

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO | JULY 2025

Magazine

ISSUE

58



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Celebrating 100 years of student media

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The researchers working at the cutting edge of tissue regeneration
Inside the flume - the University's hidden taoka



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Stocking success

Otago's new Dean of Biomedical Sciences likens the faculty to a supermarket – packed with options for students to fill their intellectual trolleys.



A place of Pacific firsts

Professor Dianne Sika-Paotonu's appointment as Otago's first Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Pacific) marks a bold step in Pacific leadership and development.



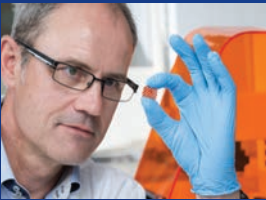
Otago's Critic

While many print publications are fading, Aotearoa's first student magazine is still going strong – hearty and humming at 100 years old.



People person

Otago's longest-serving Deputy Vice-Chancellor, now Emeritus Professor Richard Blaikie, reflects on a career rich in milestones, memories – and a lasting legacy.



Bioprinting breakthroughs

A small team of Otago researchers is working at the cutting edge of bioprinting and tissue regeneration.



Unlocking potential

An Otago academic is working to bring university-level learning into prisons – offering inmates the opportunity to study and grow behind bars.



Freeing smart minds

As the University's top-ranked Online MBA marks 10 years, graduate Andrew Moseley reflects on his Otago experience – and where AI is taking business next.



Two women, two journeys

To mark Otago Medical School's 150th anniversary, the Otago Magazine met two alumnae who trained 60 years apart and discovered how medical education has changed across the decades.



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of the University

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VICE-CHANCELLOR'S COMMENT

Tēnā koutou katoa

It is my pleasure to introduce this edition of the *University of Otago Magazine*. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the whole University community for the warm welcome I have received since becoming Vice-Chancellor in July last year. That includes from you, the alumni and friends of the University. I really value your support and input.

After a year in the role, I remain in awe of the people at University of Otago - Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka and the extraordinary research, teaching, learning and service that takes place here. Every one of our staff – academic and professional – contributes with their dedication and expertise. I want to acknowledge them first and foremost for their commitment through a period of uncertainty and change.

In this issue of the *University of Otago Magazine*, you will see some of that work showcased. From the innovative work of Dr Fairleigh Gilmour, who is teaching degree-level courses to prisoners – exemplifying the transformative power of knowledge and the University's commitment to social justice (pages 25 to 27), to the groundbreaking research in the field of bioprinting taking place on our Christchurch campus. The incredible advancements in this area hold promise for revolutionary medical treatments and underscore Otago's role in pioneering scientific discovery (pages 22 to 24).

I would like to acknowledge the support of our University Council in the work that we do. In this edition you will read about

Trish Oakley, our new Chancellor (pages 6 to 8). Trish brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to our university's values in her leadership of the Council.

This year we have seen growth in our first-year enrolments for the first time since 2021. This is a welcome development and bodes well for the years ahead. We are seeing particularly strong growth in our international student cohort, who join us from nearly 100 countries. As part of our *Pae Tata* strategic plans we are focused on growing this important aspect of our future.

The University is a diverse and vibrant community. We are supporting that through several key appointments. One is Professor Dianne Sika-Paotonu, who became our inaugural Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Pacific) in February (pages 9 to 11). Dianne's leadership and vision will be instrumental in advancing our mission of inclusivity, and making Otago a home of Pacific excellence.

Our university is, of course, nothing without our students. This year marks the 100th anniversary of *Critic Te Ārohi*, our student magazine. It is a testament to the vibrant and dynamic student community that has thrived at Otago for a century. We celebrate this milestone with a special feature that reflects on the magazine's rich history and its role in shaping student life (pages 16 to 21).

Alongside the hope that we have in our future, we are continuing to face some headwinds. The decision by the Government to remove Humanities and Social Sciences from the Marsden Fund

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S COMMENT

and to fund programmes in this and other areas at a lower rate in the future is, in my view, a backward step. Now, more than ever, we need the Humanities to thrive to help us support critical thinking, creativity and problem solving. In this edition, an insightful opinion piece by Professor Hugh Campbell addresses the Humanities crisis. He challenges us to think critically about the future of Humanities education and its importance in a rapidly changing world (pages 32 to 33).

As we embrace the future, we remain steadfast in our commitment to honouring the legacy of the University of Otago – Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka, while driving innovation, inclusion and excellence. I am grateful for the unwavering support of our staff, students and the wider Otago community. As a friend of the University, we want you to continue to feel part of our work, and to play your part in our future. We hope the insights you read in this edition of the *University of Otago Magazine* will inspire you to continue to show your support.

Noho ora mai,

Hon. Grant Robertson
Vice-Chancellor



Photo: Graham Warman

CHANCELLOR TRISH OAKLEY: “I tend to think about Otago as growing great adults. You don’t just come here to get your degree – you come here to mature through a shared Otago experience.”

WHEN TRISH OAKLEY BEGAN HER MARKETING DEGREE at the University of Otago in the 1990s, the idea she would one day become the institution’s Chancellor would have seemed absurd.

“I would not have thought that it would be possible – ever,” she laughs. Her journey, she believes, is a reminder to Otago students and alumni that life is full of unexpected turns. The key is to embrace every opportunity.

“Just say yes. How it will all work can follow. But say yes to the opportunities that come your way. And on the tough days, just keep putting one foot in front of the other.” Oakley worked for many years alongside the late Sir Eion Edgar KNZM, former Otago Chancellor (1999–2003) and Chairman of Forsyth Barr. She muses on one of his many sayings that left a lasting impression: “Sir Eion used to say, ‘The harder I work, the luckier I get.’”

This has certainly been the case in her own life. Oakley was the first in her family to attend university, though she says the value of learning was deeply rooted at home.

“Books were a big thing in our house, and my parents really emphasised the importance of education and a respect and love for learning.”

She credits her time at Otago with shaping her into a well-rounded, outward-looking person.

“I tend to think about Otago as growing great adults. You don’t just come here to get your degree – you come here to mature through a shared Otago experience.”

Since becoming Chancellor, Oakley has presided over 10 graduation ceremonies, shaking hands with thousands of graduands as they cross the stage.

“I love making that connection with them, even if it’s just for a few seconds.

It’s their moment to shine and the day represents the culmination of years of hard work, late nights, sacrifices made and relentless determination.” The moment also belongs to those who believed in them, she says.

“That’s why we invite our students and staff to stand and express their gratitude to the supporters. Gratitude is so important. “I certainly hadn’t appreciated all the sacrifices that enabled me to stand there on my graduation day.”

Oakley graduated from Otago in 1995 and immediately began her career in banking. She started as a teller, then progressed to relationship banker, joined a pilot programme in mobile banking, and later became a branch manager. Eventually, she was appointed regional support executive.

“Just say yes. How it will all work can follow. But say yes to the opportunities that come your way.”

“These roles provided a great grounding before I moved over to Forsyth Barr, where I’ve undertaken a variety of assignments including heading up Marketing and Product Development and their KiwiSaver scheme.”

More recently she has supported leadership and learning development opportunities inside the organisation.

In 2018, she received a phone call about a vacancy on the University of Otago Council.

“They said, ‘This is the call you don’t want’. But it turned out to be one of the best calls of my life.”

True to her personal motto, she said yes. She joined the Council that year, became Pro-Chancellor in 2022, and in October

2024, stepped into the role of Chancellor. Her path to University leadership has been shaped by a long history of boardroom and community involvement – beginning in 2007 with her first governance role at the Fortune Theatre and spanning multiple sectors since.

This includes serving as a trustee and later Chair of Tourism Dunedin, Director of Dunedin International Airport and as an independent member of the Olveston Theomin Gallery Management Committee. She has also been a Trustee of the Royal New Zealand Ballet and briefly served as a Director of Foundation Studies before joining the Council. She is a current member of the New Zealand Lotteries Commission.

“I’ve spent my working life in financial services, where you’re exposed to a wide range of people. That, combined with working across different sectors and alongside diverse governors, provides a wonderful opportunity to reflect and learn.”

In her role as Chancellor, she is enjoying working alongside Vice-Chancellor Grant Robertson.

“We have robust dialogue and spend time together regularly. We have plenty of common ground – and we’re both willing to concede when needed.”

While it is a turbulent time to be governing the University, Oakley says the more time she spends in the role, the stronger her belief in Otago becomes.

“My conviction in who we are, the importance and value of education and what we stand for has only grown.”

She acknowledges that the landscape for tertiary education in Aotearoa New Zealand – and globally – is unlikely to improve quickly. But she sees this as a pivotal moment to help shape Otago’s future.

“It has been a challenging period, but we are carefully laying plans for the future.”

Guiding Otago

In October 2024, Trish Oakley became the University of Otago’s 21st Chancellor – and just the second woman to hold this role in the institution’s now 156-year history. More than eight months into the role, she believes in Otago more strongly than ever.

Photos: Dave Bull

“... whether students, staff, alumni or Council Members, I want us all to feel connected to something greater than any of us, a shared sense of Otago and all that it represents – from the past to the present day and into the future.”

In October 2024, Trish Oakley became Otago's 21st Chancellor and just the second woman to hold this role.



Pae Tata – the University's strategic plan to 2030 – is important as it provides direction and clarity for navigating current and future challenges, she says.

“We can't stand still as the world changes around us. *Pae Tata* builds on our strengths and provides direction for our ongoing sustainability. It recognises the changing context in which we operate, and it acknowledges our commitment to our Te Tiriti journey.

“As Council we are guardians of this strategy and are very aware of the responsibility that entails.”

Oakley is grateful to her predecessor Stephen Higgs, who led in trying times and helped prepare her for the role. She is also grateful to her fellow Councillors.

“I'm surrounded by great people and

we're a team focused on making good decisions and lifting our own practice by learning, as well as self-reflection.”

For now, as Chancellor and also the mother of a current Otago student and a teenager soon to make her own decisions, her wish for the University is simple.

“That we continue to be a place that both supports and challenges our students – to think critically, stay curious about the world around them, and make the most of the many opportunities we offer – from clubs and societies to volunteering and community engagement.

“I want Otago's environment to be one where young people discover who they are, find their people, and for Otago to be a university that equips them with the confidence to lead in their fields and within

their communities.

“I want us to nurture in them a love of lifelong learning.

“I want Otago staff to keep pushing the boundaries of knowledge so we can contribute meaningfully to solving the world's most pressing challenges.

“And finally, whether students, staff, alumni or Council Members, I want us all to feel connected to something greater than any of us, a shared sense of Otago and all that it represents – from the past to the present day and into the future.”

LISA DICK AND LAURA HEWSON



Photos: Dave Bull

A place of Pacific firsts

The appointment of the country's first Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Pacific) at The University of Otago – Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka has been heralded as a significant advancement in Pacific development for the University.

PROFESSOR DIANNE SIKA-PAOTONU:
“My parents sacrificed everything to ensure my brother and I had access to opportunities they never did, and I have always carried a strong sense of responsibility ... to honour the sacrifices they made.”

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD WELLINGTON SCHOOLGIRL, Dianne Sika, promised her mother she was going to cure cancer when she grew up.

A close family friend was battling terminal cancer at the time, so finding a way to ensure others didn't have to face the same suffering seemed the most practical and helpful solution for the primary school pupil.

“That's when my focus on the health sciences solidified,” now Professor Sika-Paotonu explains. It set her on a path that has led to her becoming the inaugural Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC), Pacific, at Otago.

Fostered by influential teachers at Wellington Seventh-day Adventist School and Wellington Girls' College, Sika-Paotonu went on to create impressive, intertwined educational and employment records.

Her tertiary qualifications include a certificate in Anaesthetic Technology, bachelor's degrees in Physiology and Molecular Pathology, a master's degree in Molecular Pathology with first-class honours, a PhD in Immunology, and postgraduate qualifications in Public Health, Education and Professional Development, and Higher Education Learning and Teaching. Her PhD, while based at the Malaghan Institute of Medical Research, focused on cancer vaccines.

Her employment record is just as striking: Anaesthetic technician at Wellington Hospital, Lecturer in Pharmacology and Pathophysiology at Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington, Senior Lecturer in Pathology and Molecular Medicine at the University of Otago, Wellington, Associate Professor of Immunology in Wellington, and now Professor of Immunology in Dunedin.



Otago's first Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Pacific) Professor Dianne Sika-Paotonu.

“The University of Otago – Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka has had a very strong, visible and public commitment to the Pacific ... and the appointment of an inaugural DVC (Pacific) is an example of that.”

She has also worked overseas: as a visiting scientist at the Kids Research Institute Australia in Perth, and as a Fulbright Scholar and Immunology scientist at Harvard University and the University of Oklahoma in the United States.

She has done all this with husband, senior public sector manager, Reno Paotonu, and their daughter, Alisha, by her side. Sika-Paotonu credits her parents, Tevita and Teisa Sika – who emigrated from Tonga in the 1960s – and her Christian faith with instilling in her the importance of service.

“My parents sacrificed everything to ensure my brother and I had access to opportunities they never did, and I have always carried a strong sense of responsibility to do my part to give back and contribute constructively to society, and to honour the sacrifices they made.”

This sense of service has combined with both her Pacific heritage and her background as a biomedically-trained scientist to heavily influence her career.

“The key areas that I have focused on are cancer, rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease, and infectious diseases. Underpinning these is a strong focus on addressing health challenges and inequities that have disproportionately impacted communities.”

Accolades have flowed for Sika-Paotonu's work. Many have been for her science communication and public speaking skills, most recently as the first Pacific

scientist to receive the Prime Minister's Science Communication Prize, which she received for her communication of scientific knowledge and Pacific insights during the global Covid-19 pandemic.

Other honours have included the MacDiarmid New Zealand Young Scientist of the Year Award, Colmar Brunton New Zealand Research Excellence Award, Cranwell Medal from the New Zealand Association of Scientists, a share of the Liley Medal from the Health Research Council, and the Callaghan Medal from the Royal Society Te Apārangi.

There have been two special overseas tributes: the Association of Adventist Women's Woman of the Year Award from the United States; and a Tongan honour from the late King George Tupou V – The Most Illustrious Order of Queen Salote Tupou III Commander (CQS) – for scientific accomplishment.

While in Wellington, Sika-Paotonu had a taste of Pacific-focused University administration as the Associate Dean, Pacific, for Otago's Wellington School of Medicine and later the Division of Health Sciences.

All this set her on the path to become the University's DVC (Pacific).

Sika-Paotonu joins Research and Enterprise, Academic, External Engagement, and Māori DVCs within the University's Senior Leadership Team. She is also a member of the University Senate, chairs the

Pacific Leadership Group and the Pacific Staff Academic Caucus, and heads the Pacific Development Office.

She is not surprised Otago is the country's first university to make such an appointment.

“The University of Otago – Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka has had a very strong, visible and public commitment to the Pacific,” she says.

“For more than a decade we have had our Pacific Strategic Framework, and within our strategic documents there is very strong articulation of the University's commitment towards the Pacific. The appointment of an inaugural DVC (Pacific) is an example of that.”

“It is also an acknowledgement of the incredible hard work, commitment and advocacy over many years by Pacific staff, supported by our Pacific communities.”

As the DVC (Pacific), Sika-Paotonu will lead the roll-out of the University's Pacific strategic commitments expressed in *Pae Tata Strategic Plan to 2030* and *Vision 2040*. She will also lead the implementation and monitoring of the updated *Pacific Strategic Framework 2022-2030*.

“This role promotes a collective, connected approach to the Pacific strategy, with visibility and leadership that will enable the University to continue growing its Pacific focus on research, teaching and service for students, staff, communities, the Pacific region and beyond,” Sika-Paotonu says.

“My aim as the first DVC (Pacific) is to

champion the vision ‘for Pacific, by Pacific, into the Pacific’, and help ensure this is a place of belonging for all.”

Part of her brief is to grow levels of Pacific student participation, retention and success. About seven per cent of equivalent full-time students at Otago identify as having Pacific heritage, and that percentage is increasing each year.

“My aim as the first DVC (Pacific) is to champion the vision ‘for Pacific, by Pacific, into the Pacific’, and help ensure this is a place of belonging for all.”

In announcing the appointment, Vice-Chancellor Grant Robertson described it as historic.

“This is a recognition of the significance of the role of Pacific staff and students, and our relationships with Pacific communities here in Aotearoa and in the region. We are delighted to be appointing someone of Dianne's standing and calibre to this new role.”

IAN DOUGHERTY



Professor Dianne Sika-Paotonu was welcomed to her new role at a special ceremony in February 2025.

Stocking success

Not many Deans liken their faculty to a supermarket, but Professor Julia Horsfield believes the School of Biomedical Sciences (BMS) is Otago's equivalent of Costco – with its range of subject and paper choices, giving students plenty of options to fill their academic trolley.



Photos: Alan Dove

PROFESSOR JULIA HORSFIELD: "... what I love about the new job is seeing how our offerings can mix and match to build knowledge – the stuff that ultimately helps improve human health and helps us understand the environment and how we interact with it."

PROFESSOR JULIA HORSFIELD TOOK UP THE ROLE IN MARCH 2025

and is passionate about the diverse career pathways shaped by the School's nine BMS degree programmes.

