
February 2024

Introduction

With the start of the 2024 academic year and good student numbers, campus is busy with lectures, tutorials and other academic activities. 2,300 students participated Herea tō Waka | Welcome Day on 16 February. Lectures began on 19 February and in the same week there was a Students Club Day that provided an opportunity for students to sign up for a diverse range of clubs covering sport, culture, education and social interests.

On International Women's Day the newly renovated and refurbished Ann Ballin Building (formerly the Psychology Staff building) was inaugurated at an event attended by the late Dame Ann Ballin's family, friends, former and current staff and students.

Engagement

UC signed a memorandum of understanding with the Special Olympics New Zealand Charitable Trust Board that will see the University providing accommodation and services during the Special Olympics 2025 New Zealand National Summer Games.

Now in its 11th year, Summer Startup is a 10-week business accelerator programme run by the UC Centre for Entrepreneurship (UCE). It's designed to provide students with the skills and support to launch innovative business ventures. This year's showcase took place on 8 February and the programme featured over 90 speakers, including Brianne West (Ethique, Business but Better, IncrediBalls), Vaughan Fergusson (Vend), James Laughlin, Guy Horrocks, Icehouse Ventures, and Blackbird, as well as in-depth workshops and field trips.

Academic and professional conferences advance knowledge and raise visibility of UC's academic work. Dr Anna Earl welcomed 80 delegates to campus in February for The Australia New Zealand International Business Academy Conference. Associate Professor Chris Jones and Dr Madi Williams welcomed 400 delegates for the ANZ Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies Conference in February.

On 27 February UC collaborated with the New Zealand Institute for Chemistry (NZIC) to host a Global Women's Breakfast in conjunction with the United Nations Day of Women and Girls in Science to promote gender equality in Science. After introductions by Ama Matua | Executive Dean Science, Professor Sarah Young, I delivered a talk about *Catalysing Diversity in Science*. There were 366 similar events registered in over 70 countries, including new countries such as Angola and Belarus.

Canterbury University Press published three new works in February:

Still Standing: A Memoir by Anna Crighton, champion for the built past of Christchurch and New Zealand.

He Awa Whiria: Braiding the knowledge streams in research, policy and practice edited by Angus Macfarlane, Melissa Derby and Sonja Macfarlane explores a bicultural framework weaving Indigenous and Western knowledge. The open access edition was supported by the Council of New Zealand University Libraries.

The Donnithorne Wicked Bible - A Digital Edition edited by Chris Jones is an open access publication.

Education – Accessible, Flexible Future Focussed

Student services were humming with Te Pātaka seeing 50% more students compared to the same time last year. Students were engaging with the services earlier with nearly 1400 students working with Kaitoko across January and early February, over a third more than the previous year. The library was also in high demand with 9300 students visiting on the first day of lectures. Staff at Te Pātaka were kept busy in the weeks leading up to the start of semester, seeing double the number of students that they had seen in previous years. Students were able to get answers to a range of queries including accommodation, digital needs and course changes. It was an opportunity to welcome cohorts of students for many of the new programmes.

Besides students coming to campus, the first UC cohort of over 70 pre-registration nursing students commenced with the programme being delivered via UC Online. UC's commitment to accessible and flexible education has resulted in a wider geographical spread of students.

Artificial Intelligence and Assessment workshops for Science and the Business School were conducted, with ongoing workshops across schools and faculties.

Research – Impact on a Changing World

The Te Kura Tāura | UC Graduate School completed its move to Matariki Level 1, providing a visible presence and support of graduate research students at UC. This is part of the strategic plan of the Graduate School to provide strong support for thesis students to improve timely completions, improved employability and better well-being. Te Kura Tāura has also been supporting cotutelle agreements (dual PhDs) with several overseas universities (e.g., Australia, France, Chile, Belgium), which aligns with the University's strategic plan of improving international collaborations. Recent analysis of 2023 student survey data has shown that the experiences, and likelihood of recommending UC to others, has improved considerably for our research Master's and Doctoral students since the development of Te Kura Tāura, with the net promoter scores of research students now approximating those of undergraduate and taught Master's students.

