

Vice-Chancellor's Report to Council



May 2024

Introduction

In April UC recognised the success of over 2,700 UC graduates with seven ceremonies held during Autumn Graduation week. This included a celebration for UC Māori graduates held at Ngā Hau E Whā Marae, the largest cohort of ākongā Māori graduates to attend to date, and a celebration for UC Pacific graduates which was hosted on campus with 200 attendees. As part of Autumn Graduation week, on Wednesday 10 April a parade of 1,300 graduates – which The Press dubbed a ‘river of robes’ – streamed through the central city, with well-wishers turning out in droves to cheer them on.

Sir Peter Gluckman and Deputy Chair of the University Advisory Group held a webinar for all UC staff on 2 May. Several UC staff made submissions to the Science Advisory Group and the University Advisory Groups. 315 staff joined the live session and 84 staff have watched the recording on Tu Ki Te Tahi.

On 30 May the government announced the 2024-2025 budget, with some important updates for the tertiary sector. For domestic students in 2025, the government tuition subsidy rates (funding per EFTS) will increase by 2.5% and the annual maximum fee increase is provisionally set at 6.0%. The high-level changes to Fees Free were confirmed, moving from the first year to the final year of study being fees free, with additional detail to come. The total pool for the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) is unchanged, and previously signalled reductions in a number of research-related funds were included in out-year forecasts.

Eight outstanding UC alumni have been recognised in the annual King's Birthday Honours announced on 3 June, with their contributions ranging from services to wildlife conservation to structural engineering. The highest honour, Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, was awarded to Arihia Bennett for services to Māori, governance and the community.

Engagement

On 5 May UC opened four of our buildings to the public as part of the annual Open Christchurch architecture festival event. In total, 396 members of the public visited campus to view the architecture of our Rehua, Puaka-James Hight, Jack Erskine, and Forestry buildings.

There were two Tauhere Connect public talks in May. On 1 May Associate Professor Adrian Clark from the School of Product Design explored the impact of generative artificial intelligence in his talk: *What does AI mean for the entertainment industries?* On 29 May UC Arts research fellow Dr Dalila Gharbaoui, from the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, discussed the impact of climate change on coastal regions worldwide, with a focus on low-lying atoll states in the Pacific.

The Tait Foundation, a local charitable trust for the advancement of education and research, gifted \$400,000 to UC. The Tait Foundation has been a generous philanthropic donor to UC Engineering for 17 years, supporting research and scholarships, as well as the Women in Engineering Canterbury (WiE CAN) programme.

Career Fair 2024 concluded on 7 May after a series of events. In March we hosted the Business and Arts Careers Fairs which saw 26 businesses engage with 500 students, and the Law Recruitment Evening saw 26 businesses engage with 350 students. The series concluded with STEM which hosted 89 businesses who connected with 1,700 students.

UC announced support of the Doc Edge Festival 2024 through our Kōawa initiative and celebrated the festival's programme launch at Maui Studios in Ōtautahi Christchurch on 9 May. The festival is an Academy Awards qualifying festival that offers locals the chance to participate. The festival aligns with UC's vision to provide industry opportunities to our Bachelor of Digital Screen (Honours) students and connect them with local and international film, TV and media professionals.

Whilst I was in London on ACU business, I hosted an alumni event on 16 May at the Carlyle Gardens, the home of UC alum David Law. Event attendees included University of Canterbury NZ Trust (UK) Chair Alene Wilton, board members Jeremy Willis and James Croll. UC alum and former CNN journalist Tim Hume was the guest speaker.

UC facilitated the global announcement of the University's collaboration with Aardman Academy, the training arm of Oscar-winning Aardman Animations (of Wallace and Gromit, Shaun the Sheep, and Chicken Run fame). We achieved significant national and international media coverage, kicked off through Variety with a two-hour exclusive before the news went out to the UK, US and New Zealand.

