

He Kete Kōrero



WELLINGTON

University of Otago, Wellington Newsletter | Summer 2021

Dean's welcome

Tēnā koutou katoa

Welcome to the Summer 2021 issue of He Kete Kōrero.

It's been a turbulent year, full of many challenges. These last four months have been particularly demanding. In addition to a national COVID-19 lockdown, we have been required to close our main academic building, losing access in the process to approximately 75 per cent of our office spaces, 90 per cent of our teaching spaces and almost all of our laboratory spaces. As information on our building situation emerged, it became increasingly clear this was not going to be a short-term problem. We are now still in the early days of setting up new facilities and new ways of working, with a campus that will be split across multiple sites in 2022. However, despite the size and complexity of these challenges, I have full confidence in our ability to work together to solve them. I appreciate this has been a very challenging time for everyone and I'm very grateful for all your hard work, collegiality and perseverance.

Despite these challenges, the University of Otago Wellington has continued to flourish. I greatly enjoyed celebrating our successes with you this year at our Student Award Ceremony, *Hui Whakanui Tauira*, and at our Staff Appreciation Event. My most enthusiastic congratulations to **Rebecca Grainger**, who was promoted this year to Professor; **Michael Keall**, who was promoted to Research Professor; **Sarah Gordon**, **Fiona Graham**, **Mark Huthwaite**, and **Meredith Perry**, who were promoted to Associate Professor; and **Tristram Ingham** and **Jason Gurney**, who were promoted to Research Associate Professor. A very warm congratulations also to **Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman** and to all her team at He Kāinga Oranga, who won New Zealand's top science prize this year, the 2021 Rutherford Medal from the Royal Society Te Apārangi. University of Otago Wellington staff continue, as ever, to get the grants, publish the papers, win the awards, graduate new researchers and develop new physiotherapists, radiation therapists and doctors for Aotearoa's health workforce.

I look forward to seeing you all again in the New Year and wish you all the best for a relaxing festive season with friends and family. You deserve it.

Meri Kirihimete

PROFESSOR
WILLIAM LEVACK
Manutaki | Dean and
Head of Campus



Celebrating student success

Wellington campus staff and students gathered at the Dominion Museum Building last month for a wonderful finale to the year, a *Hui Whakanui Tauira*, which celebrated the significant achievements of students over the past year.

The hui provided the opportunity to farewell the graduating medical class and radiation therapy students as well as to celebrate postgraduate and undergraduate student prize winners.

Acting Vice-Chancellor **Professor Helen Nicholson** was guest speaker at the event and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Health Sciences, **Professor Paul Brunton** also attended.

A reading of the medical graduates' oath for the trainee intern class was added to proceedings after this year's Dunedin graduation ceremonies were cancelled. **Dr Erik Andersen** led the reading of the oath in Te Reo Māori and **Professor Dawn Elder** led the reading of the oath in English.

The Mace was carried in by student **Samuel Lloyd**, who has just completed his trainee intern year, and the honour of wearing the kākahu was bestowed on graduating medical students, **Grace Clarricoats** and **Kealey-Rei Sanford** in recognition of student leadership.

Graduating medical and radiation therapy students were acknowledged and presented with leaving gifts by the Dean, **Professor William Levack**.

Because attendance was limited to allow for distancing in COVID-19 Alert Level 2 the hui was livestreamed to staff, friends and whānau who could not be there in person, with more than 100 people tuning in.



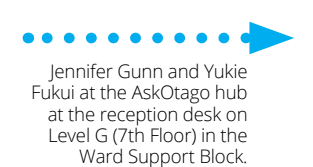
Changing spaces

Following the closure of a large part of our campus in August as a result of a newly-identified earthquake risk, new campus spaces have opened up in the Ward Support Block and at Massey University.

Photographer Luke Pilkinton-Ching has taken this series of photos of staff settling in to work in their new accommodation.



Professor William Levack at his desk in the Ward Support Block.



Jennifer Gunn and Yukie Fukui at the AskOtago hub at the reception desk on Level G (7th Floor) in the Ward Support Block.



Julie Cooper and Fiona Taylor sharing an office at Massey.



Housing and Health researchers meeting at Massey.



Rachel Hjert and Olivia Phillipson in their Ward Support Block office.



The Otago entrance at Massey University.

Lottery grants

Researchers on the Wellington campus have won Lottery Health Research Grants for work on a wide range of areas from improving access to sexual health services to the nature of e-gaming among children.

Dr Sally Rose (Department of Primary Health Care & General Practice) receives \$118,339 to work on improving access to services for sexual health using strategies co-designed by Māori and Pacific young people.

Dr Moira Smith (Department of Public Health) receives \$90,410 to conduct research into the nature and extent of children's e-gaming, its convergence with gambling and impact on children's wellbeing.

Dr Matthew Jenkins (Department of Psychological Medicine) receives \$86,033 for work to co-design a healthy lifestyle intervention for people experiencing first episode psychosis.

Associate Professor Diane Kenwright (Department of Pathology and Molecular Medicine) receives \$33,320 to purchase an Abacus dx Milestone KOS microwave tissue processor.