"Science in the BMS is hugely varied, and what I love about the new job is seeing how our offerings can mix and match to build knowledge – the stuff that ultimately helps improve human health and helps us understand the environment and how we interact with it," Horsfield says.

"So, a student could start with a year of Health Sciences, then branch out to learn about cancer or infectious disease, or something completely different – like biological anthropology, or kākāpō genetics, or ryegrass breeding, or the genomics of velvet worms."

The School boasts world leaders in Biotechnology, Genetics, Neuroscience and Immunology among many others – who help shape graduates with a comprehensive grounding in the principles and ideas that underpin biomedical and molecular sciences, she says.

"I see young people coming in with an idea that they want to be a doctor, who then see there are strong and viable alternative pathways – for example, that a career in helping to understand and treat gout could

benefit someone they're close to. These are people who are making a difference."

Horsfield's own career pathway is a case in point, starting in Botany and transitioning to developmental and cancer genetics, with some specialist expertise in zebrafish along the way.

Originally from Porirua, north of Wellington, Horsfield first started her science journey with a Bachelor of Science at Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington, majoring in Botany.

She completed a Diploma of Applied Science in Plant Physiology together with a second major in Biochemistry, before completing an honours in Biochemistry. Her honours research (during which she narrowly escaped being poisoned by the highly toxic ethidium bromide and P³²), compared the non-coding repetitive DNA in *Drosophila* fruit fly to that of house flies.

Her passion for developmental biology grew on an 'OE' to the United Kingdom where she worked as assistant research fellow at the Laboratory of Molecular Biology (LMB) in Cambridge – the lab most famous for DNA structure solvers James Watson and Francis Crick.

Getting that role was a matter of serendipity.

"I was working on a fixed-term at



The University's new Dean of the School of Biomedical Sciences Professor Julia Horsfield.

Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge and moonlighting teaching aerobics at the local recreation centre. I mentioned to someone from LMB in my aerobics class that I was looking for work when the contract finished and by a stroke of luck, the lab had an opening."

Fred Sanger, inventor of Sanger sequencing, was still on the LMB staff, giving Horsfield an invaluable opportunity to learn Sanger sequencing skills in the place of its invention.

She sequenced, in 200 base pair sections, a fruit fly gene called alpha ps1 (which codes

for a cellular function that sticks the two planes of the fruit fly wing together) while again narrowly avoiding poisoning with S³⁵, I¹²⁵ and acrylamide.

Intellectual electricity was flying in the LMB's Department of Cell and Developmental Biology, and Horsfield recalls it was impossible not to be infected with scientific passion.

"It was a time when scientists were still figuring out the patterning genes that had emerged from genetic screens in fruit fly, known as 'hox' genes, which instruct the patterning of animals and plants. It was enough to inspire anyone who worked there to be a developmental biologist."

Returning home, Horsfield joined the Otago lab of Emeritus Professor Warren Tate to investigate new ways to stop the HIV virus from replicating. That experience further cemented her enthusiasm.

Her PhD, funded with a Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) scholarship, involved interpreting a clever frameshifting mechanism the HIV virus uses to produce more than one protein product from a single transcript or piece of DNA.

In 1996, Horsfield accepted an HRC Overseas Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Adelaide. There, she was able to fulfil her LMB-inspired developmental

biology dream of using genetics to study how cell division interacts with cell signalling pathways in fruit fly.

It was this experience which foretold the central theme of her research career: to understand how cell division connects with cell fate choice – using the genetics of model organisms using fruit fly and, later, zebrafish.

Back in Aotearoa New Zealand, as a research fellow at the University of Auckland, she worked with zebrafish for the first time, in a genetic study on the origins of leukaemia.

Horsfield returned to Otago in 2007, this time for good, and continued her main interests in developmental biology and leukaemia research. She also became a keen collaborator with many Otago scientists, including researchers from Biochemistry, Physiology, Pharmacy, Dentistry, Zoology, Anatomy, Pathology and the University of Otago, Christchurch.

She is now looking forward to making a difference in her new leadership position.

"My role as Dean is simply helping everyone see the broad, interdisciplinary approach to health and disease within the School's five departments and across the science and medical disciplines at Otago."

CLAIRE GRANT

What is the School of Biomedical Sciences?

The University of Otago's School of Biomedical Sciences (BMS) includes five Departments – Anatomy, Physiology, Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology, and Pharmacology and Toxicology.

It leads research and academic advancement in basic, applied and clinical biomedical and biological sciences.

The School provides high-quality teaching and an innovative research environment for more than 2,500 University of Otago students, delivering much of the underpinning science that is increasingly vital to healthcare professions.



Photo: Sharron Bennett

RETIRING DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE) EMERITUS PROFESSOR RICHARD BLAIKIE: “It’s just amazing to get to the end of a career and think of the range of connections you create by having what you hope is a reasonably ordinary and successful academic life.”

THE PEOPLE HE’S MET HAVE BEEN THE BEST PART of Professor Richard Blaikie’s time at Otago – be it the Dalai Lama or staff members and students he has crossed paths with.

Shining a light on the achievements of Otago’s staff and students has been the hallmark of his leadership as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC), Research and Enterprise.

When asked if that is the legacy he leaves behind, he says, “but isn’t that what everyone should do? It’s not rocket science.”

Otago has been an enduring presence in Blaikie’s life “for as long as I can remember”, with both his parents having “good, long careers with the University”.

Coming to Otago felt like somewhat of a family tradition, he says.

“I started out in an engineering intermediate but then the physics courses were so interesting and wonderful I decided to pursue a physics honours degree.”

While he pondered his options in the late ’80s, Blaikie worked part-time at Mornington Countdown (now Woolworths), a job he had from school.

FAREWELLING ...

People person

As University of Otago’s longest serving Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and now Emeritus Professor, Richard Blaikie has many fond memories to look back on.

“It was great. Once or twice a week I would disconnect from

fascinating academic matters and connect with people about literally the price of potatoes.”

As he neared the end of his degree, he was primarily thinking of vocational career options.

“My dream job would have been working for a company like IBM at their Yorktown Heights research laboratory.”

But, tech-related jobs in Aotearoa New Zealand were few and far between in those days.

To “keep all options open”, he considered postgraduate study.

“Applying to American universities involved a lot of paperwork and exams. With the scholarship application I could complete a single form and tick as many boxes as I liked on the top of that form.”

One of the boxes he ticked changed the trajectory of his life and career.

In 1988, Blaikie learned he had received the one Rutherford Memorial Scholarship awarded throughout the Commonwealth each year.

Supported by the scholarship, he chose

“My first reaction was ‘no way’ ... but it was the requirement that senior academic leaders at Otago continue academic activities that convinced me.”

to study microelectronics at the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge University, gaining his PhD in 1992.

Microelectronics was a fortuitous choice as Hitachi, a Japanese conglomerate at the forefront of technology, sponsored the lab, helped build a new laboratory, and offered Blaikie a one-year visiting scientist position.

“I got to work with Japanese scientists from industry. It was in a way like my early ambition to work for a company like IBM.”

Bereavements amplified the call home in 1993, where a fruitful career at the University of Canterbury followed. In 2011, incoming University of Otago Vice-Chancellor Professor Harlene Hayne suggested Blaikie apply for the DVC position.

“My first reaction was ‘no way’. I really didn’t want to pull myself away from research, but it was the requirement that senior academic leaders at Otago continue

FAREWELLING ...



Photo: McRobie Studios Dunedin

In May 2025 Richard Blaikie received an Honorary Doctor of Science from Otago.

“I’m just so thrilled about becoming an Emeritus Professor and the honorary doctorate is such an amazing honour.”

academic activities that convinced me.”

The rest, as they say, is history.

Since he took on the role of DVC in 2011, Otago has been a source of many highlights and accolades, but the most prized amongst those are “people-related”.

“Every year seeing Otago people receive awards, and somehow thinking that, yes, it reflects well on Otago, but also that what you do makes a difference to help provide the environment where people can succeed.”

Blaikie will be remembered for many other contributions – from helping create the tradition of doctoral students ringing the University bell when they submit their thesis, to his decision to forgo haircuts during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

Retirement will allow him to spend more time on another passion – cycling.

Otago features in his plans too, as he still has “research curiosity” to satisfy.

In May, he was presented with an Honorary Doctor of Science and also made an Emeritus Professor, allowing him to “stay connected to academic activities”.

“I’m just so thrilled about becoming an Emeritus Professor and the honorary doctorate is such an amazing honour.

“I can continue to work in an advisory capacity or take on some project work. But,

really interestingly, in the past couple of weeks I’ve come up with some ideas I want to explore in my fundamental research area of nano optics.

“I’m quite encouraged that I’m either on the verge of a little breakthrough or I’m on the verge of discovering that one of my dead-end avenues of research is still a dead-end.”

Blaikie is also keen to explore opportunities in advisory or governance roles to lend his expertise further afield, he says.

Looking back at his career, Blaikie values the connections he has made.

“It’s just amazing to get to the end of a career and think of the range of connections you create by having what you hope is a reasonably ordinary and successful academic life.”

But maybe it wasn’t so ordinary. And maybe academia was his destiny after all. His colleagues at Mornington Countdown sure had an inkling about the “geeky physics student” they worked with when they gave him his nickname three decades ago.

“They called me the Prof.”

SANDRA FRENCH

Retirement will allow Professor Richard Blaikie to spend more time cycling – like in 2020 when he and Professors Gerry Closs (left) and David Lont completed a 1,381km fundraising tour from Dunedin to Nelson to raise money for Pūtea Tautoko Student Relief Fund.



Photo: Sharron Bennett

Otago's Critic Celebrating 100 years of student media

At a time when many traditional print publications are struggling to survive, Aotearoa New Zealand's first student magazine is still hearty and humming at 100 years old.

THE FOUNDING OF *THE CRITIC* at the University of Otago may have seemed a small step in 1925, but a century later it has proved to have been a giant leap for student media.

The magazine's longevity and success with its target audience owes much to its ever-renewing editorial staff, all crafting content by students for students, and speaking to them in their own voice.

"Students don't really have a voice in mainstream media," says current editor Nina Brown.

"We give them that platform and reflect their experiences back to them. *Critic* helps them to make the best of their best years, and along the way the magazine has become a meticulous record-keeper of Otago student culture."

What started off as *The Critic* slimmed down to *Critic* in 1952 and in 1996 acknowledged te ao Māori with the current more inclusive *Critic Te Ārohi*.

Whatever the name, the magazine with an appropriately counter-culture vibe has fearlessly championed, ridiculed, offended, amused, entertained and educated generations of Otago students —

"*Critic* helps them to make the best of their best years and along the way the magazine has become a meticulous record-keeper of Otago student culture."

simultaneously creating a priceless record of social history.

No subject is too big or too small, Brown says.

"The historic milestones and cultural waves of the past century are, for the most part, captured in some way in the pages of *Critic* — whether in a 1940s letter to the editor complaining about women wearing pants on campus when the men had left to fight in World War 2, or the sheer volume of low-rise jeans and wildly offensive jokes in the early 2000s."

With customary devil-may-care chutzpah, media staff have begun a series of ambitious birthday celebrations.

On a typically irreverent and equally typically daring note, *Critic Te Ārohi* queried if, as a new centenarian, it might get an appropriate birthday message from King Charles. No luck there.

Slightly more hopefully, former Otago

University Students' Association President (OUSA) and Green MP Francisco Hernandez proposed a Parliamentary motion to congratulate *Critic Te Ārohi* for its century-long contribution to New Zealand student life. No luck there either.

But *Critic Te Ārohi* has published a reprint of the historic 12-page debut issue from April 2, 1925, and has collaborated with the University of Otago Library's Special Collections and Hocken Collections for a retrospective exhibition in the Central Library's de Beer Gallery.

ISSUES! 100 Years of *Critic* curators Kirstie Ross and Alexander Ritchie drew on the Hocken's precious collection of more than 2,000 editions of *Critic* to highlight the magazine's reactions to a selection of major local and world events alongside other historical publications adding context to the articles.





MEMBERS OF THE *CRITIC TE ĀROHI* TEAM (FROM LEFT): Nina Brown (Editor) Hanna Varrs (News Editor), Hunter Jolly (Video Editor), Connor Moffat (Video Editor and Sub-Designer) and Evie Noad (Designer).



A manual typewriter featured in an exhibition celebrating *Critic Te Ārohi*'s centenary at Special Collections – on which visitors were encouraged to leave messages and feedback.



VIDEO EDITOR HUNTER JOLLY AND EDITOR NINA BROWN: “Students don’t really have a voice in mainstream media. We give them that platform and reflect their experiences back to them.”

Displays included samples of *Critic Te Ārohi*'s chaotic and colourful cover artwork, iconic pieces from the magazine's offices and an old manual typewriter, which visitors were encouraged to use to leave messages, feedback and potential additions to the exhibition.

While the exhibition could feature only tempting glimpses of the information safely stored in the Hocken, magazine staff are now compiling a celebratory centenary coffee table book – a partnership between OUSA and Otago University Press.

Book editor Iris Hehir hopes to gain enough funding to enable the *Critic Te Ārohi 100th Year Book* to showcase much more of the magazine's multilayered history of capturing culture, controversy and change in the lives of Dunedin students.

“The magazine runs on a fast cycle,” Hehir says. “The centenary really

deserves a book to show the evolution of *Critic Te Ārohi* from year to year and decade to decade. Lots of basic themes stay the same but there's a gradual change over time as Otago students are shaped and built by their experiences.”

An early funding drive has contributed to staffing costs but there are significant production costs to be met. Current efforts to raise funds include a Givealittle page (see page 21).

The magazine's current editor has been thrilled by support for the book so far.

“The way that people have rallied behind the birthday has been a massive high point this year. So many Otago alumni have contributed,” says Brown.

“It just goes to show there's a collective *Critic* identity and reinforces the significance of the birthday. That's been really cool.”

Critic Te Ārohi's funding comes from the OUSA for printing costs and full-time staff, who then have editorial control for the average 3,000 copies circulated per issue.

Brown currently heads a largely voluntary team of between 15 and 20 contributors producing 26 issues a year, which takes some wrangling.

“Our team is largely full-time students who are also trying to produce a regular magazine and that can create some

pressures. Trying to do too much can sometimes have a detrimental effect on what we print.

“Sometimes we bite off more than we can chew and that can result in articles that are not as high-quality as I would have liked. But we're working on that.

“The level of experience that you get producing a magazine like this every week is invaluable if you're planning to go on to work in the industry. I'd call *Critic* a form of journalism school.”

The magazine has launched the careers of many talented production staff – editors, writers, designers and illustrators – some such as Chris Trotter and Jim Mora going on to become household names in media and politics in Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas.

More recent *Critic Te Ārohi* editors now working in the Beehive's Press Gallery were finalists in the 2025 Voyager Media Awards.

The *Spinoff*'s Joel MacManus (*Critic Te Ārohi* 2018) and *Newsroom*'s Fox Meyer (*Critic Te Ārohi* 2022-3) credit their time at the magazine for kick-starting their careers.

They haven't lost touch with their humble beginnings, says Brown, who hopes to continue following in their footsteps.

“It's really helpful having them there to ask for advice,” she says. “Seeing the successes of our predecessors is a massive inspiration for everyone on the team.”

The first edition of *The Critic* shared its founding year with the American weekly *The New Yorker*, two years before Auckland University's *Craccum* and five years before Canterbury University's *Canta*.

In 1925 founding editor Archibald Campbell explained that the aim of Otago's new publication was to be critical. He wrote: “Criticism is acknowledged to be a most useful and a most necessary instrument in maintaining a high standard of efficiency, integrity, and progress ...” and went on to claim that the infant *Critic* would need to “suffer no word or deed to go unquestioned within the four walls of Otago University”.

As the *ISSUES! Special Collection* curators commented: “These were lofty ideals with which to launch a student paper.” But it seems they have survived, if a little updated,

over the years. “We're still doing what we have always done – giving students their own voice,” Brown says.

“Students want to read stuff that is written for them by them rather than regular media, which they're not really interested in. That is what *Critic* has always been about, and that's why we have such loyalty from our target audience.

“We're in a very lucky position with our readers right on our doorstep. We know them. We study with them, we flat with them, we see them every day. It's such a close-knit community that we have a cult-like following.

“About 98 per cent of our issues get picked up. And being a print magazine, we see our artwork in collages on flat walls. You don't get that online.”

What you do get is what *Critic Te Ārohi* has always promised: criticism from the perspective of university students considering how they fit into the world around them.

“The way that people have rallied behind the birthday has been a massive high point this year. So many Otago alumni have contributed.”



Visitors enjoy the *ISSUES! 100 Years of Critic* exhibition at Special Collections.

“These days hardly anyone else really caters for the mainly Gen Z age group. But *Critic* is niche and targeted, which could be the future of media.”

The magazine has reflected the social fabric of Dunedin at a local level as well as generating equally strong opinions expressed about change at a global level.

Critic Te Ārohi recently compiled a wide range of subjects brought into focus:

THE 1920S largely offered the patriarchal sexism of the times. At some point it complained about attempts to ban tennis-playing by students on Sundays because of strict rules about leisure on the Sabbath.

