
August 2024

Introduction

On 21 August the University Advisory Group (UAG) visited UC as part of their ongoing efforts to ensure all universities have an opportunity to inform and shape their thinking. They met with various UC leaders, research students, academics, and the UCSA Executive Committee to gain a deeper understanding of the unique strengths, challenges, and opportunities at UC. This visit preceded the Phase 2 submissions to UAG due on 30 August.

UC hosted our largest ever Rā Tōmene | Open Day on 30 August with over 5000 prospective students and their whānau registering to visit campus. This, our biggest recruitment event of the year, gave prospective students the opportunity to explore UC and gather information to help them make decisions on their future tertiary education.

Engagement

On 5 August, 26 not-for-profit (NFP) organisations joined in UC's Volunteering Expo. NFPs from Ōtautahi Christchurch and Waitaha Canterbury connected with UC staff and students, sharing opportunities to volunteer and make a difference in our community.

Ōtautahi Christchurch has been named in the Top 100 Best Student Cities worldwide. This helps build the city's reputation as a study destination, at a time when prospective students are considering where they will enrol for tertiary education

WORD Christchurch 2024 created a buzz in the city during 27 - 31 August. UC hosted the *Inspiring Minds* event, where over 240 secondary school students engaged with authors and poets. Among the guests was Thomas Udall, the United States Ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa, who was in Christchurch to introduce American author and 2024 participant Sasha LaPointe at WORD. UC was a proud principal sponsor of the festival, and the programme featured many UC alumni, staff and former Ursula Bethell writer-in-residence. UC was also a partner for the *Strong Female Characters* session with award-winning writer Emily Perkins and renowned filmmaker Christine Jeffs.

In June 2022, UC entered an agreement with Piki Films which was UC's first commercial relationship under the Kōawa banner. The New Zealand production company was a tenant in the Ōrākipaoa building on UC's Dovedale campus while making the film *We Were Dangerous*, which was released on 22 August.

On 8 August I gave a presentation titled "*Educational Leadership: Fundamentally Future focussed and Optimistic*" as part of the Canterbury West Coast Secondary Principals' Association conference in Methven.

Education – Accessible, Flexible Future Focussed

As the first half of Semester 2 came to an end, there were many assessments, projects and activities keeping students and staff busy.

There were several opportunities to showcase University of Canterbury's accessible, flexible, and future-focussed approach to learning and teaching when UC hosted several Deputy Vice-Chancellors Academic from Australia who are part of the Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN). ATN is a body that focusses on innovative universities in research and teaching. UC highlighted the Kia Angitu programme with a specific focus on ACE Teach, PALS, and the use of data to improve student outcomes. Tuihono | UC Online was also of particular interest, especially in the focus on life-long learning and engagement with industry. A highlight was having some of our academic staff involved in the hui who have championed many of the programmes and who have changed outcomes for their students.

Many faculties are finalising curriculum changes for 2026 with changes in courses and programmes. There were a number of Graduating Year Reviews (GYR) carried out over the past month. The GYR process is the final stage of a new qualification whereby the programme is reviewed following its first graduating cohort. The process allows the faculty and students to reflect on whether programme outcomes have been met and to consider changes. It is part of the overall cycle of continuous improvement. Graduating reviews were conducted for programmes across Education, Arts, Engineering, Business and Science in the most recent round. They will be reviewed as part of the Committee for University Academic Programmes (CUAP) work.

A news report in the Greymouth Star highlighted UC's commitment to accessible education for students living on the West Coast. Zakkia Waipouri, a student with an autoimmune disease, was unable to attend campus-based classes in Christchurch due to her health. She enrolled in and successfully completed a Certificate in Criminal Justice through Tuihono | UC Online. Achieving her online qualification gave her the confidence to "dream bigger" and she now intends to continue her studies in Christchurch with support from UC's disability services and our flexible learning options.

An annual event that is a highlight each year is the International Warman competition, where second year mechanical engineering students engage in assessed activities, that for some result in competing internationally. The assessment activities reflect the innovative thinking that students are involved in that advance knowledge for themselves and others.

Research – Impact on a Changing World

The finals for UC's Three Minute Thesis, and prizegiving for Visualise Your Thesis and Exhibit Your Thesis competitions were combined for the first time in August. The competitions, as part of Whakāturanga Rangahau | Research Student Showcase, celebrate postgraduate study, challenging doctoral and master's students to communicate their research to a general audience. First place winners, Brittany Ogden-Travis (Three Minute Thesis), Kirsty Newman (Visualise Your Thesis), and Katherine Revell (Exhibit Your Thesis), will go on to compete in the Asia Pacific virtual event finals hosted by the University of Queensland.

