
January 2024

Introduction

Our 150th year celebrations came to a conclusion with a festive gathering for all staff on 15 December before most staff began a well-deserved holiday break.

At the end of last year we received the Academic Quality Agency's Academic Audit report for University of Canterbury. It was pleasing to see the long list of commendations and affirmations, and the confirmation that *"UC meets, and in many areas exceeds, the outcomes and standards of a university of good international standing"*. Given the direction we have pursued since 2019, I was especially pleased that *"The Panel commends the University's consultative and engagement-oriented approach to strategy development and change, led by the Vice-Chancellor and reflected throughout the University"*. The report includes several commendations of excellent practice at UC, which is a testament to the collective effort and dedication of our entire community. There were also constructive recommendations for UC to address, including the introduction of a new curriculum management system, which is now underway.

Eleven UC academic staff and alumni were among the New Year Honours list for 2024. Notably, Professor Tim Bell, Lecturer in Computer Science and Software Engineering, has been made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (CNZM) for his services to computer science education over the past 40 years. UC Law (Honours) graduate David Beeche, Chief Executive Officer of the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia and New Zealand in 2023, has been made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to sports administration. Other UC alumni honoured included Dr Kevin Trenberth, Bachelor of Science (Honours), a climate change scientist who was appointed a CNZM for services to geophysics, and Philip (Pip) Cheshire, Bachelor of Arts, appointed a CNZM for services to architecture.

As we look forward to the 2024 academic year, we are excited to welcome new and returning students. Preparations are underway for Welcome Day on 16 February where new students and their whānau will have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the people and campus through a programme of orientation events. The current enrolment numbers are encouraging, showing planned growth in alignment with the 2024 budget.

Engagement

Nearly 100 people attended the capstone public event of the sesquicentennial anniversary with the launch of *A New History: The University of Canterbury 1873- 2023* by Canterbury University Press at the Great Hall in the Arts Centre on 12 December.

Engagement with government and local partners is ongoing. At the end of the year, we hosted long-standing and newly elected Canterbury MPs on campus to discuss our strategic direction and they walked through the renovated spaces for the Digital Screen Programme. The delegation included Canterbury MPs Hon Dr Megan Woods, Hon Dr Duncan Webb, Dr Vanessa Weenink, Dr Hamish Campbell, Hon Matt Doocoy, Reuben Davidson, Laura Trask and Kahurangi Carter.

Earlier this month the UC Structural Engineering Laboratory (SEL) hosted Ilam MP Dr Hamish Campbell to showcase our ongoing seismic research.

Brett Berquist recently attended a meeting with Selwyn District Council CEO Sharon Mason, Lincoln University Vice-Chancellor and school principals from the Selwyn region, to explore areas of collaboration in addressing the challenges of meeting the needs of the local community during a period of rapid expansion. UC remains committed to community impact and close collaboration with schools, access and student success.

On 30 November the UC Business School's Centre for Entrepreneurship delivered The Challenge event in partnership with ChristchurchNZ and with support from Smart Christchurch and The Health Technology Centre. During this event innovative health and technology inventions were displayed at the Christchurch Arts Centre. The 17 ventures that took part in the 10-week Validator programme showcased their entrepreneurial ideas at the evening, with the top 8 taking to the stage to pitch their ideas in person.

On 19 January, 62 UC staff participated in the Crusaders Long Run, a relay event with the goal of reaching 10 000 laps in conjunction with the Crusaders and other teams and individuals, to raise money for the Child Cancer Foundation.

Education – Accessible, Flexible Future Focussed

The completion of degrees was a highlight for many with 1617 students having their qualifications conferred at the end of 2023. We look forward to celebrating with many of them at the April graduation ceremonies. End of year data has also revealed improvements in first year retention rates for Māori (+4%) and Pacific students (+6%) and improving student satisfaction with teaching quality and their overall experience at UC.

Even before the start of 2024 academic year, many students are currently studying. In addition to the Takere students, summer school has just over 2000 students looking to complete courses. This period also sees the launch of two new UC online qualifications, Master of Applied Data Science (ADS) and the Postgraduate Certificate in Strategic Leadership. Two new short courses were launched including the final course of the Wellbeing series, Lifestyle and Wellbeing, and a Professional Project Management course.

Library business continued throughout summer with research and summer students, and preparing new events for orientation. Staff are also preparing for the implementation of the new Library Management System. The new system will mean better services for students and staff and will be available for students in time for the start of Semester 1.

Research – Impact on a Changing World

An innovative technology that allows Type 2 Diabetes risk assessments to be carried out in the comfort of people's own homes took out the top award in the 2023 HealthTech Challenge. Ceratec Health was named the HealthTech Challenge 2023 Overall Winner at a showcase and award evening held at the Christchurch Arts Centre on 30 November.

UC is celebrating the first successful grant from Horizons Europe. The Civil and Natural Resources Engineering team will be exploring *"Mitigating environmental disruptive events using people-centric predictive digital technologies to improve disaster and climate resilience"* as part of a large international team including other New Zealand partners and led by Trinity College Dublin. New Zealand only became eligible for Horizons Europe funding in 2023.

There were three high profile publications recently accepted in prestigious journals: Dr Matiu Prebble and an international team reported on *"Floristic homogenization of South Pacific islands commenced with human arrival."* In *Nature Ecology and Evolution* Associate Professor Mads Thomsen and an international team studied *"Herbivory limits success of vegetation restoration globally."* In *Science* Professor Renwick Dobson and his students described *"Structure and mechanism of a tripartite ATP-independent periplasmic TRAP transporter"* in *Nature Communications*.

