An agenda of hope underpins and give expression to the transformative power of ACU National’s faith-based community engagement, both within and beyond the University. Through the Beyond Today agenda, community engagement is a source of hope. Engagement is mutual, reciprocal and transformative. We do not just offer something. We are prepared to reflect on it and be changed in the process.

True engagement is also sustained. It is not a one-off donation or an isolated act. Engagement changes both parties. This is about relationships and empowerment, and about building capacity.

University-wide ownership of these agenda enable staff, students and alumni to collaborate with communities and their stakeholders in achieving a better tomorrow.

From within the University, we bring our capabilities and expertise around key areas so we can make a culturally relevant and sustainable difference.

Through the Institute’s priority themes, Beyond Disadvantage, Beyond Borders, and Beyond Differences, we are building upon the trust and relationships that have been established with people within and beyond the University.

From its Catholic tradition, ACU National has a commitment to helping others. We need to make substantive changes in the lives of people. We work with the Church and other NGOs, with governments and with communities, in response to their invitations.

Others assist us, through financial support or support in kind. We can’t do it alone and we don’t do it alone. The scope expands.

At ACU National, we are committed to community engagement. While many universities see their community engagement role solely as providing knowledge workers for a prosperous economy, ACU National’s Mission, with its focus on social justice and human dignity, takes a wider view.

While the “prosperity” view is important, it leaves out of the equation the social dimension. Our focus is engaging with communities to improve their welfare, wellbeing and capacity to do things themselves.

The establishment of the University’s Institute for Advancing Community Engagement (IACE) provides a national team to improve and deepen our community engagement relationships and activities.

It is clear from our expanding record of programs and collaborative achievements that community engagement is a core function at many levels of our University, but we recognise there is still room for improvement, and we welcome overtures and involvement as we continue to interpret it authentically.

For further information about IACE and community engagement please visit www.iace.acu.edu.au or www.acu.edu.au/community_engagement. Contact IACE project manager Ms Helen M McLucas at helen.mculcas@acu.edu.au or on (02) 9701 4335.

You can support ACU National’s community engagement work, student scholarships and other projects through the University’s Foundation. Please contact national fundraising and development manager Ms Bea Brickhill at foundation@acu.edu.au or on (02) 6209 1194.