On 11 April UBS bookshop hosted the launch of Canterbury University Press author and illustrator Lily Duval's book *Six-legged Ghosts: The insects of Aotearoa*. Duval completed her Master of Arts (with Distinction) in English Literature at UC, and it was her thesis, '*An Inordinate Disdain for Beetles: Imagining the insect in colonial Aotearoa*', that inspired the book. Over 100 of Duval's distinctive watercolours illustrate the text.

Education – Accessible, Flexible Future Focused

The regularly scheduled classes of Semester 1 have ended and students are busily preparing for exams. This year there are nearly 40 000 exam sittings scheduled for students.

Besides in-class learning, many students have an opportunity to engage with industry and authentic experiences that add to their education and employability. Engineering had a variety of industry engagements from field trips with companies ranging from AZWood, a producer of products from wood residue to JIX Technology Studios looking at the latest immersive experiences.

Innovation and accessibility to education were highlighted when UC staff joined Nurse Maude and the Nursing Council of New Zealand at the blessing by mana whenua of the new Nurse Maude Simulation and Assessment Centre. Up to 80 internationally qualified nurses per week will attend a two-day orientation and preparation course at UC prior to undertaking an objective simulation clinical examination at the Simulation Centre. This is a new Nursing Council process for registration as a nurse and opens opportunities for people who faced barriers previously.

Online learning remains popular with another surge in enrolments by over 50% in the last quarter of UOnline's offerings, highlighting the need for more flexible starts.

UC successfully won a bid for the highly competitive Tūwhitia Accelerating Learner Success Fund launched this year by the TEC. Amounting to nearly \$8 million over two years, our proposal will lead the sector in the adoption of a system level data coaching programme. Coaching will enable institutions to understand how to leverage data to thoroughly explore and resolve how staff, workflows, and technological infrastructure can speed up change. This programme will deliver data driven large scale interventions designed to impact the greatest number of learners. UC will lead the programme while working with our consortium partner, Victoria University of Wellington, to deliver a sector level solution.

In the update to the TEC on our Learner Success Programme, we have signalled that we have increased retention by 2% for those students who have taken advantage of the enrichment opportunities as part of the Kia Angitu Student Success programme. We also reported that our Māori and Pacific students are completing courses at a rate higher than the Sector Average. We further noted that, while our LSP is already returning on investment, it is timely to identify where and how we can adjust our activity to generate greater universal impact. The Tūwhitia fund will undoubtedly help us scale up to get there.

Research – Impact on a Changing World

Canterbury staff organised two international conferences held in New Zealand during April. These conferences were the IEEE International Conference on Machine Intelligence for Geoanalytics and Remote Sensing and the Polar Science, Technology, Archaeology, History and Heritage Conference.

Professor Ximena Nelson received a Human Frontiers Science Program grant for her work on jumping spiders. This is a highly prestigious, globally contested grant and has led to a number of popular media engagements including the Listener speaking about her research.

Deputy Director of Research and Innovation, Rebecca Hurrell, travelled to Latin America as part of a delegation of all eight New Zealand universities to Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Ecuador. The delegation explored research collaborations and PhD student recruitment. There are significant opportunities both at a national level and for each individual institution. It is likely to lead to new pipelines of postgraduate students and new research collaborations, which will enhance our reputation and increase our research impact.

On 10 April Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) released its 2024 subject rankings. UC ranked in the top 100 for Linguistics, Geography, and Civil and Structural Engineering, which was celebrated across UC channels including the website, social media and Kōrerorero.

QS released its 2025 World University Rankings results on 4 June. UC moved from 256 to 261 and retained its position of 6/8. Auckland retained their position in the top 100 at 65th. Waikato was the big mover and is now ranked 3rd after being 7th in 2022.

The Times Higher Education (THE) released their impact rankings on 12 June. UC has retained its overall ranking in the top 100 in the world with a ranking of 89th as judged against ten of the seventeen United Nations Sustainable Goals. Of note is being ranked 10th in the world in goal #12 '*Responsible Consumption and Production*'. This has a number of components, but high scores were received for the UC sustainability report and operational measures.