As part of the University's strategic objective of improving its national and international profile and reputation, there have been some key outcomes. Professor Jason Tylianakis (School of Biological Sciences) co-authored a new paper published in the prestigious journal *Science* titled *Teach Indigenous knowledge alongside science*.

A unique facility for studying protein crystal growth in space was developed by Dr Sarah Kessans in the School of Product Design, in collaboration with teams from Arizona State University and Christchurch companies Asteria Engineering Consultancy and Intranet. This device is scheduled to launch on SpaceX's Commercial Resupply Mission CRS-30 in March in an uncrewed mission to the International Space Station (ISS), making it New Zealand's first experimental payload onboard the ISS. Dr Kessans's research about biological research in space received seed funding from the NZ Government's MBIE Catalyst: Strategic Space 2019 fund and MBIE Innovative Partnerships.

After a nationwide search by the AF8 (Alpine Fault Magnitude 8) steering committee, Dr Tom Robinson from the School of Earth and Environment was selected as Science Lead of the programme. This South Island Civil Defence Emergency Management collective undertakes scientific modelling, coordinated response planning and community engagement to build resilience to prepare for the next Alpine Fault earthquake.

People

The halls of residence are at full occupancy for the start of semester 1 (76% Year 1 students and 24% year 2 and above). In conjunction with Kia Angitu, "Thrive" lectures were presented for all first-year halls, as an orientation to academic success and support services available. Residential Assistant training programmes were completed in February, including a noho marae (overnight stay) for UniLodge Taurima (residential assistants).

A presentation on looking after yourselves and our environment while in Aotearoa/New Zealand (student safety and environmental care) was part of the international student orientation event in February.

The School of Psychology, Speech and Hearing is running an eight-week course for students and staff on self-compassion. This offers the skills and support to build self-compassion and self-esteem and, in doing so, reduce self-criticism. It is based on research that compassion focused therapy is effective in managing stress and anxiety, regulating moods and improving overall mental well-being.

The Kaiwhakarete Oranga | Wellbeing Navigator programme has undergone significant expansion for 2024, now boasting twice the number of student Navigators compared to previous years. The 20 Navigators serve as peer support conduits, linking students with wider university support services. One of the programme's main event offerings, the 'Connect Zone,' has been extended to two days per week, offering a platform for students to enjoy smoothies, games, and conversations, fostering a sense of belonging and community among attendees. This year the Wellbeing Navigators have been trained in intentional peer support and the programme is gaining national recognition.

Collaborating with Te Whatu Ora, the University hosted a vaccine clinic for Meningitis, HPV and MMR during Welcome Day in February. Vaccination staff worked throughout the day to provide 248 Vaccines.

The University Chaplaincy Service provided its 2023 report. The service provides interdenominational support for students and staff, alongside the Student Wellbeing team. Highlights from a range of 2023 activities were the hosting of a multifaith breakfast for 65 faith leaders from local communities and staff and student groups, an online and campus-based advice service, hosting of regular morning teas with security and other support staff, and leading Christmas and other religious services.

The gym streamlined their registration process this year with the new PerfectGym membership software, dramatically improving the student experience. Students now only need to sign up once while they are a student at UC, as long as they maintain continuous enrolment. This means approximately the 3000 new members each year needing to be processed will automatically be rolled over each year, reducing administration for the Recreation and Sport team.

Matching and introductions have been completed for the 2024 cohort in the Academic Staff Mentoring Programme. The programme matches early and mid-career staff with a Professor or Associate Professor outside of their School/Department. The programme has been in place for 16 years with 302 mentorship partnerships to date. 36% of the current mentoring pool were once mentees in the programme.

The pan-university Community of Practice for Technical Staff (TechCoP) was started in 2023 and aims to link staff in Faculty-based lab and workshop technical support roles. In 2023 there were two gatherings, three workplace tours (Health Sciences, Physical & Chemical Sciences, and Fine Arts) and the establishment of a Teams site for communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. Planning for 2024 is underway via a representative Steering Group supported by People and Culture.

