

Farewell to Vice-Chancellor

The Wellington campus held a poroporoaki morning tea in March to farewell outgoing Vice-Chancellor **Professor Harlene Hayne** where she was presented with gifts from the mana whenua of Wellington, Ngāti Toa, and Pacific Island artisans of the community to take with her to Australia.

The taonga taketake – cultural gifts – were given to Professor Hayne to pass on to First Nation peoples of the Nyungar nation of the Aborigine and the Torres Strait Islanders at Curtin University in Perth, where she will take up her new role.

Toa Waaka, Rautaki Hononga Māori, Māori Strategic Framework Project Manager, presented Professor Hayne with two kete matauranga, blue and gold hand woven flax baskets containing treasures in the form of specially designed cards featuring whakatauki proverbs.

Associate Dean (Pacific) **Dr Dianne Sika-Paotonu** presented Professor Hayne with a decorative Tapa or Ngatu (in Tongan), on behalf of Pacific staff, students and wider Pacific communities, to be gifted to the indigenous people of Perth.



Above: Dr Sika-Paotonu presents Professor Hayne with the Tapa/Ngatu.
Left: The kete matauranga.

Spotlight on new staff



Emma O'Loughlin has begun work as a lecturer in the Department of Surgery and Anaesthesia. Ms O'Loughlin completed a BSc (Hons) in Physiotherapy at Trinity College Dublin. She completed rotations in Geriatrics, General Medicine, Neurology and Sports Medicine at Changi General Hospital in Singapore before moving to the US, where she was the physiotherapist for the 3,000-mile

bicycle race 'Race Across America' in 2015 and 2016. She then headed to Switzerland where she worked in musculoskeletal private practice with skiers in the off-piste resort of Verbier.

Ms O'Loughlin moved to New Zealand in 2017, and currently works as a clinical advisor with ACC. She is also completing a PhD on the impact of a female-specific anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction rehabilitation programme. She has a strong interest in including female participants in her research and investigating female-specific prevention, causation and management of common musculoskeletal conditions.

Ms O'Loughlin is a running and multi-sport enthusiast and since moving to New Zealand has completed the Coast to Coast adventure race, the Motatapu Ultra marathon, the Wellington Urban Ultra marathon and the 85km Old Ghost Ultra marathon. Last Christmas, she spent 30 days cycling from Cape Reinga to Bluff with her partner.



Dr Aaron Stevens has taken on a role as Senior Lecturer in the Department of Pathology and Molecular Medicine. Dr Stevens gained his PhD in Genetics at the Gene Structure and Function Lab at the University of Canterbury, where he investigated abnormal structures that can form in DNA, called G-quadruplexes. At a postdoctoral level, he focused on chemical

modifications that are added onto DNA (cytosine methylation) and how this changes in children with ADHD.

He is currently investigating how oxidants generated by immune cells during inflammation can influence patterns of DNA methylation, something which appears to be a key aspect in the link between inflammation and cancer development.

Dr Stevens moved to Wellington three years ago, so his wife, Jess Stevens, a freshwater ecologist, could take up a role with the QEII National Trust. Together they spend their spare time skiing, tramping, fishing, surfing, and generally enjoying the outdoors. Their favourite part of moving to Wellington has been enjoying the Tararua and ski touring on Mt Ruapehu.

Summer research

Forty-five students from across the University have taken part in research projects on the Wellington campus over summer, tackling a wide range of projects, from researching green transport solutions to working with the Ministry of Health contributing to research on the COVID-19 response.

The students have been supervised by 34 academic staff, and have worked at the University's Wellington, Dunedin and Christchurch campuses, at Wellington, Hutt and Palmerston North Hospitals, at THINK Hauora in Palmerston North and in the Ministry of Health in Wellington.

Associate Dean (Research) **Dr Sara Filoche** says the 10-week annual programme provides invaluable learning experiences for the students, with this year's programme culminating in a poster showcase, attended by sponsors, students and their friends and whānau. "This offered a fabulous opportunity for everyone to see the great work the students had achieved over the summer."