Professor Ben Kennedy was announced the 2023 winner of the Prime Minister's Science Communication Prize in May. He was recognised for his innovative work informing communities about volcanic hazards and the uncertain risks of eruptions. Professor Rob Lindeman (HIT Lab) was inducted into the IEEE VGTC Virtual Reality Academy at the IEEE Virtual Reality 2024 conference in Orlando, Florida. Currently, there are 56 inductees.

Associate Professor Daniela Liggett of the School of Earth and Environment was invited to Princeton University for the Sustainable Futures Conference. She was one of 15 panellists flown in from around the world and the only panellist from Australasia. Her presentation explored the implications of a range of external pressures and internal discord on Antarctic environmental governance.

People – Nurturing Staff, Thriving Students

The Student Wellbeing team ran a collaboration with Orion and EnergyMate to provide an educational workshop to help students understand more about their home power bill. All attendees were supplied with LED lightbulbs, shower timers, and other resources.

Pink Shirt Day took place on Friday 17 May, but UC celebrations spanned the week. Positive message boards were set up at the start of the week in Puaka-James Hight and the Living Room (located next to the bookshop) for students and staff to leave uplifting notes. A t-shirt making workshop was run in the Te Rua Makerspace. Oranga | Wellbeing Navigators made pink smoothies and toasties at the Connect Zones. A photobooth and sweet treats were put into the Living Room for anyone donning pink on the official Pink Shirt Day.

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora returned to campus in May to provide follow-up doses for those who received their first meningococcal B dose at the start of the year. Additional vaccine clinics are being organised with Health New Zealand for Winter Wellness and Open Day later on in the year.

A supply of free period products, funded from the student levy and administered by student volunteers, is available in Puaka-James Hight and Rehua.

During study week the Living Room is a place for relaxation for students, with handmade mocktails, pastries, and a painting session. Free snacks and fruit deliveries were made to study spaces in the Undercroft, Puaka James Hight and Rehua.

A programme of security tips for students and staff has been run throughout the year to date via digital screens, newsletters and social media. This has included information about safe walking routes, bus timetables, Security team services and the emergency communication towers.

The Recreation Centre has recorded 76,785 visits to 30 April. This is up 10,000 visits compared to the same time in 2023, and we are continuing to observe our participation levels returning to pre-COVID levels of 85,000 for this time of year. There are just under 10,000 student members registered, representing around 48% uptake of student headcount.

In April an Early Career Workshop was held for post-doctoral students and late-stage PhDs in Engineering and Science. The event was organised and run by senior female academics and aimed primarily at women, the rainbow community and other under-represented groups in the early years of their career. There were over fifty attendees, and a range of UC and external speakers.

Approximately 35 staff from the Faculty of Science participated in two Supporting Students in Distress workshops hosted by Julie Pratt, Student Care Manager. Staff feedback reported that the workshop provided them with additional tools to more confidently support students in distress.

Six professional staff from a variety of areas and at different career stages have signed up for a mentoring programme with the Association for Tertiary Management (ATEM) via UC's membership. This pilot programme runs from November 2023 to August 2024 and matches mentees with an appropriate mentor from an Australasian University. The UC participants are being managed through People and Culture and an evaluation of the programme will be undertaken. Interim feedback is extremely positive from all our participants.

Internationalisation – Locally Engaged, Globally Networked

UC hosted three delegates from the Indian Institute of Technology – Delhi (IITD), Professor James Gomes (Dean International Programmes), Professor Naresh Bhatnagar (Dean Research and Development) and Dr Archana Trivedi (Research Development Coordinator), and representatives from the universities of Lincoln and Otago, on a tour of our Ilam campus on 2 May. The visit, which allowed us to showcase exemplary UC research, was reciprocal, following a successful UC-supported trip of New Zealand researchers to IITD earlier this year.