Dr Tufulasi Taleni, Faculty of Education, received the Pasifica Community Researcher Award from Community Research and the Pacific Circle Consortium's Peter Brice Award.

People – Nurturing Staff, Thriving Students

Kate Brooks will join the Facilities Management Team in February as Asbestos Manager. Kate, a qualified asbestos specialist whose last role was with the Canterbury District Health Board, will head up a new FM Health and Safety team that will also have a generalist health and safety role, and a building compliance role.

The first virtual wellbeing seminar of the year, offered in late January, was “*Power up the Positive: Harness the Benefits of Positive Emotions*”. This workshop focussed on emotions that boost creativity and productivity, improve health and reduce stress. Participants learnt strategies to experience these emotions more often, and how to reset to use them when needed.

A new online course on Te Reo basics is available to all staff. The programme has seven modules and an average completion time of twelve hours.

The Accommodation Services and Facilities Management teams have refurbished a number of houses on campus so that they can be used as student accommodation. This will provide approximately 60 additional beds for non-first year students, thereby freeing up space in the student halls. The houses will be managed by Unilodge.

UCSA ran a Summer Series of social events throughout January and early February. This included a picnic for Postgraduate students.

On 1 December we celebrated the achievements of 90 academic and professional staff at Hui Whakamānawa | Celebration of Success. The awards spanned newly appointed professors, Values Awards, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Awards, Sustainability Awards, Teaching Awards, Early and Emerging Career Awards, Capability Development Awards, HEA fellows, Teaching scholarships and Long Serving staff. National awards including Ako Aotearoa teaching awards and Royal Society awards were also recognised on the day.

Internationalisation – Locally Engaged, Globally Networked

We ended 2023 with global recognition for *Sure to Rise: The Edmonds Story* by Peter Alsop, Kate Parsons and Richard Wolfe (Canterbury University Press, 2023) being announced as the winner in the Culinary History category in the Gourmand 2023 World Cookbook Awards.

Our summer school program continued with the hosting of 130 attendees from articulation partner universities in China, at our two-week experiential Global Competency Development Program in January. The program aims to promote our degree and study abroad programs to prospective students, and is a key marketing activity for our international education function.

Executive Dean of Engineering, Saurabh Sinha, along with Pedro Lee, Associate Dean Engineering, and Assistant Vice-Chancellor Brett Berquist attended the Australian Education Management Group’s Hand in Hand Workshop on 31 January. They met with senior representatives of Australian, US, UK and New Zealand Universities that operate successful transnational education programs, to better inform UC’s transnational education planning.

Organisational Efficacy – of a sustainable scale by 2030

The University is in the process of Audit NZ undertaking UC’s external audit for the financial year end 31 December 2023.

After discussion and review, the UC Council decided to modify the University’s Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the UC Investment Plan 2022-2024 to better reflect realistic stretch targets in the post-COVID educational environment. This change to the Investment Plan (a statutory requirement) was submitted to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), and the Commission approved these changes in November 2023.

UC's progress in transforming its digital architecture and capabilities was recently recognised by the CIO magazine. The Chief Digital Officer, Michael Oulsnam, was ranked 8th in the top 50 CIOs in Technology in New Zealand. The position reflects the significant delivery and progress of the Digital Services team in the past 3 years. During the same ceremony our Chief Information Security Officer, Rudo Tagwireyi, was awarded the *Next CIO* award by CIO magazine. This award recognises Rudo's extensive work to transform UC's digital security and risk management, having led the Security strategy and programme.

Digital Screen Project facilities ready for Semester 1 are Enhanced Learning Spaces in Ōtākaro, Digital Production Studio Facilities and Innovative Virtual Production Sets.

The Ann Ballin building project has achieved practical completion and the building was handed back to the School of Psychology, Speech and Hearing in January. Staff have provided positive feedback on their refreshed environment. The building will be ready for teaching from the start of term two as planned.

Environmentally Sustainable

With our continuing commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), I am pleased that Te Kura Umanga | University of Canterbury Business School has been selected as one of the new cohort of Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) Champions for 2024-2025. As well as recognition for delivering value for business and society at large, PRME Champion status represents the UC Business School's commitment to work collaboratively to develop and promote activities that address shared barriers for the PRME community, with sustainability an important pillar of this work. The UC Business School joins 47 international Business Schools as PRME Champions.

In a major milestone, the boilers on the Ilam campus were commissioned to burn biomass at the end of 2023, as the conversion from coal burning is now complete. Final touches, such as new asphalt, are being finalised in the delivery yard to restore the area to a clean working site now the contractors have finished. This conversion removes a considerable proportion of the Ilam campus carbon footprint.

UC received top results in the annual QS sustainability rankings for 2023. In addition to an overall ranking of 86, UC is placed in the top 10 worldwide for environmental education.

Associate Professor Elizabeth Macpherson, from the Faculty of Law, won the Advancing Sustainability Research Award for her contribution to environmental and natural resources law, and her focus on addressing global environmental challenges. School of Forestry Associate Professor Justin Morgenroth won the Advancing Sustainability Knowledge Award for his work over the past decade, taking first-year Forestry students to the Pūharakekenui Styx River in Ōtautahi Christchurch to undertake restoration planting in partnership with the Christchurch City Council. Ngāi Tahu Centre Senior Research Fellow Dr John Reid (Ngāti Pikiao, Tainui) won the Protecting Our Planet Award for his work to boost the health of UC's waterways.

UC and UCSA signed the Edible Canterbury Charter in December 2023 to support Canterbury's food resilience preparedness.