

Dean of ACU La Salle Academy awarded education medal

Internationally respected Catholic educator Professor Br David Hall fms has been awarded the prestigious Dr Paul Brock Memorial Medal by the NSW Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL).

Professor Hall, a Marist Brother who has been a leader and teacher in the Catholic education sector for 40 years, said he was “completely humbled” to receive the award from ACEL.

“I am quite humbled to receive it because various esteemed colleagues of mine have received this award previously, including ACU Emeritus Professor Patrick Duignan, who shaped and informed me from the very day I became a school leader in my twenties,” Professor Hall, 61, said.

Awarded annually to a prominent educational leader who has significantly impacted education policies and achievements, the Dr Paul Brock Memorial Medal honours the life of passionate educator Dr Paul Brock, who also joined the Marist Brothers for a time.

Originally from Sydney, Professor Hall was educated by the Marist Brothers at both St Patrick’s, Dundas, and at Marist College, Eastwood. He joined the Marist Brothers in 1980, at the age of 18.

Although trained to be a secondary Geography and Economics teacher, Professor Hall’s first teaching post was as a primary drama teacher to “new arrivals” into New South Wales, as part of a government-funded initiative to improve migrant literacy levels.

Over a career spanning four decades, Professor Hall has worked as a secondary deputy principal, principal, Head of Mission, and is chair of Marist Schools Australia.

He has been with ACU’s La Salle Academy for the past decade and holds a master’s in theology from the Catholic Institute of Sydney and a doctorate from the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

Professor Hall praised the work of educational leaders, noting the “sacredness” of their role.

“If you’re leading a company that produces a product, that’s very important, but when you’re leading an institution that’s developing human beings, and developing human beings in collaboration with their parents, who have prime responsibility for these children, it requires another dimension of leadership,” Professor Hall said.

“The research tells us two things about children and their learning, and the thing that impacts most on a child’s growth in their learning is the teacher, not the curriculum, not the resources, although they help.

“The research has also taught us that after the teacher, the next most influential factor as to how a child grows and develops is the school principal because that person is responsible for developing the culture and the climate in which the teacher can do their work.”

Reflecting specifically on the job of principals, Professor Hall said the research from ACU’s annual *Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey* consistently showed signs of concern.

“For one decade we’ve had depressing news, and my reflection is that the future of principalship is not to see it as a burden but to live it as a joy,” Professor Hall said.

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