intimate rather than dry and distant.

“If the fictions of reconciliation like The Secret River can provoke discussion on issues of race and history, and book clubs can provide space for these questions to be considered, then perhaps such texts and spaces are contributing to the evolution of understandings of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.”
Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech was one of the greatest oratorical achievements in American history and one of the emotional high points of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

From the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, King seared the plight of African Americans into the public consciousness and challenged the United States to live up to its founding ideals by ending centuries of pervasive discrimination against black people.

King envisioned a new America where people would “not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character”. In doing so, he gave millions of Americans, black and white, a language to express their aspirations for change.

The speech was simultaneously an expression of hope for a brighter future for African Americans, and a scorching indictment of the racism African Americans continued to confront.

Within two years, Congress had passed civil rights legislation outlawing segregation and guaranteeing black voting rights.

Last year marked the 50th anniversary of King’s speech, and millions of Americans observed the occasion by feting both dreamer and dream.

King was held up as a symbol of political heroism from a bygone era – and there were inevitable references to President Barack Obama and how he represents the fulfilment of his vision.

Yet King’s true legacy is more complex than this. By reducing his career to a single expression, “I Have a Dream”, we trivialise the substance of his message and distort the meaning of his life. King might have had a dream, but he was not a dreamer.

Perhaps the best way to understand King is to consider the opposition he faced in life. In August 1963, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover labelled him “the most dangerous Negro of the future in this nation” and, with the approval of the Kennedys, began to wiretap his home, offices and hotel rooms.

In time, Hoover discovered many things about King. But his most important discovery was King’s readiness to suffer and sacrifice for black freedom – to go to jail, endure beatings and risk death for the cause.

In articulating his dream, King’s appetite for struggle shone through. He said that 1963 was “not an end but a beginning” for African Americans. Securing blacks’ basic constitutional rights was his immediate priority. But in a sign of things to come, King also drew attention to the crippling scourge of black poverty. He knew that economic deprivation played a huge role in keeping blacks at the bottom of American society, and he understood that civil rights legislation alone would not guarantee racial equality.

Thus, with the passage of anti-discrimination laws in the mid-1960s, King broadened his
focus and targeted what he saw as the trifecta of social misery in America: race, poverty and militarism.

More and more attuned to the problems of inadequate housing, insufficient jobs and inferior schools, he began to speak of the need for a “radical redistribution of economic and political power” to close the gap between the “haves” and “have nots”.

King also became an outspoken critic of US involvement in Vietnam, viewing the war not only as morally unjust but as detracting from the struggle for racial and economic justice at home.

Indeed, in the final months of his life, King was planning an interracial poor people’s campaign to pressure the federal government to implement programs to eradicate poverty in the US.

King’s contribution to his country went well beyond words. Yet in 1968 neither the president, Lyndon Johnson, nor the two living former presidents, bothered to attend his funeral.

By then King’s demand for “basic structural changes in the architecture of American society” had made him a far more dangerous figure in the eyes of the political establishment. He was branded a traitor because of his position on Vietnam and a socialist agitator because of his views on inequality.

In difficult times, King often lamented that “the dream I had in Washington back in 1963 has . . . turned into a nightmare”. We might ask: if he were alive today, would he view America through the same pessimistic lens?

It is difficult to know.

King would surely acknowledge the tremendous progress made in America by blacks: the election of a black president, the rise of African Americans in business and entertainment, and the expansion of the black middle class.

But he would be dismayed by the deteriorating circumstances of the black poor in a nation where the chasm between rich and poor is now wider than ever. And he would despair of the persistent racial inequities in the criminal justice system so tragically underscored in last year’s Trayvon Martin case.

2014 is an appropriate time to reflect on how far America has come, and how far it still has to go, to be the society King imagined.

King was more than a dreamer who solved the problems of the past. His vision challenges Americans to confront the problems of the present, and to be ever vigilant in pursuing justice and equality in the future.

