



## Worldwide University Update

June 2021 | Scottsdale AZ, USA

### **Master of Arts (Spiritual Direction)**

The students in the Master of Arts (Spiritual Direction) have now completed their thesis proposals and ethics approvals. Their topics include grief, wellbeing, beauty, and workplace chaplaincy. We look forward to reading them.

### **Master of Arts (Christian Studies)**

In collaboration with two Indonesian faculty members, we are now in the last week of second semester, with nine students. This is a professional development program for Indonesian Christian workers. Due to the pandemic, all studies are done online using mainly Zoom and WhatsApp, and all done in Bahasa Indonesia. Internet connections vary from excellent to “drops out every time it rains.”

We use discussion as much as possible to keep sessions relevant to practices on the field. Students have been enthusiastic and show admirable commitment to learning. One student is a church elder and the others are either pastors or members of indigenous missions. One couple is planting a church based on an early-age kindergarten in a remote area. Another is pastoring a small new church in a village high up in the mountains. One uses digital media for evangelism in a regional city.

### **Course in research ethics**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a committee that oversees the ethics of research with human subjects. A group has been through orientation to the legal requirements, which we did through Zoom. Some have already finished, despite the challenges of inconvenient time zones and schedules.

The US legal requirements are quite sensible and, like the Australian guidelines, their main purpose is to protect people who could be exploited. However, many details are different from those in Australia, and some are based on political considerations and past US problems.

Some things are also quite confusing. Oral history is defined as not being research. (?) And some terminology does not have its ordinary meaning. For example, “exempt” does not really mean “exempt” but refers to separate categories with different requirements.

### **ACAS**

WU’s forerunner institution, the Australian Centre for Advanced Studies (ACAS), has received its renewal of accreditation. It had to take the matter to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, and the hearing eventually produced about 3,000 pages of evidence. It was a huge effort taking on their legal team, examining and cross-examining witnesses, gathering affidavits, and providing hundreds of documents.

The Tribunal recently announced its ruling that ACAS had done nothing wrong and had met all accreditation requirements, and that that the accreditor (ASQA) had made a series of errors. Even though I expected to win, it took a week after the decision to think about anything else other than “We won!”

This means that some WU qualifications will again be eligible for Australian government accreditation, such as the graduate programs in education and spiritual direction. In fact, we have a group of people who have completed a course and are ready to graduate.