

Vice-Chancellor's Report to Council



August 2023

Introduction

August has been an eventful month filled with UC 150th celebrations, graduation ceremonies, hosting of important visitors, and continuing to forge strong relationships within the community.

A highlight of the past month was the Noteworthy event, when about 600 people attended *Noteworthy: Celebrating 150 years of UC* - a concert by UC Music in collaboration with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra on 26th August at the Christchurch Town Hall, including works by John Ritchie, LA Mitchell, Gareth Farr, Rakuto Kurano, Reuben de Lautour and Mahina-Ina Kingi-Kai. Chancellor Amy Adams addressed the audience, noting the importance of Arts in a thriving society.

Congratulations to our 621 graduates who achieved their special milestones during the Spring Graduations on 29 August. It was also a great honour to be invited for the first time to the Tuahiwi Marae for the Eke Tangaroa Māori Graduation Celebration on 30 August. On the same day the Pasifika graduation celebration was hosted on campus.

The Tūwhitia fund for the tertiary sector was announced recently. The fund will provide up to \$10 million for tertiary institutions for funding of learner success initiatives, and in particular removing barriers to success for priority learners. The inaugural Tūwhitia symposium was hosted at UC in September 2022. Driven by a commitment to Learner Success, UC invited tertiary organisations and the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) to come together to share sector practices in improving outcomes for priority learners. Then Minister of Education, Hon Chris Hipkins, spoke on the final day.

As part of a nationwide university consultation process, officials from the Ministry of Education and the TEC met with various UC stakeholders on 18 August to discuss the potential scope of the funding review.

Engagement

In addition to the Concert, the university is continuing its 150th celebrations with various other events hosted during August:

Whiria te tangata: Weaving The People Together, the UC 150th Art Exhibition, continues to draw significant traffic at The Arts Centre, and we hope to receive more visitors ahead of the exhibition's conclusion on 10 September.

The 150th photo board travelling exhibition is visiting Canterbury districts, showcasing some of UC's most treasured historic photos and contrasting them with images of modern UC. The exhibition visited Kaikōura during 7-11 August and was featured in the Kaikōura Star. Currently in Hurunui, it will next head to Mt Hutt and Ashburton in September, and Selwyn in October.

In support of the WORD Festival, the University hosted a panel on the 150th book. Associate Professor Chris Jones (editor of the book) was the convenor, and Dr. John Wilson (author of the 150th book), Professor Te Maire Tau, Margaret Lovell-Smith, and I were panel members discussing the forthcoming book as well as Lovell-Smith's new volume on attitudes towards WWI, published by Canterbury University Press. The book will be launched in mid-December.

Students were very appreciative of the birthday cupcakes, popcorn and ice creams handed out on August 23rd as part of the 150th celebrations. It was good timing as we approached the end of Term 3.

UC Senior Film lecturer, John Christoffells's film *Building Bridges: Bill Youren's Vision of Peace* premiered in Auckland as part of the New Zealand International Film Festival on 26 August. The film also screened at the Rotterdam Peace Festival and locally at the Lumière Cinema, and the film was also included by Limelight for release around Aotearoa. John has been appointed as the Academic Director of UC's Digital Screen programme.

Education – Accessible, Flexible Future Focussed

We were pleased to receive official confirmation of the Business School's AMBA reaccreditation for a further 5 years. UC received the reaccreditation with no conditions and only minor recommendations.

This month saw recognition of teaching success, with seven scholars being awarded a fellowship under the Distributed Teaching and Learning Programme. This year, in addition to the general category, fellowships were awarded for specific teaching and learning innovation in Work Integrated Learning (WIL). Focus on Artificial Intelligence, adaptive learning, problem-solving and resilience in students and indigenising the LLB were the projects awarded in the general category. In WIL two of the projects focus on career development, a key factor in supporting student success. The third focuses on skills transfer and awareness for students which has shown to be important in supporting students in transferring to employment.

Kia Angitu has continued to be a priority over the past month with the introduction of Peer Assisted Learning Support (PALS) to three new courses, including in Education and Product Design. There have also been appointments of two Pacific PALS leaders and an expanded focus on PALS inclusive for disabled students. Evaluation of results of PALS for Semester 1 showed particularly pleasing improvements for students doing PALS in PHYS101, with ten percentage points different for the PALS students compared to matched cohorts.

Course development for student success has expanded with 17 first-year courses now re-developed or under development. Career development learning is being piloted in two first year courses, PSYC106 and MATH101.

The Te Kakau a Maui scholars continue to benefit from the programme. Last term saw the introduction of alumni mentors, with positive feedback. Early analysis of results for those students is showing pleasing outcomes in terms of course completion.

Research – Impact on a Changing World

Professor John Cater from the School of Mechanical Engineering, Te Kaupeka Pūhanga | Faculty of Engineering has been appointed by Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment as the National Contact Point for Horizon Europe Cluster 4 (Digital, Industry and Space). He will lead national transdisciplinary responses to Horizon Europe funding calls, positioning UC as a thought leader in this area.

