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Waipapa
Taumata Rau
**University
of Auckland**

UniNews



TRAVELLING TOGETHER

David Lines on the joys of
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UNDER THE DOME

Past meets present at the
Gus Fisher Gallery

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A selection of University staff and students who provided expert commentary in the media recently. Let us know! Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz.



Nicola Gaston

WEIRD METAL

Earth.com reported on research by Professor Nicola Gaston and her team into gallium, which turns liquid at unusually low temperatures. “Thirty years of literature on the structure of liquid gallium has had a fundamental assumption that is evidently not true,” she said of the metal’s atomic structure at different temperatures.
Link: tinyurl.com/gaston-earth-gallium



Chris Hall

CELLS HAVE CIRCADIAN CLOCKS

Disruption of our body clocks has been shown to reduce our ability to fight infections. Now researchers in FMHS have found that immune cells have circadian clocks. Lead researcher Dr Chris Hall told *The Times Australia* the cells are activated by daylight when their host is more likely to encounter bacterial infections.
Link: tinyurl.com/hall-times-australia



Thomas Lacombe

AI BOOM TIMES

Dr Thomas Lacombe, the director of the Master of Artificial Intelligence programme, now in its second year, told RNZ that student numbers had more than tripled from last year to about 100. Some students will go on to create AI tools for companies – and some will have jobs that don’t yet exist, he said.
Link: tinyurl.com/lacombe-rnz-ai



Enrique del Rey Castillo

ADDRESSING CONCRETE’S COST

Dr Enrique del Rey Castillo (Engineering and Design) has spent seven years developing a more sustainable, low-carbon concrete that draws on Roman engineering and mātauranga Māori. He told RNZ that while concrete is indispensable, its substantial environmental costs must be addressed.
Link: tinyurl.com/castillo-rnz-concrete



Paora Sharples

REFLECTING ON MOKO KANOHI

What makes moko kanohi unique? Professional Teaching Fellow Paora Sharples (Arts and Education) spoke to RNZ about facial moko, following Winston Peters’ reference to Rawiri Waititi’s mataora as ‘scribbles’. “It represents our history, our whakapapa, our knowledge. It’s key to our very identity and existence,” he said.
Link: tinyurl.com/sharples-rnz-mataora



Stephen Hoadley

RIISING GLOBAL TENSIONS

Retired Honorary Associate Professor Stephen Hoadley (Politics and International Relations) featured on Waatea News and bFM discussing the escalating situation in the Middle East, including the US strike on Iran, and on *NZ Herald’s* The Front Page podcast (link below) on tensions between New Zealand and the Cook Islands.
Link: tinyurl.com/hoadley-nzherald-cooks

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Something to share? The next *UniNews* is August 2025, copy due 15 July.
Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz

For the fortnightly Whāimōhio The Loop newsletter, email: staff-comms@auckland.ac.nz.
Deadlines are on the intranet under News, Events and Notices, The Loop.

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UNIVERSITY LAUNCHES ITS FIRST PACIFIC STRATEGY

Ala o le Moana captures the strategic priorities and identifies outcomes for its Pacific learners, academics, staff and communities.

For the first time in its 142-year history, the University has a Pacific strategy, which was launched at an event at the Fale Pasifika on 9 June.

Called *Ala o le Moana*, meaning ‘pathways of the ocean’ in Gagana Sāmoa, its title references Pacific peoples’ journeys across oceanic expanses, highlighting their deep history and navigational expertise.

The University has around 4,000 Pacific students and nearly 400 Pacific staff, and the strategy sets out a framework to amplify the strengths of Pacific learners, academic and professional staff, and communities. The framework, in turn, aims to achieve the outcomes set out in the University’s overarching strategies, *Taumata Teitei*, *Vision 2030* and *Strategic Plan 2025*.

“This strategy is more than a document – it’s a directed flightpath for transformation,” says Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific, Professor Jemaima Tiatia-Siau.

“It’s about creating a future where Pacific learners and leaders can thrive, with an approach that recognises and celebrates their identities, values and languages, while also honouring their invaluable and unique contributions and excellence.”

At its heart, the strategy, which covers the years 2025–2030, outlines five strategic ‘flightpaths’, or priorities.

These include advancing Pacific student success; honouring relationships with iwi Māori and other groups to progress the University’s overall vision and strategy; enriching Pacific representation, leadership and visibility; elevating Pacific-led research; and nurturing and strengthening Pacific communities.

