
May 2023

Introduction

As the year progresses, I am pleased to see the number of campus visitors returning to pre-COVID-19 levels. During the past month, UC hosted a number of high-profile local and international guests on campus, including politicians, ambassadors and the Christchurch Mayor – all of whom we are honoured to receive. I have also been delighted by the continued student networking activities and UC's community engagement in accompanying members of the public on a recent campus tour and presenting public lectures around the city.

The Budget was a key focus for the month of May, which brought some positive news for the tertiary sector. Specifically the following will benefit the University and its students.

1. The biggest impact will be an effective increase of 5.0% in Delivery and Qualification (DQ; formerly Student Achievement Component, SAC) (per equivalent full-time student, EFTS) funding – which rises to 5.25% on average when additional funding for mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori is included. This is estimated to benefit UC by \$4.1 million in 2024 and \$7.8 million from 2025 onwards.
2. In a year when UC has had student growth in excess of the automatic funding level, it is great news that all forecast domestic EFTS will be funded (\$180 million over the next three years). However, with demand lower than forecast in previous years, the level of increase is lower and the fees-free subsidy provision has reduced.
3. Many UC students will benefit from the introduction of half-price public transport for those aged 13–24 years.

Following the staff hui – kōrero with the VC in April, Keith Longden presented this month's staff hui with a focus on the 2022 UC Annual Report and financial statements.

On 3 May another key partnership was cemented with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between UC and Environment Canterbury. This agreement recognises the collaborative and mutually beneficial basis of our relationship and sets out opportunities to partner together in areas such as student-led research projects, support of UC's master's and doctoral students, internships, and the co-creation and delivery of research projects.

Engagement

Following a successful first round of sesquicentennial celebrations, we are preparing for the next wave of festive events. The University's official 150th birthday will be recognised on Friday 16 June, with a celebration for staff and students on campus 12–1 pm at Ti Kōuka, Haere-roa. Attendees are being asked to wear red for a group photo to be taken at the event.

UC participated in Open Christchurch when 280 community members toured the Ilam buildings of Puaka-James Hight, Ernest Rutherford, Angus Tait, Macmillan Brown Library and College House. Corban Te Aika led a successful tour under the theme “Transforming the Campus of a Te Tiriti Based University”. Dr Erin Harrington presented a lecture on the history of the original campus and tours of the former site in the city centre (now the Arts Centre) were also on offer.

We hosted a number of high-profile guests on campus in the past month, elevating UC’s profile and forging relationships at all levels. Among them were the Minister of Research, Science and Innovation, Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall and Hon Judith Collins (Opposition research spokesperson), who discussed research innovation, early researcher careers, and Horizon Europe research opportunities. The Department of Political Science and International Relations, together with local community group the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs and Trade, hosted Ambassador Rosemary Banks, New Zealand’s former ambassador to Washington.

The National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE) hosted French Ambassador Laurence Beau and German Ambassador Nicole Menzenbach at the first NCRE Diplomatic Roundtable seminar of 2023. All EU member State Ambassadors to New Zealand will be speaking at the seminar over the year. Dr Serena Kelly (Language, Social and Political Sciences) presented a Model European Union for 70 New Zealand high school students at the Beehive in Wellington.

The UC MBA and Executive Education programmes introduced the Masterclass series from Te Kura Umanga | UC Business School. It features key academics interviewing industry leaders on topical issues for a series of 20- to 30-minute videos.

Visiting Erskine Fellow Professor Ray Jayawardhana, who is Harold Tanner Dean of Arts and Sciences and Hans A Bethe Professor and Professor of Astronomy at Cornell University, presented a livestreamed public lecture. The topic of his lecture was the quest for alien worlds and life beyond Earth.

