

Vice-Chancellor's Report | Te Pūrongo a te Tumu Whakarae



Professor Cheryl de la Rey

E ngā iwi katoa, tēnā koutou katoa.

With 2019 as my first year as Tumu Whakarae | Vice-Chancellor at Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha | University of Canterbury (UC), it was most gratifying to be welcomed so warmly by UC staff and students. It was a successful year in many respects, with a growth in student numbers, stronger research performance, many accolades for staff and students and the conclusion of the post-earthquakes rebuild and recovery phase. These achievements positioned us well to look ahead and plan the next decade in the life of the University. By the end of the year, we had developed and published our new institutional strategy, Tangata Tū, Tangata Ora.

But 2019 was also a challenging year. In March, Ōtautahi Christchurch experienced a terrorist attack on two local mosques, which shocked us all and caused a great deal of reflection about who we are as a community, our values and our commitment to social inclusion. It was heart-warming to see the UC community come together to mourn and show support at the UC Band Together event, which was attended by over 5,000 people – the largest campus gathering ever according to many reports. Members of staff and students went above and beyond in their efforts to provide support and the Student Volunteer Army again stepped in, welcoming Muslim students as they returned to campus and providing transport and logistics where needed. Our researchers have been leading the ensuing conversations about online hate, inclusiveness and diversity through conferences, further research and media commentary, and in this way have helped to shape the debate about the influences that are so important to our communities here in Aotearoa New Zealand and also globally.

Later in the year, a second tragedy struck our community with the passing of student Mason Pendrous in the Sonoda hall of residence. A report from an independent investigation, together with our own internal reviews, has given us the basis for making a number of changes in our student pastoral care to ensure that such a tragedy does not happen again. I want to thank all UC staff, students, alumni and stakeholders for their support as we responded to these challenges.

As I reflect on the past year, I am pleased that the University has also had many successes and it is important to celebrate these. Highlights included: Professor Emerita Paula Jameson receiving the 2019 Marsden Medal by the New Zealand Association of Scientists; the approval of 12 UC-led research projects by the 2019 Marsden Fund Te Pūtea Rangahau to the total of \$6.54 million in diverse fields of research; and Professor Anne-Marie Brady becoming the first female political scientist to be made a Fellow of the Royal Society Te Apārangi.

Furthermore, the Royal Society Te Apārangi awarded engineer Dr Volker Nock a 2019 Rutherford Discovery Fellowship to accelerate research into saving native trees from fungal pathogens; and Emeritus Professors John Blunt and Murray Munro were named among the top 1% of cited researchers worldwide.

Professor Steven Ratuva led the world's biggest project on ethnicity and published two books in 2019. While this is one standout example, many of our academics published books and articles that contributed to their fields, and many brought their research into the public realm with accessible public talks and commentary in the media.

Following considerable planning, we launched new qualifications for 2020, to respond to the needs of our incoming students – the Master of Applied Translation and Interpreting and the new Bachelor of Youth and Community Leadership, which grew out of the Student



Volunteer Army and the Christchurch 101 community-orientated paper.

Building on our institutional experience of resilience, responsiveness and innovation in a fast-changing world, UC has identified opportunities to extend its impact. Our new strategic vision will shape the University's forward trajectory towards our milestone 150th anniversary in 2023 and beyond. The vision is the outcome of an extensive participatory process involving mana whenua, tangata whenua, our staff, students, alumni, and community and business partners.

At the heart of the strategy is the concept of engagement focused on three main areas – education, research and people – with organisational efficacy, internationalisation and sustainability as transversal goals. Our commitment to engagement is inspired by our shared view that at the base of UC's public role must be our commitment to support the development, growth and success of the city and region and increase engagement with the people of Ōtautahi Christchurch and Waitaha Canterbury.

With implementation beginning in 2020, UC will work to increase the impact of what we do – from innovative research to inspirational teaching, from forging international partnerships to increasing international rankings and, very importantly, inspiring our UC community to be engaged and empowered to make a difference.

The vision enables staff and students to create a more sustainable organisation in line with the aspirations of our people and our community.

Integral to the direction of UC and our success is our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In early 2019 I was both humbled and privileged to attend a pōwhiri and the signing of a new partnership agreement with Ngāi Tūāhuriri, the rūnanga that holds the tino rangatiratanga of our area.

Moving into 2020, I am pleased to report that UC is an energised, dynamic community with a clear direction, widespread commitment and the passion to make a difference.

I would like to thank Te Kaunihera o Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha | UC Council for their warm welcome and support to me as the new Tumu Whakarae | Vice-Chancellor. Thank you in particular to Sue McCormack who, as Tumu Kaunihera | Chancellor, assisted me in settling in and becoming familiar with my new institutional home.

Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Vice-Chancellor | Tumu Whakarae

AT A GLANCE

18,364  Students

 1,909 Staff (FTE)

50%  International Staff

144,661  Alumni

 5  QS Ranked University