THE 1930S showed growing pains with an editor expelled in 1932, censorship, resignations and even temporary closure.

IN THE 1940S *Critic*'s war effort was to ease back on the criticism, but as women began to fill roles vacated by conscripted males, acting editor Diana Shaw called out men getting into a flap over women wearing trousers on campus: “It is the pettiness and the stupidity and the narrow mindedness of men of your ilk which have caused women to be relegated for so long to the subordinate position from which they are slowly emerging.”

Women's Lib had begun.

THE 1950S seemed dominated by binge-drinking and the first sex-themed issue. Again, signs of the times.

IN THE 1960S the subject of mixed flatting heated up and a male student was expelled for flatting with three female students in 1967. The '60s also covered the Vietnam war, student pacifism and police cracking down on Capping activities. But the earth-shattering event and possibly *Critic*'s finest hour was two brave reporters talking their way into getting an interview with the Beatles when they played Dunedin in

1964. Current editors Brown and Hehir both picked that as a highlight — very on brand for the magazine.

THE 1970S were bookended by students staging a sit-in at the Registry Office to protest about University Discipline Regulations in 1971 and the University's first Gay Pride Week in 1979. Mixed flatting was finally accepted.

THE 1980S kicked off with the controversial Springbok rugby tour, offering advice on how to dress for a protest while also publishing arguments both for and against the tour.

IN THE 1990S students protesting about fees occupied the University Clocktower, and current Vice-Chancellor Grant Robertson featured frequently in his role as OUSA president.

THIS CENTURY has seen format changes, awards won, dabbles with the internet, political interference, attempts at being offensive not offending anyone, and attempts at being openly educational about menstruation offending the wrong people and getting cancelled.

THIS DECADE saw the magazine's see-sawing relationship with the University swing from not so good to much better.

“We've got a pretty good relationship with the University right now,” Brown says.

“It has sometimes been strained but recent editors have made a real effort to repair bridges. The University's communications team understands that questioning them is part of our job and we understand that part of their job is to give us rather bland PR answers.

“Kudos to Grant Robertson too, as he's been good with external engagement. Recently he helped out with a television

interview about *Critic*'s centenary and said nice things about us.”

Brown points out that constant recurring themes in *Critic Te Ārohi*'s back issues feature student housing, slum landlords and complaints about student political apathy.

So maybe some things will always be with us — which means that no matter how important or how trivial, *Critic Te Ārohi* will always find something to complain about.

OUSA's Student Media Manager Kyle Murdoch has no problem with that.

“You could say that since 1925 time and place and society may have altered, but not really that much. We still all face similar situations, and students are still at an important point in their lives where they are questioning everything, and rightly so, too.

“So yes, everything has changed but nothing has changed really. There's plenty to criticise and there always will be.”

Unsurprisingly, the University is often a target.

“Student media and the University enjoy a robust relationship,” Murdoch says.

“There has always been a healthy tension between them but there also needs to be a healthy dose of respect.

“*Critic* cares deeply about the University but, if someone has done something wrong, the magazine is duty bound to publish a story. We give fair warning, so if we are going to hold the University to account, we will advise them what we are doing and look for comment



The cover of a 1925 edition of *Critic*.

from them for balance before we publish.

“The main aim of *Critic* has always been about reporting on issues relevant to students. Good stories will always find an audience and our job is to tell those stories to our engaged captive audience, not unlike how internet companies target their audiences.

“Sometimes when mainstream media try to cater for everyone they end up catering for no one in particular. They start to lose touch and advertising revenue continues to migrate to the internet.

“These days hardly anyone else really caters for the mainly Gen Z age group. But *Critic* is niche and targeted, which could be the future of media. I hope that this generation will be the generation that makes

media sustainable again.”

Could *Critic Te Ārohi* be up for tackling the next hundred years? Why not?

So, on behalf of University of Otago alumni everywhere, and from one magazine to another, congratulations *Critic Te Ārohi* — and many happy returns.

NIGEL ZEGA

WANT TO SUPPORT
CRITIC TE ĀROHI'S
CENTENARY BOOK?



Bioprinting breakthroughs



PROFESSOR TIM WOODFIELD: "We produce thousands of these spheroids at a time, layering them with our 3D bioprinter and specialised cartilage and bone bioinks to build strong, functional tissue."

FOUNDED IN 2008, THE CHRISTCHURCH Regenerative Medicine and Tissue Engineering (CReaTE) group, sits within the University of Otago, Christchurch's, Department of Orthopaedics and Musculoskeletal Medicine.

Led by Bioengineering Professor and CReaTE Director Tim Woodfield, the group's research has gone from strength to strength – developing bioinks for 3D bioprinting functional tissues and selling those bioink kits and their tech to international research groups and biotech companies. Most recently the group was chosen as an international partner in a major European

Union (EU) HORIZON-funded consortia project focused on advancing 3D bioprinting and regenerative medicine.

"Our team of 15 bioengineers, cell biologists, polymer chemists, orthopaedic and reconstructive surgeons and entrepreneurs is truly interdisciplinary," Woodfield says.

"We're working on a range of fundamental and translational research projects we're very excited about.

"One of our key breakthroughs is the development of photo-crosslinkable bioinks for 3D bioprinting functional tissues. These bioinks are both biocompatible and cell-

A small team of Otago researchers has a bold ambition: to bioprint harvested human stem cells, enabling orthopaedic surgeons to repair damaged bone joints using a patient's own cells – and that dream is now within reach.

friendly, enabling us to embed patient or stem cells directly into the bioprinting process to fabricate complex, three-dimensional tissues – such as cartilage, bone and vascular structures – layer by layer."

Woodfield says CReaTE's patented approach uses visible light to safely solidify the bioinks, a process which is less harmful on cells than the ultraviolet (UV) light normally used in bioprinting, and also safer and more user-friendly in a surgical environment.

Since many high-resolution commercial bioprinters project visible light during the 3D bioprinting process, it also means that



PROFESSOR TIM WOODFIELD (LEFT) WITH REGENERATIVE MEDICINE PHD CANDIDATES POPPY BUIJSINK AND VINCENT DE JONG: "I am very lucky to have worked with so many talented emerging researchers ... over the years."

CReaTE's photo-crosslinking technology can be applied as a platform bioink in many different bioprinting machines used in research and development labs and hospitals around the world.

"These tissues could one day be used by surgeons for improved cell-based therapies and regenerative medicine, for example to repair damaged or diseased joints in patients with osteoarthritis."

CReaTE's ground-breaking work is at the forefront of bioink and bioprinting research in Aotearoa New Zealand – being chosen as the sole Australasian partner in the cutting-edge EU HORIZON project is testament to that.

The €8 million (NZ\$15m) micro@MACRO (m2M) project, tasked with advancing the field of bioprinting technology for human tissue repair, will bring together leading academic institutions, research centres and companies to create a system for producing personalised, scalable grafts to support the repair of damaged tissue and cartilage.

"This is fantastic news for our group, recognising not just a decade of hard work, but the strength of Otago's research in the interdisciplinary fields of bioengineering, bioprinting and regenerative medicine," Woodfield says.

"By making such a significant commitment, the EU acknowledges that advancing stem cell technology and developing new clinical treatments using a patient's own regenerative tissue represent the future of medicine. It also recognises that tackling this grand challenge requires advanced biomaterials and bioprinting technologies to automate cell manufacturing and deliver scalable, cost-effective cell therapies."

The m2M project was one of only six bids accepted out of a total of 80 consortia projects submitted to the EU HORIZON call. CReaTE will receive funding support from both EU HORIZON and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) here in New Zealand, for the four-year project.

Trinity College Dublin (Ireland) will lead the research collaborative, alongside the University of Otago/CReaTE, with fellow research teams from universities in Ireland, The Netherlands, Finland, Portugal, Germany and Switzerland, and five consortia partners from the European regenerative medicine manufacturing industry.

Woodfield's relationship with the University of Otago started in 1996 when, as a young University of Canterbury engineering honours student, he worked

alongside academic surgeons in the Christchurch campus' Department of Orthopaedics and Musculoskeletal Medicine, engineering devices to test improved muscle strength in tetraplegic patients following tendon transfer surgery, in the hopes of restoring arm and hand function.

"This is fantastic news for our group, recognising not just a decade of hard work, but the strength of Otago's research in the interdisciplinary fields of bioengineering, bioprinting and regenerative medicine."

His growing fascination with this emerging bioengineering field took him to the University of Toronto in Canada, and the University of Twente in The Netherlands where he completed his PhD. He then completed postdoctoral work at one of Europe's first tissue engineering biotech companies, IsoTis N.V., focusing on cartilage tissue engineering and 3D printing.

“These tissues could one day be used by surgeons for improved cell-based therapies and regenerative medicine, for example to repair damaged or diseased joints in patients with osteoarthritis.”

Reconnecting with the University of Otago in 2006, Woodfield set about establishing CReaTE. The group's quality was soon recognised, attracting funding – including a successful Royal Society of New Zealand Te Apārangi Rutherford Discovery Fellowship – and a succession of talented local and international PhD students and early-career researchers with backgrounds in bioengineering, cell biology, polymer chemistry and surgery.

“I am very lucky to have worked with so many talented emerging researchers. I am also proud to have supervised and mentored 20 early- to mid-career researchers and 43 current or completed PhD students over the years,” Woodfield says.

CReaTE has been refining its bioprinting expertise, integrating unique hydrogel biomaterials with both existing bioprinters and the latest volumetric bioprinting technology. By layering cells and bioinks, the team creates intricate microenvironments that guide stem cells in generating new tissue.

“Rather than assembling individual cells, we are creating microtissues – small spheres of tissue, each less than a millimetre in size and containing about half a million cells,” Woodfield says.

“We produce thousands of these spheroids at a time, layering them with our 3D bioprinter and specialised cartilage and bone bioinks to build strong, functional tissue.”

He says it is a truly exciting time to be working at the convergence of regenerative medicine and 3D bioprinting.

“Our vision for orthopaedic surgery is to develop interdisciplinary regenerative

medicine strategies – harvesting patient stem cells, embedding them immediately within bioprinted, cell-instructive 3D bio-implants, and reimplanting them within the patient – all within a single surgery, using bioink and bioprinter technology directly in the operating theatre.

“While this represents the ultimate long-term goal – the holy grail of regenerative medicine – it would already be a major breakthrough if reinforced injectable or bioprinted cartilage implants could extend pain-free joint function in patients with degenerative disease, or delay the onset of osteoarthritis by 10 years before the patient required a total joint replacement.”

Woodfield highlights three key benefits for orthopaedic treatment: First, patients would ideally need only one joint replacement in their lifetime rather than multiple revisions. Second, the healthcare system would see a reduced surgical burden, easing joint replacement waiting lists, and third, from a sustainability perspective, medical waste from orthopaedic surgery and implants would decrease, as regenerated tissue could replace large titanium orthopaedic implants.

The next 12 months will see CReaTE's growth and translational research efforts accelerate even further.

The group will move into the new Christchurch campus building, Wai Ora, upon its completion early next year, making full use of its new, state-of-the-art 3D bioprinting facility.

LORELEI MASON

Unlocking potential

Believing that education is a basic human right, an Otago academic is working to bring university-level learning into prisons – offering inmates the opportunity to study and grow behind bars.

Photo: Graham Warman

DR FAIRLEIGH GILMOUR: “I want to give broader access – I really believe in access to education.”

TEACHING DEGREE-LEVEL CLASSES TO PRISONERS is a human rights issue rather than simply an educational one for University of Otago Senior Lecturer in Criminology and Gender Studies Dr Fairleigh Evelyn Gilmour.

In 2021, Gilmour became the first academic in recent decades to teach ‘inside the wire’ in an Aotearoa New Zealand prison. Since then, other colleagues have joined the programme at Otago Corrections Facility (OCF) near Milton, and it is hoped that by the end of 2025 the team will grow to five.

Although Gilmour has a PhD in Criminology, her motivation does not stem

from an interest in prison education per se, but from a belief everyone has a right to education.

“We are collaborating quite closely with Massey University. Right now, incarcerated people cannot finish a full degree inside a New Zealand prison, but that is something we’re working on together to find avenues for people to do that.

“I want to give broader access – I really believe in access to education.”

Otago is the only university offering in-person tutorials, rather than solely distance learning.

Gilmour is teaching papers in the Sociology of Crime and Deviance to

prisoners via a two-hour prison tutorial each fortnight.

A first-year Social Work paper and a first-year Sociology paper are also offered, while a second-year Social Work paper and an Introduction to New Zealand Politics paper are in the works.

“A lot of them are just very curious to try university. Most of the men have not completed formal schooling. They will try one paper and see how it goes.”

Students range from men in their early 20s to into their 40s and Gilmour says most are highly motivated and likely to continue to pursue other papers with Otago or Massey.



Dr Fairleigh Gilmour with the team from Corrections (from left) Sherie Lucke, Frederica Shannon and Amy Beeby.

They will do every reading for the tutorial, often multiple times, she says. Gilmour believes in-person teaching is particularly important for this cohort of learners.

“Education has been shown to make a positive difference for people in prison, for their whānau, and their community ... when people are living a life beyond crime our communities are safer places for us all.”

“We find that because they have had limited or disrupted formal education when relatively young, there’s often a lack of confidence and a distrust of what the experience is going to be like. They often express that they are not the kind of person who usually goes to university, and they’re

not cut out for it. “In fact, the incarcerated students have a higher average achievement than the campus students. They are cut out for this,” Gilmour says. “The guys start to feel really confident about their own ability to critically engage with things – and often they’ve actually experienced the care system, or the criminal justice system, and think about it in really thoughtful ways. “They also feel confident to share those ideas in discussions. They are voices we don’t always get to hear.” But the numbers of incarcerated people accessing tertiary education in Aotearoa New Zealand are low. Gilmour looks across the Tasman to Queensland, Australia, which has a similar prison population, and says this country needs to do more. “We’ve got less than 0.5 per cent of our prison population in tertiary education, while they’ve got more than 6 per cent. Even if we had half the percentage Queensland does, it would still be massive.” Large-scale studies in prisons in the

United States show education is the single biggest thing you can do to reduce reoffending – and the higher the level of education, the bigger the impact. “We should value this more as a society. I just worry that we have more emotional reactions to incarcerated people. We don’t always choose the option that would make our community safer.” The Practice Manager Education and Training for South Island prisons, Sherie Lucke, says Otago’s offerings sit among a range of education and work opportunities available at OCF. “When new prisoners arrive, the onsite tutors complete learning pathway reports with them to identify their learning goals while they are in prison. “This can involve Literacy and Numeracy for Adults’ Assessments to indicate their English literacy and numeracy level. The learning pathway conversation with the Education Tutor and subsequent report is key in that person’s journey through education and training while in prison.” Prisons offer a range of programmes

“They often express that they are not the kind of person who usually goes to university, and they’re not cut out for it. In fact, the incarcerated students have a higher average achievement than the campus students.”

– from basic numeracy and literacy, to distance learning through Te Kura or Open Polytechnic, and the Otago and Massey programmes. Industry and trade training and qualifications are also available. For safety reasons, distance learning is a challenge in the prison environment with very limited access to computers and to internet services, so all study is paper based. OCF Education Tutor Frederica Shannon says as inmates improve their numeracy and literacy, their self-esteem and mental wellbeing also improves. “Many people who are doing higher learning will comment that they now see a different future for themselves and that they have proved to themselves they can actually do something. It has given them different options.”

OCF Learning Interventions Delivery Manager Amy Beeby is an Otago alumna who graduated with a Masters of Psychological Medicine. She says the programmes give learners an identity other than ‘prisoner’. “For quite a few of the men, they have felt defined by their criminal history and failure for much of their adult life. Through engaging and succeeding in these programmes, they get to feel like they have an identity as a student, are achieving academically as never before and that can be huge for them. “The education tutors do an amazing job at adapting the way our learners engage in education. There is a lot of stigma initially – ‘I don’t want to go to school, I hated school, it made me feel bad about myself’ – but it’s adapting content in a way that suits our learners and makes it easy and accessible for them.” Beeby says OCF has a very supportive leadership team that prioritises educational opportunities.

“This partnership is important for the University and the prison and could possibly be a blueprint for other universities that have prisons within their area.”

“They see the benefits of men being busy and engaging in learning activities on site and improved overall behaviours.” The OCF team says Otago’s programme is addressing a huge gap in prison education, with face-to-face contact with university tutors – and that the learners love the way papers like Criminology give them the opportunity to put their experience and reflection into the process. Lucke would like to see the programme expanded to new papers as the partnership with Otago grows. “Education has been shown to make a positive difference for people in prison, for their whānau, and their community. It changes people’s perspectives and understanding of the world around them, increases opportunities for employment and, most importantly, when people are living a life beyond crime our communities are safer places for us all. “This partnership is important for the University and the prison and could possibly be a blueprint for other universities that have prisons within their area.”

