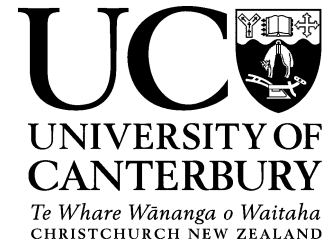


Vice-Chancellor's Report to Council



April 2025

Introduction

April marked the end of a busy first term followed by mid-semester break.

During 8-10 April we celebrated Autumn Graduations. Over 2,800 students graduated, supported by approximately 12,000 whānau, friends and UC staff over the five ceremonies. The celebrations included a street parade from Hack Circle to Victoria Square which was well attended and included an address from Christchurch Mayor Phil Mauer.

Following the submission of the final report from the Science System Advisory Group (SSAG), the government announced the establishment of the Prime Minister's Science and Technology Advisory Council. The Advisory Council will provide independent scientific advice to the government on priority funding areas for science and innovation to benefit the economy. Dr John Roche of the Ministry of Primary Industries has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor and will also serve as deputy chair of the council, under Minister Dr Shane Reti as chair. Other members of the group include Sir Peter Gluckman who led the SSAG, as well as senior representatives from the bioengineering, beef and dairy, and energy sectors.

Engagement

UC held a 2025 Industry Evening event at Tūranga Library on 10 April to celebrate the creativity and industry engagement of final-year Product Design students. The showcase attracted members of the general public, school groups, and UC graduates and their families during graduation week. The awards evening was the culmination of the week-long public showcase, where students exhibited their final-year projects. Students received \$18,500 in industry-sponsored awards.

On 29 April we officially opened the University's new Earth Science Garden located in front of the Ernest Rutherford building. The brainchild of Dr Kate Pedley of the School of Earth and Environment, the garden was installed in conjunction with Facilities Management as part of the landscaping on the new ground source heat pumps site. Featuring over 200 rocks across 15 different types, the garden is a scaled-down representation of the bedrock geology of the South Island, with a particular focus on the Canterbury and Westland regions. It offers students the chance to practice identifying features and solving geological problems as they would in the field.

UC Business School has been shortlisted as a finalist as Business School of the Year in the PIEoneer Awards 2025. The PIE is a UK based news, recruitment and events organisation for professionals in international education. The annual awards are globally renowned and recognise excellence in international education. Winners will be announced at a ceremony on 5 September at London's Guildhall.

Education – Accessible, Flexible Future Focussed

The last week of Term 1 was particularly busy with tests and assignments due before the break. The students made the most of existing study spaces with the library once again being the central hub of activity for students. There was an increase in foot traffic of approximately 11% compared to last year across all three libraries with capacity peaking at the end of the term.

While face-to-face tests remain the most frequent form of assessment, faculties and departments are using more alternative approaches. Computer and Software Engineering ran their largest online test, with 931 students participating concurrently in an assessment. The test demonstrates how digital infrastructure and collaboration can support large-scale, high-quality learning experiences in a rapidly evolving academic landscape and also our commitment to accessible and future-focussed education at UC.

As part of the Tertiary Education Commission funded student success project, He Kokonga, UC held a university-wide workshop with significant participation from staff right across UC, including both academic and professional staff, totalling 110 people. The outcomes of the workshop will form the foundation of a scalable programme that will contribute to student success across New Zealand.

Career development is widely recognised as an important part of student success. The UC Careers and Work Integrated Learning teams have been renewing their focus on career education and support for students. There was recently mention of a PACE student's work in a local newspaper. The article can be found online: *Uncovering Kaiapoi and Rangiora's archaeological heritage | Star News*, and talks about the exciting project a PACE student has been involved with in assisting with uncovering archaeological heritage.

Research – Impact on a Changing World

Five UC academics have been elected as Royal Society Te Apārangi Fellows: transnational criminal law expert Professor Neil Boister, wildlife behaviour and conservation expert Head of School of Biological Sciences Professor Elissa Cameron (Ngāi Tahu, Ōtākou), internationally recognised biochemist Professor Renwick Dobson, feminism and postcolonial history leading scholar Professor Katie Pickles, and world-leading maths modeller Professor Michael Plank.

The research team in the Construction Management discipline has been awarded the 2025 Parkman Research Medal by the UK Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) for their paper "*A tool for reporting the optimal timing of pre-construction services in New Zealand*". The award recognises research of exceptional quality and significant impact in civil engineering, construction, and materials science. The winning paper will be made freely available for a year and be actively promoted to the global civil engineering community. The team comprised of PhD student Paul Botha, Dr Daniel van der Walt, Associate Professor Eric Scheepbouwer, and Associate Professor Phil Barutha from the University of Notre Dame.

The School of Earth and Environment hosted two international visits investigating research opportunities. The Director of Tonga Geological Services was hosted to discuss collaborative research projects and the impacts of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai eruption. The incoming Polish Ambassador, Patryk Błaszczak, the retired Ambassador of the European Union to Japan and South Korea, Professor Michael Reiterer (now Erskine Fellow at the UC National Centre for Research on Europe), and Winsome Dormer, Honorary Consul for Poland, were hosted to discuss research collaboration in Antarctica between UC and the European Union members.

Minister Dr Shane Reti visited UC's Biomolecular Interaction Centre (BIC) and toured the Nano Lab, where a range of cutting-edge research projects were presented. The Nano Lab delivers access to micro and nanofabrication technologies for education, research and commercial projects. The Lab houses equipment that can replicate the structure of a single human cell and 3D print structures that can only be seen under a microscope.