These priorities correlate with five outcomes, which would position the University as a place that fosters Pacific excellence in student achievement, collaboration and partnership across New Zealand and the Pacific, and impactful research contributions.



Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific, Professor Jemaima Tiatia-Siau



Pro Vice-Chancellor (Māori) Catherine Dunphy with UniBound manager Sara Toleafoa



Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dawn Freshwater

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific says *Ala o le Moana* reflects the University’s commitment to Pacific success, equity and inclusion.

Many hands helped to birth the strategy, she says, which was the result of extensive, University-wide collaboration over 15 months. This included consulting with Pacific communities across Aotearoa, and with strategic partners and individuals from non-Pacific communities. Talanoa with church leaders, community elders, youth and business leaders ensured the strategy was grounded in the realities and aspirations of Pacific peoples.

At the launch of *Ala o le Moana*, she expressed her gratitude to everyone who contributed to the strategy.

“Without your voice, leadership, knowledge and efforts, *Ala o le Moana* would not have come into being. This re-emphasises our University’s commitment, in that we all desire a common goal and that is to continue building, nurturing and sustaining a thriving environment for our Pacific communities.”

She adds that the launch of the Pacific strategy was timely, following on from *Kawea Ake*, the University’s Māori strategy, and *Toitū Waipapa*, the University’s Māori framework. The strategy positions Pacific peoples in solidarity

with tangata whenua, recognising the shared aspirations for tino rangatiratanga, equity and transformation.

At the launch, the Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific extended her gratitude to the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Māori and senior Māori colleagues from across the University. They provided invaluable support and guidance during the strategy’s development, she said.

“We have been fortunate to have the guidance and support from tangata whenua and mana whenua, under the leadership of Pro Vice-Chancellor Māori Professor Te Kawehau Hoskins and her office, as well as the taonga of insights from our Māori whānau from across our institution.”

The University’s Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dawn Freshwater, who also spoke at the launch, says *Ala o le Moana* is an important milestone for the institution, providing a tangible and visionary roadmap for Pacific success.

“Many hands and hearts have shaped this important document – we are absolutely thrilled that, after 142 years, *Ala o le Moana* has been realised.”

■ Kim Meredith

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/pacific-strategy-launch

HIWA TAKES TOP HONOURS AT PROPERTY AWARDS



A “once-in-a-generation” building project at the University has scooped up a number of awards, including the top prize, at New Zealand’s property industry awards.

Hiwa, the University’s new recreation centre, won three awards, including the Supreme Excellence Award, at the 2025 Property Council New Zealand Property Industry Awards, held at Spark Arena on 13 June.

The supreme award recognises Hiwa’s outstanding contribution to student well-being, architectural innovation, and community impact. The centre also won ‘Excellence – Best in Category’ in the education property category and ‘Excellence’ in the leisure and tourism property section of the awards.

Judges praised Hiwa as “a building that works hard to keep people moving”, acknowledging its transformative role in promoting health and well-being through design. The 26,000sqm facility, located in the City Campus, was selected from more than 100 entries across 11 categories.

“This is a once-in-a-generation project,” says Simon Neale, the University’s chief property officer. “It was humbling and a great honour, and a real reflection of the hard work put in by an amazing group of people in one of the toughest construction environments.”

The project was delivered on a compact 6,500sqm site, requiring the demolition of the previous structure and the creation of a vertically stacked facility that ranges over six levels.

The design demanded innovative engineering solutions to protect adjacent heritage buildings and maximise usable space.

“There is a lot to be said about Hiwa; it is an exceptional building,” Simon added.

“With more than 500,000 visits in its first few months, it is already transforming the lives of our students and communities and will continue to do so for decades to come.”

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/hiwa-property-awards

UNIVERSITY RETAINS WORLD RANKING

The University has maintained its 65th place in the 2026 QS World University Rankings (WUR), the only New Zealand University to be placed in the top 100.

The result marks a consistently positive trend for the University in the QS WUR; it was 87th in 2023, 68th in 2024, 65th in 2025 and 65th again in 2026.

There were 1,501 institutions ranked this year, including eight in New Zealand, and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dawn Freshwater says retaining the 65th position is an endorsement of the University and its pursuit of excellence.