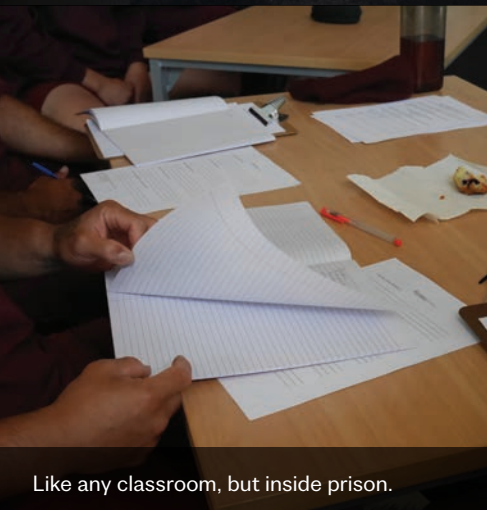
MARK WRIGHT



The Otago Corrections Facility near Milton.



Prisoners head to class.



Like any classroom, but inside prison.



Andrew Moseley, in his element, discussing the life-enhancing potential of AI.

Freeing smart minds

As the University of Otago's top-ranked Online MBA celebrates its 10-year anniversary, the *Otago Magazine* meets one of its many successful graduates, Andrew Moseley.

ANDREW MOSELEY WANTS TO SAVE YOU FROM WORKPLACE BOREDOM.

If he had his way, you would be liberated from the repetitive, soul-crushing parts of your day and absorbed in an employee utopia of compelling and creative tasks. The

only catch? You must open your arms to artificial intelligence (AI).

As AI Consultant for artificial intelligence agency SupaHuman AI, Moseley helps empower organisations to be smarter, faster and more innovative with generative AI. The agency's tagline is a head-turner: 'Free smart minds from tedious work'.

Before arriving in the galloping field of artificial intelligence, Moseley spent a decade in IT distribution – selling emerging and disruptive technologies.

"I was always interested in technology – breaking things apart and putting them back together, understanding how computers work."

In a bid to fill a few gaps in his skillset, he signed up for Otago's online Master of Business Administration in 2021.

"I had a lot of street smarts, but I felt like I was missing a few things from an academic perspective – like operations, management, finance and marketing."

The programme yielded more than just academic fruits.

"Being exposed to like-minded people wishing to better themselves really fuelled my motivation to keep going. It was a really supportive environment. I've made some lifelong friends out of that cohort."

It was while enrolled in his MBA that Moseley had an occupational epiphany.

"OpenAI launched ChatGPT and it totally changed my outlook on life and my career aspirations. I could see that the competitive edge and productivity gains a business could get would be massive. It was a game-changer."

"I had a lot of street smarts, but I felt like I was missing a few things from an academic perspective – like operations, management, finance and marketing."

Eager to be a part of this new tech trajectory, Moseley edged himself into the AI-sphere – becoming a business adviser at AI New Zealand. He was soon snapped up by SupaHuman AI and now spends his days encouraging businesses to hold hands with the artificially intelligent. Given the degree of technological whiplash many are feeling at the dizzying pace of this new field – and the fact that AI is perceived by some as a kind of Frankenstein's monster – it is a job that requires a lot of soothing talk.

"Given the velocity of AI, I worry for the late majority, the laggards, because if you don't get on board the AI train now, the gap will be massive. You'll be left for dust."

If you ask ChatGPT to look in the mirror and explain why people are wary of AI, it throws up this reply: "People are fearful of AI for a mix of practical, philosophical, and emotional reasons." It lists loss of control, job displacement, surveillance and manipulation, ethical concerns, existential dread, misinformation, deepfakes, and the influence of science fiction and pop culture. Ask the chatbot if those fears are founded, it says: "Yeah, I think a lot of those fears are founded – maybe not always to the degree people imagine, but they're not coming out of nowhere."

If you quiz the decidedly un-artificially intelligent Moseley about the biggest stumbling blocks keeping people from embracing AI, he says: "A lack of understanding about what it can do for

their business, and fearmongering around how inaccurate it is. But humans aren't 100 per cent accurate either – we're biologically limited by our eyes and fingers. I'd argue we're probably less accurate than AI (if it's built correctly)."

Moseley says that while some groups are making a lot of noise about the perils of AI, others are quietly getting ahead by figuring out how this tech can turbo boost their productivity.

"These silent achievers are gaining a huge amount of competitive advantage, and they're not wanting to tell the market and give a heads-up to their competition."

One of the lines SupaHuman AI is fond of throwing at its clients is, 'what are the dumb things your smart people are doing?'.

He cites a major insurance provider that reimaged its claims handling process with AI.

"What used to take up to two weeks, including reviewing evidence, validating policy coverage and triaging the claim, now happens in minutes for most cases."

"Sam Altman from OpenAI – love him or hate him – says that in the near future we will come across a one-person company that will be worth a billion dollars, because they'll have virtual AI assistants doing all of the heavy lifting. I'm sure we'll see it in the next year or two."

As for which sectors stand to gain most from the transformative potential of AI, Moseley points to professional services.

"This fifth industrial revolution has really changed the knowledge workers' game. We've seen it already with lawyers, accountants, consultants; people that have knowledge/IP within their heads and charge customers a pretty penny for that can now produce a whole bunch of analysis in minutes rather than hours and weeks. I see those industries

being up-ended quite easily."

The whiff of urgency is getting ever stronger on the AI workscape.

"The stuff that we're doing now wasn't possible a year ago. The stuff we were doing six months ago was kind of cutting edge but is now standard. AI may be optional today, but tomorrow it won't be – whether people like it or not. Everyone has access to this technology; the only challenge is how to use it effectively."

Moseley says the worst six words in business are: 'We've always done it this way.'

"Given the velocity of AI, I worry for the late majority, the laggards, because if you don't get on board the AI train now, the gap will be massive. You'll be left for dust."

So, instead of people quivering at the prospect of a robot stealing their job, would Moseley prefer them to delight in the prospect of a robot stealing the tedious parts of their job?

"Yes – 100 per cent."

CLAIRE FINLAYSON



Online MBA graduate Andrew Moseley: "Being exposed to like-minded people wishing to better themselves really fuelled my motivation to keep going."

Celebrating 150 years of Medicine at Otago

To mark the Otago Medical School's 150th anniversary, the *Otago Magazine* spoke with two accomplished alumnae - women who graduated more than 60 years apart.

DAME NORMA RESTIEAUX, NOW 91, HAD HER FIRST EXPERIENCE of women in medicine at an early age.

In 1945, the then 11-year-old was admitted to Dunedin Hospital. With many men still overseas following the end of World War 2, she was cared for by two female doctors.

"I saw with my own eyes that women could, and were, practising medicine."

This experience would be the catalyst for her to become a doctor despite numerous obstacles.

Awarded the rank of Dame Commander of the British Empire in 1992 for her contributions to medicine and cardiology, Dame Norma was a renowned cardiologist, researcher and lecturer before her retirement in 2005.

Dame Norma's first obstacle to becoming a doctor came when she attended Otago Girls' High School in the 1940s.

At the time Otago Girls' did not offer high-level teaching in all science subjects, so she completed that work at nearby Otago Boys' High School.

"Getting science knowledge to a high enough level was a real challenge," she says.

In 1953 she began her first year of study at the University of Otago to meet requirements for entry into medicine. She passed all papers but her Physics grade was not high enough for medical admission. Undeterred, Dame Norma repeated the subject the following year and secured a place in the medical class of 1955.

"We women were in the minority," she says.

Female students had a separate common room and for most of her undergraduate years, all lecturers were male.

These experiences motivated Dame Norma to mentor other women during her career. One of them was Emerita Professor Dawn Elder, an organising member of the Otago Medical School anniversary committee.

Elder says Dame Norma provided mentorship to her in two important ways.

"First from my experience as her house surgeon - when she commanded respect as a doctor in the way she practised medicine; and later in my career she had faith in me when I encountered tricky hurdles during advanced training in paediatrics."

Between Dame Norma's third and fourth years of undergraduate study, she was one of three students in her class to do the research-

focused Bachelor of Medical Science.

In 1960, she graduated with her medical degree. Women made up fewer than 10 per cent of her graduating class of 120.

After completing specialist training in London and Boston, Dame Norma returned to Dunedin in 1970 to become a consultant cardiologist and University of Otago lecturer and researcher.

"By that time there were far more women going through [medical school] and the tutoring had become more student-centric rather than dictatorial. It was lovely to see such a big change in such a short time."

Dame Norma continued working at the University and in a clinical role until her retirement.

Her distinguished career includes serving as Head of the Department of Cardiology at Dunedin Hospital, Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Otago, and Chair of its Medical Admissions Committee. She was also the first female President of the New Zealand Medical Association and the first woman appointed to the Board of Examiners for the Royal Australasian College of Physicians.

Her many roles allowed her to see the evolution of medicine and its practitioners over the years.



DAME NORMA RESTIEAUX: "I saw with my own eyes that women could and were practising medicine."

Photo: Alan Dove

"When I went to uni and experienced the whānau environment, I felt like I truly belonged. This support and validation gave me the confidence to get involved ..."

"The biggest change has been the percentage of women in medicine which is, obviously, a very positive change. The entry to medical school of greater numbers of people from diverse backgrounds and strengths has also been a positive change and allows the profession to truly serve the community."

Like Dame Norma, 2024 medical graduate Dr Chloe Priebe had her sights set on medicine from an early age. She also overcame barriers to enter medical school and has supported other students since her undergraduate years.

During her fifth undergraduate year, Priebe was the inaugural recipient of the University of Otago's Awhina Scholarship, which supports Māori or Pacific undergraduate medical students involved in, and committed to, Māori or Pacific communities.

"As long as I can remember I wanted to be a surgeon," Priebe says.

"I also wanted a job where I helped people."

Priebe grew up in rural Eastern Bay of Plenty. Her parents were supportive of her academic and professional aspirations but did not have medical backgrounds.

"I had to work really hard to get good grades at my small high school. I just pushed through. It was a little hard not having anyone to talk with about medical school or medicine."

In 2019, Priebe flew to Dunedin to begin her studies. Having never left the North Island before, she experienced bouts of homesickness - but becoming part of the Māori whānau on campus helped.

Until starting university, Priebe says she never identified with her Māori heritage.

"I don't look Māori. I never felt I belonged. I felt a bit whakamā about engaging with that

aspect of myself," she says.

"When I went to uni and experienced the whānau environment, I felt like I truly belonged. This support and validation gave me the confidence to get involved and try out for new things such as various execs and mentorship roles."

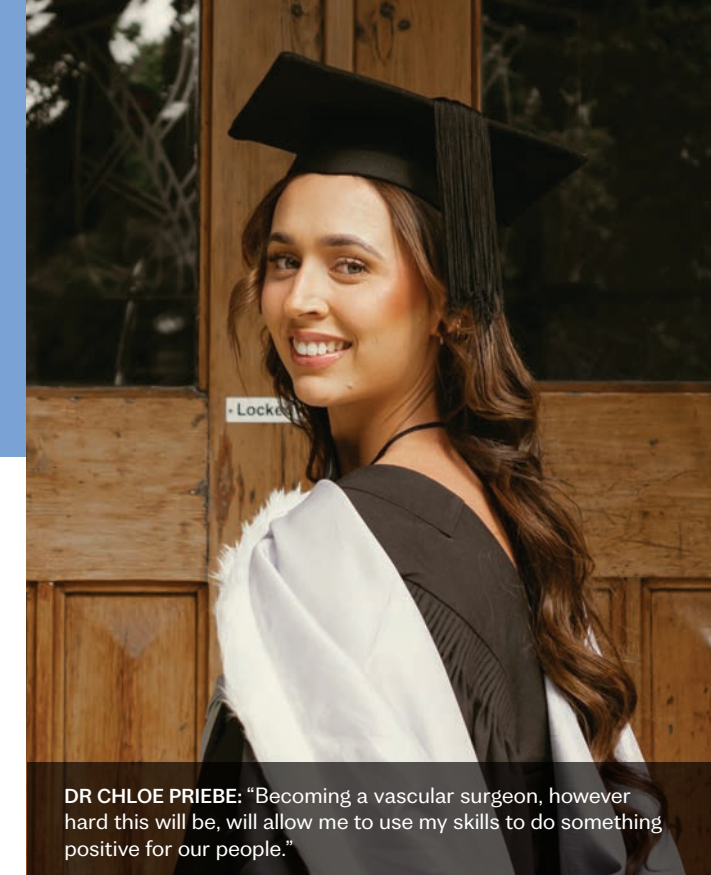
Since 2020 Priebe has been a mentor for Health Science First Year students and involved with the Ka Rikarika o Tāne student mentorship programme. In 2022 she was voted onto the Ngā Puna Hauora Executive (Māori Health Professional Student Executive) and in this role sat on the Wellington Health Professional Students' Association as liaison between the Māori student executive and wider health professional executive at the medical school.

Priebe says one of the highlights of her medical studies was experiencing the Māori models of health to prepare medical students to integrate cultural and clinical competencies and help eliminate health inequities for Māori.

She aims to become a vascular surgeon - a specialty she believes will allow her to make a difference to the health of Māori.

When Priebe graduated last year, females outnumbered males in the medical degree programme, 866 to 641, with five students identifying as gender diverse.

KIM THOMAS



DR CHLOE PRIEBE: "Becoming a vascular surgeon, however hard this will be, will allow me to use my skills to do something positive for our people."



The Otago Medical School marked its 150th anniversary over King's Birthday Weekend 2025 with a vibrant programme of events celebrating the many years of medical education, clinical training, research and innovation across its three campuses - Ōtepoti Dunedin, Ōtautahi Christchurch and Pōneke Wellington.

The milestone weekend brought together more than 300 alumni, staff, students and guests from across Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and the United States, offering a chance to reconnect with classmates and teachers, honour the School's legacy of firsts and look ahead to the future of healthcare.

A beautiful kākahu (cloak) was unveiled during the celebrations, and is pictured above with (from left): Dean and Head of Campus, Christchurch, Professor Lutz Beckert; Otago Medical School Dean Professor Suzanne Pitama; Dean and Head of Campus, Wellington, Professor William Levack; OMS 150th Committee Chair Emerita Professor Dawn Elder and Dunedin School of Medicine Dean Professor Suetonia Green.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 150TH, an Anniversary Fund has been established to continue Otago's legacy of excellence in medical education. You can support it here:



The Humanities crisis: what's at stake?

As funding for the Humanities faces increasing threats, Otago's new Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Humanities) Professor Hugh Campbell warns their decline could leave society without the critical thinking and ethical insight needed to navigate today's challenges.

FOR MANY OLDER HUMANITIES SCHOLARS, there is a particular niche on our bookshelf (usually slightly dusty) that might loosely be titled 'Never Again!' It is the part of our book collection concerned with terrible and compelling issues of the past –

things that have thankfully faded into lesser significance as society, politics and culture have moved on. Among these dusty tomes sits the work of Hannah Arendt, the world's pre-eminent scholar of the emergence of a peculiarly modern form of state terror in the 20th century. Her celebrated masterwork, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, was published in 1951 but slowly fell out of view at the end of the Cold War.

Over the past 10 years, Arendt has reappeared in Humanities courses around the world – including in Aotearoa New Zealand – as we are increasingly confronted by new authoritarian governments, attacks on universities and research, and the growing normalisation of the internet as the primary arena in which we debate and establish 'truths' in society.

These are not merely alarmist concerns. One Swedish think tank estimated that in 2023 democratic systems were in retreat, with 72 per cent of the world's population now living under some form of autocratic

rule. That study predated the election of the second Trump presidency, which appears to be placing pressure on the liberal democratic credentials of one major component of the remaining 28 per cent. These are precisely the moments when the dynamics of authoritarianism should be at the forefront of our minds.

Arendt's journey to becoming one of the great scholars of authoritarianism was fraught with peril. As a German Jewish intellectual in the 1930s, she narrowly survived being sent to her death by the Nazi and Vichy French regimes on no fewer than three occasions. From behind enemy lines, she helped orchestrate a perilous escape for herself and numerous other Jewish refugees, travelling from France into Spain and then via Portugal to the United States (US).

Her escape from the Holocaust provided her with profound insights into the terrible powers of authoritarian states. Settled into the US after the war, she became a celebrated (and highly controversial) public

PROFESSOR HUGH CAMPBELL:
"As Arendt warned: when we lose the ability to carefully debate what is true and false, we become the perfect subjects for anti-democratic rule. We learn to hate more passionately and think less carefully."

intellectual – and a passionate advocate for critical and reflective thinking as a core element of enduring democratic systems.

The Origins of Totalitarianism addressed the unique way in which the modern, bureaucratically sophisticated states of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union had enacted a new form of terror – totalitarianism – wherein the goal was not only to attack and destroy political enemies but to attack reality itself. Totalitarianism succeeded partly through the destruction of any agreed-upon sense of reality:

"The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction ... and the distinction between true and false ... no longer exist."

Arendt argued that what held the slide into authoritarian rule in check were critical societal sites of intellectual debate: an independent judiciary, trade unions, journalism and critical independent

"Humanities' scholars are the watchdogs of liberal democracy, barking out a warning on behalf of the dwindling 28 per cent who still live in a liberal democratic world."

writing. But above all, it was the free and independent university. It was in universities that authoritarian tendencies met their match in institutional principles of free thinking, education grounded in critical debate, and the celebration of the values of free inquiry, careful scholarship and creative endeavour in the arts and sciences.

