

Department of Industry, Innovation,
Science, Research and Tertiary Education

Collaborative Research Networks (CRN) Program

Funding Agreement: CRN2012:01

Commonwealth of Australia (**Commonwealth**)

Australian Catholic University Limited (ABN 15 050 192 660)
(**Recipient**)

Project: Building Collaborative Research with a Particular
Focus on Cardiovascular Health

Schedule 2– Project

1. Overview

1.1 Project Title

Building Collaborative Research with Specific Focus on Cardiovascular Health

1.2 Project Participants

1. Lead Institution	AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY (ACU)
2. Partnering Institutions	
(a) Higher Education Partners	THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE (UNIMELB)
(b) Other CRN Partners	ST VINCENT’S HOSPITAL, MELBOURNE (SVH)
	O’BRIEN INSTITUTE (OBI)

1.3 Project Summary

CRN funding will establish a Program of Research Enhancement and Sustainability (**PRES**), with responsibility to enhance research capacity and capability at ACU. The Program focus will be the development of staff research capability using University of Melbourne collaborative tools and training programs developed to accommodate ACU Health as well as general researcher and research training requirements. The Program will have depth and breadth to ensure an alignment with needs and CRN goals. Pre and post assessments will be undertaken to measure outcomes. These assessments will enable ACU to derive a set of indicators of the value to the institution of the CRN investment. PRES will include a collaboration project with UniMelb in staff and student training and program development for ACU. In another aspect of the CRN Program, ACU, UniMelb, SVH and OBI (**the Alliance**) will develop and implement a suite of cardiovascular research projects and components as capacity builders and exemplars of quality research. Outcomes include increased mentoring and collaboration to build ACU research capacity; multi-disciplinary ACU HERDC outputs; and expanded translational cardiovascular disease (**CVD**) research.

1.4 Project Objectives

ACU’s project on *Building Collaborative Research with Specific Focus on Cardiovascular Health* will establish a research Alliance (ACU, UniMelb, SVH and OBI) to direct a two-stage program to promote sustainable research excellence and collaborative research connections with ACU. This CRN program will leverage ACU’s academic and industry connections and will lead to increased communication, collaboration and synergy through sharing of knowledge and resources and economies of scale.

The program has two stages with two elements and will achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Stage 1: Element 1 – Establish a Program of Research Enhancement and Sustainability (PRES)

PRES will be established to direct the enhancement of research capability at ACU. Its objectives include:

- 1.1 Creation of a vibrant research culture at ACU
- 1.2 Mapping ACU current and emerging research strengths, ACU research concentrations and demographics of ACU research staff.
- 1.3 Based on 1.2, CRN funding will facilitate the ongoing implementation of strategic structural change to ACU's research staff and research centres to meet the future needs of its research strengths and priority areas.
- 1.4 Based on 1.2 and expertise gained through the Alliance, the implementation of a strategy to increase collaborative research within the Alliance initially, but subsequently with other organisations, where research synergy and efficiency is confirmed. This focus will be on ACU's research strengths (see 1.3).
- 1.5 Enhancement of research capability of all faculties and research personnel at ACU through PRES-directed exposure of ACU staff to research infrastructure available at a highly intensive research university (UniMelb) and at other partners (SVH and OBI). Initiatives include train-the-trainer programs, participation in cross-faculty seminars, and facilitated opportunities for joint publications, grant applications and research student supervision.
- 1.6 Implementation of multi-modal transfer of research training and development programs from UniMelb to ACU staff, particularly Higher Degree Research (HDR) students, post-doctoral fellows and Early Career Researchers (ECR).
- 1.7 Implementation of cross-institutional research-focused initiatives such as staff exchanges.
- 1.8 Development of cross-institutional pathways for staff and student communication and transfer.
- 1.9 Implementation of a strategic plan for the establishment of additional research collaborations. This strategy will leverage current and emerging strengths at ACU and current and potential collaborations in disciplines aligned with ACU's Mission (see 1.3).
- 1.10 The establishment, with ACU's IT department, of i) platforms that facilitate the licensing of training programs available at UniMelb to all ACU campuses and ii) a data portal for shared research information (eg research staff expertise), resources (eg infrastructure and personnel) and outputs (eg publications, grants).
- 1.11 Development of the CRN Alliance to be acknowledged as conducting research of excellence.
- 1.12 Using expertise gained in (1.11), replication of the collaborative research-centre model with other academic and industry organisations including health and hospital systems (Stage 2).

2 Stage 1: Element 2 – Develop Cardiovascular Research at ACU

Health is one of four specific areas of Mission of ACU, and CVD is a National Priority Research area. Through the Cardiovascular Research Centre (CvRC) , ACU collaborates with UniMelb and SVH. This collaboration (The CRN Alliance) is designed to leverage the synergistic research efforts of biomedical and medical scientists, clinicians, health specialists and medical specialists focused on Australia’s most costly disease - CVD. The CRN Alliance will contribute to PRES and become an exemplar collaborative model. Advancements in CVD research would make a significant contribution to reducing the burden and costs associated with treatment and rehabilitation of CVD.

The objectives of Element 2 include:

- 2.1 Development of the emerging research strength of ACU in Health Sciences, and in particular cardiovascular research, through PRES-facilitated management and collaborative synergy of the CRN research Alliance.
- 2.2 The expansion of cardiovascular research at ACU to gain nationally and internationally-acknowledged research standing focusing on cardiovascular health, including the disadvantaged, vulnerable and Indigenous members of the community.
- 2.3 To establish greater synergy among the research Alliance and the current nine (9) multi-disciplinary programs in the CvRC through increased communication and sharing of resources and research staff.
- 2.4 To integrate into the emerging cardiovascular research program specific CVD relevant research programs at OBI (tissue regeneration, myocardial cell replacement, obesity and CVD). ACU recently signed a collaborative agreement with OBI (December 2011)
- 2.5 To establish strong links with welfare and community agencies for the development of interdisciplinary cardiovascular research and clinical outreach programs with the vulnerable and disadvantaged population.
- 2.6 Using the CRN Alliance as an example of collaboration. Lessons learned by PRES through Alliance expansion and interaction with the collaborative partners will be used to seek and establish other collaborations (Stage 2).

3 Stage 2: PRES (post CRN funding) and the CRN Alliance

Use PRES expertise to:

- 3.1 Strengthen existing links, and broaden the collaboration with academic, welfare and community agencies.
- 3.2 Expand the development of interdisciplinary cardiovascular research, increase clinical outreach programs and create opportunities for multi-disciplinary research in all areas of ACU research strength
- 3.3 Establish PRES as an integral and continuing component of the ACU strategic plan to develop research capacity and foster research collaboration nationally and internationally, post the CRN program.
- 3.4 Extend collaboration nationally and internationally using the experience gained from the CRN Alliance model, particularly in Health Sciences, to hospitals, academic institutions and welfare agencies in Victoria, ACT, New South Wales and Queensland. PRES will use the development of the CRN Alliance as a model

for future collaborations in areas of ACU's evolving strengths such as Health, Nursing, Education, Psychology, Social Justice and the Common Good, Theology, Philosophy, and History.

3.5 To significantly increase ACU research outputs including publications; Higher Degree Research (HDR) student enrolments and completions; grant income; and collaborations.

3.6 ACU will engage with a range of relevant professionals in order to leverage and expand its collaborations..