

# Different world. Different perspectives.

Australian Catholic University (ACU) is using Australian Government funding to develop a suite of new short-term overseas programs that challenge the trend of which students can afford to travel to study.

Traditionally, study abroad has been the domain of students from wealthier backgrounds and families with high educational attainment. Students with limited finances, family responsibilities and work or workplace experience commitments have been largely excluded.

While in 2015 only 11 per cent of Australian university students who studied abroad were first-in-family at university, and less than 5 per cent were from lower socio-economic backgrounds, ACU is using funding provided through the Australian Government's New Colombo Plan (NCP) to turn this figure around.

Partly through these efforts, a remarkable 47 per cent of ACU students who studied abroad last year were the first in their family to study at university. This is four times the national average, according to the Australian Universities International Directors' Forum (AUIDF) Learning Abroad Report 2016.

More than 253 undergraduates can study in the Indo-Pacific in 2018 with combined ACU and NCP support.

The NCP aims to lift knowledge of the region by supporting Australians to undertake short and longer-term study, internships, mentorships, community engagement and research.

Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Greg Craven said the program reinforced the University's commitment to enhance our students' degrees through the inclusion of overseas learning experiences.

"Our graduates will be working in professions that require very high levels of inter-cultural competency. These international programs are an important part of the global engagement experience that students need," Professor Craven said.

"Most importantly, funding support like this helps us give access to lower income students who may not otherwise have had the financial means to go abroad."

Since 2014, ACU has received Australian Government funding for more than 70 overseas study programs and sent more than 430 students on either semester exchange programs or short-term international experiences. Well over half of these students have gained experience in Asia through the New Colombo Plan.

Among the projects planned for in 2018 ACU, 10 business and commerce students will take part in an intensive two-week program learning about entrepreneurship and international business in Surabaya, Indonesia; while 66 students from disciplines including nursing, midwifery, and allied health will complete clinical placements in Vanuatu, in settings such as public hospitals, community health services and rural outposts. This placement was established in partnership with Vanuatu's Ministry of Health.

Professor Craven said ACU students reported that such international experiences gave them real insight and understanding of other cultures.

"They return to Australia better-informed about international politics, major world events and the issues confronting people in other regions, while also learning about how people elsewhere perceive Australia.

"For many students, the international experiences they gain at ACU are formative (or transformative) and have a huge impact on their personal and professional decisions thereafter."

Education student Monique Fahey journeyed from Ballarat to northern Laos last year to teach English.

“Working in Laos has shown me first-hand the difference that can be made through the power of education. My goal is to help as many people as possible attain a higher quality of life through better education,” Monique said.

ACU offers courses in theology and philosophy, health sciences, education and arts, and law and business in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Ballarat, Canberra, Adelaide and Rome.

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