People – Nurturing Staff, Thriving Students

A range of on-campus events in early April highlighted services available to, and work being done by students and staff. The Digital Services team ran a quarterly showcase to discuss digital priorities, and a number of stalls that focussed on digital challenges and opportunities. The Legal Services team ran "*UC Legal 101*", a chance for staff to learn how best to engage with UC Legal. UC Graduate School ran a workshop entitled "*Taking an Intercultural Approach to Supervision*".

Included in a range of learning and development offerings released recently by People and Culture are "*The Influential Leader*" which focusses on impactful and influential skills, and an online programme on the effective and safe use of Generative AI. Southern Cross ran webinars for staff about the UC benefits available to staff and their families.

UC-funded influenza vaccinations are being offered again this year to UC staff, and UCSA has promoted 1,000 free vaccinations to students. In addition to using the usual booking system at the UC Health Centre, staff can also now take advantage of a new walk-up service provided by the University Pharmacy.

UC is part of a UNZ working group that is in talks with Worksafe about the safety standards for University laboratories. Handling and storage of hazardous substances is a priority issue. A Reactive Visit took place following a complaint to WorkSafe. The complaint was about the fumes given off by the hot wire cutting of foam board. After disproportionate levels of corrosion were found in the level 6 plant room of the Ernest Rutherford building, an action plan is being implemented to mitigate health and safety risks.

Five UC Sport Charitable Trust sports clubs have partnered with global athletics leader New Balance and Belgravia Sports Apparel for the next three years. UC's Rugby, Football, Netball, Hockey, and Basketball clubs will be fully equipped with new uniforms, training gear, and casual apparel. The partnership is a significant milestone for the UC Sport Charitable Trust sporting community in their support of athletes on and off the field.

In support of New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) week 5-11 May, Te Ratonga Whaikaha | Student Accessibility Service is offering a short, introductory, skill-based NZSL course open to all UC students and staff in Terms 3 and 4. In line with UC's values of Whanaungatanga and Manaakitanga, the course will help build sign language capability in our places of learning, work and recreation.

Internationalisation – Locally Engaged, Globally Networked

In March UC joined a delegation of all 8 New Zealand universities in Delhi, India, to attend the Association of Asia Pacific International Education Conference (APAIE), alongside a series of events organised by Education New Zealand to promote New Zealand as a study destination for Indian students. These activities leveraged the Prime Minister's visit to India the week prior, which was

met with strong enthusiasm by Indian counterparts. Educational ties between New Zealand and India were prominent in the Prime Minister's delegation, including time spent at UC's prestigious Indian partner university IIT Delhi, where a New Zealand Centre is based.

UC's Future Students Director and Global Engagement Associate Director remained in India in early April to engage with UC's partners and recruitment agents. They hosted a small alumni dinner in Mumbai which was warmly received. UC Business School's Director of Internationalisation travelled from India to Vietnam and China where they met with several UC partner universities and agents from these priority regions.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research met with the European Union Ambassador in New Zealand, Lawrence Meredith, to discuss opportunities for closer research engagement between UC and the EU, especially through the Horizon Europe funding programme. The Ambassador has invited the DVCRs from universities across the New Zealand to participate in the upcoming EU-NZ Business Summit in Auckland.

Organisational Efficacy – of a sustainable scale by 2030

The UC Services Portal refresh went live on 24 March. This is the first major refresh since the system went live in 2022, and is aimed at enhancing overall functionality, findability, and user experience for staff and students. Key improvements include simplified navigation through a new, more intuitive mega menu, and a redesigned interface aligned with digital platforms. Findability and search capabilities have been enhanced, and built-in data and performance analytics are now utilised to gain better user insights.

Digital Services have been supporting the Legal team to implement a new matter management system (LawVu) to record new legal matters. This helps the Legal team to manage their workload and will make it easier for stakeholders to view and keep track of any matters raised.

Tupuārangi is progressing well, on time and budget. Careful management to maintain progress is required to ensure the completion date is achieved.

The Kōawa Studio Post-Production building is on schedule with most of the concrete structure nearing completion. Forecast practical completion is scheduled for December 2025.

Environmentally Sustainable

The Sustainability Hub is striving to widen participation in the international Green Impact initiative, following on from the considerable results by a small number of UC teams in 2024. The programme now has several new teams in various faculties and service units. For example, in the Engineering Faculty, CAPE lab managers are using guidelines in the Green Impact initiative to investigate ways labs could be improved, such as improving fume hood efficiency and the use and efficiency of ultra-low temperature freezers. In the Science Faculty, Environmental Science students enrolled in ENVR411 undertook the first waste audit of UC cafeterias and common lunch areas as part of course requirements to assess challenges and propose workable solutions.

The Sustainability Hub ran an event to encourage academics to include the SDGs, in some way, explicitly or implicitly, in their curricula and research. Four UC academics presented how they viewed the relevance of the SDGs to their own disciplines, and how they had incorporated them into various courses.

UC's Associate Professor David Dempsey and Professor Andy Nicol have contributed to a pivotal International Energy Agency (IEA) report into the advancements and future potential of underground hydrogen storage (UHS) in the global energy landscape. Led out of the Netherlands with global expertise across industry and academia, the IEA report on UHS technology addresses the growing need for sustainable and efficient energy storage solutions. As the world transitions to renewable energy sources, the ability to store hydrogen underground offers a promising method to balance supply and demand, reduce carbon emissions, and enhance energy security.