Professor Santiago Pujol was announced as the new Te Hiranga Rū QuakeCoRE Director, commencing January 2025. QuakeCoRE is a Tertiary Education Commission Centre of Research Excellence (CoRE) hosted at UC since 2016. Its goal is to ensure that Aotearoa New Zealand is at the global forefront of earthquake disaster resilience. It has received over \$50 million of research funding during 2016 - 2027. He takes over from Professor Brendon Bradley who has been both the deputy director and director since it started.

Associate Professor David Dempsey is leading groundbreaking research in volcanic eruption forecasting using AI. By analysing real-time seismic data from various volcanoes worldwide, their machine learning models can recognise patterns that indicate approaching eruptions, potentially providing several days of advance warning. This is a good example of an AI powered breakthrough where we are engineering the now and the future to save lives.

The Faculty of Health hosted a 75-person symposium titled “*Oranga: A Canterbury Waitaha Symposium of Health & Wellbeing Research*”. They had a variety of speakers from Canterbury and across New Zealand.

On 26 August the Te Kaupeka Ako | Faculty of Education held its inaugural Faculty-wide Research Symposium. There were over 60 attendees with presentations by recipients of Faculty-funded research projects, doctoral students presented research posters, and a panel formed from the Faculty’s professoriate answered questions submitted by staff and students under the theme of “*Ask Me Anything*”.

Professors Alex James, Anne Bower and colleagues had their work profiled in Nature Briefings looking at gender bias in different research fields. They found that the more women there were in a field, the lower the overall grant application success rate and evaluation of researcher quality, according to the analysis of data from more than 30 countries.

An article in The Press reported that UC postgraduate student, Emma Arvidson, created powdered instant oat milk. Starting with her Masters in Product Innovation at UC, she received \$20 000 funding from KiwiNet and commercialised the project with support from her mentor and trialled her invention with Callaghan Innovation. She has started a business, Teiny, offering a plant milk alternative that is healthier than regular plant milk and packaged more sustainably. Teiny received \$5000 from the King’s Trust, and Emma is a finalist in the Foodstuff’s emerging supplier competition with the potential of offering Teiny to New World supermarkets next year. Online sales for Teiny are planned for February 2025, with more commercial plans in the pipeline.

People – Nurturing Staff, Thriving Students

People and Culture piloted a peer-led, small group coaching programme to develop Project and Change Management skills for staff managing small, business-as-usual projects or initiatives. Participants worked in groups planning real-life projects over the course of eight weeks. The coaching focused on robust planning and deliberate consideration of the people impacts of the planned initiative as the key ingredients for successful implementation. Feedback was positive, and the programme will now be offered on an ongoing basis.

Other new programmes offered to staff in leadership roles *include Communication Strategies for Leaders*, and *The Coaching Collection – Effective Coaching Behaviours, Coaching Skills and Constructive Conversations*, and *Coaching and Feedback Practice*.

The core online training module about the Staff Code of Conduct was recently distributed to staff. The module is designed to provide an understanding of the Staff Code of Conduct and staff members’ responsibility to treat people with respect, impartiality, courtesy, and sensitivity. The course covers various topics, including identifying breaches of the Code and how to manage them. It also summarises University policies that fall within the scope of the Code.

At the recent Asia Pacific Student Accommodation Association (APSAA) Conference, Greg Scott (Director Accommodation Services) and Abigail Frederikse (Accommodation and Campus Life Manager) presented a paper in conjunction with UniLodge from an investigation into future models of student leadership in halls of residence. UC’s Senior Accommodation Advisor, Andrea Schoorl, was also the recipient of the Fred Johnson Award for Professional Achievement in Aotearoa and Greg Scott received the ACUHO-I New Professional Award.

UC's annual 2-day career planning workshop, *Planning Your Career Advancement*, aimed at academic staff within the first five years of their career, was held in August. 21 staff from across the university enthusiastically engaged with the content, senior leaders and other presenters, and each other. MS Teams will be utilised to keep the cohort in touch and enable collaboration as well as promoting ongoing professional development activities.

Internationalisation – Locally Engaged, Globally Networked

While in Japan, Executive Dean of Education Professor Joce Nuttall signed a renewed Memorandum of Understanding with Sendai University's Chairman Taiji Hozawa and President Dr Hitoshi Takahashi. UC's relationship with Sendai dates from the almost simultaneous natural disaster experiences of both cities in 2011.

On 5 August UC hosted NAFSA: Association of International Educators' Executive Director and CEO Dr Fanta Aw on campus. NAFSA is the world's largest non-profit association dedicated to international education and exchange. We invited Dr Aw to share her experience and knowledge of the value of international students and supporting their success, and she gave a talk on *"Supporting International Student Success"* which was open to all interested staff.

