

MEDIA RELEASE

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ACU pays tribute to Catholic education pioneers at 60th anniversary of Canberra campus

Australian Catholic University (ACU) is celebrating the 60th anniversary of its Signadou campus in Canberra this week.

The diamond jubilee celebration will pay tribute to the Dominican sisters whose commitment to education for women, by women shaped the foundation of the campus and empowered generations of students

The Signadou Dominican College of Education was officially opened in 1963 by then Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies. The vision was simple: to create an environment where women had the freedom and opportunity to teach and learn from one another.

The Dominican sisters included First Nations women in this journey, embracing diversity and inclusion as integral elements of their educational philosophy.

Against the backdrop of the late 1950s and early 1960s, a time when women still struggled to receive an education in many parts of the world, the Dominican Sisters paved the way for generations of women to access higher education.

In the first year, a total of 19 students graduated, and the college went on to become a major provider of primary school teachers for Canberra and beyond.

Over the years, it has expanded to include research institutes and centres, while also offering courses in education and many other disciplines, including social work, nursing, paramedicine, midwifery and theology.

The College was one of four Catholic tertiary institutions that contributed to the creation of ACU in 1991, playing an instrumental role in laying the foundations for the University.

The 60th anniversary celebrations with former staff and students are being held on the Feast of St. Dominic, the patron saint of Signadou.

ACU Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Zlatko Skrbis said the milestone celebrated a legacy of transformative education that had shaped lives and communities.

"The spirit of the visionary women who founded Signadou continues to resonate through our institution, inspiring us to uphold their commitment to knowledge, service, and empowerment," Professor Skrbis said.

"This anniversary is a reminder of our shared journey, and the significant impact of ACU's Signadou Campus on the higher education landscape in Australia.

"We look forward to creating a future where the pursuit of knowledge and social responsibility remain at the heart of all we do."

ACU Canberra Campus Dean, Associate Professor Darius von Guttner, said the anniversary was an opportunity to celebrate the rich history of the Signadou Campus and its transformational impact on Canberra's inner north, and commit to the future of excellence in education.

"As we celebrate this significant occasion, we not only honour the sacrifices of the educational pioneers but also look ahead with great optimism and enthusiasm for the bright future that lies ahead for ACU Canberra," Associate Professor von Guttner said.

"Over the past six decades, our campus has nurtured countless bright minds, instilling in them the values of service, leadership, and faith."

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