

ACU to introduce Ancient Israel Program

Australia's only academic program dedicated to the archaeology, history and languages of Ancient Israel will be introduced at Australian Catholic University (ACU), offering units on Archaeology of Ancient Israel in Arts, Education and Biblical Studies degrees from 2022.

The Program is funded by generous philanthropic donations of close to \$2m over a five-year period from the Education Heritage Foundation, Henroth Foundation and the Sir Asher and Lady Joel Foundation.

Since its inception seven years ago at Macquarie University, the Ancient Israel Program has proven a great success, with significant research outcomes including discovery of a lost Biblical city and vibrant academic links with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University and other international institutions.

ACU's multi-campus structure, digitally enhanced learning opportunities, and an internationally acclaimed research profile will allow the program to flourish. The university offers Australia's only major in the Archaeology of Ancient Israel as well as complementary courses in Ancient History, Biblical Studies, Classical Hebrew and other ancient languages. The program will support research focused on Ancient Israel, a new archaeological dig in Israel when travel permits, and a program of eminent visiting scholars.

In announcing the introduction of the program at ACU, Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Zlatko Skrbis said, "understanding history and tradition is the driver of knowledge and innovation. We are not afraid to set our ambitions high, envisioning that we can produce a world-leading centre for the study of Ancient Israel.

"I am confident that the combination of an exciting syllabus and our collaborative academic environment will assure the integrity and long-term viability that are essential for the program's success.

"We are extremely privileged in forging this partnership with our donors and thank them for their immense generosity in establishing the program in its new home at ACU."

Peter Wertheim, the co-Chief Executive Officer of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and Director of the Education Heritage Foundation, welcomed the program's introduction at ACU. "The partnership with ACU presents a remarkable opportunity to further develop the Ancient Israel Program by drawing on the depth of scholarship in Biblical Studies and ancient languages at ACU and combining it with archaeology that will be a focus of the new Major and research efforts," he said.

“The donors were impressed not only with the level of academic excellence at ACU, but also with the university’s shared vision and commitment to make the Ancient Israel Program thrive and prosper.”

Associate Professor Gil Davis will direct the program. He will be joined by a senior archaeologist specialising in the archaeology of ancient Israel. It will build on the existing depth of Biblical, ancient Near Eastern and ancient language scholarship at ACU.

The Ancient Israel Program will have a broad reach, available to more than 32,000 students across eight campuses in Australia and a campus in Rome.

Images are available on request

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