

# Vice-Chancellor's Report

**There can be little doubt that 2011 will be remembered for the earthquake that occurred on 22 February which followed the earlier earthquake in September 2010. The February earthquake had a devastating effect on the city of Christchurch leading to the loss of 185 lives, including two current students, two students who had completed their studies and were about to graduate, two people with teaching affiliations to UC and 12 alumni of the University. While there were no building collapses, fires or serious injuries on campus the earthquake caused the University to be closed for three weeks from the second day of the first semester.**

During that time extensive surveys of the 240 structural spaces spread across the 87ha campus were undertaken. Emergency remedial work was carried out to ensure buildings were safe so that classes could resume promptly. Until the Easter recess some lectures and tutorials took place in tents erected on various car parks on campus, while other classes were conducted offsite. Significant additional online resources were made available to support learning and as new and more spaces became available, rescheduling of classes occurred on a weekly basis.

The University of Adelaide hosted nearly 170 students on exchange for the first semester and Oxford University hosted 42 students for the Trinity Semester. In addition, other New Zealand Universities hosted UC students so they could continue their studies in some cases closer to home. All these institutions waived tuition fees and in some cases contributed toward or provided accommodation. The support was very much appreciated and has accelerated interest in exchange and study abroad among all students.

The University committed itself to delivering a quality full academic year programme in the 2011 calendar year and I am pleased to report that due to the extraordinary efforts of staff and the flexibility and responsiveness of students this was achieved. Positives to come out of the earthquakes were enhanced online resources, accelerated interest in flexible online supported

learning, progression of aspects of the Campus Master Plan and improved IT infrastructure resilience.

So many people responded to the extraordinary situation not only would it be difficult to name them all, it would be unfair to do so. But let the record note the appreciation I, as Chief Executive, feel for the individual and collective effort that kept the University going. Thank you.

Soon after the February earthquake it became apparent that the University would need additional space to meet the needs of staff and students during what was likely to be an extensive period of building remediation. A total of 15,000sqm of single-storey wooden buildings spread over the University Oval and the playing fields at Dovedale were erected within six months.

As at the end of the year libraries, laboratories, lecture theatres and halls of residence were open for business to support 15,000 students. There remain a number of buildings which require significant work before they are able to be used by the University and, in a few cases, further technical work needs to be done to determine whether remediation is the most cost-effective use of insurance proceeds and University resources.

The University has prepared a Business Case for support which it has presented to the Government and shared with the wider community. The more rapidly student enrolment recovers and efficiency savings can be realised the more modest will the impact be on the University. Some modest reductions in staffing through attrition and voluntary redundancies took place in 2011 but overall staff turnover was not materially different in 2011 than in previous years.

Overall equivalent full time student numbers are about 9% below the record level achieved in 2010 when the University was under pressure to reduce enrolments of domestic students which stood at 103% of places funded by the Tertiary Education Commission. The largest reduction in students was among first-year students (down 23%) and in the College of Arts (down around 22%).

Research quality is difficult to assess and the impact of the earthquake may never be known. On the one hand there is no doubt research time was lost and research set back. However Canterbury is now the most extraordinary source of new data and new research opportunities, not only in science and engineering but in all aspects of the human condition, community and the environment, business, economics, politics, history, geography, psychology and so on. The opportunity exists to attract resources, talented students and undertake original research for years to come.

The University is appreciative of the significant support we receive from the business community through scholarships, prizes and internships. As well as financial support, internship and career opportunities offer mutual benefits to students and businesses and contributes to a well-rounded and world-class learning environment for students. The learning environment is so much more than buildings, it reflects the staff, student peers, quality of programmes, student support, community engagement and opportunities for experiential learning off campus including study abroad, field-based research and internships.

The University was able to launch an after school homework support and Māori leadership programme for students of Aranui and Linwood high schools thanks to funding from the American New Zealand Association. The association undertook a substantial fundraising drive to support the Christchurch recovery effort and agreed to provide funding to support outreach and liaison activities that prepare and encourage students from low-decile schools, Māori and Pacific students to study at UC.

While the earthquake might have dominated the University during 2011 it is pleasing to be able to report some significant new initiatives and achievements. The New Zealand Prime Minister, the Right Hon. John Key, spoke at the commissioning of the newly installed High Performance Computer in the upgraded

Primary Data Centre and on the same day passed out the inaugural round of the Vice-Chancellor's Community Engagement Awards to 30 students who had made exceptional contributions in the formation and operations of the Student Volunteer Army which had been established in September 2010 and responded again so heroically to the community's needs following the February earthquake.

The inaugural award of the UC Innovation Medal to Associate Professor Keith Alexander in October provided the opportunity to recognise the importance of transferring knowledge from the University to the wider community through innovation and

lectures and media commentary of the seismic activity.

There were a number of changes to the Senior Management Team during 2011 and it is with sadness that I record the death of Associate Professor Richard Duke after a period of illness. In the middle of the year Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey (Business and Economics) left the University to take up a position in the UK and at the end of the year Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Sue McKnight (Learning Resources) returned to her native Australia.

It was with pleasure that I welcomed to the Senior Management Team Mr Darryn Russell

## **“The earthquakes have helped remind the University of the central part students must play in promoting a world-class learning environment.”**

commercialisation. Other firsts for the University during 2011 included: Community Open Day (attended by nearly 4000 people); the launch of CEISMIC (a digital humanities repository for earthquake related material to support future studies); signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Ngai Tahu to develop the Ngai Tahu Research Centre and the creation of an unlimited number of academic admissions scholarships to be awarded to students entering the University of Canterbury in 2012 and 2013. UC was the first New Zealand university to be rated by QS and awarded five of five stars as a higher education institution.

