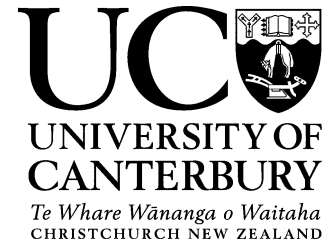


Vice-Chancellor's Report to Council



July 2024

Introduction

Semester 2 began on 15 July and after a quiet period due to the mid-year break, the campus is again busy with staff and students.

The Students' Association ran "Re Ori '24" prior to the start of Semester 2. This included Te Rourou a Haere (Lunch on the Lawn), a Clubs Day, an International Food Expo, Music Events, and a Winter Wellness Expo. There was also a drop-in opportunity for postgraduate students and families to meet with UCSA advisors, provide feedback about their experiences to date, and to connect with fellow students.

UC hosted the July meeting of the Committee on University Student Pastoral Care (CUSPaC). Operating through Universities New Zealand, the Committee has a focus on the Pastoral Care Code and works on matters such as monitoring, compliance, student voice and sharing of best practice. As part of my welcome remarks, I updated the members on UC's approach to education and the student experience.

Professor Philip Joseph has been appointed as a King's Counsel (KC) in recognition of his outstanding service and dedication to the field of law. In addition to Professor Joseph's appointment, UC graduates Wendy Aldred, Alanya Limmer, Philip Shamy, Timothy Stephens, Robert Stewart, Garry Williams, and Samuel Wimsett were also appointed to the rank of KC.

Engagement

The mid-year Hui-a-Hāpori Community Meeting on 8 July was well attended by the campus neighbours and local (non-student) residents. The Ilam and UC Community Liaison Officer, Senior Constable Liz Johnson, joined UC Security Manager Ken McEwen and UCSA President Luc McKay to give updates relevant to the local neighbourhood, including the Good One Party Register, UC events and campus updates.

There were two Tauhere Connect public lectures this month: "*Darkening peaks: alpine adventures hit by shrinking glaciers*" on 17 July from glaciologist Associate Professor Heather Purdie, and "*Galactic Archaeology in Aotearoa's night sky*" on 24 July presented by Senior Lecturer in Astroinformatics and Data Science Dr Clare Worley. Both livestreamed events were well attended and received active engagement from the in-person audience during the Q&A sessions. Videos of the Tauhere Connect talks are available on YouTube.

Education – Accessible, Flexible Future Focused

Results from Semester 1 were pleasing with some substantial improvements in key 100-level courses across the Faculties. The results are a reflection of the work of academics and course coordinators working with Kia Angitu, Future Learning and Development, and with our Māori and Pacific student teams to support excellent academic outcomes.

As part of future focused learning, a comprehensive Teaching and Learning Support Hub has been launched to provide detailed information and guidelines on the use of and responses to Artificial Intelligence (AI) for staff. Additionally, a new community of practice has been established across UC to further support staff in navigating and learning about AI. This initiative aims to foster a collaborative environment for sharing knowledge and best practices. The working group meets weekly and is continuously developing new resources in support of UC.

The importance of AI literacy and the role of the University in life-long learning was evidenced recently with an AI Workshop for Industry Professionals, *“Navigating the Future: An Engineer’s guide to Generative AI”*, that was delivered by Civil Engineering for industry practitioners. It generated great interest and highlighted the opportunity for UC to be a leader in this area.

In terms of student success, several staff took the opportunity over the mid-semester period to take part in Analytics for Course Engagement (ACE): ACE Teach hui. ACE Teach was developed with faculty input to assist teaching staff to see students’ engagement and be able to adapt and respond accordingly. A pilot being conducted in the BCom is showing promising results for staff and students. On the back of that, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with University of Montreal to work collaboratively on Learning and Teaching innovation such as ACE Teach.

Research – Impact on a Changing World

Dr Matt Hobbs is part of a team investigating *“Does the environment young people grow up in promote or obstruct mental health?”* funded for \$500 000 from A Better Start and Cure Kids.