This year, the finals of Three-Minutes Thesis (3MT) and Visualise Your Thesis (VYT) were combined into a single Research Student Showcase. Both competitions challenge research students to share the story of their research with a general audience in creative and engaging ways. Henry Hault from Te Kaupeka Pūtaiao | Faculty of Science was the 3MT winner for his presentation *“Mt Taranaki has a plumbing problem”*. Henry received a \$5,000 prize and will represent UC at the virtual Asia Pacific finals held at the University of Queensland in October. Second place went to Gladys Tan from Te Kaupeka Pūtaiao | Faculty of Science who received \$3,000 for her presentation *“Does the amount of citric acid matter?”*. Gladys will represent UC at the virtual 3MT Inter-University Masters Final in Auckland. Third place (and \$1,000) went to Kate Wislang from Te Kaupeka Pūhanga | Faculty of Engineering with her presentation *“What you are not seeing”*. PhD student Kate Revell of UC’s Te Kaupeka Oranga | Faculty of Health won the 2023 Visualise your Thesis (VYT) award for *“Year 7/8 Student Engagement in Performing Arts”*. She received a \$1,000 prize and will represent UC at the International VYT Programme in October, hosted by the University of Melbourne.

Associate Professor Stefanie Gutschmidt and Professor Mathieu Sellier, both from the School of Mechanical Engineering, were successful in their bid to host the Australasian Fluid Mechanics Conference in Christchurch in 2026. UC last hosted this conference in 1974, and it will cover the broad field of fluid mechanics in all engineering and scientific disciplines.

Following a collaboration between the School of Product Design and Health, a new online platform launched which aims to bridge the gaps in sexuality education for young New Zealanders. Called Te Puāwaitanga: Beyond the Birds and Bees. The free platform is a New Zealand first and uses research gathered from rangatahi to provide our youth with the skills to safely navigate sexuality messages they find online and to build healthy relationships.

Dr Matthew Hobbs presented at the New Zealand Society for Hospital and Community Dentistry annual meeting on 28th–29th July, and was awarded the senior researcher prize (non-clinical) for best presentation for his work creating New Zealand’s first complete dataset of public drinking water supply alongside Dr Tim Chambers (University of Otago).

People – Nurturing Staff, Thriving Students

In line with UC’s values of manaakitanga, we are preparing for the Mental Health Awareness Month starting on 18 September. We will be offering a series of programmes and events for students and staff throughout the month, including a *“Managing Your Mind”* webinar, a student and staff social event with a focus on mental health, a *“Take a Mate to Coffee”* promotion, and a Mindfulness workshop. There is also a promotion about World Car Free Day on 22 September.

As part of the ongoing Menopause in the Workplace programme, the University Wellbeing team hosted a lecture on Menopause by Dr Anna Fenton of Oxford Women’s Health. Over 200 staff attended the lecture.

The third “pop-up” session for new staff was recently attended by 30 recruits. These informal gatherings are proving a good point of connection for staff. They are also a useful forum to ask questions about a number of issues for example payroll and tax, academic induction, and staff wellbeing and professional development programmes.

The UCSA has opened the nomination process for its annual University of Canterbury Blues Awards, which recognise sporting and cultural excellence. Nominations are also being invited for the Community Champions Awards, in which the students recognise staff contributions, with a number of categories for academic, technical and general staff, including a Wellbeing Champion award.

Internationalisation – Locally Engaged, Globally Networked

On 31 August UC colleagues attended a Malaysian NZ Business Council Independence Day dinner. The continued strength of our engagement with the Malaysian community in Christchurch adds significantly to our character as an internationally engaged university.

With support from the Science Faculty, the Rose Centre for Stroke Recovery and Research hosted a Dysphagia Think Tank on 14th August attended by experts from the USA, Europe, Japan and Australia.

New Zealand's annual international education conference, NZIEC KI TUA 2023 was held in Christchurch during 16-18 August at Te Pae Convention Centre. The theme, *The Pathway Forward*, was celebrated by more than 590 delegates, reconnecting in person for the first time since 2019. The Minister for Education in China, His Excellency Huai Jinpeng, delivered the keynote address. Addresses were also delivered by NZ Education Minister Jan Tinetti and ENZ Board Chair Tracey Bridges.

Organisational Efficacy – of a sustainable scale by 2030

Digital has been busy working in partnership with the Research and Innovation and Library teams across two further application modernisation initiatives to replace end of life on-premise solutions.

The Library project team have signed the contract for the Library system, Folio, and are busy in detailed planning for its roll-out. Our Request for Proposal in market to explore a replacing platform for our legacy Research Management System also closed and detailed platform proposal assessments are now underway.

Environmentally Sustainable

200 UC staff and students attended waste reduction events held to mark Plastic Free July. This included a well-received staff volunteering opportunity with Environment Canterbury.

Early in August UC's Procurement team volunteered and planted over 400 native trees in Christchurch's Coronation Reserve. They seeded a variety of plants including Olearia, Coprosma, Kanuka, Broadleaf and Three Finger.

Jade Humphrey from the School of Earth and Environment received a Community Youth Award on 8 August in recognition for her volunteer work, creating and leading Predator Free Riccarton.

Toka Tu Ake EQC have provided funding for the Resilience to Earthquake and Landslide Multi-hazards programme to address SDG 11. This research provides fundamental data and tools for decision-makers to reduce risk, reflecting the strong teaching of both programmes in this area.

The first intake for course GEOL345 (Groundwater and Geothermal Systems) is now completed. The course focuses on SDGs 6 and 7, and also treats campus as a "living lab", such as in examining the new Ground Source Heat Pump.

Chemical And Process Engineering researchers have been using new technology to turn medical waste like face masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) into diesel. Using a process called catalytic pyrolysis, the researchers hope this will be a step forward in sustainable disposal of medical waste. Professor Alex Yip, who leads the study, said in the past few years during the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a significant surge in global waste.