“This ranking comes in a year of upheaval in higher education in some parts of the world, alongside rapidly improved performances from peers in other regions,” she says.

The WUR assesses performance across ten areas. The University improved its position in five of these: employment outcomes, international research network, international students, academic reputation, and citations per faculty.

Another major ranking result, the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, was also announced in June. These rankings assess universities’ contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For 2025, the University has been ranked 28th equal out of 2,318 institutions worldwide, placing in the top 1.2 percent. This follows last year’s position in the top 0.7 percent.

Overall, the University is also in the top 5 percent in the world for nine of the 17 SDGs.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/2026-qs-wur



**Vice-Chancellor,
Professor Dawn
Freshwater.**
Photo: Chris Loufte

VICE-CHANCELLOR INTENDS TO STEP DOWN IN 2026

Vice-Chancellor Professor Dawn Freshwater has indicated her intention to step down from her role at the University after nearly six years.

Professor Freshwater became the University’s first female vice-chancellor in March 2020 on the eve of the Covid-19 pandemic.

University Chancellor Cecilia Tarrant says the Vice-Chancellor has worked tirelessly in the face of extraordinary times for the tertiary education sector and will leave the University in a position of strength.

“Under Professor Freshwater’s leadership, the University has sustained its global positioning as a top-100 University, maintained solid financials in an increasingly complex national and global context, increased domestic and international student numbers, and, in particular, seen significant growth in postgraduate students,” says the Chancellor.

“During Covid-19, Professor Freshwater supported an extensive staff process to develop a new vision and strategy: *Taumata Teitei Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan 2025*, which was updated in 2024. This launched a significant transformation agenda, which has been realised in the years since.

“We are grateful that Professor Freshwater has given us an extended notice period. This will allow the University to commence a full international search for a new vice-chancellor, while maintaining our momentum.”

The University expects to formally farewell Professor Freshwater in the first half of 2026.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/vc-steps-down

DANCE TO DATA RECOGNISED IN DOCTORAL THESIS AWARDS

Research spanning everything from feminist choreography to the use of AI in engineering inspections has been recognised in the 2024 Vice-Chancellor's Prize for Best Doctoral Thesis.

In 2024 there were 443 doctoral degrees completed, and 18 nominations were received for the prize. Criteria for nomination include the demonstrable significance, originality, contribution and excellence of the thesis.

The winners, celebrating the five most exceptional theses, were Dr Sarah Foster-Sproull (Arts and Education), from the Dance Studies Programme; Dr Zongda Lei (Science) from the Department of Physics; Dr Kelsey Miller (Science) from the Institute of Marine Science; Dr Justin Sobion (Law); and Dr Xiaofei Yang (Engineering and Design) from the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering.

Dr Sarah Foster-Sproull's thesis was titled, 'Vibrant dance power: locating vital materialist incantations of thing-power in feminist choreography'. Sarah, who left high school before her final year to pursue a professional dance career, describes winning the prize as "a major highlight in my career".



Dr Sarah Foster-Sproull is one of five winners of the 2024 VC's best thesis prizes.
Photo: Billy Wong

"This recognition is also a win for Dance Studies and the Faculty of Arts and Education, because it is a testament to the arts' capacity to have impact in the world, for its prioritisation of relationships, people, place, collaboration and connection. I am very proud to represent Dance Studies on this list," she says.

Dr Xiaofei Yang's winning thesis, titled 'Automated data analysis for bridge visual inspection using deep learning techniques', explores how artificial intelligence and drones can improve bridge inspections.

Like Sarah, Xiaofei notes that receiving the prize is deeply meaningful.

"It not only recognises the years of hard work that went into the research but also highlights the growing importance of interdisciplinary solutions for critical infrastructure challenges," he says.

"I'm deeply grateful to my supervisors, collaborators and the University of Auckland for their support throughout my doctoral journey."

Read more on all the winners:
auckland.ac.nz/2024-vcs-best-theses

TOP SOPRANO SINGS AT BISHOP'S CONSECRATION



Rev Canon Dr John Ashley Null and Morag Atchison in Tunis

In April, Morag Atchison, a senior lecturer at the School of Music, received an extraordinary invitation.

The New Zealand soprano was asked to sing in Tunis, the capital of Tunisia, at the consecration of her old friend Rev Canon Dr John Ashley Null, now the Bishop of North Africa and responsible for the Anglican church in Tunisia, Chad, Algeria, Libya and Mauritania.