UC’s Centre for Entrepreneurship is currently running the Food, Fibre & Agritech challenge 2023. It’s the first of the new StartUp Validator series funded by ChristchurchNZ with commercial sponsorship from Agnition, the innovation spin-out arm of primary sector player Ravensdown. The Validator is an eight-week pre-accelerator programme. It attracted 40 applications from entrepreneurs and companies nationwide, Crown research institutes, students, researchers and new founders, from which 20 ventures have been chosen to participate. An industry connection day was held at B.linc (Lincoln University) on 16 May. The top ventures will present their items and compete for cash and in-kind prizes at a finale event, to be held at the Boma International Food and Agribusiness Management Association (IFAMA) International Conference in the Christchurch Town Hall on 19 June.

The School of Forestry’s 50th anniversary celebrations, delayed from 2020 by COVID-19, were finally held from 12–14 April 2023. This well-attended and successful event included a quiz night, a conference, a field trip and a dinner. Ahead of the conference, a staff reunion was held at the School of Forestry. Attendees included four of the Foundation staff of the School – John Barker (Silviculture), who travelled from Canada to be at the event, Bruce McConchie (Forest Economics), Karl Schasching (Senior Technician) and Paul Fuller (Senior Technician). Joy McKelvey, widow of Foundation Chair of Forestry, Peter McKelvey, also attended.

The annual Te Papa Hauora “We’re Talking Hauora” evening took place on Tuesday 10 May. It featured UC academics Dr Megan Gath, Dr Jessica Fitzjohn, Professor Don Hine and Dr Kate Prendergast, along with other health researchers from UC.

On 11 May, Justice Stephen Kós, Judge of the Supreme Court of New Zealand, delivered a lecture on “Police Interviews: The Right to Silence as a Right to Privacy”. The lecture was well attended with strong representation from the judiciary, Canterbury Bar, legal profession, staff and students.

One way in which UC academics continue their leadership and public service takes the form of public lectures. As part of the Tauhere UC Connect public lecture series, Dr Nick Maitland (Faculty of Health) spoke on “Middle-age Board-om: Skating, Surfing & Snowboarding into Your 40s” on 10 May. It received media coverage on ABC Radio Sydney and RNZ Afternoons with Jesse Mulligan, as well as appearing as a Stuff publication featured in *The Press*, *Post* and *Waikato Times*. Professor Julia Rucklidge will speak on 31 May on the topic “Could Nutrition Help Solve the Mental Health Crisis?”

As part of the Climate Change Commission’s consultation phase, on Friday 19 May UC hosted a panel consisting of He Pou a Rangi Climate Change Commission Chair Rod Carr, General Manager of Sector Analysis Barry Anderson and, from UC, Professor David Frame and Associate Professor David Evison.

A week-long awareness campaign culminated in activations on World Biodiversity Day, 22 May, including a World Biodiversity Day walk. Three academics, Professor Jim Briskie, Dr Rob Cruickshank and Adjunct Fellow Colin Meurk, provided insights into campus biodiversity, in an expert talk on native falcons that coincided with sightings of a rare native falcon on campus.

Sure to Rise: The Edmonds Story by Peter Alsop, Kate Parsonson and Richard Wolfe (Canterbury University Press) will be officially launched by Professor Katie Pickles at Scorpio Books on 15 June. Promoted as a rich slice of Aotearoa New Zealand’s cultural history, the book is expected to enjoy a wide readership and is receiving good media coverage.

Associate Professors Cheryl Brown and Kathryn MacCallum, Head of School Te Hurinui Clarke and Associate Professor Sara Tolbert presented a successful symposium on “Enhancing Educational Equity through Digital Learning” in the Learning and Instruction Division of the American Education Research Association Conference in Chicago in April. This is the USA’s largest education research conference.

Lecturer Kristie-Lee Thomas (Ngāti Mutunga o Wharekauri, Te Āti Awa, Ngai Tohora, Rapuwai) was one of the organisers and facilitators of a symposium and wānanga around disaster resilience and future collaborations. The event was designed for knowledge exchange between Mataatua community leaders, rangatahi and our programme researchers in Whakatāne, and was hosted by Te Whare Wānanga o Te Awanuiārangi. Kristie-Lee got involved as part of her role as a co-lead of the Resilience to Nature’s Challenge Mātauranga Māori research programme – Te Whanake Te Kura i Tawhiti Nui.