Dr Filoche acknowledges all the different funding sources and the generous funding from the 16 external sponsors this year which make the programme possible.

"We weren't sure if the programme could go ahead this year, but it was a huge success, thanks to the contributions of lots of people, especially **Julie Cooper** and **Dr Rachael Mason**, who managed it all."



Fellowship for outstanding work

Professor Janet Hoek from the Department of Public Health has been elected a Fellow of the Society for Research into Nicotine and Tobacco (SRNT) in recognition of outstanding contributions to the field of nicotine and tobacco research and services to the society.

Professor Hoek co-directs the University's ASPIRE 2025 Research Centre and currently leads Marsden and Health Research Council (HRC) project grants as well as co-directing an HRC programme and a Cancer Society programme.

Her work on standardised packaging and e-cigarettes has attracted international attention, informed regulation, and identified opportunities to extend current policies.

He Kete Kōrero



WELLINGTON

University of Otago, Wellington Newsletter | Autumn 2021

Dean's welcome

Tēnā koutou katoa

Welcome to the Autumn 2021 issue of He Kete Kōrero.

It has been a real joy to welcome students on to campus for the 2021 academic year. Whether you are in the final year of study in medicine, just starting out in a degree in radiation therapy, or exploring new fields through postgraduate study, we hope you will find a home here and enjoy with us all that Wellington has to offer.

We have an increasing diversity of students joining us each year, and in particular increasing numbers of Māori and Pacific students. We highly value this diversity, as it is vital for producing the health workforce that Aotearoa needs. Each Māori or Pacific student who graduates as a doctor or radiation therapist or in another health profession is a 'win' for our country's health system.

Students are also a large part of our campus life. I was hugely impressed by the work produced by our summer research students, who worked on projects over the Christmas holidays. It was a delight to have alumni with us to learn about their work at a special poster showcase at the end of January.

It is with a tremendous sense of pride that we celebrate the many achievements of our staff, who have been recognised nationally and internationally for their work in diverse fields ranging from reducing the harm from tobacco to work on healthy housing, mental health and COVID-19.

I'm excited by the possibilities offered by the University's increased focus on sustainability. With the challenges posed to our planet from climate change and massive change on the agenda for the health sector over the coming year, our University's leadership and research has never been more needed.

Ngā mihi nui

PROFESSOR
WILLIAM LEVACK
Manutaki | Dean and
Head of Campus



Australasian award for World of Difference

The work of the World of Difference service user education and research group has been recognised with a Lived Experience Leadership Award from The Mental Health Strategies (TheMHS) Learning Network Service and Program Awards.

World of Difference, run through the Department of Psychological Medicine on the Wellington campus, is an education and research programme aimed at ending discrimination and promoting recovery, inclusion and respect for those who experience mental distress. It is fully led and delivered by those with lived experience.

World of Difference Programme Lead **Dr Sarah Gordon** accepted the award in a virtual ceremony in February and says it was a privilege to do so on behalf of all of those with lived experience who are involved with the programme's work.

"The contribution of each and every one of us is critical to our success. It is an honour to have had our work recognised in this way."

TheMHS Learning Network aims to improve mental health services in Australia and New Zealand. Their Lived Experience Leadership Award celebrates services or programmes where significant leadership is provided by those who have personally experienced a mental illness/unhealth/ill health or unwellness.



World of Difference team members, allies and supporters pictured (back row, l to r): Rachel Tester, Steve Holloway, Tracey Gardiner, Fiona Mathieson and Francis Goodstadt; (front row, l to r): Clarissa Chandrasen, Jeanna Thomson, Sarah Gordon and Jess Senior.

MONDAY MORNING WAIATA AND KARAKIA

Join fellow staff and students in the Level C lobby on Mondays at 9:15am for waiata and karakia to start the week with lifted spirits and a feeling of unity. Kupu (words) available at reception.

