

Putting faith at the heart of teacher development

One of the best news stories in Catholic teacher pre-service education in Australia is the recent launch of the Australian Catholic University 'Signum Fidei' program.

Signum Fidei is a practical initiative of the ACU La Salle Academy providing opportunities that complement the academic program to develop the faith of pre-service teachers.

The Signum Fidei Catholic Life and Mission Program aims to help pre-service teachers become confident in contributing to the building of a strong Catholic identity in the schools where they will be employed.

The program comprises three modules: Catholic Life and Practice; Faith Formation and Ministry in Catholic Schools; and Youth Ministry Experience (cross-cultural). Students receive a Certificate upon successful completion of each Module. At an employment level, Signum Fidei provides a determinant for Catholic employers in choosing people of faith to take up teaching positions in Catholic schools.

The Dean of La Salle Professor Br David Hall spent many months consulting with Catholic school employing authorities before settling on the content and activities of the program. "Employers want ACU to form the head and the heart of our graduates, they want teachers who believe that developing the faith of young people matters," Professor Hall said.

"They want to employ teachers who are intentionally attending to their own faith development. Signum Fidei is designed to do this."

ACU Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Greg Craven, whose vision and commitment saw the establishment of the La Salle Academy, said: "this addition to the way ACU prepares teachers for Catholic schools is grounded in our rich Catholic tradition, presenting it in new and engaging ways that responds to the aspirations of the New Evangelisation."

Recently launched at the Brisbane and Strathfield campuses, the first module consists of a retreat experience and a minimum of 25 indicative hours of Church participation. Module one will also be launched in the coming months at ACU campuses in Melbourne, Ballarat, Canberra and North Sydney.

Here is what some participants said of the Signum Fidei Module one retreat experience:

It makes me want to definitely develop and explore my faith further...I want to go to Church more often.

Amazing experience...I felt more connected than I ever have before.

I am now so keen to participate in ministry and Church!

The retreat definitely opened my eyes to the signs of faith in my life. I am more prepared and motivated to step out and be more involved in my Church.

It was a fruitful experience; warming to the heart ... it gave me insight into the function and process of evangelisation and strengthening of faith.

A much-needed encounter with Christ.

I feel reinvigorated and eager to participate more actively in my faith. I have been made aware of avenues I can pursue to explore and share my faith.

The retreat opened my eyes to the power and presence of God and faith in my life ... I want to fully participate in my faith and bring God back into my life.

I can see the start of my faith. I don't feel connected yet but I can see myself starting to open up.

It has challenged me to be a good leader in faith and to encourage others ... new, amazing and a fantastic atmosphere.

The La Salle Academy operates as a joint enterprise between ACU's [Faculty of Education and Arts](#), [Faculty of Theology and Philosophy](#), and [Directorate of Identity and Mission](#), and provides an integrated approach to curriculum development, delivery and assessment, and faith formation activities.

ACU is the leading educator of teachers in Australia, and is the largest Catholic university in the English-speaking world. The University offers courses in education and arts, theology and philosophy, health sciences, and law and business at seven campuses in Australia with the option to study at the Rome Centre.

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