Professor Matthew Wilson, Director of the Geospatial Research Institute Toi Hangarau, and Dr John Reid (Ngāti Pikiao, Tainui, Tauiwai), a Senior Research Fellow at the Ngāi Tahu Research Centre, have collaborated to produce a short documentary about Christchurch. Covering the city’s geography, history of floods and potential impacts of climate change, the documentary has been presented on the RNZ website.

The Elaine P Astronomy school took place in April, with two clear nights of observing at the Mt John Observatory in Tekapō. Among the many highlights of the programme were the observations of several fascinating objects, including the Tarantula Nebula and Sombrero Galaxy. Under the guidance of UC student Zachary Lane, the groups even managed to track an asteroid using the Boller and Chivens 0.6M Scope. Twenty Year 13 students from all over New Zealand attended the programme, and they were privileged to be among the first groups to see the refurbished Townsend Teece telescope at the Christchurch Arts Centre.

Jade Humphrey, a PhD student in the School of Earth and Environment, was featured on News Hub for his work as Predator Free Riccarton lead, supporting New Zealand's predator free 2050 goal.

Together with the School of Biological Sciences, the School of Earth and Environment also delivered an outreach session to 80 students at Whakaraupō as they launched a non-hydrodynamic pontoon. The pontoon will enable access to mudflats to collect long sediment cores, which has not been possible as many of the intertidal mudflats in Whakaraupō and elsewhere on Banks Peninsula are far too soft to walk on.

The staff of the School of Physical and Chemical Sciences participated in the Horoata Night Glow festival by showcasing a variety of interactive science demonstrations. Among their demonstrations were the launch of a weather balloon, and hands-on chemistry and physics activities such as elephant's toothpaste, the bed of nails, the hovercraft and whoosh bottle.

Education – Accessible, Flexible, Future Focused

As we approach the end of Semester 2, students are starting to prepare for exams. Peer Assisted Learning Sessions (PALS) have been attracting higher numbers of students than previously, with well over 1,000 attendances. Course coordinators, advisors and many others have worked with students to encourage them to attend. Indicators from tests throughout the semester show improved results for students who attend PALS, and it is pleasing to see more courses and more students involved in the programme.

Furthermore, many courses and programmes are working with Future Learning and Development through the Taipapaki programme. While most of this work focuses on undergraduate programmes, postgraduate programmes have also been redeveloped. Feedback from staff has been very positive. Nearly 500 exams are scheduled for the end of Semester 1, most of which are now returning to face-to-face mode.

The end of the semester also means saying farewell to our first group of Erskine Fellows for the year. After several years of limitations on the running of the Erskine programme due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, the programme is fully operational again and the number of visitors coming through the programme is back to pre-COVID-19 levels. International academics have been delighted to visit UC under this programme, as the following feedback illustrates: "I deeply enjoyed my stay at UC and am extremely grateful for this opportunity to the Erskine Program, to my host and to the whole department. UC can only be congratulated on running such a successful program, which contributes to academic and personal exchange and has many positive side effects for UC and the academic world in particular, and intercultural exchange in general."

With the Erskine Programme in its 60th year, plans are under way for an event to celebrate this milestone in Semester 2, which will also complement the University of Canterbury 150th celebrations. UC looks forward to the arrival of new Fellows in Semester 2, along with 200 Study Abroad students and 100 new international students.

UC has continued to offer lifelong learning experiences through short courses, microcredentials and co-curricular learning experiences. The newly introduced microcredentials have been popular in UC Online. Since the start of the year, the microcredentials have had 283 enrolments in total, with the numbers growing each month. Course completion is at 93% and feedback has been positive. As well as providing lifelong learning opportunities, the microcredentials give learners a snapshot of what else UC has to offer. Psychology courses have attracted the most enrolments, particularly those on Nutrition, Wellbeing, and Psychology of Wellbeing.