Dr Kirsty Danielson (Department of Surgery and Anaesthesia) receives \$17,387 to purchase an Enhanced Small Particle detection module to characterize small particles using flow cytometry.

Dr Tim Chambers (Department of Public Health) receives \$12,604 for a nitrate sensor to do community testing of water supplies to produce an audit of nitrate levels as part of research into the health impact of nitrates on health.

Booking your space

Staff and postgraduate students are able to book work stations in Block 7, Level D at Massey University through **Resource Booker**. Please take your University of Otago swipe card to access our offices in Block 7, Block 5A, and the Massey University Library. If you have difficulties with swipe card access please email phillip.kane@otago.ac.nz.

There are 46 desks available for booking, including one room for Zoom. All desks have a monitor, desktop computer and keyboard and most have web cams. There is also an 18-person bookable boardroom-style meeting room, which has videoconferencing and AV installed.

Internet access is via Eduroam, which is just like accessing the University Wi-Fi on one of our existing campuses.

There is a small kitchen, and staff can visit Massey University's Tussock Bar and Café. Information about parking, the café and maps can be found on [Massey University's website](https://www.massey.ac.nz).



Top research honour for housing research

The Royal Society Te Apārangi has awarded its prestigious Rutherford Medal to **Distinguished Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman** CNZM QSO FRSNZ and researchers at the He Kāinga Oranga - Housing and Health Research Programme for their research into the impact of housing interventions on health and wellbeing.

The medal is awarded to Professor Howden-Chapman and her colleagues on the Wellington campus, **Professor Julian Crane**, **Associate Professor Michael Keall**, and **Associate Professor Nevil Pierse**, as well as to the wider research team.

The society paid tribute to Professor Howden-Chapman's inspirational leadership and said He Kāinga Oranga's research had demonstrated how straightforward improvements to cold, damp housing could significantly reduce rates of infectious, respiratory and cardiovascular disease and deaths, particularly for children and older people.

Professor Howden-Chapman said she was deeply honoured to receive the award for research that He Kāinga Oranga had carried out on housing, energy and health over more than two decades.

The University's Acting Vice-Chancellor **Professor Helen Nicholson** said she was delighted to see the tremendous contribution that Professor Howden-Chapman and her group had made to the field of housing and health being recognised.

"Their work has made a real difference to the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders."

The Rutherford Medal is awarded annually and comes with \$100,000 in prize money from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE).

Communicating the science

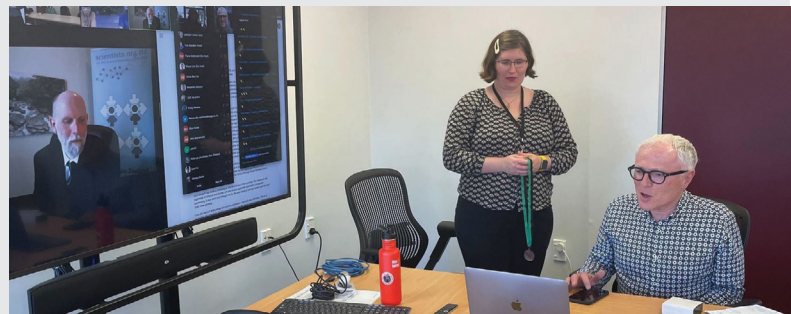
Department of Public Health **Professor Michael Baker** MNZM has been awarded the New Zealand Association of Scientists (NZAS) Cranwell Medal for science communication for 2021.

The award was presented by NZAS Co-Presidents Professor Troy Baisden (via Zoom) and Dr Lucy Stewart in person in Wellington, following the association's online conference and AGM last month.

Professor Baisden said Professor Baker was among New Zealand's most dedicated and effective science communicators and was passionate about opportunities to organise society in ways that promote health, equity and sustainability.

It is the second year in a row the Cranwell Medal has been awarded to a University of Otago, Wellington academic, with Associate Dean (Pacific), **Dr Dianne Sika-Paotonu**, winning the 2020 award.

Professor Baker's work has also been recognised by the New Zealand Federation of Multicultural Councils, which last month presented him with the Ann Dysart Distinguished Service Award. The award was made for exemplary service and passion that has made a visible and positive difference to the lives of all New Zealanders.



NZAS Co-Presidents Professor Troy Baisden (on screen) and Dr Lucy Stewart present the Cranwell Medal to Professor Baker.

Professor Baker has also been named a semi-finalist for New Zealander of the Year in the 2022 Kiwibank New Zealander of the Year Ngā Tohu Pou Kōhure o Aotearoa awards in recognition of his reassuring and measured communication during the COVID-19 pandemic and his influence on Government policy.

He recently became a founding member of the *World Health Network*, a global coalition of more than 350 public health experts and citizens dedicated to the worldwide elimination of COVID-19.



Gold medal for services to pathology

Professor Brett Delahunt ONZM KStJ FRSNZ from the Department of Pathology and Molecular Medicine has been awarded a unique Gold Medal from the New Zealand Society of Pathologists in recognition of his 41 years of service.