Four UC staff spoke at the New Zealand International Education Conference (NZIEC) in Wellington: Assistant Vice-Chancellor Engagement Brett Berquist, Professor Clemency Montelle, International Student Experience Coordinator Professor Mengping Cheng and Internationalisation Officer Micky Lu. The purpose of the conference is to enable engagement across New Zealand's international education sector with a view to sharing good practice and exploring strategies for future growth and development.

On 30 August the Advancement team hosted a table at the Malaysian Business Council annual dinner to maintain and build on the relationship with our Malaysian alumni. I shall be visiting various centres around Malaysia during the week of 23 September to host alumni events and meet with key partners in Malaysia to further strengthen UC's bond with the community. My visit will include meetings with the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaysia and the President of the National University of Singapore (during a stopover en route back to Christchurch).

Organisational Efficacy – of a sustainable scale by 2030

The Enterprise Business Capability Project (EBC) commenced work on the key foundations for the overall architecture being the foundation data model across the whole of the Finance and Human Capital Management piece and the job architecture relating to organisational framework. Within the broader EBC project contract negotiations are underway with the preferred payroll vendor.

The Data and Analytics team, with cross-functional support from Finance and others, have successfully transitioned or retired over 200 reports from Cognos to Power BI. This efficiency drive has not only streamlined UC's analytics framework, reducing duplication and enhancing process efficiency, but also achieved a cost saving of approximately \$63 000 annually by phasing out Cognos.

Tupuārangi Student Accommodation is making progress with foundation screw piles already underway. In a collaboration between the Civil and Natural Resources Engineering Department and the Facilities Management service unit, a tutorial about construction foundations was held at the Tupuārangi building site for 45 fourth year Civil Engineering students.

Members of the Process Improvement, People and Culture, and Learner Success teams met with the Senior Leadership Team in August to discuss the results of Question 14 of the 2024 Staff Survey, *"UC systems and processes support me to get work done effectively"*, which received the lowest rating of the survey questions. Three process areas of most concern across UC were identified and a series of focus groups will be held to understand and resolve the specific challenges in each, including improving and redesigning processes as required.

A UC Process Improvement Community of Practice is also being created, with the initial cohort of participants being invited from areas that have a direct impact on student experience and revenue generation. Participants will gain experience in documenting processes and procedures with applicable tools and resources and will have the opportunity to collaborate with others in similar roles across UC, which will help lift overall UC process maturity and support achieving our organisational efficacy goals.

The University's investment in the Digital Screen programme and Kōawa Creative Technologies Precinct is now in its third year. The spaces and facilities now available for student use include:

- Ōtakaro: graphics and visual effects suites, edit suites, colour grading suite, PC and Mac computer labs, motion capture space, art room, stop motion animation space, classrooms, collaborative work spaces, two lecture theatres, staff offices, postgraduate space.
- Jack Mann: one green screen stage and one virtual production stage.
- Wairākei: Dolby standard recording studios, voiceover booths, sound editing and mixing suites, Foley sound effects room.

BAFTA nominated Stretchy Productions, makers of popular stop motion animation series Kiri & Lou, moved into the Ōtakaro Annex on 2 September where they will make their first feature film. The partnership agreement with Stretchy includes guest lectures, workshops and work experience opportunities for students.

Environmentally Sustainable

The recent tertiary sector climate adaptation analysis for all New Zealand universities and Wānanga, which models 4 future scenarios at different levels of global warming, has been shortlisted for a major sustainability award. A submission based on the scenario titled *From Sweet As to Oh Bigger – Sector-wide climate scenarios*, has been shortlisted in the Powerful Partnerships category of the national Green Gown Awards. UC hosted regional workshops and contributed to the report, which highlights the role of New Zealand's tertiary sector to champion climate mitigation now and for the future.

The Communication team ran a Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Awareness campaign during August. They featured a month of stories from UC and organised events such as the externally facilitated SDG Game for the students. In this exercise students worked on different global climate scenarios together in teams to understand global impacts of changes in other national strategies.

The third New Zealand Hydrogen Symposium (NZHS 2025) was announced this month, which will be hosted by The Sustainable Energy Research Group in Civil and Natural Resources Engineering. In this conference we are bringing together the latest work supporting the development and deployment of hydrogen for de-fossilisation. Applications closed on 31 August.

Bachelor of Electrical and Electronic Engineering (Hons), and a Diploma of Global Humanitarian Engineering student, Leonardo Bolstad, attended the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum. This story was part of UC's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) communications campaign running throughout August. Chosen from 6000 applicants, Bolstad was the only Kiwi among 500 youth delegates at ECOSOC.