Associate Professor Michael Ondaatje is Head of the National School of Arts at ACU. A version of this article previously ran in the Fairfax Press.
When ACU theology graduate Fr John Sanderson, 51, was deployed to Afghanistan as a military chaplain his weapon of warfare was a peaceful demeanour. He was also armed with some heavy duty life experience and a barrage of effective communication tactics, Sara Coen writes.
Fr Sanderson said he had served as a police officer in London for many years so had the ability to relate to people in high stress environments, and understand those making significant life and death decisions.

He had been a Reserve Infantry Officer so had the military connection, and had also worked as a chaplain in children’s hospitals dealing with families who had experienced grief and loss.

“Being an ordained priest coupled with my studies in theology at ACU provided a sound framework for my ministry work in Afghanistan with the soldiers and their families,” he said.

During his deployment in Afghanistan, Fr Sanderson was technically not permitted outside the wire. He was based on the barracks where he conducted regular church services, para-liturgies and prayers for the soldiers and their family members. He was also required to conduct a number of Memorial Services and Ramp Ceremonies, and minister to the wounded and dying. On the lighter side, he also presided over two marriage ceremonies and baptised a number of children.

Fr Sanderson was deployed to Afghanistan during a period of high tempo, high intensity operations which translated to high coalition casualties. Many people working on the barracks were at breaking point.

“One of the young nurses was hit with a mass casualty on her first day as 10 severely wounded soldiers were rushed into the hospital at once. She said I was able to bring a sense of peace to that chaos for her. She eventually became a Christian and I later conducted her wedding ceremony,” Fr Sanderson said.

The deployed environment lends itself to some intimate spiritual conversations and intensifies human relationships. Surviving chaplaincy in a military environment requires emotional, spiritual and theological resilience.

“You come up against a lot of stereotypes and assumptions about the Church, about the bible and about Jesus and you need to know how to gently diffuse those ideas in a non-defensive way. If you hedge your bets and if you can’t articulate your beliefs you immediately lose credibility.

“You can’t wait until you are in a war zone to start working out your key doctrines and beliefs. Your beliefs need to be extremely sound. When a soldier says he’s dying you need to be able to speak into and pray into that situation instantaneously.

“In Afghanistan the soldiers would visit me as they would a doctor or a dentist. They considered me to be a specialist in my field and would often ask for advice about topics such as faith, life and death. Counselling models can work in a military context, but mostly the soldiers wanted to know what I thought. They didn’t want a counselling model.

“I met a politician a few years ago and he regularly says to respective members of Parliament that they need to be able to articulate all of their policies in one hundred non-technical words or less. It’s exactly the same with clergy. If you are going to encounter people with theology you need to be able to articulate things in a hundred words or less in a non-threatening way.

“War can be incredibly emotionally taxing for the guys and girls who are deployed, but I think it’s often even harder for the family members who are left behind. It can be extremely stressful and confusing for them as they can’t always accurately contextualise what is going on.

“For example, there was a suicide bomber and a big attack on the Governor’s residence in Afghanistan that really terrified my wife and kids. The Australian media picked up the story and really ran with it. Everyone on the barracks was fine, but the media coverage was incredibly disturbing for so many of the families.

“My family usually distance themselves from me before I deploy, which is part of the separation process, and they work hard at getting into a routine when I’m away. The children take a while to adjust and usually move into their mother’s bedroom to sleep.”

Fr Sanderson said his definition of real courage is the mums, wives, girlfriends and partners that stay at home.

“They are the true heroes.”
The latest addition to the Brisbane Campus is the ACU Leadership Centre, a professional executive campus located in the heart of the Central Business District. Designed as a teaching and learning facility, the new centre will cater for ACU’s executive and postgraduate students, as well as provide a venue for corporate and networking events.

ACU Provost Professor Pauline Nugent said the ACU Leadership Centre, Brisbane, bolsters the University’s commitment to quality executive and postgraduate programs.

“The centre is an exceptional addition to ACU, and has been purpose-built to meet the needs of our executive and postgraduate students,” she said. “Situated in Cathedral House in the Cathedral precinct, the venue is conducive to expanding Catholic partnerships and building relationships with the corporate community.