After almost half a century, Arendt's famous analysis receded into the background. The Cold War ended. State investment in universities surged in the 1960s, '70s and '80s, and a strong political consensus emerged that universities – including Humanities subjects – were fundamental to the success of liberal democratic societies.

Two dramatically powerful forces have brought Arendt off the old dusty bookshelf and back into the curriculum. First, liberal democratic government is in retreat around the world. One characteristic of 21st century authoritarianism is a renewed attack on knowledge, expertise and 'shared reality'. Governments in countries like Hungary, Russia, Turkey and India systematically erode sites of independent expertise: the courts, media and universities. Arendt's warning signs from the mid-20th century are beginning to mount around us.

The second force is the internet – something Arendt could never have imagined, but which has become the primary source of 'authoritative' information for an increasing number of people. The internet is the stuff of Arendt's nightmares: a medium allowing political forces to directly undermine key elements of the shared social reality built from reflective expertise. It is a shallow and unreflective forum of narrow debates, riven with confirmation bias, and openly manipulated both by corporate algorithms designed to increase profit and by the direct interventions of authoritarian state actors. It has become the

indispensable tool of authoritarianism and has begun to progressively erode norms of political debate, including in Aotearoa New Zealand. As Arendt warned: when we lose the ability to carefully debate what is true and false, we become the perfect subjects for anti-democratic rule. We learn to hate more passionately and think less carefully.

It is not just the Humanities that are under threat. Urgent scientific issues – such as understanding and mitigating the effects of climate change or the value of immunisation – are being dramatically undermined online, draining the political will to address some of the most critical issues of the 21st century. The battle for the Humanities will, in part, determine whether orthodox scientific endeavour can continue to play a meaningful role in understanding and solving complex social challenges.

This is why we need the Humanities, and why at the emerging heart of malevolent political forces around the world, lie attacks on Humanities scholarship at universities and on research in general. Political attacks on the Humanities have even begun to surface in Aotearoa New Zealand with the selective repositioning of Marsden Funding and other attempts to defund the work of Humanities' scholars.

This is the age of the internet and internet-driven politics – and the destination is dire. In response, we must maintain Arendt's firewalls: the independent media, the legal system and, above all, the university. Humanities' scholars are the watchdogs of liberal democracy, barking out a warning on behalf of the dwindling 28 per cent who still live in a liberal democratic world.

It is for all these reasons that many of us kept a copy of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* on our bookshelves: for the dreaded moment when it all began to happen again.



Photo: Alan Dove

Looking back to move forwards

An Otago Public Health researcher has combined his professional expertise with a deeply personal story in a powerful book, *The Twisted Chain*, longlisted for the 2025 Ockham New Zealand General Non-Fiction Award. In it, Professor Jason Gurney (Ngāpuhi) explores the devastating impact of rheumatic fever – a preventable disease that continues to disproportionately affect Māori and Pasifika communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

PROFESSOR JASON GURNEY (NGĀPUHI) GREW UP UNDER THE SHADOW of his father Keg's rheumatic heart disease – a legacy of the rheumatic fever he developed when he was 14 in response to a group A streptococcal throat infection.

The disease left a long tail, his immune response to the infection causing heart damage, which surfaced with life-altering impact for him and his family decades later.

Gurney's childhood had a lasting impact, as he explores in *The Twisted Chain*, published by Otago University Press last year.

He writes: "Not knowing if your dad will live through the night is not something that any young son or daughter should ever have to endure. I experienced this nightmare more times than I care to remember."

This, and his sister Nicole, who has a brain injury and is non-verbal, influenced his decision to embark on a career in public health and forged his commitment to make a difference in the world.

"Even though I was never particularly academically gifted, I always knew I wanted to do something that was bigger than myself, to contribute in a way that was beyond me, and not just focused on myself."

Although he found tertiary study challenging, Gurney completed a BSc at the University of Auckland followed by a PhD in Biomechanics. It wasn't until he joined the University of Otago's Wellington campus in late 2010, however, that he discovered his true calling – Epidemiology.

He was hired by then Public Health academic Dr Di Sarfati to work on a Health Research Council (HRC)-funded project examining the impact of comorbidity on ethnic disparities

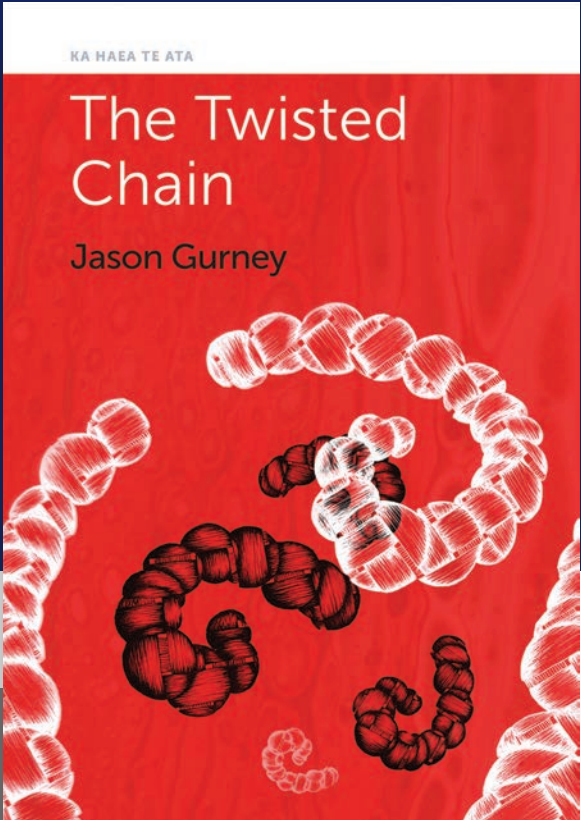


Photos: Luke Pilkinton-Ching

PROFESSOR JASON GURNEY: "Even though I was never particularly academically gifted, I always knew I wanted to do something that was bigger than myself, to contribute in a way that was beyond me, and not just focused on myself."

"Not knowing if your dad will live through the night is not something that any young son or daughter should ever have to endure. I experienced this nightmare more times than I care to remember."
- Professor Jason Gurney in *The Twisted Chain*

The Twisted Chain, which blends memoir, science and social commentary, was released last year and was longlisted for the 2025 Ockham New Zealand General Non-Fiction Award.



in access to cancer care. It was his first introduction to the field, and he says he couldn't have asked for a better mentor.

"She remains my mentor to this day."

Under Sarfati's guidance, Gurney quickly realised he was going to be a far better epidemiologist than he ever was a biomechanist.

"The science made intuitive sense to me," he says.

"The bigger picture approach made sense, and I felt I had more capacity to make a difference to large populations of people, particularly Māori."

He talks of epidemiology as a discipline which looks back to move forwards, a sentiment expressed in the whakatauki:

'Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua: I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past.'

"That's really what epidemiology does – it sees the world as it is, and as it has been,

and then tries to analyse the problem in a way that drives solutions."

After that first project, he moved on to studies of rheumatic fever – the disease that had left such a mark on his own life. With two-thirds of cases occurring north of Hamilton, it made sense for him to be based in Auckland when, in 2014, he took up a role project managing a national study on rheumatic fever risk factors led by Professor Michael Baker. He has remained in Auckland, working remotely for the Wellington campus.

The national research project investigated the causes of rheumatic fever, firmly establishing that factors such as poor housing and overcrowding are key contributors to the disease. The work earned Baker and the research team – including Gurney – the HRC's Liley Medal in 2023.

In the nearly 15 years since he started

working in public health, Gurney has looked at a range of diseases from chronic conditions like diabetes and cancer, to infectious diseases like rheumatic fever.

The common thread? Health equity for Māori.

He is currently leading a five-year research programme, again funded by the HRC, aimed at eliminating inequities in cancer survival for Māori.

"We're examining the entire cancer care pathway – from diagnosis through to treatment – identifying points where Māori are doing better, worse, or the same as non-Māori across all cancers, so we can improve survival outcomes."

"Our job is to pinpoint where the health system should focus its resources to address the stark inequities that result in Māori having poorer survival rates for 23 of the 24 most commonly diagnosed cancers in New Zealand."

“That’s really what epidemiology does – it sees the world as it is, and as it has been, and then tries to analyse the problem in a way that drives solutions.”



The statistics on Māori health outcomes are confronting; the climate for public health funding is challenging. In the face of all this, Gurney has one thing - hope.

When it comes to rheumatic fever, which primarily affects Māori and Pacific children and young adults, all that is needed is will, including the political will for change, he says.

“In a broad sense, we already know what we need to do to take massive action in preventing rheumatic fever.

“A strong example is the Healthy Homes Initiative, which looks at problems with dampness, coldness and leaks – all those things that create an environment within a house for group A streptococcus to thrive and spread – and then remedies them. Those programmes work: they reduce hospitalisations, they reduce pharmaceutical expenses.”

He also cites recent research led by colleague Dr Julie Bennett, which explores a new method of delivering penicillin to people with rheumatic fever.

Currently, patients with acute rheumatic fever require painful intramuscular injections of benzathine penicillin every month for at least 10 years to reduce the risk of new strep A infections and further heart damage. The new approach delivers

antibiotics into fatty tissue rather than muscle, making the injections significantly less painful. It also allows for doses to be given every three months instead of monthly.

“Ultimately, I believe we are moving forward in the right direction,” Gurney says. “And we will continue to head in the right direction because we must. It is a moral must.”

The news last December that he was being promoted to Research Professor left him completely delighted and, simultaneously, feeling like an imposter, he says.

“It is a privilege to be a professor and it is a privilege that I don’t take lightly. I was the first in my family to go to university – let alone do a PhD, let alone become a professor – so I feel extremely privileged, but also a strong sense of responsibility to fill the boots.”

Gurney will give his Inaugural Professorial Lecture at the Wharewaka Events Centre in Wellington on Wednesday, 3 September at 5:30pm.

CHERYL NORRIE

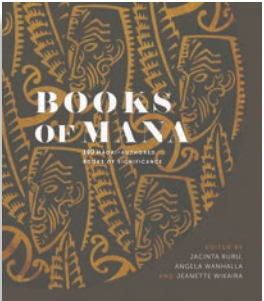
Books by Otago alumni

Middlemore Hospital: The first two decades 1943-1964 by Earle Brown and Walter (Wally) Robins, Mary Egan Publishing, August 2024.

Interfamily Therapy: Utilising Multifamily Groups in Social Care, Healthcare and Education by Javier Sempere and Claudio Fuenzalida, Palgrave Macmillan Cham, October 2024.

Alumni: if you have recently published a book please email mag.editor@otago.ac.nz

For further information: Otago University Press oup.nz | publicity@otago.ac.nz



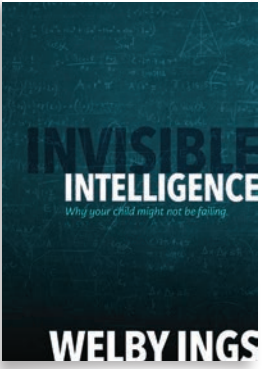
Books of Mana: 180 Māori-Authorled Books of Significance

Edited by Jacinta Ruru, Angela Wanhalla and Jeanette Wikaira
Otago University Press, February, 2025

Books of Mana celebrates the rich tradition of Māori authorship in Aotearoa New Zealand. It reveals the central place of more than 200 years of print literacy within te ao Māori and vividly conveys how books are understood as taonga tuku iho – treasures handed down through generations.

In this beautifully illustrated collection of essays, some of Aotearoa New Zealand’s most renowned Māori thinkers join the editors in a wide-ranging kōrero about the influence and empowerment of Māori writing.

Books of Mana builds on the work of editors Jacinta Ruru, Angela Wanhalla and Jeanette Wikaira, who curated *Te Takarangi*, a selected list of Māori-authored non-fiction books published since 1815. Launched in 2018, in partnership with the Royal Society Te Apārangi, *Te Takarangi* now comprises 180 titles, each representing an important touchstone in an extensive landscape of Māori literature. *Books of Mana* explores the ways these books have enriched lives and helped to foster understanding of Māori experience, both at home in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally. What emerges from the essays collected within these covers is a clear vision of the importance of writing as activism and a profound sense that these Māori-authored non-fiction books, and the knowledge they contain, are taonga.



Invisible Intelligence: Why your child might not be failing

By Welby Ings
Otago University Press, July 2025

In *Invisible Intelligence*, educationalist, filmmaker and best-selling author Welby Ings considers how schools measure intelligence and shows how narrow definitions of literacy and numeracy can lead to bright students being described as ‘behind’ and positioned as problems, when they are not.

Ings mixes poignant, humorous and insightful storytelling with current research to explore the ways that some children’s intelligent approaches to problem-solving are dismissed or ignored, with devastating consequences for individuals and society. Yet *Invisible Intelligence* offers hope. Written with wisdom, experience and compassion, it is the kind of book that ‘puts an arm around the shoulders’ of those who love and work with children whose intelligence is not recognised because they don’t learn the same way as others.

Pragmatic, wise and helpful, *Invisible Intelligence* shows what can be done better in education, and why it is so important that it is.

“This book was so great I shut myself in my office and sobbed ... *Invisible Intelligence* is timely, original and a very fresh breath of air.”

– Professor Vivienne Anderson (Dean, University of Otago College of Education)

A smokefree quest

Researchers at the University of Otago’s ASPIRE Aotearoa Centre are taking an innovative approach to smokefree research – exploring vaping’s impact on young people and using AI to monitor tobacco industry lobbying.

ASPIRE Aotearoa Codirector Professor Janet Hoek says the group started investigating tobacco industry interference more closely in response to last year’s repeal of New Zealand’s world-leading ‘tobacco endgame’ measures.

“We have access to an AI platform that monitors news releases in real time, allowing us to track arguments the tobacco industry uses to oppose new tobacco control policies,” Hoek says.

“We are also examining new product developments because we know tobacco companies want to diversify the nicotine marketplace. For example, overseas, they have aggressively marketed products like oral nicotine pouches to young people.”

The group’s new multi-strand research programme Te Tupu o te Harakeke aims to strengthen Māori research capability by providing leadership roles for Māori researchers and conducting research that has direct relevance to Māori.

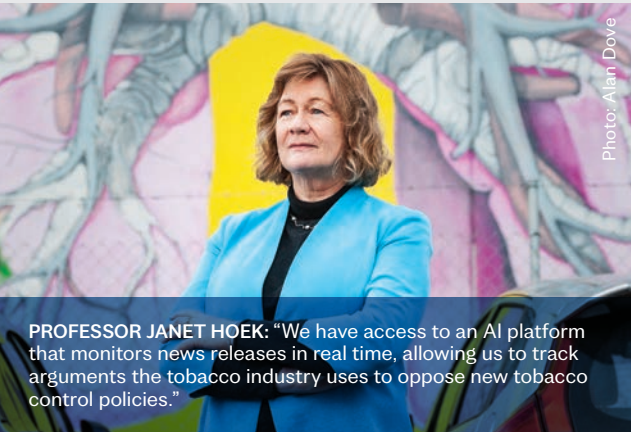
It will also continue the Aotearoa arm of a renowned international tobacco survey – the International Tobacco Control programme.

One of the most innovative initiatives will examine how rangatahi Māori experience vaping and smoking. A related project, Ka Hao te

Rangatahi, will explore how rangatahi views can influence government policy.

“This work aims to ensure that young people’s voices are not just part of the data, but become part of the recommendations for future actions.”

The work is funded by a five-year programme grant from the Health Research Council of New Zealand.



PROFESSOR JANET HOEK: “We have access to an AI platform that monitors news releases in real time, allowing us to track arguments the tobacco industry uses to oppose new tobacco control policies.”

Shedding light on March 15 trauma

Ongoing research from the University of Otago, Christchurch’s Department of Psychological Medicine has identified the need for tailored screening and support systems for survivors of the city’s 2019 mosque terror attacks.

The latest paper, following 189 mosque survivors and their whānau, was published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* late last year.

It found more than 60 per cent of participants were still suffering from mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety or depression in the 11 to 32 months after the attacks. Many had combinations of more than one of these conditions.

Lead author Dr Ruqayya Sulaiman-Hill says survivors of the attack, or those who had lost a family member had a greater likelihood of developing major depressive disorder or PTSD.

“Our results are in line with other studies internationally which show that suffering a physical injury in a terrorist attack, regardless of severity, is strongly associated with mental health impacts.

“This highlights the importance of mental health screening for injured survivors in addition to treating their physical health needs. Secondary stressors, such as financial issues or concerns about family members are also important.”

Current March 15 research is focused on understanding how

individuals can experience growth following trauma, including exploring the role of religion in facilitating post-traumatic growth.

A separate study is examining dual relationships involving Muslim support workers operating within their own community.

“We want to understand the benefits as well as psychosocial impacts of working with people you know.”



DR RUQAYYA SULAIMAN-HILL: “This highlights the importance of mental health screening for injured survivors in addition to treating their physical health needs.”

Lessons from the weekly shop

University of Otago Marketing researchers have good news for parents: the family grocery shop helps children become competent consumers.

Co-authors Associate Professor Leah Watkins and Professor Rob Aitken set out to discover what factors help children make thoughtful spending decisions as they grow up.

They found parents can help their children become competent consumers by involving them in supermarket shopping and explaining both the reasons for their purchasing choices and the values that underpin them.