Professor Philip Schluter and Dr Jalal Mohammed are part of a \$5 million Health Research Council grant investigating *“Lifecourse trajectories for young Pasifika in Aotearoa”*.

Professor John Dalrymple-Alford (Faculty of Science) has been awarded \$300 000 for work entitled: *“Parkinsons: Are some answers but a tear away?”*.

The thesis work of Ellie Adams (Human Interface Technology Lab, HitLAB) was exhibited at the Doc Edge Festival in Christchurch from 26-30 June.

From the School of Earth and Environment, Professor Deirdre Hart has been made a life member of the New Zealand Coastal Society. She is only the sixth person to ever be granted a life membership.

Professor Jamie Shulmeister has joined the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Futures. He plans to extend his research with indigenous peoples in Australia on issues of importance to the Butchulla people who are the traditional owners of K’gari (formerly Fraser Island).

Accounting academics have been successful with external grants with Drs Ellie Norris, Julia Wu and Peni Fukofuka gaining a grant from Accounting and Finance Association of Australia and New Zealand (AFAANZ) to support their project entitled *“The business of death: social, cultural, and financial accountability at an outback funeral service”*. Accountant Dr Claris Chung was recently awarded a Canterbury Medical Research Foundation grant for a project titled *“Unlocking the Potential of Preeclampsia Self-management System: Analysing Benefits, Challenges, and Gaps”*.

Associate Professor Laura Revell was elected to the International Ozone Commission (IO3C), one of only 30 scientists to be chosen globally. She is renowned for her expertise in chemistry-climate interactions and has made significant strides in understanding how the ozone layer is impacted by human activities, including from greenhouse gas emissions and an increased frequency of rocket launches.

Professor Philip Vermeulen (Department of Economics and Finance, UC Business School) was appointed as a Future Director on the Reserve Bank of NZ Board on 1 June 2024 for a term of 2 years ending 31 May 2026.

People – Nurturing Staff, Thriving Students

PhD student Sidney GJ Wong is a recipient of this year’s Fulbright New Zealand Science and Innovation Graduate Award. Sparked by his role as a community advocate for marginalised groups, Sidney is researching how to use AI to detect hate speech on social media by harnessing natural language processing, a branch of AI that enables computers to understand, generate, and manipulate human language. Sidney will travel to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in August to begin his scholarship.

UC’s Aerospace team won the 30 000-foot Commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) category at the Spaceport America Cup competition in New Mexico. The team competed against more than 120 teams from 20 countries with their single-stage rocket, Kārearea.

Reframe Wānanga has partnered with UC to deliver peer support sessions on campus in Semester 2, focusing on meaningful conversations. Part of the Stepping Stone Trust, Reframe Wānanga works with young people to support their mental health and wellbeing through workshops that use art and other fun interactive activities. Supported by fellow students in their roles of UC’s Kaiwhakatere Oranga | Wellbeing Navigators, these sessions will provide a safe space for students to support their wellbeing, connection and belonging.

The Counselling team is running another eight-week “Life and Anxiety Group” in Semester 2 to help students explore anxiety and address the barriers it can present.

A series of new initiatives from the Kaiwhakatere Oranga | Wellbeing Navigators have also kicked off. Drawing on their understanding of student interests and needs, the team is running regular Creative Writing for Wellbeing Groups, Rainbow Connections Cafés, and Book Club meetings. The Grief Group run by Navigators last year has also restarted.

Orion Energy and EnergyMate provided another workshop to help educate students around home power use.

The UC 3x3 Basketball Men's Team are the Oceania Champions. The team won the New Zealand competition, earning them the right to travel to the Sunshine Coast to play in the Oceania tournament, where they secured the title. This has earned them a place in the World University 3x3 Games in China at the end of 2024.

UC Rugby have had a successful season so far, with the Premier Women becoming Champions again, and the Premier Men, both Colts Teams and Premier Reserve Men's teams, all making their respective finals. The Premier Men's team made its final for the first time in 34 years. The 2nd Premier reserve men's team also made the plate final for their section.