We were also well represented at the two Future Leaders workshops sponsored by Te Papa Hauora and facilitated by Ross Denton. Each workshop is a week-long intensive programme for students from UC, University of Otago (Christchurch) and Te Pūkenga Ara at no cost to the participants. UC students were enrolled from a range of programmes: Clinical Psychology (2); Health Sciences (4); Speech and Language Pathology (2); Nursing (1); Psychology (1); Social Work (1); Organisational Psychology (2); and Audiology (1).

Learning outside the classroom is a component of many Science programmes. In the last month, Arts students too have had a diverse range of field trips. For example, students from EURA101 Global Europe went on a field trip to Tūhaitara Coastal Park. Te Kōhaka o Tūhaitara Trust is a registered charity responsible for the rehabilitation and management of Tūhaitara Coastal Park and was established as an outcome of the settlement between Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and the Crown. For students of Global Europe, the visit to the park offers insights into the impact of colonisation on New Zealand, which is a focus of their course, as well as providing an example of regeneration of Māori land.

First-year students from the Bachelor of Digital Screen with Honours degree went on a field trip to Māui Studios. Māui Studios is a kaupapa Māori production studio that develops digital content grounded in mātauranga Māori, tikanga and tīpuna values for local and global audiences. The students met the Māui Studios team, had a tour of their facilities and learnt about the design to development process of 'Te Haerenga' – a quest-based gamified learning platform for rangatahi to learn about Aotearoa's energy story.

Research – Impact on a Changing World

May and June are busy months when research teams across the University, if selected from an earlier externally assessed Expression of Interest phase, are writing full-bid research proposals. The Research & Innovation Office is currently supporting seven full Smart Ideas proposals and 31 full Marsden proposals that need to describe relevant aspects of innovation and commercialisation, Vision Mātauranga, the track record of the research team, and potential research advance.

A significant development to follow on from New Zealand gaining Associate membership of the Horizon Europe, giving us access to Pillar 2 of Europe research funding system focused around "global challenges", is a commitment in the recent budget of more than \$38 million over four years to support successful New Zealand researchers in collaborative programmes with European partners. UC has submitted its first Horizon Europe proposals and is working through how to best support UC

researchers in future rounds and help potential applicants to understand the funding calls and how to participate in a consortium. A cross-university group formed by the New Zealand universities last year is working collaboratively to understand the needs and requirements of Horizon Europe.

The KiwiNet Research Commercialisation awards are the biggest national event for the research commercialisation sector. Dr Sean Feast has been selected as a finalist for the Breakthrough Innovator Award and is also a finalist in the Hi-Tech Awards Young Achiever category. Sean is CEO of Precision Chroma, a UC spin-out company in partnership with BridgeWest – an international venture capital fund. The venture is commercialising 3D printed chromatography columns, founded on Professor Conan Fee's research in this area. Award recipients will be announced at a gala dinner hosted in Auckland on 28 September.

Professor Santiago Pujol and PhD student Charlie Kerby are conducting new, innovative research in earthquake testing that may have a major impact on concrete wall construction. This research is proposing new remediation techniques, as highlighted recently in national media. It is funded by Toka Tū Ake EQC (the Earthquake Commission) through its contestable Biennial Grants scheme, which supports research on improving the resilience of buildings. Similarly, UC has secured funding from the Building Research Association of New Zealand (BRANZ) to carry out research aimed at developing a model to predict how contaminant release rates from a building surface during storm events change over time as a building material degrades and weathers. This research is led by Dr Frances Charters and Professor Tom Cochrane (Civil and Natural Resources Engineering), Professor Sally Gaw (Physical and Chemical Sciences) and Dr Zhengwei Li, BRANZ Senior Corrosion Scientist. The project is a good example of multidisciplinary research at UC, and it will fund a new postdoctoral fellow, a position currently being advertised.