The Gold Medal was presented by the President of the New Zealand Society of Pathologists, Dr Peter Bethwaite, at a special reception held at Bellamy's at Parliament last month which was attended by senior members of the profession.

Dr Bethwaite paid tribute to Professor Delahunt's decades-long service to the Society, including his 10 years as President, and in particular his efforts to resurrect the Society to the status it has now as the professional body for pathologists in New Zealand.

The presentation coincides with another milestone for Professor Delahunt, who celebrates 25 years as a Professor this year. His long and distinguished career includes having more than 500 academic publications to his name.



Dr Mark Huthwaite plays David Bowie.



The cast of Cinderella (left to right) Jaslyn Heaphy (ITS), Fiona Mathieson (Psychological Medicine), Jo Edson (Paediatrics and Child Health), Associate Professor Ben Gray as Cinderella (Primary Health Care) and Dean Professor William Levack.

A song and dance at staff awards

It was a time to celebrate when academic and professional staff met up for the annual campus staff appreciation awards at the Dominion Museum Building at the beginning of December.

Awards were presented for the embodiment of University of Otago staff values Manaakitanga, Pono, Māhirahira, Whakawhanaungatanga, as well as for leadership, research, teaching and service.

Acting Vice-Chancellor, **Professor Helen Nicholson** and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Health Sciences, **Professor Paul Brunton** travelled from Dunedin to speak to staff at the event.

Dean and Head of Campus **Professor William Levack** said while the awards were non-monetary they were given with a lot of aroha.

“The staff awards provide us with an opportunity to celebrate our success and reflect on the achievements of our fabulous team members.”

When the formal part of the event was complete, it was time for staff to showcase their skills on stage. Professor Levack began by leading a theatrical performance of Cinderella, Associate Dean Student Affairs **Dr Mark Huthwaite** brought his fabulous David Bowie tribute act to the stage for the final time, and Rautaki Hononga Māori – Māori Strategic Framework Project Manager **Toa Waaka** celebrated diversity, leading staff in Swedish and Zulu action songs.

Watch more in this [video](#) of the event from photographer/videographer Luke Pilkinton-Ching.

HRC support for post grad research

The Health Research Council of New Zealand has announced funding for postgraduate research on the Wellington campus in areas ranging from traumatic brain injury to Māori attitudes towards vaccination.

The funding comes through the HRC's annual Career Development Awards, which support the country's most promising emerging researchers.

Zara Mansoor, a clinical psychologist, receives a Clinical Research Training Fellowship for her PhD research evaluating parenting programme *Tuning into Teens* being run in local Child Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Dr Alice Rogan, an Emergency Medicine Registrar at Wellington Hospital and a Research Fellow in the Department of Surgery and Anaesthesia, has been awarded a Clinical Research Training Fellowship for her PhD research investigating the use of blood biomarkers to improve the clinical pathways for adult patients who present to emergency departments with traumatic brain injuries (TBI).

Grace Davies receives a Māori Health Masters Scholarship to investigate Māori attitudes towards vaccination in Aotearoa, particularly among those living in a Māori pa community in Porirua.

Joanna Minster has been granted a Pacific Health PhD Scholarship to investigate the relationship between mental wellbeing, identity and a sense of belonging in Pacific peoples through a public health and psychological medicine lens.

Academic promotions

Academic staff from the Departments of Medicine and Public Health on the Wellington campus have been promoted to the role of Professor.

The new professors are: **Rebecca Grainger** from the Department of Medicine, a rheumatologist whose research focuses on addressing clinically important questions about arthritis and immune-inflammatory conditions, and on the use of technology in health care and medical education; and **Michael Keall** from the Department of Public Health, who has been promoted to Research Professor, and works on the health, environmental and safety implications of housing, urban design and transport.

The promotions were announced by Acting Vice-Chancellor **Professor Helen Nicholson**, who said they acknowledged the academics' dedication and commitment.

“Not only do these promotions honour these individuals and highlight their work, they emphasise the range of academic talent and expertise we have at Otago.”

Four academics were promoted to the position of Associate Professor: **Sarah Gordon** and **Mark Huthwaite** from the Department of Psychological Medicine; **Fi Graham**, from the Department of Medicine; and **Meredith Perry**, from the School of Physiotherapy; while **Tristram Ingham** from the Department of Medicine and **Jason Gurney** from the Department of Public Health were promoted to Research Associate Professor.

The promotions take effect from 1 February, 2022.



Evening talks

A series of five evening talks will be held in Wellington from mid-February to present the latest research on some of the big questions in public health, including health equity, cancer, infectious diseases, the Smokefree Action Plan, healthy housing and sustainability.

The series will provide a chance to gather together (COVID-19 permitting) and start 2022 with some fresh thinking.

For more information, keep an eye on otago.ac.nz/uowsummerschool or email fran.wright@otago.ac.nz to be sent further details once confirmed.

For more news, visit our news page otago.ac.nz/wellington/news and follow us on Twitter @OtagoWellington