The Student Ambassador programme within halls of residence has commenced with a training workshop facilitated by the ISANA NZ. This programme aims to work with international students on developing cross-cultural connections.

The staff leadership development programme has been expanded to include courses on Applied Decision Making, Moving Forward After Change – Rebuilding Groups and Departments, Fostering a Meaningful Work Environment, and Managing Neurodiversity. The last three courses are in webinar form and are run in partnership with Otago University and Victoria University of Wellington.

A student protest took place on 26 July regarding the war in Gaza and the University received a document from the protest organisers.

The University received the sad news that Associate Professor Chris Jones passed away while visiting family in the UK during the semester break. As a renowned Medieval historian, he was involved in many projects in Canterbury and played a central role in the University's 150th celebrations, including leading the editorial committee producing UC's sesquicentenary book.

Internationalisation – Locally Engaged, Globally Networked

Our Global Development team hosted an International Welcome event for more than 300 new international students to campus ahead of their Semester 2 start. The event helps them to meet other international students, interact with staff and other valuable community partners, and learn about the many opportunities available at UC.

On 22 July we welcomed another cohort of Erskine Fellowship recipients. Unique to UC, the Erskine Fellowship has played an essential role in keeping the University connected with international academics and universities for over 60 years. Our new cohort of 40 Erskine Fellows are from Germany, Italy, Malaysia, the Netherlands, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, each staying and teaching for up to three months. By year end UC will have had 78 Fellows on campus for 2024.

As a result of our international partnership with the University of Oxford, Ako ā-Mahi | Work-Integrated Learning, on behalf of UC, are hosting our first Crankstart Scholar interns. The Crankstart Scholar programme at the University of Oxford provides funding and support to students in their international work experiences, and the current intern cohort is working on projects related to Linguistics and European policy at UC.

Organisational Efficacy – of a sustainable scale by 2030

The construction of Tupuārangi, the 283-bed student accommodation facility in Homestead Lane, is underway and on track.

Tuihono UC | UC Online upgraded the learning management system from Totara to Moodle to enhance UC's learner experience. The Moodle implementation aligned our system with UC's AKO | Learn, leveraging existing LMS capabilities, increasing agility for in-house changes, and providing immediate access to the latest features, alongside Moodle's improved and dynamic user interface. This change will reduce costs per year and pave the way for improving student experience, engagement, and success through features like UC's Academic Course Engagement (ACE) product.

Since the launch of the new website and experience management platform, the Digital Services web team have been very engaged in progressing various significant improvements to UC's primary website experience based on feedback from staff and students. Improvements in recent months include a revised research landing page and improved searching experience for researchers, improvements to staff profile and contact information, content and structure improvements for multiple areas including Library and Graduate School, improving our search engine rankings and a series of improvements to the search performance on the website.

The HitLAB and the Department of Civil and Natural Resources Engineering (CNRE) have collaborated to share space leading to a win-win situation, with 18 desks being allocated to CNRE staff and research postgraduate students in underutilised space in the HitLAB. Not only has this led to enhanced space utilisation, but has also contributed to positive experiences for staff and students located there. Professor Rob Lindeman, Director of HitLAB, reports "They're having a really good time and we're finding increased opportunities for collaboration due to the co-location".

Environmentally Sustainable

We have received the formal consent from ECan allowing us to operate the Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHP). Work is proceeding on the GSHPs with the plant room nearly completed, all drilling finished, heat exchangers are installed, and testing is planned for early Q4.

A successful MBA Thought Leadership event took place on 25 July at The Piano in Christchurch. It featured an insightful session with Climate Change Commission Chair, Dr Rod Carr, who discussed the transition to a sustainable future and addressed the challenges and questions along the way.

Over 2000 staff and students have attended Sustainability Office events in 2024 to date, 200 of which attended waste education events as part of Plastic Free July.