Dr Matt Hobbs (Faculty of Health) has recently published a study demonstrating a link between environmental factors and youth mental health. The study, a collaboration between researchers from UC, Otago and Auckland, is part of a wider project funded by Cure Kids and A Better Start National Science Challenge. The research investigated a range of protective and detrimental environmental factors that may influence youth mental health. The team used the Healthy Location Index, a tool developed by UC's **GeoHealth Laboratory**, in conjunction with population-level mental health data contained in the Integrated Data Infrastructure.

The Faculty of Education has seen a number of its research initiatives advanced. Rutherford Scholar Dr Hilary Dutton has published preliminary findings on youth mentoring in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. Associate Dean Brigid McNeill was on an RNZ panel discussing the success of the Better Start Literacy Approach as a consequence of National Science Challenge and Ministry of Education funding. Tufulasi Talen was part of the team who completed the Pacific Transition Project called "Soso'o le Fau ma le Fau: Supporting Pathways for Lifelong Learning for Pacific Families and Fānau". Tufulasi was instrumental to the project, which was supported by the Rāta Foundation and Tātai Aho Rau: Core Education. Dr Amy Scott, senior researcher in the Child Well-being Research Institute, has been elected to the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association (NZSTA) Executive Board. Dr Kaisa Hahl (from University of Helsinki, Finland) was a visiting scholar in the Faculty of Education in April.

Professor John Hopkins, Dr Toni Collins and Leanne Avila, as researchers from UC's Institute of Law, Emergencies and Disasters (LEAD), have published three articles in the *2021 Yearbook of International Disaster Law* (published in April 2023 by Brill). The articles focus on disaster, disability and climate resilience in the Pacific region.

Continuing UC publications in high-profile journals include two recent papers in *Scientific Reports*. One of them reported results around quantum mimicking of optical coherence using machine learning, while the other was on developing speckle-based phase-contrast for X-ray imaging. These papers underline the breadth of UC expertise across applied mathematics, data science, physics and medical imaging. All of these fields are progressing rapidly through advanced analytical techniques and machine learning, bringing into stark relief the intersection of technology and ethics (including responsible and culturally appropriate data management). Professor Tammy Steeves and co-authors have just published a paper in *Molecular Ecology Resources* looking at best-practice data management of biodiversity genomics, particularly where it intersects with indigenous data governance.

Within UC's new school, Te Kura Tāura | Graduate School, operations are still expanding. Following considerable cross-university discussion and collaboration, the Research Student Supervision Policy came into effect this month, a milestone in the development of Te Kura Tāura. Doctoral student recruitment continues to be ahead of 2022 in a year-to-date (end of April) comparison, reaching 113 enrolments so far against a target of 215 for the year. International students were the dominant cohort enrolled during the month.

People – Nurturing Staff, Thriving Students

The 2023 Academic Promotions round has been launched, with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic facilitating workshops for staff and Heads.

The inaugural Community of Practice for the UC Academic Mentoring programme pool of mentors was held in early May. The pool consists of 80 professors and associate professors who have made themselves available to be matched as mentors to early-career or mid-career academic staff for a year. Since People and Culture developed the mentoring programme in 2008, it has produced 271 partnerships to date. Mentors appreciated the opportunity they gained from the Community of Practice to interact with colleagues they might not usually meet and to discuss the benefits and challenges of mentoring. A further session will be held before the end of the year. A recent survey identified mentors' common professional development needs; the next step is to explore solutions to deliver on these.

Staff and students celebrated Pink Shirt Day on 19 May with a number of decorated lunch and meeting rooms, dressing in pink, and an event in the Undercroft that featured a range of giveaways and activities. As well as providing an opportunity for University members to celebrate together, the day was a reminder of the importance of inclusion, acceptance of differences, and respectful behaviour.

