

ACU chosen to participate in prestigious global community engagement program

Australian Catholic University (ACU) is delighted to have been chosen as one of 20 international institutions to participate in Uniservitate, a global program for the development and promotion of “service-learning” in Catholic higher education institutions.

Service-learning (also referred to as community engagement) is a teaching method that unites community service with academic instruction. At ACU, service-learning is stirred by the Gospel values and speaks directly to the university mission; it is a practical way of responding to social inequity and injustice in the context of academic learning.

Led by the Latin American Centre for Service-Learning (CLAYSS), and through the support of international philanthropic organisation PORTICUS, Uniservitate’s aim is to generate a systematic change in Catholic higher education by integrating academic learning with community engagement. The program is a response to Pope Francis’ call for the Church to “go out to the peripheries” by offering students the opportunity to involve “heads, hands and hearts” to create a more just and supportive society, and thereby construct the “civilisation of love”.

Through our mission, ACU is committed to ensuring that all students and staff have the opportunity to make a contribution to their community that is feasible and meaningful to them, and that works with communities in a way that is valuable and respectful.

ACU has a long history of involvement with community engagement both domestically and internationally, and in 2021 over 3500 students will have a community engagement experience with a community who experiences disadvantage or marginalisation.

ACU was one of three universities in the Oceania region to have been selected to participate in this two-year program. Coordinated by De La Salle University, Manila, ACU will be working with Assam Don Bosco University (India) and Fu Jen Catholic University (Taiwan), to further enhance the institutionalisation and quality of our service-learning/community engagement program. We will also have the opportunity to share our experience of how service-learning has been applied in an Australian context.

Dr Matthew Pink, National Community Engagement Manager said,

“I am thrilled with our acceptance into the Uniservitate program. This provides ACU with a fantastic opportunity to learn from the global Catholic higher education network and to share our work on the global stage. I am excited to see the practical manifestation of this collaboration in the coming years.”

The Uniservitate program runs for the next two years and involves online symposia, training for university leaders, and the identification of, and action toward key areas of development for participating universities. Through providing our students with deeper opportunities to be agents of change for the common good, this will also strengthen our identity as a Catholic university.

Media Contact: Georgina Bible, 0475 963 606, Georgina.Bible@acu.edu.au