

SENATE DIGEST FOR MEETING OF 2 MARCH 2023

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chancellor welcomed Senators and attendees to the meeting and apologies were noted for Most Reverend Anthony Fisher OP, Archbishop of Sydney.

2. Acknowledgment of Country and Opening Prayer

Senate expressed sorrow at the passing of His Eminence Cardinal Pell. He was the Foundation Pro-Chancellor and served as President of Corporation. Senate noted his enormous contributions to ACU and the larger community. A prayer was shared in his memory.

Senate noted the resignation of Karl Morris from Senate, effective 24 January 2023. He brought expertise and an eye for detail to Senate, particularly in finance and business. Senate expressed thanks for his service and noted a service award for contributions to Senate would be presented to him.

3. Report from Chancellor

The Chancellor provided a summary of the events and meetings in which he had participated since the previous meeting, including:

- Opening Mass and Welcome Cocktail Reception - Catholic Schools and Religious Liberty: A Global Perspective Rome and Conference, Rome;
- Catholic Schools and Religious Liberty: A Global Perspective conference, Rome;
- Mass at St Peter's Basilica followed by General Audience with Pope Francis, Rome;
- Meeting with Vice-Chancellor, His Eminence Cardinal de Mendonça and Bishop Tighe, Rome;
- Blessing and Opening of ACU's Campus di Roma, Rome;
- Ex Corde Ecclesiae: Reflections after 30 Years, Rome
- ACU Constitution Review Working Party Meeting #5;
- Cardinal Pell Memorial Mass, North Sydney and Banyo;
- Visits and Meetings with Fordham University, Boston College, ACCU, Georgetown University and Catholic University of America (CUA);
- ACCU Conference, Washington DC; and
- Induction to Senate with Student Senator, Ms Deanna Uremovic

4. Review of Remuneration (Vice-Chancellor & President)

Senators and the Secretary to Corporation entered a closed session.

5. Report from Vice-Chancellor and President

The Vice-Chancellor and President (VC) provided an overview of the Report and highlighted the following:

- ACU has secured a record \$45 million NSW Government grant to establish a STEM Centre of Education Excellence at the Strathfield Campus;
- The Faculty of Education and Arts will be establishing an Australian Centre for the Advancement of Literacy (ACAL). It will focus on early years literacy and effective interventions across the years of schooling. From April 2023, the new Australian Centre for the Advancement of Literacy will build a concentration of leading researchers and practitioners in literacy and reading. A presentation and resolution is provided under agenda item 10;
- Congratulations to Associate Professor Laura Miller (Occupational Therapy) and her team from the School of Allied Health, for leading the consortium that has successfully secured \$6.9 million in funding from the Australian Department of Social Services to deliver ENVISAGE. This is an evidence-based program to support families raising children with a developmental concern or disability. Total consortium funding is \$13.8 million;

- ACU has established a new partnership with RSL Queensland. An initial sponsorship agreement of \$200,000 will support an additional ACU Student Veteran (Families) Services Liaison Officer, deliver a new veteran exercise lifestyle program, and deliver a new veteran and family art program. A fee for service agreement is also in place to support research consultancy projects;
- ACU Canberra Campus Blackfriars Residences student accommodation has opened. The new residence consists of 42 purpose-built and fully furnished studio apartments;
- In 2022, alumni and donors contributed to ACU in greater numbers than ever before. ACU had its most successful fundraising year to date with \$4.2m in philanthropic funds secured. This was up from \$1.2m in 2020 which is a 328% increase;
- The sad news for ACU that the Interim Provost Meg Stuart announced her retirement. Meg has done outstanding work building a culture of excellence in education and building key relationships. Meg will be greatly missed when leaving in 2024. It was noted that an announcement would be made to staff in the afternoon and ACU will go to market to recruit a new Provost.

Senate discussed:

- How the University manages philanthropic donations; and
- STEM funding.

6. State of Play

The Vice-Chancellor and President (VC) presented the annual State of Play presentation.