I am also proud of the following recent achievements of two of our staff:

The New Zealand Microbiological Society has elected Associate Professor Matthew Stott from the School of Biological Sciences as its delegate to the International Committee on Systematics of Prokaryotes. He will serve for a three-year term, which he started on 1 April.

Emeritus Professor Robert Jackson has been elected as an 'Honorary Member' of the International Society of Arachnology. Robert has been involved in the research of arachnology for several decades and this is a huge honour for him.

The Faculty of Science has the following outgoing Erskines during the mid-semester break:

Associate Professor Pieter Pelser from Biological Sciences will visit University of Tampa, Arizona State University and Shasta College, all in the USA. His purpose is to learn more about improving the first-year experience and student success, making courses more inclusive such as by using adaptive lab technologies, and providing in-course support for students with anxiety or depression, neurodiverse students and students from underprivileged backgrounds.

Senior Lecturer Dr Sarah Flanagan will visit UNSW, Australia and the University of British Columbia, Canada. She will also go to the USA to attend the Evolution and iEvoBio conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico and participate in a workshop on “Fostering Academic Futures through Online Teaching” at the University of California. Her focus will be on improving engagement and developing resilience in quantitative BIOL teaching, including by developing problem-solving teaching approaches such as online, problem-based learning tools.

Senior Lecturer Dr Andy Vonasch will visit the University of Kent, UK and attend a preconference workshop on the psychology of conspiracy theories in Krakow, Poland to work on his teaching of topics in moral psychology and personality psychology.

Senior Lecturer Dr Seth Harty will visit the universities of Oklahoma and Nebraska in the USA to work with experts in teaching adolescent identity development and developmental models of aggression in relation to adolescent outcomes, and on clinical interviewing and interventions, including for dually diagnosed patients. He will also visit New York City and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to work with experts in the assessment and treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and in substance use.

UC is contributing to the Universities New Zealand project to respond to the unions’ pay parity national claim under the 2020 amendments to the Equal Pay Act 1972. This is a gender-based claim about the pay and conditions for a range of clerical and library-based roles in the sector. The project is now moving into what is likely to be an extended phase of investigating the claim. In line with legislative requirements, staff in relevant roles have received a letter explaining the process.

People and Culture has launched the new online staff learning management system DevelopMe, which is now the platform for the rollout of a range of professional development modules aimed at supporting staff in core areas of their roles. A module on the Privacy Act 2020 has been rolled out in May. Other modules to be implemented in 2023 cover doctoral supervision, conflict of interest, the Student Pastoral Care Code, risk management, and health and safety. Managers will receive reports on completion rates by existing staff, and a range of modules will form an orientation programme for new staff, including the annual intake of fixed-term academic support staff, many of whom are also students.

The Burnside West Christchurch University Cricket Club hosted an evening event for about 100 students, featuring the student group Lads Without Labels. Other guests included former All Black captain Kieran Read, All Black Fletcher Newell and Black Caps Ish Sodhi and Todd Astle. A panel discussion covering aspects of mental health was followed by a question-and-answer session.

Internationalisation – Locally Engaged, Globally Networked

On Friday 19 May, UC hosted an Australian political exchange delegation, comprising Senator Jana Stewart (Victoria), Carina Garland (Member for Chisholm), Jayne Stinson (Member for Badcoe), Taylor Martin (Member of the NSW Legislative Council) and other bipartisan Australian political representatives. The Inter-Parliamentary Relations team of the New Zealand Parliament arranged the visit as a part of the Guest of Parliament programme to foster strong, positive relationships between the New Zealand and Australian parliaments.

UC also hosted a delegation of senior representatives from Thai universities, Silpakorn University and Rajamangala University of Technology. UC's School of Product Design has a strong history of engagement with Silpakorn's Faculty of ICT and discussed credit mapping and articulation pathways for undergraduate study at UC.

The Vice President of Human Resources from multinational engineering equipment company Hilti Group visited UC to discuss graduate employment mechanisms. The purpose of the visit was to extend UC's current student-focused engagement with Hilti and to explore new activity in the consulting and research space.

