

Media release

1 September 2021

New beginnings as IRU welcomes a new member and a new Executive Director

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) welcomes the University of Canberra (UC) to its ranks and names Paul Harris as the new Executive Director.

From today, the University of Canberra is a member of the IRU, bringing the network's membership to eight and its footprint to include all of mainland Australia.

"The University of Canberra is a wonderful fit with the IRU as our newest member," said IRU Chair Professor Carolyn Evans.

"University of Canberra shares the goals of all our members to provide excellent educational opportunities for underserved populations, to undertake research which makes a difference domestically and globally, and to be engaged members of our diverse local communities.

"With the membership of UC, the IRU now has a member in all mainland states and territories and the existing members welcome this chance to work more closely with our colleagues in Canberra."

University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor Professor Paddy Nixon said he is delighted for the university to be included as an IRU member.

"IRU is at the forefront of higher education and research policy and is a strong voice on the future direction of the sector," he said. "UC is keen to join with like-minded academic and professional staff in progressing the work of member universities and the sector more broadly.

"The collective effort across teaching, research and community impact is impressive and we look forward to what the University of Canberra brings to the network as the only member from the nation's capital."

The IRU is also set to welcome its new Executive Director, Paul Harris.

Mr Harris previously worked as the Director of the North American Liaison Office of the Australian National University at the Australian Embassy in Washington DC, and prior to that was the Counsellor for Education and Science at the Australia Embassy in Tokyo. He has also worked at the CSIRO where he was the General Manager, Government and International Relations.

Professor Evans said the wealth of experience and understanding Mr Harris developed in his previous roles will greatly benefit the IRU.

"The selection panel was impressed by the thoughtful and globally informed perspectives he brought to Australian higher education policy issues and his vision for the IRU," she said.

"We look forward to continuing to play an influential role in shaping public policy and contributing to our members under his leadership."

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Mr Harris will commence his role in mid-September and replaces Conor King who finished with the IRU in July after nearly 11 years.

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Quotes to attribute to Professor Carolyn Evans, IRU Chair:

On the University of Canberra: “The University of Canberra is a wonderful fit with the IRU as our newest member. UC shares the goals of all our members to provide excellent educational opportunities for underserved populations, to undertake research which makes a difference domestically and globally, and to be engaged members of our diverse local communities. With the membership of UC, the IRU now has a member in all mainland States and Territories and the existing members welcome this chance to work more closely with our colleagues in Canberra.”

On Paul Harris: “Paul brings a wealth of experience and understanding developed in his role working in universities, diplomacy and CSIRO. The selection panel was impressed by the thoughtful and globally informed perspectives he brought to Australian higher education policy issues and his vision for the IRU. We look forward to continuing to play an influential role in shaping public policy and contributing to our members under his leadership.”

Quotes to attribute to Professor Paddy Nixon, Vice Chancellor, University of Canberra:

“The University of Canberra is delighted to be included in the IRU network. The IRU has an expansive national reach with members in nearly every State and Territory. The collective effort across teaching, research and community impact is impressive and we look forward to what the University of Canberra brings to the network as the only member from the nation’s capital.

“IRU is at the forefront of higher education and research policy and is a strong voice on the future direction of the sector. UC is keen to join with like-minded academic and professional staff in progressing the work of member universities and the sector more broadly.”

About the IRU

The IRU is a network of eight comprehensive universities committed to inclusive excellence in teaching and research in Australia. Its members are Charles Darwin University, Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Murdoch University, University of Canberra, and Western Sydney University.

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