“A flexible learning space, the centre will act as a forum for key industry stakeholders while providing new opportunities for our executive and postgraduate students.”

The centre contains a range of state-of-the-art learning environments, and has been designed to allow students to learn and engage in a variety of settings. The space has been strategically arranged to maximise functionality while limiting noise and can accommodate formal lectures, group learning, video conferencing, board meetings, events and networking.

Associate Vice-Chancellor (Brisbane) Professor Jim Nyland said he was thrilled with the new campus.

“We have built this facility to cater to the specific needs of executive and postgraduate students, including staffing it with a core team of dedicated and qualified professionals, supported by our world-class academics based only 15 minutes away at our main campus at Banyo,” he said.

“It is an ideal venue and has been designed to deliver the intent of ACU’s new mission here in Queensland. I can boldly predict that this magnificent teaching and learning space based within the wonderful setting of Cathedral House will enable ACU Brisbane to be recognised internationally for providing world-class leadership programs across all our areas of mission.”

The centre has a panoramic view of the city, Cathedral and Chapel, and careful thought has been given to the design, ensuring the facility connects with ACU’s identity. The light, welcoming, and calm interior provides a sanctuary for inclusive learning. The decor includes dove details, which are intended as a reference to the Holy Spirit and as a link back to the Banyo campus. Further symbolism throughout the interior is inspired by stained glass, as well as sacred geometry, symbolising a ‘sense of oneness’ and knowledge.

The facility features data access, designated workstations, lockers, kitchen facilities and extensive audio-visual and video conference capabilities.

Photography: Supplied
Images: Supplied
It’s the issue of tattoo removal that Father Greg Boyle finds so surprising. Of all the services his gang-member rehabilitation program Homeboy Industries offers, it seems Australians are most curious about the one promising to erase the personal branding that tattooing delivers.

“I find that question kind of interesting,” said the Jesuit priest, affectionately known as G-Dog or Father G. While everyone in Australia from sports stars to mothers seems to be signing up for skin art, they’re undoubtedly sporting less confronting messages than those worn by the teens Father Greg ministers to in Los Angeles.

“Gang-related tattoos are provocative and they can create problems for you. It’s not just problems for employment, if you have alarming tattoos, then those will create problems even as you’ve started to step away from that life [of crime].”

Father Greg was in Australia recently on an ACU-sponsored speaking tour called ‘Jobs Not Jails’ to share how Homeboy Industries changes the lives of thousands of ex-gang members every year.

It was his dedication to finding a place in society for everyone that originally brought Father Greg to the Boyle Heights community in East LA, where he served as pastor of Dolores Mission Church from 1986 to 1992. It was there he started what would become Homeboy Industries, now in its 26th year.

The organisation primarily works with young people – aged 14 to 18 – who have served prison time, and those involved in gangs. Of these, 100 per cent are low income; more than 90 per cent are Hispanic, Latino or African-American; the vast majority have post-traumatic stress disorder or complex trauma; many were abused or abandoned as children; all have been witnesses to serious violence; and most are at a first-to-third grade reading level.

The organisation is the largest gang member rehabilitation program in the United States and has become a model for other organisations around the world. What began as a program catering to the unique needs of a city with high rates of gang violence, has now expanded to include 46 programs in the US and eight internationally – from Guatemala City to Glasgow.

“The profile of the person who joins a gang in Los Angeles – the despondent, the traumatised, the mentally ill – can probably be applied to other complex social dilemmas, whether it’s homelessness or kids doing drugs,” Father Greg said. “In the end they are kids who are not so much seeking something, but rather fleeing something.”

There are more than 120,000 juvenile gang members in LA alone. Of those, 12,000 will walk in the doors of Homeboy Industries each year looking for help to get their lives on track.

If they sign up for the 18-month program they receive counselling, skills training in the Homeboy businesses, mental health care, and tattoo removal.

The ‘homes’ are once-rival gang members who now find themselves working together in the bakery, diner or farmer’s market. Five per cent of the teens are girls, who work in the Homegirl Café and catering business.