UC hosted the Education New Zealand General Manager, Wendy Kerr, and her new team to familiarise them with UC's strengths in international education and to discuss ways to feature Canterbury in the New Zealand International Education Conference to be held at Te Pae in late August this year.

A workshop to develop international education partnerships in China was held with AEMG Education. This is the second workshop of its kind this year, aimed at engaging faculty and university executives and heads of school with models for development of partnerships that aim to increase the quality and volume of students from China.

UC earthquake engineers visited Turkey to conduct earthquake reconnaissance. This involved a two-week trip for Professor Santiago Pujol and PhD candidate Julián Rincón, during which they studied the area struck by the Kahramanmaraş earthquake sequence in early February this year. The American Concrete Institute led the mission, accompanied by the American Society of Civil Engineers and National Institute of Standards and Technology, and with support from the University of Canterbury and Izmir Institute of Technology.

Organisational Efficacy – of a sustainable scale by 2030

The 2023 Government budget announced in May included a 5.0% increase in tertiary education subsidies for the 2024 financial year (FY). Although the increase is below the 7.3% 2022 consumer price index (CPI) rate, it is better than the inflation adjustment in the Budget 2022 (for 2023), which was 2.75% when 2021 CPI was 3.3%. Funding is falling behind, and tight control of fee increases (set at 2.75% in FY2023) reduces options for tertiary education organisations (TEOs) to increase income elsewhere. During the media lockup for the Budget, Minister of Finance the Hon Grant Robertson said that the adjustment would be above inflation in the period that TEOs get it, but funding adjustments usually reflect prior inflation. However, the confirmed 5.0% increase forecast in FY2024 is above UC's expectation before the Budget of 3.75%.

Mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori provision will get a phased 15% increase in funding. This results in a 5.25% increase in SAC/DQ on average when this additional funding is included.

Half-price public transport fares for people aged under 25 years from 1 July 2023 will help many students financially and allow them to live in cheaper places further from some CBD campuses.

There was no increase in major research funds, other than Horizon Europe Pillar II (\$37.6 million) and no increase in Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) funding. Three Wellington-based multi-institution research hubs will receive a total of \$400 million of capital expenditure and \$51 million of operational expenditure funding. The hubs are:

- climate change and resilience, which involves the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA), GNS Science, Victoria University of Wellington, Massey University “and others”, and will be “part of a national centre for research on oceans, climate and hazards”
- health and pandemic readiness, involving Victoria University of Wellington, Otago University, the Institute of Environmental Research (ESR), Malaghan Institute of Medical Research and Callaghan Innovation
- technology and innovation, involving Callaghan Innovation, GNS Science, Victoria University of Wellington and the Malaghan Institute of Medical Research. It will be based at Gracefield.

Positive news for UC’s Digital Screen Campus is that the Government has promised a 20% rebate on gamer developers’ expenditure in a bid to compete with comparable, though larger, rebates in Australia. Australian-based game developers are able to claim a tax rebate of between 30 and 40 cents for every dollar they spend developing a computer game. Game developers in New Zealand will be able to access the 20% rebate if they meet a minimum \$250,000 expenditure threshold.

Considering the Budget on balance, although increases for research funding were limited, the 5.0% increase in SAC/DQ is above UC expectations. We are also delighted to see a material response from the Government to the Australian game development subsidy.

Digital Services and the Library have been progressing a project to replace our 27-year-old Horizons platform with a modern, cloud-based library system that is easy to integrate and use. Following approval of the business case and having assessed competing platforms in the market, the team has now selected the preferred platform. The new library system will be introduced over the next nine months with an initial target release date of early 2024.

In the ongoing rollout of our new Ako ā-Mahi | Work Integrated Learning platform (UC Placements), the Faculty of Education received training and was onboarded last month, facilitating the management of student placements within the community for over 1,100 students. Go live of UC Placements for five schools across UC is scheduled before the end of June, and Engineering is going live shortly after. The target for project completion is the end of the first quarter of 2024.

