

ACU's MacKillop Professors honour the legacy of Australia's first saint

Australian Catholic University (ACU) has appointed four academics MacKillop Distinguished Professors, a new title inspired by the legacy of Australia's first saint.

Professor Sandy Middleton, Professor Herbert W. Marsh, Professor Richard M. Ryan and Professor John Hawley have been named as the inaugural MacKillop Distinguished Professors.

ACU Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Professor Julie Cogin said the professorships recognised exceptional academic leadership and service.

“Our inaugural MacKillop Professors are scholars of exceptional calibre whose work has transformed their fields and elevated ACU's global standing,” Professor Cogin said.

“Their scholarly achievements, leadership, and unwavering commitment to the dignity of the human person make them ideal recipients of the MacKillop Distinguished Professorship.

“Mary MacKillop's commitment to education, compassion, and social justice continues to inspire people around the world.

“Our recipients are continuing Saint Mary's legacy in their pursuit of excellence, academic distinction and service to the wider community.”

The MacKillop Professorship honours scholars whose work not only advances knowledge but also embodies the spirit of Saint Mary MacKillop, serving others through scholarship, leadership, and impact.

Professor John Hawley is a global leader in exercise physiology and nutrition science and Director of the Mary MacKillop Institute for Health Research. His collaborations with Harvard Medical School, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Karolinska Institute, and Royal Melbourne Hospital reflect his commitment to translational research that improves lives.

Professor Herbert W. Marsh is one of the world's most influential educational researchers. He is among the top five most-cited Australian academics, led ACU's School Principal Health and Wellbeing project and has shaped education and health policy globally. His focus on Indigenous education, rural equity, and school leadership reflects ACU's mission-focused research.

Professor Sandy Middleton has led ACU's Nursing Research Institute since it was established in 2008, in partnership with St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney and Melbourne. She has been recognised in Stanford's Top 2% of scientists globally and attracted more than \$100 million in research grants. She was the lead investigator in the landmark Quality in Acute Stroke Care (QASC) Trial, which showed that simple nursing protocols were effective in minimising the effects of acute stroke and save lives. Professor Middleton was the first-ever inductee into the St Vincent's Health Network's Nursing Hall of Fame.

MEDIA RELEASE

25 November 2025



Professor Richard M. Ryan is a globally renowned psychologist and co-developer of Self Theory (SDT), one of the most widely applied theories of motivation and well-being. His work is cited by the WHO, Red Cross, and national ministries.

Media Contact: Louise Crossen, 0477 675 772, louise.crossen@acu.edu.au