Senate discussed:

- Enrolments;
- Growth in new courses;
- Debt Refinancing Strategy;
- Staff reduction as part of Recovery Transition Program;
- Operating model;
- Capital investment strategy; and
- Aspirations, areas of strength and the Strategic Plan.

7. ACU Vision 2033

The Pro-Chancellor provided a progress updated on ACU Vision 2033 and highlighted the following:

- Two rounds of strategy consultation have achieved over one-thousand individual engagement touch points. The diverse range of participants has included staff, students, alumni, and our Catholic community;
- Feedback will be sought from Senate at the 27 April Meeting, regarding the 'Our Future' discussion paper

8. Australian Centre for the Advancement of Literacy

The Executive Dean of Education and Arts provided a brief overview of the Business Case and spoke to:

- The focus for 2023 and the benefits of the new centre;
- The risk mitigation strategy; and
- The conditionally approved grant for \$500,000 grant in humanities.

Senate discussed:

- Where early reading and literacy support will be focused;
- Bespoke training; and
- Historical changes in the focus on teaching phonics in schools.

Senate:

- approved the proposal to establish the ACU Australian Centre for the Advancement of Literacy.

9. Report from Interim Provost

The Interim Provost provided a brief overview of the Report and highlighted the following:

- EFTSL was 22,748 against target of 24,685 (92%). With mid-year enrolment removed, enrolment is 95% of target. It is anticipated that the mid year target will be met in full.
- Headcount for commencing students is up 450 on the same time last year, but behind EFTSL target due to yield of 79%. Continuing yield is 70%, meaning students are enrolling in fewer than six of eight units. This is a new trend first observed in 2022;
- There has been a significant shift in international student enrolments up from 482 EFTSL to 1019 EFTSL. An additional 200 international students have accepted an offer and are expected to enrol for semester 1; and
- Over 330 international students have accepted an offer but not yet met the requirements for enrolment. These students will be targeted for mid-year enrolment where their course of choice is able to be open at that time.

Senate discussed:

- Continuing load; and
- International enrolment figures and drivers.

10. Report from Chief Operating Officer

Senate discussed the following reports:

- Delegations and whether principles are supported and align with the Recovery Transition Program;
- Bi-annual Performance Report;
- Student Services and Amenities Fee Report;
- Melbourne Campus Development Report;
- Work, Health and Safety Report Q4; and
- Contract Execution Register.

11. Report from Academic Board

The Chair of Academic Board provided a verbal update of the Governance Day and meeting of 16 February and highlighted the following:

- TEQSA renewal of registration perspective is that confidence in Academic Board is essential. It was noted that the Annual Academic Board Report was provided to Senate; and
- There continues to be an increased focus on artificial intelligence (AI) with work underway to address policy implications, incorporation into the curriculum, risks, and mitigations. It was noted that policies are currently being updated accordingly.

Senate discussed:

- Applications for benchmarks and oversight of Learning and Teaching policies. It was noted that the primary policy statement is under review and will be renamed Monitoring Policy;
- Ethical considerations of intellectual property ownership when interacting with AI; and
- The need to adopt a leadership position for use and engagement with AI.

12. Report of the Senate Standing Committee

A brief update was provided on the status of Senate Membership.

13. Report of the Finance and Resources Committee

The Pro-Chancellor provided a brief overview of the meeting and highlighted the following areas of focus:

- The deficit forecast, per the State of Play presentation;
- The extraordinary meeting of FRC was called to give FRC a deeper understanding of the forecast positions; and
- Work is underway to amplify the work of KordaMentha.

Senate discussed:

- Review of the operating model; and
- Engagement of KordaMentha.

Senate noted the *'Unaudited 2022 Financial Statements; and Preliminary 2023 Forecast'* and the *'Finance and Resources Committee Briefing - FY22 unaudited result and FY23 forecast'*.

14. Reports from State Chapters

Senate noted the Report of the Victorian State Chapter meeting of 22 November 2022.

15. Submission to Constitution Working Group

Senators met following the meeting, for a discussion session on the submission to the Constitution Review Working Group.