The Digital Services team helped the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP) to establish a separate Microsoft 365 tenancy, which went live last month. COMNAP is an international association with members comprising the national Antarctic programmes of 32 governments around the world. Those programmes are the organisations responsible for delivering and supporting scientific research in the Antarctic Treaty Area on behalf of their respective

governments and in the spirit of the Antarctic Treaty. The project established a separate Microsoft 365 tenancy for COMNAP for email and SharePoint online, with the Secretary for COMNAP as administrator. The project resolved multiple security and administrative challenges that COMNAP faced in hosting and organising collaboration among its global members.

In other notable news, the Chief Digital Officer of Digital Services, Michael Oulsnam, has been appointed as the New Zealand representative on the Council of Australasian University Directors of Information Technology (CAUDIT) Executive Committee. CAUDIT is an incorporated not-for-profit association that draws its membership from all higher education and research institutions in Australia and New Zealand. It provides valuable services to the members in the areas of sector combined procurement, professional development, cybersecurity and insights. Michael has also been appointed as Chair of the Universities of New Zealand ICT Directors Committee.

Environmentally Sustainable

On 3 May, Minister of Climate Change the Hon James Shaw announced from the Beehive that UC was among the recipients of funding from a new State Sector Decarbonisation Fund from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA). We will receive \$4.5 million to help replace our coal-burning Dovedale boiler.

The Times Higher Education Impact rankings were released in early June. This ranking assesses our research, policies and campus operations around sustainability issues framed within the 17 UN Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs). For 2023, UC's score is 89.6 and our global ranking is 77, compared with a 2022 score of 92.6 and global ranking of 50. The main influence on the drop in rankings was increased competition – more universities are entering this ranking system every year. We are in the top 100 in the world in four of our submitted SDGs: 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, 12 Responsible Consumption and Production, 14 Life Below Water and 15 Life on Land. Of note is that we received a large drop in the score for “low carbon energy use”. When we have access to the full set of results, we will be analysing this carefully.

The Community Feast, held at Aldersgate to celebrate our 150th anniversary, attracted over 300 participants, including representatives from over 60 organisations. This provided an opportunity to discuss the University's new Sustainable Food and Drink Plan, as well as other sustainability initiatives, and to network with the Deputy Mayor and other councillors who were present.

In April, Forest Management Ltd remodelled our carbon sequestration estimates from Mt Barker Forest out to 2050. In May, Facilities Management engaged Ekos Ltd to outline alternative offsetting options to achieve carbon net neutrality by 2030, should these be needed.

As part of its ongoing climate change risk assessment of UC, consultant AECOM held a workshop to confirm current mitigation measures, both in place and proposed. Mana whenua involvement in this stage of the review continued with Dr John Reid.

Garrick Thorn (Chemical and Process Engineering) attended a workshop for the EECA Regional Energy Transformation Accelerator (RETA) programme on the West Coast. While there, he connected with a number of industry groups seeking to reduce emissions from process heat.

The Waste Contract Working Group (involving Facilities Management, the UC Students' Association and UniLodge) has begun its contracts review. All parties are working to closely align waste systems and the services procured to support them in improving environmental sustainability.

The new Cycle Plan 2022–2030 was published on the UC website. Part of developing this plan involved setting organisational targets for other forms of sustainable commuting. A recent audit of bike stand use showed that 40% percent of bike stands were in use on average across one week in March, up from 33% in 2022.

During May, UC celebrated World Biodiversity Day with a Biodiversity Walk through Ilam Gardens. Thirty people also participated in a University event to promote the City Nature Challenge, resulting in over 500 observations. Over the weekend, one EnviroSoc student contributed to more than 2,000 observations. A second predator trap line was established on campus (along Waiutuutu-Okeover Stream). In another initiative, an Edible Campus Tour attracted 30 attendees.