Pairs of parents and children aged 10 to 12 years were tasked with undertaking a week’s shopping for their family.

While loading their trolleys, the children made sure they stocked up on essential food items and included specific items that other family members preferred.

Importantly, they were conscious of making healthy choices – allocating a large portion of their shop to fresh fruit, bread and vegetables – and echoed their parent’s values around frugality and ethical consumption.

Aitken says the research was inspired by a study from the 1950s, where researchers attempted to discover what consumption choices children would make if they were free from parental control and relieved of financial constraint.

The 1950s children made sensible choices, but researchers put this down to their experiences living through shortages and austerity following World War 2.

“With our study, we wanted to find out if the escalating rates of consumption in today’s world would affect children’s choices, but we were pleasantly surprised to see the children making conscientious decisions.”



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR LEAH WATKINS AND PROFESSOR ROB AITKEN: “... we were pleasantly surprised to see the children making conscientious decisions.”

Tracking elusive wallabies with innovative genomics

Wallabies are a growing threat to farming and conservation in the lower South Island, but University of Otago Anatomy PhD candidate Gracie Kroos may have the answer to tracking these elusive, nocturnal pests – advanced genomics.

Environmental DNA (eDNA) analysis is already used to identify traces of DNA from specific species within soil, water or air. It is a cost-effective way to detect pests and measure biodiversity, supporting environmental management worldwide.

Kroos is leveraging these DNA sequencing techniques, using Tipu Mātoro National Wallaby Eradication Programme funding, to see if they could work to rapidly identify the areas that wallabies inhabit.

Wallabies are underestimated pests in Aotearoa New Zealand, she says.

“They occur at very low densities across large landscapes, making their surveillance and management using standard detection tools difficult.

“My PhD research will use air and water samples, including spiderwebs, specifically to detect wallabies in the environment.”

The goal is to find an alternative detection method that does not require actually seeing the wallabies, which are often cryptic and hard to find.

“I am investigating using this technique in captive wallaby parks and in natural settings around Central Otago and Canterbury,” Kroos says.

“I also want to know the distance the DNA signal could travel through environments, and how long the DNA signal persists after a wallaby has been present.”

Kroos hopes eDNA-based methods will prove to be the innovative monitoring tool Aotearoa needs to help eradicate this invasive pest.



PHD CANDIDATE GRACIE KROOS: “My PhD research will use air and water samples, including spiderwebs, specifically to detect wallabies in the environment.”

2025: The year of glacier preservation

To raise global awareness of the importance of glaciers in the climate system and the impacts of their loss, the United Nations declared 2025 the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation.

Of the approximate 2,900 glaciers in Kā Tiritiri o Te Moana – The Southern Alps, only two have ongoing field monitoring programmes.

One of these benchmark glaciers is Brewster Glacier located near Haast Pass. Since 2004 Otago researchers have been tracking the response of the glacier to climate change.

Study leader Professor Nicholas Cullen, an expert in glacier-snow-climate interactions based in the School of Geography, says observations across this period tell a startling story of change.

Cullen says Brewster Glacier is now losing ice at three times the annual rate recorded when measurements began, with its surface dropping more than 20 metres since 2000.

"If these retreat rates continue, Brewster Glacier and other similar glaciers, will very likely disappear by the middle of this century. However, every fraction of a degree of warming we can prevent remains vital to safeguarding the largest and highest glaciers in Kā Tiritiri o Te Moana."

Mountain regions are complex social-ecological systems and the goal of Otago's Mountain Research Centre, to which Brewster Glacier research contributes, is to generate knowledge and connect with stakeholders to enable informed decisions, he says.

"Our mahi is to protect our mountain environments, minimise harm to people and infrastructure from changes to these landscapes, and support those who depend on the water resources from these environments for their livelihoods."



PROFESSOR NICHOLAS CULLEN WITH A TEAM AT BREWSTER GLACIER: "If these retreat rates continue, Brewster Glacier and other similar glaciers, will very likely disappear by the middle of this century."

Solving the Fijian heart disease puzzle

Searching for a genetic link to premature heart disease in the New Zealand Fijian population is both a personal and scientific mission for University of Otago, Wellington, researcher Dr Pritika Narayan.

Narayan, who is of Fijian Indian heritage, has close family members who have been affected by the disease.

Her experience is sadly not unique, with people from Fiji making up just under 2 per cent of Aotearoa New Zealand's population, but experiencing 20 per cent of the heart attacks that occur in people under the age of 40.

The pattern of inheritance is striking: In one family, a grandfather had a heart attack in his 60s, his son in his 40s and his grandson in his 20s.

Narayan's theory is that those at higher risk of premature disease may have a genetic marker, which helped their ancestors survive historical famine events and/or infectious disease outbreaks in Fiji.

"The same marker may be having the opposite effect now food is relatively abundant, causing fat to accumulate in the arteries and leading to very premature heart attacks."

Her three-year research study, funded by the National Heart Foundation of New Zealand, will be the first to map the genomic structure of both iTaukei (Indigenous Fijian) and Giriti (Indo-Fijian) groups, in the search for a genetic link to the disease.

If a gene variant is found, it could lead to better screening, and new therapies for premature heart disease.

The project is already having an impact, providing access to free heart health checks through community events.



DR PRITIKA NARAYAN: "The same marker may be having the opposite effect now food is relatively abundant, causing fat to accumulate in the arteries and leading to very premature heart attacks."

Remarkable retelling of the journey of Mataatua Whare

Tessa Petersen has helped bring the story of Mataatua Whare to life in a vivid performance of a new composition by renowned composer Dame Gillian Karawe Whitehead.

The idea was sparked in 2023, when Petersen – a Senior Lecturer in Violin at the University of Otago – was researching a project around the centenary of Dunedin's 1925 New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition. Mataatua Whare, first built in 1875, was part of the exhibition. From there it went to Tūhura Otago Museum, finally returning home to Whakatāne in 1996.

"I found the whole story of Mataatua Whare so compelling," Petersen says.

"I had a strong vision of its remarkable journey being told through music. There is a lot of inherent contrast, and I could imagine the voices of the characters, including one for Mataatua itself, plus a visual element to enhance the musical composition. I felt this important story could be shared in this way."

Petersen shared her idea with Dame Gillian, who was enthusiastic, and the pair then approached Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Awa – which became a close collaborator.

The work features three soloists plus a choir, kapa haka group and symphony orchestra. The visuals were created by Video Factory and feature the text in te reo Māori and English along with historic photographs.

Following a private performance for Ngāti Awa in Whakatāne, the public première was staged by the Dunedin Symphony Orchestra in the Dunedin Town Hall in late June, with Petersen as Concertmaster.

Support for the première included a University of Otago Research Grant.



TESSA PETERSEN: "I found the whole story of Mataatua Whare so compelling. I had a strong vision of its remarkable journey being told through music."

Photo: Graham Warman

An inhaled measles vaccine may work better than a jab

University of Otago researchers are investigating whether inhaling the Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR) vaccine produces a stronger and longer-lasting immune response than the traditional injection into the arm.

Since 2022, Melanie Millier has been the Clinical Trial Coordinator for the MAXXED study, funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) and led by Professor Peter McIntyre, of the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health.

MAXXED has been recruiting Health Sciences students with low measles antibody levels who need an additional dose of the MMR vaccine. Volunteers are randomly assigned to receive the vaccine either by inhaling it as a mist – similar to how asthma medication is delivered via a nebuliser – or through the standard injection.

In 2024, Millier received a grant from the Otago Medical Research Foundation along with an HRC Clinical Research Training Fellowship to expand the MAXXED trial.

Her additional research focuses on identifying the cells responsible for producing measles antibodies, for which she is collaborating with Professor James Ussher, of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology.

Millier says there is nothing different about the vaccine – just the way it is being given.

"It's delivering it straight to the lungs, just as would happen if exposed to the measles virus in an outbreak."

The team is also investigating the impact of the vaccine in students with good antibody levels, to assess what would happen in a measles outbreak.

Understanding the effectiveness of novel vaccine delivery methods will help inform future vaccination strategies, she says.



MELANIE MILLIER: "It's delivering it straight to the lungs, just as would happen if exposed to measles virus in an outbreak."

Photo: Alan Dove

A gift of grand proportions

Photo: Dave Bull

Ko e Hala Hangatonu – The Straight Path is based on the straight road that leads to the Tongan King's palace and its motifs include historical and contemporary images drawn from the Pacific, Western Europe and the Middle East.

One of Aotearoa New Zealand's most respected living artists, Dame Robin White, has gifted a monumental work, *Ko e Hala Hangatonu – The Straight Path*, to the University of Otago's Hocken Collections.

TAKING TWO YEARS TO COMPLETE, the 24m long ngatu (illustrated tapa) was a collaboration between Dame Robin White and Tongan artist Ruha Fifita, supported by a community of women artists on the main island of Tonga, Tongatapu.

Dame Robin and Fifita, both members of the Baha'i community, met in 2010.

"I immediately recognised in Ruha a dedication to the arts characterised by a spirit of service and an eagerness to learn," Dame Robin says.

"Seeking an opportunity for us to work and learn together felt like a very natural step to take."

The pair's first collaboration, *Siu i Moana I: New Zealand to Tonga*, was made for the

Kermadec exhibition in 2011 and measures 5.5m x 4.7m. *Ko e Hala Hangatonu* followed. At 3.6m wide and the show-stopping 24m long, this piece drew on the skilled women-power of the Haveluloto kautaha koka'anga (tapa-making collective), whose members worked alongside Dame Robin and Fifita.

Ko e Hala Hangatonu – The Straight Path is based on the straight road that leads to the Tongan King's palace, a road that was lined with Norfolk pines in years gone by.

Metaphorically, the piece represents the evolution of life, of the past informing the future. A closer inspection reveals the motifs woven into the piece are a mix of historical and contemporary images drawn from the Pacific, Western Europe and the Middle

East. For instance, a black London taxi and a fighter jet can be found along the path.

The work came to New Zealand in 2014 and was exhibited at several galleries across the North Island, including Pataka Art + Museum in Porirua, Aratoi Wairarapa Museum of Art and History and Two Rooms in Auckland.

With scale, however, comes logistical challenge. *Ko e Hala Hangatonu* demands space – and a lot of it. The piece has been in careful storage for the past 10 years, but now has a permanent home in the Hocken Collections.

"When preparing to leave New Zealand for Kiribati, Michael Hitchings – then in charge of the Hocken Pictorial Collection – urged me not to throw anything out, but leave my 'stuff' with the Hocken."

HOCKEN LIBRARIAN KELLY-ANN TAHITAH AND CURATOR, ART, HOPE WILSON: "It is an incredible honour to be gifted this work by Dame Robin, on behalf of herself and Ruha Fifita."

So why the Hocken Collections?

Dame Robin moved to Portobello in 1972 and worked as an artist for 10 years. In 1981, together with her young family, she moved to the Republic of Kiribati to volunteer within the Baha'i community and there she remained for "17 fantastic years".

"When preparing to leave New Zealand for Kiribati, Michael Hitchings – then in charge of the Hocken Pictorial Collection – urged me not to throw anything out, but leave my 'stuff' with the Hocken.

"From then on, I have thought of the Hocken as a place for receiving items of mine that might be of archival interest and serve the purpose of the Hocken as a place of research and learning that is open to all."

This commitment to learning is a fundamental principle of Dame Robin's life.

While studying at Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts in the mid-1960s, she was taught by Colin McCahon, who encouraged her to never stop learning – that "we are all students".

Her faith also strongly influences her art,

specifically the Baha'i principles of collaboration, equality and experimentation.

For Dame Robin, the making of *Ko e Hala Hangatonu* embodied all her core values.

"It was an intense learning experience – learning about collaboration and how to promote unity of thought and purpose among a diverse group of participants, each of whom bring their own skills, experience

and expectations.

"In this sense, there are no mistakes, just valuable lessons and an expanded set of experiences and knowledge that can be applied along the path of learning."

Hope Wilson, the Hocken Collections Curator, Art, says it is this sentiment that makes *Ko e Hala Hangatonu* such a wonderful gift for the Hocken.

"It celebrates learning, evolving and growth and feels like a beautiful fit for the Hocken and Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka. We look forward to exhibiting and sharing the work with members of the University community into the future."

The piece joins more than 300 other works by Dame Robin in the Hocken Collections. These include studies from her time at Elam School of Fine Arts and iconic works of Hereweka and the Otago Peninsula created while she was living in Portobello.

"It is an incredible honour to be gifted this work by Dame Robin, on behalf of herself and Ruha Fifita," Wilson says.

BRIGID FEELY

Ko e Hala Hangatonu – The Straight Path on display at Auckland's Two Rooms Gallery. Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Two Rooms. Photo credit: Jennifer French.

Photo: Dave Bull

Two academics receive Prime Minister’s prizes

Two Otago academics had their work recognised with Prime Minister’s Science Prizes in May.

Professor Jemma Geoghegan (Microbiology and Immunology) (pictured below) received Te Puiaki Whakapā Pūtaiao the Prime Minister’s Science Communicator prize in recognition of her work advising policymakers and enhancing public understanding about infectious diseases such as Covid-19 and bird flu.



Dr Olivia Harrison (Psychology) (pictured below) received Te Puiaki Kaipūtaiao Maea the Prime Minister’s MacDiarmid Emerging Scientist Prize for her work developing a multidisciplinary approach to understanding and managing anxiety.



Ranking success

Otago is home to New Zealand’s highest ranked subject area in the latest Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings by Subject announced in March.

Sport-related subjects at Otago have been ranked 11th in the world, continuing their rise from 12th place last year.

Three other subject areas also feature in the global top 50: Anatomy and Physiology (30th), Dentistry (40th), and Hospitality and Leisure Management (44th).

With a total of seven subjects ranked in the top 100 globally, Otago continues to affirm its position as one of New Zealand’s top two universities. A further six subjects appear in the 101–150 band, seven more in the 151–200 band, 10 in the 201–300 range, and an additional seven subjects ranked among the top 500 worldwide.

This recognition builds on Otago’s landmark achievement last year, when it became the first university in the world to receive a 5+ Stars rating, along with five-star ratings in nine individual categories, under the revamped QS Stars assessment.

This comprehensive evaluation considers key areas that matter most to students, including teaching quality, facilities, and graduate employability.

In addition, the University ranked 78th globally in the QS Sustainability Rankings, reflecting its strong commitment to environmental and social responsibility.

Vice-Chancellor Grant Robertson says the results reinforce Otago’s world-class reputation and commitment to delivering outstanding education and research that makes a difference globally.

Otago Launches Disability Action Plan

Otago has launched *Te Kokeka Whakamua – Disability Action Plan 2024–27*, reaffirming its commitment to an inclusive and accessible environment for all.

Vice-Chancellor Grant Robertson called the March launch a milestone.

“As one of the first universities to establish a formal disability support service in the early 1990s, Otago has long been a sector leader in New Zealand.”

The plan builds on the legacy of Otago’s highly regarded Disability Information and Support Service, aiming to ensure all students feel they belong and can thrive.

Historic Indigenous-led MOU

Connecting as tangata whenua across New Zealand and Australia provided the foundation for a significant agreement between the

University of Otago – Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka and Murdoch University.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the two parties in Dunedin in November 2024 in a ceremony that included tikanga Māori and Indigenous protocols of the Noongar people from Western Australia.

Three versions of the agreement were signed: te reo Māori, Whadjuk Noongar and English, making it the first multi-language MoU signed by Otago.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori) Professor Jacinta Ruru says Murdoch and Otago share a strong commitment to improving outcomes for Indigenous students.

“Murdoch, has a strategic goal to become the university of choice for First Nations students whilst we are on our own journey to becoming a Te Tiriti-led university. I look forward to walking alongside Murdoch on this path towards our shared future.”

Campus pantries open



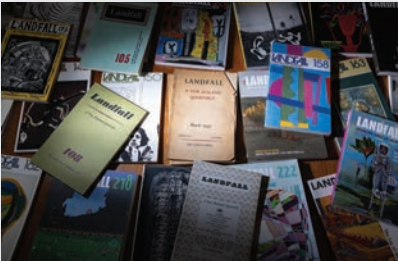
Otago has launched three pātaka kai (food pantries) on its Dunedin campus to help address rising food insecurity among students.

Student Services Director Claire Gallop says the need is growing.

“One of the things that often can slip when you’ve got to pay your rent and power bills is actually feeding yourself.”

While emergency food bags are already available through the Otago University Students’ Association, the new pantries aim to provide more accessible, stigma-free help. There are three pantries on campus currently – including one located at Unipol (pictured above with Chris MacDonell and Laura Freeman). A fourth will open at Te Pou Whirinaki – Student Wellbeing Hub when it launches.

Landfall celebrates 250th edition



Landfall, New Zealand’s foremost and longest-running arts and literary journal, is also celebrating a milestone this year with its 250th edition.

The October 2025 issue is rebranding as *Landfall Tauraka* (Landing Place), and will boast a new format and design. Editor Lynley Edmeades will be attending writers’ festivals and events across the country as part of the official celebrations.

“*Landfall* is a place for new voices to emerge and be put in conversation with established writers. Editing the journal is a huge privilege, but it is also a huge responsibility to make each edition special – even though I’m just the custodian and the doorway for the array of writers involved.”