The University's National Centre for Research on Europe hosted European Ambassadors, Nicole Menzenbach (Germany), Laurence Beau (France), Jane Connolly (Ireland), Zsolt Hetesy (Hungary) and Grzegorz Kowal (Poland) on campus between 22 March and 3 May, offering in-person and online sessions during which the ambassadors highlighted their priorities and perspectives for the future direction of the European Union. Lawrence Meredith, the EU Ambassador to New Zealand, visited UC on 30 April to speak to a large gathering of EURA and EURO students and staff and will return to UC again in Semester 2.

Along with the UC International College (UCIC), the University hosted 20 international recruitment agents from Asian countries during Autumn Graduation week in mid-April, giving them an opportunity to explore the campus and Ōtautahi Christchurch. The agents play a crucial role in advising prospective international students on the educational journey available in New Zealand. The visit is a chance for agents to witness firsthand the exceptional academic and cultural offerings of UC.

Organisational Efficacy – of a sustainable scale by 2030

Digital Services continues to progress a comprehensive programme of work to enable a Cyber Secure culture at UC and enable the protection of our assets and our people. The Web experience team in partnership with our Cyber team and wider UC community of users have been progressively migrating our UC blog and WordPress websites onto a secure central platform, CampusPress. This has already had a significant impact on UC's Security Scorecard grade and will continue to improve as we consolidate the many websites onto secure, supported platforms and put in place clear patterns for new websites required for UC research and teaching.

Student First successfully rolled out v50 of ourUC on 16 May. This means that course approvals functionality is now available in ourUC for new 2024 applications. Access has been updated, with over 380 staff now able to process course approvals in ourUC. Several faculties have already been processing course approvals in ourUC which have generated Enrolment Agreements. Engagement across the university has been good with feedback from staff being very positive. This is a significant milestone in our journey to replace JadeSMS.

The Whakahaere Rangahau project is set to transform the Research project management administrative experience, a complex eco-system of multiple applications and information sources. It will also address the retention of an end-of-life Research Management System on premise with growing cyber risk in maintenance. The adoption of a new system will enable a much-improved researcher experience in the administration of projects at UC, as well as reduce enterprise risks.

The Identity Governance and Administration project is now up and running. The project will resolve operational risks and continue to improve the automation and coverage of accounts and related software provisioning and deprovisioning for staff and students.

The construction project for the new 283 bed student accommodation facility, Tupuārangi, has begun and is on target. The aim is for the building to be ready for the 2026 academic year. The Homestead Lane site for Tupuārangi has been vacated by the Grounds team, which has moved to the south west corner of Ilam Fields.

The Faculty Operations team has begun a review of some processes common to all faculties, with a view to identifying examples of best practice and finding opportunities for efficiencies (e.g. process automation) and continuous improvement. The review commenced with exams and grades processes, and research (PhD and Masters) student management within a faculty (e.g. expense management, desk and computer management). Faculty Operations is meeting with Faculty and School Administrators across UC to gather data and map the existing processes undertaken to start the continuous improvement process.

Environmentally Sustainable

Sustainability communication campaigns in May included Waste Education followed by Biodiversity. Both campaigns showcased UC research to media and, with the Sustainability Office, provided engagement opportunities for staff, students, and our community to learn more and take action. Events included a worm-farming workshop for International Compost Awareness Week, a Biodiversity Walk for World Biodiversity Day and bringing waste-free influencer Ethically Kate to campus. Other initiatives were the Repair Café, Clothes Swap and Get Sorted with Christchurch City Council. Over 420 people attended these events.

Professor Jan Evans-Freeman presented a public webinar in the Climate Conversations series to members of Engineering NZ titled *Our University's Journey Towards Sustainability*, loosely based on the Council presentation she delivered.

The first bike stand utilisation survey has been undertaken for the year. It showed an average utilisation of 44%, thereby returning us to pre-COVID levels and meeting our obligations to the Christchurch City Council which require us to not exceed 70% utilisation without a plan to increase provision.