A bridge between students and staff

The Wellington Health Professional Students' Association (WHPSA) is moving beyond issues of medical education, setting up a new Student Staff Committee (SSC) to discuss broader issues of student wellbeing.

President **Morgan Chambers**, a Trainee Intern on the Wellington campus, says the association, which was set up to represent medical students, had since grown to include Physiotherapy and Radiation Therapy students.

"We recognised we shouldn't be restricting our meetings to medical education; often other matters arise relating to student wellbeing, cultural competency, campus facilities, or anything really!"

The new committee will include all the association's council members, as well as the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, **Dr Mark Huthwaite**, and Student Affairs Administrator **Ann Thornton**, with the Dean, **Professor William Levack**, attending as required.

The committee will also have an Advanced Learning in Medicine Subcommittee for matters pertaining solely to education. This will include the association's Education Representatives, the Associate Dean, Medical Education, **Associate Professor Rebecca Grainger** and Education Advisor **Dr Tehmina Gladman**.

Ms Chambers says both committees will be chaired by WHPSA council members.

"With our council increasing their leadership, we hope the committee will grow further, providing a platform for staff-student communication and collaborative development on our Wellington campus."



Morgan Chambers

Street clean-up

Department of Public Health PhD student **Zhang Wei** has launched a clean-up operation, mobilising staff and students to collect rubbish from outside the Wellington campus at lunch times.

The Sustainability Starts from Streets (3S initiative) – Nā te Huarahi ka Huanui was launched with support from Head of Department **Professor Louise Signal** last month.

During the first session, five people from the Department of Public Health donned protective gloves donated by the Keep New Zealand Beautiful organisation to collect plastic wrappers, cigarette butts and other rubbish.

Zhang Wei is hoping staff and students from other departments of the Wellington campus will join in on the 30-minute clean-up sessions, which run most Thursdays between 1pm and 1.30pm. Those interested can meet the team at Level C reception just before the start time.



Department of Public Health staff Professor Louise Signal, Shan Valiyara, Kerry Hurley and Fiona Taylor with Zhang Wei.

Boot camp for thesis writers

A series of boot camps are being held on the Wellington campus to encourage and support postgraduate students to 'shut up and write' as they work on their PhD and Masters theses.

The boot camps are being run by PhD students **Carla Strubbia** (Department of Medicine) and **Ryan Sixtus** (Department of Paediatrics & Child Health) and are open to all postgraduate students enrolled at the University of Otago, Wellington.

The one-day sessions offer students the opportunity to work alongside fellow postgrad students, and to meet other students who may be 'hidden away' in different departments, or doing research offsite, such as those based at NIWA.

The boot camps are held every second month in the student study space on Level C, with lunch, coffee and snacks on offer in C07. The next boot camp session is scheduled for Saturday 1 May. Book in advance to secure a spot by emailing carla.strubbia@postgrad.otago.ac.nz or ryan.sixtus@otago.ac.nz.



Pasifika Scholarship

Medical student **Sophie Papali'i** has been awarded a scholarship from the Pasifika Medical Association (PMA) for her final year of study on the Wellington campus.

Sophie was awarded one of the four Papali'i Dr Semisi Ma'ia'i University of Otago Scholarships, named in honour of a lifetime member of the PMA.

The PMA scholarships will provide support for two secondary school students, 10 medical students and one medical practitioner this year. They are awarded to those who have shown a passion to improve the health and wellbeing of Pacific people in New Zealand and in the Pacific region.

They were presented at a ceremony at the Cordis Hotel in Auckland in December last year, which was attended by scholarship recipients and their families. The keynote address was given by Dr Lupe Taumoepeau, who is of Tongan descent and is New Zealand's only female vascular surgeon.



Dr Lupe Taumoepeau and Sophie Papali'i.

New Year Honours

Researchers on the Wellington campus have been recognised in the 2021 New Year Honours List for exceptional services in the field of public health.

Sesquicentennial Distinguished Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman QSO has been made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (CNZM) for services to public health, while **Professor Michael Baker** has been made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to public health science.