During the year University staff engaged extensively with the community, providing technical and expert advice, media communication, public lectures and seminars. Dr Mark Quigley (Geological Sciences) was awarded the Prime Minister's Science Communicator of the Year award for his widespread and highly accessible public

(Assistant Vice-Chancellor Māori), Professor Steve Weaver (Assistant Vice-Chancellor Research), Dr Hamish Cochrane (Assistant Vice-Chancellor Academic) and Professor Adrian Sawyer (Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Business and Economics).

In reflecting on the things that uniquely define the University of Canterbury it is increasingly clear that we are known for our graduates. In addition to mastering the skills of their chosen discipline, I believe all University of Canterbury graduates should have the opportunity during their programme of study to have a relevant work-integrated learning experience, the opportunity to study abroad for credit, a community engagement experience opportunity and the chance to develop cultural confidence and competence, to live and work in a bi-cultural New Zealand and a multicultural world.

The earthquakes have helped remind the University of the central part students must play in promoting a world-class learning



*Dr Rod Carr*

environment. Their resilience, peer-supported learning and individual and collective initiative is a critical success factor. So too is the ability of staff to innovate and inspire students. It is essential our research informs our teaching and we are recognised for our research.

We are largely funded to teach and that funding is mainly a function of how many domestic and international students are attracted to UC. Student recruitment, engagement, retention and success during their programme of study and the ability of students to go on to further study or employment are critical. Our 2011 survey of graduates showed that nine months after graduation, more than 85 per cent of UC graduates were engaged in further study or engaged in work or other activities they were satisfied with. While another 10 per cent were employed they were seeking opportunities to better use their qualifications or advance more rapidly in their chosen careers.

*Continued on following page*

Directly and indirectly UC generates a billion dollars of economic activity in Christchurch. In 2010 the University reported record student numbers, graduates, revenue for research and teaching and was ranked among the top 2 per cent of universities in the world attracting students from over 80 countries. It was world class, growing and contributing to the region. Half the students came from outside Canterbury. UC was drawing resources into New Zealand and into Canterbury. PAYE, GST, FBT and other taxes paid directly and indirectly on economic activity generated by UC exceeded what the Government paid the University as a block grant for teaching in 2010. University graduates are more likely to be employed, less likely to be unemployed, earn higher incomes on average, on average pay more taxes, live longer and are healthier than those who do not have a higher education – why would you want less of these things? The earthquake caused a one off shock to first year student enrolments and in particular to international student numbers. Excluding any withdrawal of Government funding, the loss of tuition fees (domestic and international) amounts to about \$40 million over three years, about one third of which is covered by insurance.

Half the academic staff at UC come from overseas. It takes months to recruit and decades to build the capability represented at UC. It will be likely some staff will leave and others will be reluctant to come due to the quakes. It is critical that Government maintain the block grant for teaching and compensate for uninsured lost tuition revenue to preserve the capability of UC while student

numbers recover or until it is clear that they will not. It is just common sense that it is more cost effective to retain than to eject and later replace talented academic staff. Buying time has a lower probability of regret. Buying time is a smarter option. Buying time is low risk for the Government but high risk for the University which is why Government should provide support to retain capability for research, innovation, creativity and higher education. Support for the University in the next few years will preserve opportunities for the future youth of Canterbury while supporting the immediate recovery. Graduates are more likely to seek local employment, start local businesses, contribute to the local community and attract others to the city and region.

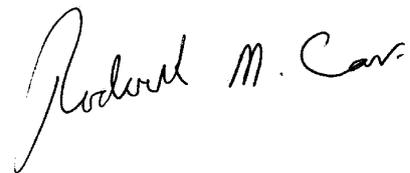
The earthquake damaged buildings and new building codes mandate upgrades that are not covered by insurance. Our young people in the second largest city in New Zealand should have access to quality higher education in safe places, fit for purpose and close to home. It is more economical to remediate at UC than build new capacity in other cities such as Wellington, Dunedin and Auckland and require Christchurch students to leave town to access higher education.

To recover from the quakes, Christchurch needs economic activity to generate employment to retain and attract people. The University is a teaching and research centre and quick wins are most likely from preserving what was good and building on to it rather than assuming something new will come along.

Innovative and creative communities require an eco-system of teaching and research institutions – schools, technical

institutes, further and higher education providers, knowledge intensive businesses, research intensive public and private sector organisations. An integral part of that eco-system is a sustainable, research intensive, comprehensive world-class university. Many cities aspire to create one, Christchurch has one but without central government support it is vulnerable and less likely to play the role it could and should play as a contributor to the eco-system. We can do some of the heavy lifting to address the impact of the quakes but we need support.

In exchange for that support the University can preserve what is good and accelerate change already underway. We can create clearer pathways to higher education, we can differentiate our learning environment by placing greater emphasis on experiential learning opportunities, we can ensure enhanced transfer of knowledge to the private sector, we can build our postgraduate profile and emphasise research and teaching that can support New Zealand's sustainable social, economic and environmental development and we will continue to be more efficient in our use of resources and more effective in contributing to New Zealand's future prosperity.



**Dr Rod Carr**

**Vice-Chancellor**

28 February 2012