

International conference to tackle challenges of community engagement in higher education sector

The challenges facing community engagement and service learning in the higher education sector will be the focus of a three-day international conference coming to Melbourne in July.

Two of the world's largest English speaking Catholic universities, Australian Catholic University (ACU) and DePaul University (Chicago, USA), have partnered to host more than 15 international community engagement academics at the conference, which will be held at the ACU Melbourne Campus from 23-25 July.

University-community engagement or service learning refers to mutually beneficial partnerships between university and community in order to address social issues while developing students and staff members' civic behaviours. From a Catholic perspective, this means working *with* members of the community who experience the most disadvantage and marginalisation.

The conference will celebrate the significant achievements that can grow from partnerships between higher education institutions and communities, while also exploring some of the contemporary challenges of community engagement/service learning.

ACU Pro Vice-Chancellor Engagement Professor Sandra Jones said, "For community engagement to succeed it needs to be a real partnership between the university and the community, recognising the strengths and resources that each bring to the table. That is why we are excited to host a conference that is not just for academics but also for partner organisations, students, community members, and anyone with an interest in learning more about community engagement and service learning".

"The challenges we face centre around embedding community engagement in the curriculum, engaging effectively with community partners, and supporting staff and students in their own community engagement journeys," said Professor Jones.

Conference program lead Dr Matthew Pink said, "Each day of the conference will have a different focus. We will start by celebrating university community engagement and service learning with students, staff, and community. Then we will move on to the practicalities of developing university-community engagement partnerships and end by promoting collaborations between ACU and De Paul."

The conference will include keynote presentations from academics committed to community engagement and service learning from Australian and United States. Keynotes and presenters at the conference include:

- De Paul University Executive Director of the Irwin W. Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning Dr Howard Rosing
- De Paul University Professor of Anthropology and Director of Community Service Studies Dr Nila Ginger Hofman
- Southern Cross University Vice President (Engagement) Mr Ben Roche
- ACU Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement) Prof Sandra Jones

Event details

Event: ACU and DePaul University Conference on Community Engagement and Service Learning

Venue: Australian Catholic University, St Patrick's Campus, Melbourne

Date: 23-25 July 2019

Cost: Per day - \$10. Lunch can be added for an additional \$20 per day (total \$30 per day).

For more information and to register visit: <https://www.acu.edu.au/about-acu/news-and-events/events/2019/july/the-acu-and-depaul-university-conference-on-community-engagement-and-service-learning>

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