For Edmeades, *Landfall* is both a taoka and a labour of love.

“There’s something comforting about sitting down with a book – especially a curated anthology like *Landfall*. It’s an antidote to the fast-paced media we are constantly receiving and to things like AI. No one wants to read something people can’t be bothered to write themselves.”

Founding editor Charles Brasch would probably have agreed. Edmeades says she can feel his ghost in her office, surrounded by copies of every *Landfall* ever printed.

And once the hectic celebrations die down, she’ll be having a lie down with a cup of tea – and no doubt a good book.

Have your say on the future of campus spaces

What social, entertainment, and recreation spaces would make Otago’s Dunedin campus more vibrant and inclusive?

The University is inviting feedback as part of a Campus Activation Review, led by Emeritus Professor George Benwell.

“In our education village, students should be able to both study and explore life safely on and around campus during one of the most exciting times of their lives,” he says.

As student numbers grow and the community becomes more diverse, the campus must evolve to meet changing needs – especially for Māori, Pacific and international students and staff, as well as the wider Ōtepoti community.

To share your thoughts (in confidence), contact Megan Wilson, Email: megan.wilson@otago.ac.nz.



Appointments:

Trish Oakley as Chancellor (see pages 6 to 8)
Brendan Boyle as Pro-Chancellor

Associate Professor Dianne Sika-Paotonu as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Pacific) (see pages 9 to 11)

Professor Hugh Campbell as Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Te Kete Aronui - Division of Humanities (see pages 32 to 33 for his opinion piece)

Professor Suzanne Pitama as Dean, Otago Medical School

Professor Suetonia Green as Dean, Dunedin School of Medicine

Professor Lutz Beckert as Dean and Head of Campus, University of Otago, Christchurch
Professor Julia Horsfield as Dean, School of Biomedical Sciences (see pages 12 to 13)

Associate Professor Bridgette Toy-Cronin as Dean, Faculty of Law

Professor Diane Ruwhiu as Dean, Graduate Research School

Professor Bruce Russell as Dean, School of Pharmacy

Associate Professor Justine Camp as Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Māori) – Division of Health Sciences



Professor Mabe Long (pictured above) as Eamon Cleary Chair in Irish Studies

Associate Professor Liana MacDonald as Chair in Māori, Moriori and Indigenous Peace Studies

Professor Ross Thompson as Dame Carolyn Burns Chair in Freshwater Sciences

Professor Rachel Zajac as Provost
Jeremy Togneri as Chief People Officer
Suzie Bartlett as Staff Wellbeing Manager

Awards and achievements:

The University of Otago – Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka won four awards at the 2024 Best Design Awards. Tuakiritaka, Otago’s rebrand, was recognised with a gold in category Graphic – Large Brand Identity and silver in category Toitanga. The *Down For It* campaign won silver in the Moving Image – Motion Design and Animation category. The University’s bespoke font, Wickliffe Type Family, was also awarded a silver in the Graphic – Design Craft category.

Five academic staff received 2025 Excellence in Teaching awards: Associate Professor Melissa McLeod (Public Health, Wellington); Dr Fairleigh Gilmour (Sociology, Gender Studies and Criminology); Professor Miranda Johnson (History); Dr Tessa Romano (School of Performing Arts); and Dr Murat Üngör (Economics).

The University's highest research honour, the Distinguished Research Medal went to Otago global health expert Professor **John Crump** (pictured below) in 2024. Professor of Medicine, Pathology and Global Health, Crump helps lead the Otago Global Health Institute and is Co-Director of Otago's Centre for International Health.



The 2024 Rowheath Trust Award and Carl Smith Medal was awarded to Associate Professor **Anna High** (Faculty of Law).

Six researchers received Early Career Awards in 2024: Dr **Jude Ball** (Public Health, Wellington), Dr **Rose Crossin** (Population Health, Christchurch), Dr **Olivia Harrison** (Psychology), Dr **Nathan Kenny** (Biochemistry), Dr **Daniel Pletzer** (Microbiology and Immunology) and Dr **Andrew Reynolds** (Medicine).

Dr **Amanda Clifford** (Kāi Tahu, Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe) (Psychology) and Dr **Amber Young** (Taranaki Iwi) (Pharmacy) received the 2024 University of Otago Māori Early Career Award for Distinction in Research, while Dr **Emma Powell** (Te Tumu) received the 2024 Tofā Sāili Pacific Early Career Award for Distinction in Research.

The 2024 University of Otago Research Group Award went to the Department of Microbiology and Immunology **Phage-host interactions (Phi) laboratory**.

Dr **Jeff Foote** (Management) was named Otago's Supervisor of the Year in November 2024, while Best New Supervisor of the Year went to Dr **Andrew Reynolds** (Medicine, Dunedin).

The 2024 University of Otago Staff Awards celebrated outstanding contributions across several categories. Four staff members received Awards for Exceptional Performance by Professional Staff: **Jacqui Bradshaw** (Client Services – Health Sciences); **Thelma Fisher** (Information Services – University Library);

Alison Stewart (Organisational Development) and **Michelle Taiaroa** (Māori Centre | Te Huka Mātauraka). The Vice-Chancellor's Award was presented to **Michelle Taiaroa** in recognition of her exceptional service. In the Health and Safety Awards, the Individual Initiative Award went to **Jose Garcia Flores** (Library Facilities Services), while the Team Award was presented to the **Grounds Team** (Campus Services). For Sustainable Practice, **Amanda Hutchinson** (Information Services – University Library) received the Individual Award, and the **University Flats** team (Campus and Collegiate Life Services) received the Team Award.

Professor **Mark Hampton** (Mātai Hāora, Christchurch) (pictured below) won the 2024 Otago Innovation Ltd Proof of Concept Award for research into overcoming cancer drug resistance.



Associate Professor **Marg Currie** and Dr **Christoph Goebel** (Pathology and Biomedical Science, Christchurch) were the inaugural recipients of the James Smedley Trust Fellowship.

Professor **Dianne Sika-Paotonu** (now Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pacific) received the prestigious Callaghan Medal from the Royal Society Te Apārangi for her evidence-based science communication and engagement across Aotearoa and the Pacific.

Dr **Ehsan Arabahmadi**, an Otago PhD graduate, won the Hatherton Award for the best scientific paper by a PhD student in physical, earth, or mathematical sciences.

Professors **Michelle Glass**, **Dave Grattan**, and **Claudine Stirling** were elected Fellows of the Royal Society Te Apārangi in 2024.

Dr **Leah Smith** (Microbiology and Immunology) received a 2024 L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Fellowship for her research into phage therapy and antibiotic resistance.

Professor **Harald Schwefel** (Physics and Te Whai Ao – Dodd-Walls Centre) was among the first globally to receive the new Google Academic Research Award to support his work in quantum technologies.

Emerita Professor **Helen Nicholson** (Anatomy) became the first New Zealander elected President of the International Federation of Associations of Anatomists (IFAA), representing 57 global anatomy associations.

Professor **Rob Walker** (Medicine) received the 2024 TJ Neale Award, the highest scientific honour from the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology.

Dr **Angela Clark** (Dentistry) was appointed by the New Zealand Police as the Australia New Zealand Forensic Executive Committee (ANZFEC) Agency Endorsed Representative – the first time Aotearoa has had forensic anthropology representation at this level.

Associate Professor **Lesley Gray** (Primary Health Care and General Practice, Wellington) was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners for her contributions to general practice and rural hospital medicine.

Dr **Deanna Beckett** (Dentistry) received the Hon. Annette King Award for Leadership and Excellence in Oral Health.

ASPIRE Aotearoa researchers were honoured at the Oceania Tobacco Control Conference: Professor **Janet Hoek** received the Nigel Gray Award for advancing tobacco control; Associate Professor **Andrew Waa** received the Dame Tariana Turia Award for Indigenous tobacco control leadership; the team also won Best Conference Abstract for their study on adolescent vaping addiction in Aotearoa.

Dr **Jim Smith** (Pathology) was awarded the 2024 Roche Translational Cancer Research Fellowship.

Cheryl Davies (Ngāti Raukawa / Ngāti Mutunga ki Te Wharekauri) (Public Health, Wellington) received the Health Research Council of New Zealand's Te Tohu Rapuora Medal for transformative work in Māori communities.

Dr **Nils Birkholz** (Microbiology and Immunology) received the Asia-Pacific Protein Association Young Scientist Award.

Professor **Christine Winterbourn** (Mātai Hāora, Christchurch) received the Redox Biology and Medicine's prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award for her work in redox biology.

2024 MSc graduate **Joseph Balfe** (Neuroscience) was awarded a Clarendon Scholarship to pursue a PhD in Psychiatry at the University of Oxford.

Associate Professor **Wayne Morriss** (Anaesthesia, Christchurch) received two major anaesthetic medicine honours – the New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists President's Award and the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists highest honour – the Robert Orton Medal.

Professor **Maree Thyne** (PVC Commerce, Dean of Otago Business School) was elected President of the Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy – the fourth Otago academic to hold the role.

Associate Professor **Diane Kenwright** (Pathology and Molecular Medicine, Wellington) received the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia Konrad Muller Outstanding Teaching Award for 2024.

Pacific Opportunities Programme at Otago (POPO) received the Pacific Service Excellence Award at the Sunpix Pacific Peoples Awards in November 2024.

Professor **Alister Neill** and Associate Professor **Angela Campbell** (WellSleep Centre, Wellington) were recognised at the Australasian Sleep Association Conference. Neill received the Distinguished Achievement Award; while Campbell received the ANZSSA President's Award.

Associate Professor **Aniruddha Chatterjee** (Pathology) received a United Kingdom Council for Graduate Education Research Supervision Award.

Honorary Professor **Vijay Mallan** won the Australian Council of Graduate Research 2025 Award for Excellence in Graduate Research Programs and Support.

Professor **Stephanie Hughes** (Biochemistry) received the inaugural Rare Disorders Research Award, presented by Governor-General Dame Cindy Kiro, for her work on gene therapy for Batten Disease.

Professor **Abby Smith** (Marine Science) received the 2024 New Zealand Marine

Sciences Society Award, in recognition of her outstanding and continued contributions.

2025 New Year Honours:

25 staff and alumni were recognised in the 2025 New Year Honours list. They were:

CNZM: **Graeme Blick** for services to geodesy; **Esther Fung**, ONZM, for services to the Chinese community; **Frederick Graham**, ONZM, for services to Māori art; Professor **Helen Pilmore**, for services to nephrology and transplantation services; Emeritus Professor **Murray Thomson**, for services to oral health.

ONZM: **Carlos Bagrie**, for services to the food and rural industries; Dr **Catherine Ferguson**, for services to otolaryngology; Nadia Lim, for services to the food industry; Dr **Margot Skinner** for services to physiotherapy; Emeritus Professor **Murray Tilyard**, for services to health.

MNZM: Dr **Karen Colgan**, for services to wildlife conservation and education; Professor **Rawinia Higgins**, for services to Māori language, education and governance; **Shelley Katae**, for services to Māori and Pacific communities; Dr **Malcolm Legget**, for services to cardiology; **Lachlan Marshall**, for services to water polo; **Janice Molloy**, for services to wildlife conservation; Professor **Louise Parr-Brownlie**, for services to neuroscience; **Sarah Jane Rae**, for services to choral music; **Michael Styles**, for services to people with dyslexia and education; **Belinda Walker**, for services to the community.

KSO: **Jocelyn Armstrong**, for services to interfaith communities; Associate Professor **Tristram Ingham**, ONZM, for services to survivors of abuse in care.

KSM: **Michael Buick**, for services to the performing arts, particularly musical theatre; **David Richmond**, for services to sport, particularly athletics and cricket; **Barbara Simpson**, for services to conservation and the community.

King's Birthday Honours:

16 alumni and staff were recognised in the 2025 King's Birthday Honours list. They were:

ONZM: Emeritus Professor **David Baxter**, for services to physiotherapy and health; Professor **Bernadette Drummond**, for services to dentistry

and education; **Daryl Eason**, for services to wildlife conservation; Dr **Celia Devenish Giddings**, for services to women's health and education; Professor **Patria Hume**, for services to sports science and injury prevention; **Julia Marshall**, for services to children's literature; Dr **Fiona Pardington**, for services to photography; Distinguished Emeritus Professor **Paul Spoonley**, for services to sociology.

MNZM: **Meleua Ikiua**, for services to Vagahau Niue language and education; **Pauline Luyten**, for services to rugby and the Pacific community; **Julie Pearse**, for services to governance and the community.

KSM: **Heather Baldwin**, for services to the community; **Fergus More**, for services to the community and the law; **Terence O'Regan**; for services to nursing and the community; **Robert Smallfield**, for services to historical research and the community; Dr **Glenys Weir**, for services to health.

Hon KSM: **Siesina Latu**, for services to the Pacific community.

Obituaries:

Sonya Boereboom (Dean's Department, Dunedin School of Medicine)
Tasi Lemalu
Emeritus Professor **Peter Matheson** (Theology and Religion)
Professor **Nicole Roy** (Human Nutrition)
Associate Professor **Damian Scarf** (Psychology)
Emeritus Professor **Jim Simpson** (Chemistry and Botany)

Ka rere ana kā mihi ki te huka mate, kia rātou kua mene atu ki tua o te ārai, ki te paepae nui o Hawaiiki.

Ko rātou tēnā kua wheturakitia ki raro i te maru o Pōhutukawa i tēnei wā o Matariki.

Koutou kua riro ki te kauhakanui o Hine-nui-te-pō,

Haere, haere, haere atu rā.

Growing food rescue – from a carload to a national network

Thinking about what she really wanted from life led University of Otago alumna Deborah Manning ONZM on a journey of discovery from law to food rescue.



DEBORAH MANNING ONZM:
“I wanted to be motivated by how I could do something significant for somebody else and create lasting change for communities and for our country.”



The 2025 Kiwibank New Zealand Sustainability Leader of the Year, Otago alumna Deborah Manning.

FROM A LONG LINE OF OTAGO ALUMNI, the 2025 Kiwibank New Zealand Sustainability Leader of the Year initially bucked the family trend and studied physiotherapy at Otago Polytechnic, graduating in 1983.

In 2000, she decided to study law part-time at the University to develop her ability to think critically and analyse issues.

“I think we can develop solutions when we critically analyse issues, so we can see them from both sides and then find a solution that is palatable to all parties.”

Manning graduated with an LLB in 2006 and, after practising in several Dunedin law firms, reached a point in 2012 where she was questioning the usual drivers of success, such as money and career progression.

“I decided I wanted to shift my thinking away from trying to have a successful career and life into why don’t I try and have a significant one.

“I started looking at things differently. I wanted to be motivated by how I could do something significant for somebody else and create lasting change for communities and for our country.”

Reading the newspaper one day, she saw two stories on one page that made an impact: one about dumpster divers and how much edible food was being thrown away by supermarkets, the other about food insecurity and children who were going without breakfast or dinner.

“I thought to myself, ‘what would it look like if we took the food before it even reached the dumpster and use that food to provide food support for the people in the community who are experiencing this food insecurity and the consequential negative impacts of it?’”

After six months of research, she established a trust, a company and a board under the name KiwiHarvest Food Rescue. Then her brother David Kirk MBE, former All Black captain and Otago medical graduate, said: “Look, all of this background research that you’ve done is really, really great but when are you actually going to start rescuing the food?”

“That’s when I realised that you can’t ever know exactly how your journey will work out,” Manning says.

“You’ve just got to start and see where it takes you. I literally had to get in my car and

go and rescue some food and then see what goes right, what goes wrong and pivot as needed.”

From that first trip in her car, to pick up a bag of sandwiches from a store, which she then took to a woman’s refuge, KiwiHarvest’s rapid progress has been marked by a few pivotal moments.

Firstly, onions. After working unpaid, on her own and with the help of a girlfriend for about six months, someone gave her a tonne of onions.

“You can imagine what the smell of a tonne of onions does to your garage. I realised then that if somebody was willing to give me a tonne of something and I was only just starting, then this idea was actually going to work.”

Second, a truck. With a little seed funding Manning was able to purchase a truck and pay for a part-time driver.

Third, the Goodman Foundation. In 2015 the foundation supported KiwiHarvest’s expansion into Auckland and provided warehouse and office facilities.

Today, KiwiHarvest has branches in Dunedin, Auckland, North Shore, Invercargill

and Queenstown, with sponsorship and grants from corporate donors and local government. Food donors range from major supermarkets to small producers.

The organisation has rescued and distributed more than 15 million kg of food to 220 charitable organisations, the equivalent of more than 33 million meals. By stopping food from being sent to landfill, KiwiHarvest has also prevented more than 40 million CO₂ equivalent greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere.

A social investment analysis by the University of Otago in 2018 showed that for every \$1 invested in KiwiHarvest, it returned \$5.16 worth of social value back to the community.

“We might say that we work in the not-for-profit space, but we do make a profit. Our profit is in the social outcomes that we can achieve.”

Manning was also instrumental in creating the New Zealand Food Network, set up during Covid-19 and primarily funded by the Ministry of Social Development.

The network has two centralised distribution centres which receive, sort and

store large volumes of food from donors – distributing it to Food Hubs in manageable quantities, which move it onto charitable organisations.

