

## The University of Canberra

Necessity is the mother of strategy, as well as of invention. The University of Canberra, located in the national capital, has naturally always had a national perspective: the Australian Mathematics Competition which its staff founded 25 years ago now attracts entrants from almost every Australian high school. And because Canberra is Australia's diplomatic capital, the University is home to a thousand students drawn from more than 70 countries, as well as from every State and Territory.

But, even with a thousand staff and ten thousand students, UC is one of the smaller universities in our country. To do what it does has always required the intelligent search for the right partners. We have not put capital into overseas campus ventures; rather, we search for the right overseas university partners and give them a role in our teaching and research. Because our focus is on preparing people to enter and advance in the professions (and also to shift from one profession to another) we form partnerships with organisations which have a common interest in high-quality professional staff. Our research emphasis — on tackling today's problems today — implies partners who have problems which lend themselves to a research-based approach (not every problem does). Success here often leads to a long and productive relationship, in which the partners learn a great deal about each other, to the benefit of both.

Partnership establishment and partnership maintenance are key elements in the University of Canberra's external strategy, and have been for the past ten years. In the global world in which Australia is placed, universities are becoming indispensable players, partly because they are likely to have wide networks — wider than those of most businesses and organisations. But no university can do everything, and UC has learned that another valuable partnership role is that of 'knowledge broker': for some of our partners, especially at the local government level, we act as the point of reference where expertise of some kind is needed. If we possess the expertise ourselves, we will offer that; if we don't, we will find the best available, and bring that to the attention of our partner. Partnerships work best if each partner appreciates that the other is interested in success for both.

The partnership form can vary greatly. The Australian Mathematics Trust, now the organisational form which is responsible for the Australian Mathematics Competition (more than 500,000 entrants each year) is a partnership between the University, a learned academy, professional associations and hundreds of volunteers all over the country. The University's well-known national centre for social and economic modelling (NATSEM) is a partnership between the University, some government departments, and a spread of organisations and companies interested in the application of these highly sophisticated techniques to areas interesting to them. UC has one-on-one educational partnership with the Australian Customs Service, and the two partners have designed a unique educational program for ACS staff which fits the needs of Customs yet

articulates into the normal degree structures of Australian universities. The University's principal CRC, that in Freshwater Ecology, has 19 partners, one of the largest groups in the whole CRC system; the CRC for Freshwater Ecology is widely regarded as one of the most successful.

The revolution in communications technologies has of course assisted UC in forming national and international partnerships. It was one of the first Australian universities with an active and useful website, which was judged recently as one of the best, as well. But UC staff are used to travelling off-shore and to any point in our country to give courses, teach intensively, offer advice or conduct research. And once again, location in the national capital is important: national endeavours and national partnerships make good sense if they are headquartered in or in some way are associated with Canberra. It is probably true that UC could provide, from somewhere in its portfolio, an example of almost any kind of partnership that works.

One consequence of this strategy is that the core business of the University, which is teaching, scholarship and research, is now much more broadly defined. We teach Vietnamese students in Canberra, but also in Ho Chi Minh City; we teach Australian students everywhere, but also in Canberra. Most of our academic staff have been to at least one of the countries of our region for teaching purposes, or scholarship or research, a thing that was unheard of ten years ago. Our research endeavour is much more characterised by successful research for other people (indeed in proportionate terms we lead the pack in this respect) than it is by the conventional test of Commonwealth research grants won. And because 40 per cent of our expenditure is now earned through activities other than those funded by the Commonwealth's core grant, our staff know that this the path for the future.

We don't know everything, and we don't claim to. But we cover a pretty wide terrain in the land of knowledge, and we're used to forming partnerships with people who need what we have. Above all, we listen.

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