People and Culture launched a recruitment training module for hiring managers and panels. In addition, the software supporting staff recruitment processes, Snaphire, has been expanded to capture all roles that are fixed term and not advertised. This means that all our fixed term and continuing roles are now processed via the system, improving processing time and consistency across UC.

People and Culture also released the first stage a new Staff Development Programme. This provides a calendar of offerings that enable our staff to approach opportunities for growth and feel supported to invest in their development. Initial courses for all staff are The Successful Leader – Leadership Fundamentals, Pasifika Talanoa Day, First Aid Level 1AI, First Aid Refresher and Quarterly Connections (a forum for new staff). The first tranche of Academic Staff courses is Taking an Intercultural Approach to Supervision, Introduction to Media, Social Media - a beginners guide to LinkedIn and X, and Planning your Career Advancement (PYCA).

Karen Mather, Director - Academy Affiliation and Organisational Development, has been appointed to the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) Human Resources in the Higher Education Community Steering Group and was selected to be the ACU regional representative for Aotearoa New Zealand. The remit of this role is to connect and work with other HR professionals from across the Commonwealth, learn and share good practice, represent the University of Canterbury at a global level and work of the ACU HR in HE Community.

Internationalisation

UC welcomed 50 new international Erskine Fellows to UC for Semester 1 with more to arrive across the semester, bringing a total of 67 Erskine Fellows for the first half of the year. The Erskine Programme continues to be a stellar UC initiative that benefits both staff and students.

As part of the MBIE-funded 'Future Architecture of the Network' project, the Electric Power Engineering Centre has signed affiliate agreements with Aalborg University (Denmark), TU Dresden (Germany), The University of Cambridge (UK), the University of NSW (Australia) and TUMCREATE (a joint research programme between Technische Universität München (TUM) in Germany and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore). These affiliate agreements cover research cooperation and academic and student exchange.

In February the New Zealand Centre at IIT Delhi convened a meeting with all New Zealand universities and Education New Zealand scheduled a series of meetings around this and the QS India Summit. At the Summit, UC hosted a workshop on alternative energy with IIT Delhi and also a plenary panel on industry partnerships with academia. Professor Clemency Montelle and Professor Matt Wilson were awarded two of the four inaugural IIT-Delhi India-New Zealand Centre Fellowships which were celebrated in New Zealand Government and Indian media.

A new international internship course is underway this month, with seven UC students attending a four-week enriching work and cultural experience at Sendai University as part of the PACE programme. They're interning for a range of Japanese businesses across different industries.

Organisational Efficacy – of a sustainable scale by 2030

During February the University successfully launched its new Library management platform as planned and within budget. This platform streamlines the management of electronic and print catalogues, enhances the student experience, and seamlessly integrates with UC's learning and mobile platforms. This marked the retirement of the outdated Horizon system, which had been in use for over 30 years. The new platform, called Folio, operates as a cloud-based Software as a Service (SAAS) solution and leverages modern integration architecture via UC's Data Integration Hub. Notably, Folio was among the first systems to capitalize on UC's newly available integration services, allowing for swift implementation in time for the start of the semester.

Digital Services initiated the early adoption of our new core voice services platform, Teams Calling, in February. As the current voice system, Skype for Business, approaches its end-of-life, transitioning to the more modern telephony voice service provided by Teams Calling is imperative. This strategic project not only allows UC to retire outdated on-premise telephony infrastructure but also mitigates associated risks. Teams Calling, a robust enterprise voice platform, enables the University to maximise the value of its existing investment in Microsoft 365.

Environmentally Sustainable

February saw a much higher engagement from students interested in getting directly involved in sustainability activities than we have seen in recent years. Approximately 150 students attended an open day held by Facilities Management's Sustainability Office at the community garden during O Week, while hundreds attended the stall during Clubs Days.

The Sustainability Hub hosted a student event at the start of semester in the Undercroft, specifically aimed at first year students, to learn more about what UC is doing about sustainability and the sustainable development goals. Students from the Sustainable Design Society had a table at the event, and happily signed up many more students to their club.