“I know we have to change the systemic drivers of poverty and food insecurity ... But in the meantime, people still have to be fed and it’s just not acceptable in our country, where we produce enough food to feed 40 million people, that we’ve got food insecurity.”

“I know we have to change the systemic drivers of poverty and food insecurity, and that’s a big, long-term, multi-year, multi-generational job. But in the meantime, people still have to be fed and it’s just not acceptable in our country, where we produce enough food to feed 40 million people, that we’ve got food insecurity.”

As well as receiving the Kiwibank award, last year Manning was named an Officer of the New Zealand Order and Merit for services to the community and environment.

She says she shares both honours with all the people who have been part of the food rescue journey, including her children and husband Patrick, a Professor in Otago’s Department of Medicine, who, on occasion, was called in to drive the truck or go to the farmers’ market.

“I have received such a lot of support from people from the early beginnings, right through to all the food donors and funders and volunteers and those agencies we pass the food on to.”

She is also delighted that food rescue has been recognised as a sustainable solution to environmental issues in New Zealand.

“And that it’s not just about reducing food waste or protecting the environment but about ensuring that everyone has access to the basic necessities of life, especially our most vulnerable people.”

MARGIE CLARK

Celebrating the musical legacy of Honor McKellar

A new scholarship is being established by the University of Otago to celebrate the life and work of the distinguished, and much-loved, voice teacher and performer Honor McKellar.

THE HONOR MCKELLAR MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP in Classical Voice was announced earlier this year at the 'Honouring Honor' concert and tribute in Dunedin, featuring opera star Jonathan Lemalu ONZM (bass) and Professor Terence Dennis (piano). The scholarship will provide support for an undergraduate or postgraduate student who demonstrates outstanding promise, to study Classical Voice at Otago.

McKellar was a renowned mezzo-soprano and passionate teacher. As Otago's first full-time executant voice teacher, she taught some of Aotearoa New Zealand's most renowned singers, including Lemalu, Patrick Power ONZM and Matt Landreth.

Emeritus Professor John Drummond and Dennis, who is Blair Professor of Music at Otago, spoke at the concert about Honor's legacy.

Drummond said Honor embodied three key qualities as a singer and a teacher, which she imparted to her students.

"As a singer you are the messenger. Your



The late Honor McKellar on her 100th birthday.

job is to deliver the music so its full meaning will be understood. A concert is not about you, it's about the music you sing.

"The words matter as well as the music. She once told me, 'It's all about the words'.

"Be professional in everything you do, in the way you work, the way you treat fellow performers, and the way you treat audiences."

A generous gift from two family members has launched the scholarship fund and the University is calling for further donations to create an endowment. Fundraising efforts for the voice scholarship will sit alongside the campaigns to increase the endowments for the Mozart and Frances Hodgkins Fellowships, and the Children's Writer in Residence.

Otago's Director of Development and Alumni Relations, Shelagh Murray, says the voice scholarship celebrates McKellar's special legacy.

"Honor was an inspiring and dedicated teacher, who helped shape the first-class voice programme that continues at Otago today," Murray says.

"We hope this scholarship honours that special contribution and continues her legacy through supporting future generations of classical singers."

At McKellar's 100th birthday celebrations

at the University in 2020, Lemalu paid tribute to her as a professional singer and teacher.

"Without your guidance, without your love, I wouldn't have the singing career. I wouldn't have these achievements and highlights without the joy of music you instilled in me.

"I remember your boundless energy, patience and instilling fun and joy in my music-making."

An Otago alumna, McKellar graduated with a BA in 1942 and MusB in 1944. She then studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London from 1946 to 1949.

In 1971, she returned to Otago to become the first executant lecturer in singing, when she was appointed William Evans lecturer, a post she held until her retirement in 1985.

McKellar received a QSM in 1989 for services to music and continued to teach singing at the University as well as privately well into her 80s. She was made a Life Member of the New Zealand Association of Teachers of Singing in 2012.

YOU CAN DONATE TO THE SCHOLARSHIP HERE:
Select Honor McKellar Scholarship in Classical Voice from the dropdown list.



Unique and 'invaluable' Children's Writer Residency seeks support

For more than three decades, the Children's Writer in Residence at the University of Otago – the only one of its kind in Aotearoa New Zealand – has nurtured the country's literary talent.

SINCE ITS INCEPTION 32 YEARS AGO, the residency has supported some of Aotearoa's most celebrated children's authors. Its alumni list reads like a who's who of New Zealand children's literature: Jack Lasenby, Dame Kāterina Te Heikōkō Mataira, Fleur Beale, Vincent Ford, Kyle Mewburn, Barbara Else, Fifi Colston and Feana Tu'akoi, to name just a few.

Renowned New Zealand author and educator David Hill CNZM says the residency provided him with the opportunity "to be surrounded by others for whom books and the fact of writing are both natural and central. That was hugely affirming".

Hill was the University of Otago College of Education/Creative New Zealand Children's Writer in Residence in 2003, sharing the residency with fellow author Pauline Cartwright.

A multi award-winning author, Hill is best known for his work for young people, ranging from picture books to teen fiction.

He is also a mentor for emerging writers and an advocate for children's writers and book awards. His CNZM honours award citation in 2024 describes him as "part of the backbone of New Zealand children's literature".

"Mostly, writers spend their lives as a minority, working alone in their communities," Hill says.

"What a boost it was to spend three months immersed in a climate where everyone acknowledged and valued books and writing."

It also meant that, as a provincial author, he was able to talk with other writers and be surrounded by literary events.

"It also made it so easy to focus on a large project. Inevitably, at home, you're surrounded by other obligations and commitments. But I was able to have three focused, almost selfish months committed to writing. It was invaluable."

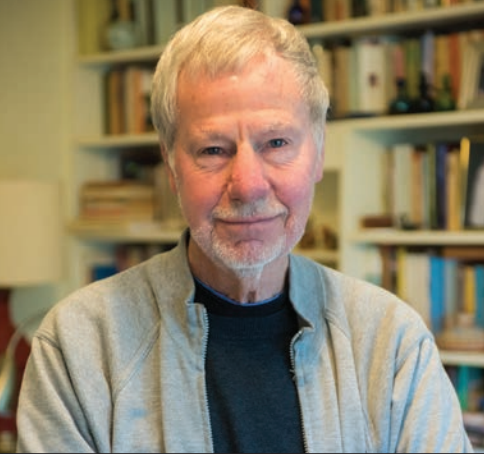
An important partner for the fellowship is the Robert Lord Writers Cottage Trust, which provides accommodation to the writer for the six-month term of the residency at no cost. Te Kura Ākau Taitoka | The University of Otago College of Education (Dunedin) provides the writer with office space, access to resources and funds, and manages the administration of the residency. Creative New Zealand funding has provided the writer with a stipend.

Unfortunately, the University's 2024 Creative New Zealand funding application for the residency was unsuccessful and, while the College of Education has managed to fund it this year, the University has made the difficult decision not to offer it in 2026.

Determined to get the residency back in place for 2027, Otago has launched a fundraising campaign to build an endowment fund to secure the residency's future in perpetuity.

Dean of the College of Education, Professor Vivienne Anderson, says: "While we are grateful for the funding we have received from Creative New Zealand over many years, it has been disheartening to lose this really vital support for children's literature in Aotearoa.

"This residency is unique in New Zealand. It has resulted in quality literature for children and promoted children's literature locally



WRITER DAVID HILL CNZM: "It also made it so easy to focus on a large project ... I was able to have three focused, almost selfish months committed to writing. It was invaluable."

and nationally. If you look at any children's section in a library or bookshop, or at the books children are reading in school, you will see that previous residents' names feature prominently."

Anderson says children's literature is vitally important for fostering a love of reading.

"It is also vital that we have stories that reflect and engage with the culture and identity of our young people in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our writers need to be supported to be able to produce quality children's literature.

"We are committed to seeking alternative funding to be able to resume this important Children's Writer in Residence and would be very grateful if you could help us get this unique and treasured residency back in place for 2027 and beyond."

YOU CAN SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN HERE:

Select Children's Writer in Residence from the dropdown list.

Or contact Becs Wilson, Development Manager, Email: becs.wilson@otago.ac.nz



Some of the many books which have been written by recipients of the Children's Writer Residency.

Working together

The University of Otago is actively developing new projects to accelerate research opportunities across health, the arts, science and business – and is seeking philanthropic people who are passionate about giving back.

WAI ORA – HERALDING A NEW ERA OF HEALTH RESEARCH

The University of Otago's commitment to New Zealand's health ecosystem continues with it's new build – Wai Ora – in the heart of Te Papa Hauora, Christchurch's Health Precinct.

In 2026, over 300 Christchurch-based health researchers and educators will shift into this landmark building, where they will continue to transform health outcomes in Canterbury, New Zealand and the world.

The University is investing \$280 million in this state-of-the-art building, which will incorporate modern laboratories, clinical research spaces and health professional education facilities. From within this building, research teams will continue to push their research to the edge, breaking into new areas of development.

With research grants depleting in value and quantity, Otago is looking for new and different ways to support its significant research community in Christchurch.

Help Christchurch researchers do more. Be part of New Zealand's health solution.



THE COMMERCE ADVANCEMENT FUND – INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS

Designed to provide targeted support for strategic initiatives which enhance business education, research and industry collaboration, the Business School has created the Commerce Advancement Fund. It will use this fund to pivot quickly on emerging opportunities, ensuring its students and academics remain at the forefront of business innovation and impact.

This flexible fund will fuel industry partnerships, student development programmes and entrepreneurial initiatives that prepare graduates to tackle real-world business challenges.



A work by 1978 Frances Hodgkins Fellow Grahame Sydney.
Grahame Sydney (b.1948), Railway Red, 1975, egg tempera on board: 590 x 823mm (sight size), Hocken Collections - Te Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago - Ōtākou Whakaihū Waka, 80/188. Purchased with the assistance of a subsidy from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand.

STRENGTHENING THE MOZART AND FRANCES HODGKINS FELLOWSHIPS

In 2025, the University of Otago has made the very difficult decision to pause the Mozart Fellowship in music and Frances Hodgkins Fellowship in the visual arts in 2026.

The trust funds that have supported these two Fellowships have become increasingly at risk of over-allocation in recent years and volatility in international investment markets has now created unacceptable levels of risk to the ongoing viability of the funds, if this offering were to go ahead. The University is not in a financial position to supplement these fellowships, as it has in the past.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Humanities) Professor Hugh Campbell says the University is committed to ensuring that these Fellowships remain a long-term part of our community and the wider New Zealand arts landscape.

"The University treasures all these Fellowships and we are very proud of the work and community impact of the current and previous recipients. As well as giving the funds a year of recovery time, we are seeking philanthropic support to boost these funds to a level at which they can sustain the annual fellowships."

As an integral part of the New Zealand creative fabric, these fellowships have enabled dozens of New Zealand artists to flourish, and with support they will do so again in 2027.

Celebrating 150 years of teacher education in Otago



In 2026, the University of Otago will mark a significant milestone: 150 years of teacher education in Otago, the birthplace of formal teacher training in Aotearoa New Zealand. It began in 1876 with the opening of the Dunedin Training College on Moray Pl. Over the decades, teacher education in Otago evolved through various forms and names – becoming the University of Otago College of Education / Te Kura Ākau Taitoka Education in 2007. To honour this legacy, a weekend of celebrations is planned for 16-18 October 2026. Further information to come in 2026.

75 years of the School of Physical Education Sport and Exercise Sciences



The University of Otago's School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2024, with reunion events held from 28-30 March 2025.

Yes, I would like to support the University of Otago and its ongoing programmes. Your gift can be directed to any one of the following areas:

- ☐ Scholarships
- ☐ Research
- ☐ Pūtea Tautoko Student Hardship Fund
- ☐ Where the need is greatest
- ☐ Other

Amount of gift
☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$1000
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Account Name: University of Otago Foundation Trust
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☐ I would like information about including a gift to the University of Otago in my will.
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In the flume

Professor Jim Cotter checks the core body temperatures of Josh Bird and Kristine Zipfel during the filming of Discovery's *Titanic: 25 Years Later* with James Cameron documentary in the University of Otago's flume.

Photo: National Geographic/Spencer Stoner

It has hosted Oscar winners and Olympic champions, been instrumental in studies on water safety, and has even been used in the analysis of traditional Māori fishing lures. The University of Otago's flume is a hidden taoka – quietly powering cutting-edge research across disciplines.

PART AQUATIC TREADMILL, PART WATERY WIND TUNNEL, the flume in Otago's School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences is a small but mighty piece of research equipment. Tucked away in the school's basement, the 11m-long flume's powerful pumps can create flow speeds of up to 3.6m per second, or 13kph. For comparison's sake, the world's fastest swimmers can reach about 2.3m per second.

Opened in 1997, it quickly became a magnet for research and instruction.

Oscar winning film director James Cameron has used it to recreate a scene from *Titanic* in the hope of settling an ongoing conspiracy argument, while Olympic champion Michael Phelps has trialled high-tech swim suits in it.

Professor of Motor Learning Chris Button says it is unique.

"Other flumes around the world are wider or have been built for physical therapy purposes rather than biomechanics purposes, which is what we made ours for.

"We have this long, tunnel-like section that swimmers or boats can be placed in with a smooth flow of water. Others, because of their design, tend to be more turbulent and don't give the same smooth, river-like flow."



Some of the varied uses of the flume include (from left) allowing swimmers and their coaches to analyse strokes; testing the energy expenditure demands of surf lifesaving techniques; and how babies respond to water when crawling down a ramp compared to an edge.

Technical team manager Nigel Barrett says it has four fixed cameras and other angles, and equipment can be added as needed.

"That gives us the ability to do biomechanics or technique analysis, but it also makes it useful for more left-field projects."

One of the first big projects it attracted – one that went on for several years under great secrecy – involved Speedo's world-leading development of the 'shark skin' full-body swimsuit.

Speedo supplied special mannequins to mount in the water so they could measure the surface drag and lift in different designs. The flume even hosted secret sessions with the Speedo swim squad – effectively the American swim team – including Michael Phelps before he made Olympic history.

Button says the contentious suits were eventually banned.

"We were a victim of our own success, really. They were so good that cages were rattled left, right and centre."

One of the great strengths of the flume is the ability to use laboratory equipment to gather a whole range of biometric data – such as core temperature, heart rate and metabolic gas analysis – while someone is swimming or even paddling a kayak.

A range of swimming studies has been run in the flume, including World Aquatics sponsored research establishing a maximum hot water temperature for endurance swimming.

This involved hanging a light rig over the flume, providing four kilowatts of light heat, while someone swam below in 40-degree water.

At the other extreme, a cold-water immersion study involved dropping people into the flume in icy water to observe gasp reflex, brain blood flow, respiratory dynamics and heart rate.

"At the time, about half of New Zealand

drownings involved unintentional immersion when people unexpectedly fell into the water – off boats or rocks – and got cold shock," Button explains.

"We wanted to analyse how long they could cope in the cold water. We monitored them for the first few minutes just treading water, then asked them to try and swim as far as they could. They didn't last long – about 10-15 minutes was all anyone could manage."

The study involved about 100 people and has helped inform water safety policy changes. This research was followed by a study on treading water and whether people were using efficient techniques, using video analysis.

Other water safety-related research included a study by Brazilian student Carolina Burnay, who looked at whether infants would approach water down a ramp but avoid it when looking over the edge.

"We have some pretty convincing data showing that, when there is a ramp there, they tend to crawl down it because they appear intrigued by the water. But when there is a drop, they are more cautious of falling in," Button says.

Other studies included testing low drag paint finishes for rowing skiffs, and Marine Science researchers have used the flume to examine the drag of kelp to help understand how far it will drift in ocean currents.

One of the most unusual jobs was for Discovery's *Titanic: 25 Years Later* with James Cameron documentary in which director James Cameron set out to recreate the scene where Rose floated on a door panel while Jack slowly froze in the water.

Online conspiracists had suggested they both could have floated on the door and survived, so Cameron tested this by having two age, gender and size-matched people enter icy cold water, with a replica door, while hooked up to gear to measure for hypothermia.

In short, several different scenarios were



Flume Manager Nigel Barrett and Archaeology student Bradley McDonald with replica Māori fishing lures to be tested in the flume.

Photo: Graham Warman

worked, they concluded survival for both would have been unlikely.

One of the most recent uses saw Archaeology honours student Bradley McDonald evaluate the performance of replica Māori fishing lures.

With help from Professor Steven Mills from Computer Science, McDonald laser scanned lures found at the Waihemo Shag River Mouth archaeological site to create 3D digital models.

Archaeology Programme lab manager Phil Latham then made the replicas using authentic, locally sourced materials.

Clipping the replicas to a fixed line in the flume and carefully raising the water speed, they found the lures appeared to mimic fish locomotion, and even the larger ones could have worked behind a two-person waka.

While the potential future uses for the flume remain varied, Button says running it does have a financial cost, so they are always looking for support and new commercial opportunities to get the most out of this unique asset.

MARK WRIGHT

WATCH IT:
Titanic: 25 Years Later with James Cameron is available to stream on Disney+.



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