“The girls usually prefer to sort things out face to face but the guys seem to be better when they’re working shoulder to shoulder,” Father Greg said.

The rehabilitation programs have proved to be successful in curbing gang-related crime, as well as saving taxpayers thousands of dollars. Fewer than three in 10 teenagers who have taken part have reoffended.

Father Boyle said such programs deliver huge social and economic benefits to the community. Yet while the Homeboy businesses generate $5 million a year, a further $10 million must be sourced from donors and benefactors.

“The social and economic costs of incarceration are astronomical compared to the funds needed to provide proper rehabilitation, employment and training services,” he said.

“In the United States, the estimated cost of juvenile detention per prisoner is between $100,000 to $150,000. For less than 50 per cent of that amount, Homeboy Industries rehabilitates approximately 12,000 per year.

“Our experience is that by providing hope and opportunities, we can reduce crime, save taxpayers’ money and help thousands of people to turn their lives around.”

To find out more about Homeboy Industries visit homeboyindustries.org
I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to do my pro bono work with the Refugee and Immigration Legal Centre (RILC) in Melbourne, at a time when they were preparing to take a case to the High Court of Australia in Canberra.

RILC is a community legal centre which assists asylum seekers, refugees and disadvantaged migrants in the community and in detention. The centre helps around 5,000 people every year.

This particular case was brought to RILC back in late 2013 and looked at challenging the Commonwealth Parliament and the Minister for Immigration’s Migration Regulations – which place a ‘cap’ on the number of protection visas awarded each financial year.

My part in helping with the case was to research certain sections of the Migration Act 1958, find Second Reading Speeches and Explanatory Memorandums which supported the case, and to familiarise myself with both our plaintiff’s and the respondent’s submissions.

The case was scheduled for two court days as RILC had joined our case, M150, with another case, M279 to be heard at the same time, as these challenges were similar enough. The M279 case also looked at challenging the ‘cap’ placed on permanent protection visas, but it also dealt with sections in the Migration Act about unwanted boat arrivals and mandatory detention.

On Wednesday 14 May at 10am the case began in front of a full bench of seven justices. The grandness of the building and the inside of the courtroom was amazing. I sat with Greg Hanson and David Manne from RILC in the general public area. We were right behind our counsel’s table and were able to communicate with them in case they needed us to find any materials in the High Court law library or if David needed to give counsel certain instructions. While David acts on behalf of the client, he had referred this case to Allens Law Firm to represent the client in court.

This was such an invaluable experience for me. Not many cases make their way to the High Court, and even many solicitors and barristers have not had the opportunity to be a part of a High Court case – making my experience even more incredible.

During law school I have read many High Court judgements, however it was different actually hearing the questions asked from the bench and watching how the Justices react to counsel’s oral submissions. It was also fantastic to be able to sit in the practitioner’s offices with our counsel and take note of how they prepare, and of what goes on behind the scenes of a hearing.

The decision of the High Court was delivered on 20 June 2014 with a unanimous decision in favour of the plaintiff (RILC’s client). This meant that the minister’s determination made on 4 March 2014 pursuant to s 85 of the Migration Act was invalid and so the court provided relief by a writ of mandamus directing the minister to consider and determine the plaintiff’s application for a Protection (Class XA) visa according to law.

This decision greatly impacted a number of people who were awaiting decisions on their protection visa applications. RILC does an incredible job and I am grateful that they allowed me to participate in one of their many cases that make a difference to so many people’s lives.

For more information on law at ACU visit acu.edu.au/law
In 2015, Australian Catholic University will reach a special milestone – 25 years of people, learning, and achievements that continue to bring about real change in our communities.

The 25th anniversary will be marked by a series of events, conferences, pilgrimages, special masses, book launches and other initiatives in the week of 27–31 July, 2015.

All ACU staff, students, alumni and friends of the University are invited and encouraged to take part in the celebrations.

To ensure you are notified of upcoming events, please visit acu.edu.au/alumni-update and update your details.

We look forward to celebrating and reflecting on ACU’s rich history with you.

acu.edu.au/25years