Professor Howden-Chapman is co-director of He Kāinga Oranga/ Housing and Health Research Programme, funded by the Health Research Council for over two decades, and director of the New Zealand Centre for Sustainable Cities.

She has been honoured for her work researching the

links between urban housing, health and wellbeing. Her research on housing, conducted in partnership with local communities, has had a significant influence on standards for housing and energy policy in New Zealand and internationally. She chaired the World Health Organization Housing and Health Guideline Development Group, which launched new guidelines in 2018.

Professor Howden-Chapman says she is delighted to receive the honour, an indication that her work in public health is making a difference.

"It shows the importance of healthy housing is being recognised."



Professor Baker is a member of the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group and has been at the forefront of New Zealand's response to the pandemic, supplying expert advice to the Government, conducting research, and providing information directly to the public and the media.

He wrote what is almost certainly the world's first COVID-19 elimination strategy and has published research on the pandemic in major international journals, including the New England Journal of Medicine, The Lancet and The BMJ.

Professor Baker sees the award as recognition for the wider team of researchers who came together on the Wellington campus to work on the pandemic response.

"I think we've made a difference, and I am hoping our collaboration on COVID-19 may provide impetus for a future where scientists work even more closely with political leaders to help manage other major health and environment challenges."

Professor Baker has been a Professor of Public Health since 2013 and is Director of the Health Environment Infection Research Unit (HEIRU). He is a member of the New Zealand Science Media Centre's Advisory Board and the World Health Organization's Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella Elimination.

Prime Minister's Prize

Professor Michael Baker has won the 2020 Prime Minister's Science Communication Prize for his work providing expert commentary on COVID-19.

Professor Baker has been New Zealand's 'go-to' science expert on the virus since the earliest days of the pandemic, doing more than 2,000 media interviews since January 2020, including more than 100 with international media.

University of Otago Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), **Professor Richard Blaikie**, says the University is exceptionally proud of Professor Baker's achievements in translating his expert knowledge into practical and accessible information to inform the Government and people of Aotearoa in a time of crisis.

The Prime Minister's Science Prize comes with \$75,000 and the majority of this money will go to support the establishment of a Public Health Communication Centre to be based in the Department of Public Health.

Professor Baker was also recently named Wellingtonian of the Year for his contribution to shaping New Zealand's successful science-based COVID-19 response.



Research, Science and Innovation Minister Megan Woods and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern presenting the award to Professor Baker. Photo courtesy of The Prime Minister's Science Prizes Secretariat.

West Coast bound

The University has opened a new interprofessional learning programme based in Greymouth which gives senior health students the chance to learn about each other's roles while gaining clinical experience in their own professions.

The five-week programme funded by the Ministry of Health will cater for about 50 students a year from a wide range of health professions. The students are in their final years of study for degrees in dentistry, dietetics, medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, oral health, pharmacy, physiotherapy and social work at the University of Otago, Otago Polytechnic, the Ara Institute of Canterbury and NMIT, the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology.

The programme is based at the new Te Whare Ako learning hub which has been established in the grounds of Te Nikau Hospital & Health Centre, with the students on clinical placements in community practices and clinics in Greymouth and Hokitika during their stay.

Interprofessional Programme Director **Professor Sue Pullon** says the students will be supported both by clinical supervisors and by three highly qualified local staff – Programme Leader **Dr Fiona Doolan-Noble**, Deputy Programme Leader **Sue Donaldson** and Kaiwhakahaere Tari (Programme Coordinator) **Megan Tahapeehi**.

The West Coast programme is modelled on the University's Tairāwhiti Interprofessional Education programme, which has been running in Gisborne and Wairoa since 2012.



L to R: Sue Donaldson, Deputy Leader of the West Coast programme with students Lucy Rowe, Amanda Cotterrell, Josh Levin, Kimberley McAuley, Anna Watkins and Rois Gracia, Programme Coordinator Megan Tahapeehi and Programme Leader Dr Fiona Doolan-Noble.