Morag is used to doing star turns in a range of operatic and concert roles, but says the invitation to perform in such an exotic location, and at such an important event, still came as a complete surprise.

Morag first met Ashley when they were both at Goodenough College, a postgraduate hall of residence in London. She says the invitation was a great honour, and also a chance to see Ashley and other former college friends, including notable accompanist Maria-Neus Devesa.

Maria agreed to be the pianist at a recital ahead of consecration day, says Morag, as well as on the day itself.

She arrived in Tunis in early May for the event. Both the recital and consecration were held at St George's Church, which is the only Anglican church in Tunisia. It serves a diverse community of expats, students, missionaries and locals, with services mostly in English, says Morag.

The church was packed for the consecration event, which was attended by many notable clerics from the US, Europe and the UK.

And fortunately, says Morag, all proceedings went as planned.

"Being able to take part in such a service in that extraordinary place for a friend, with people who were there when I was studying in London, was something I'll remember as special for the rest of my life."

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/atchison-tunisia



Professor David Lines' career has been characterised by collaboration.

Photos: Chris Loufte

TRAVELLING THE LONG ROAD, TOGETHER

When David Lines' great-grandmother, an accomplished musician and teacher, travelled from Scotland to New Zealand, her piano came too. Today, the professor continues to walk in her footsteps.

There are those who move fast, and those who move together.

Newly minted Professor of Music David Lines will tell you himself that his path to professorship took longer than most.

The self-described 'good boy' was so immersed in mobilising peers and students and fostering collaborations across the University that he almost neglected the one person he needed to push into the limelight – himself.

"I care about research, but I really get my kick from working with people ... doing creative and interesting things.

"I suppose it's the boring word service," he says. "And I really like making things happen."

David realised early on that steering projects to completion was just one of many strings to his bow; his real superpower lay in mobilising and galvanising people.

"It's got to be a collective thing, helping people. People have all these different talents and skills, and so much to offer. It's kind of silly if it's just one person's empire."

Dean of Arts and Education Professor Nuala

Gregory describes the highly accomplished musician as a quiet and selfless leader, ahead of his times. She says David is a great example of the virtuous circle of research-teaching-service; each aspect interacting with the others to generate a more profound impact.

"He has been thinking and acting in interdisciplinary ways since long before those concepts were formalised and disseminated across the University," says Nuala.

His recent work includes contributions on improvisation pedagogy, arts-based research, community arts, and music education.

David marked his promotion with an inaugural lecture, 'Musical Dialogues', in May, featuring musical interludes on a grand piano and collaborations with students and musician friends.

While our lives contain thousands of interactions and conversations, what, he asked, does quality dialogue look like? Because as social beings, the nature of our connections impacts the quality of our communication.

"I would also add it contributes to a rich and creative life," says David, "and for a good education too."

The good boy

Family members in the audience included wife Rebecca and his first piano teacher, 93-year-old mother Alison Lines.

The youngest of four, David grew up on an apple orchard in the Horowhenua. Displaying exceptional musical talent as a child, he travelled two hours to Wellington weekly,

"I care about research, but I really get my kick from working with people ... doing creative and interesting things."

- Professor David Lines, School of Music

“I just love learning things ... for me the buzz is crossing the boundaries.”

- Professor David Lines

studying under a classical piano teacher, with lessons continuing through to university.

Learning under the ‘master teacher and student’ model demanded adherence to a strict hierarchy. Studious and dutiful, David came to embody the archetype of the ‘good boy’, faithfully following the lead of his teacher, trained in Europe, performing the great classical works with the precision and reverence intended by their original composers.

But the rise of popular music sparked a new musical interest once David became a teenager, and likely was the nudge that changed not only the trajectory of his life but broadened his outlook. An older brother played guitar, so 12-year-old David approached his parents to do the same.

“I said I want a guitar – and they argued with me for a little bit. And then they said ‘okay!’”

Learning guitar by ear compared with the highly structured and disciplined nature of classical piano training was a gamechanger, but it would be years before David would fully appreciate the contrasting experiences.

“It wasn’t like piano,” he says. “You played around, listened to tunes, and copied them ... that was the first thing that broke the cycle.”

“I think about it now as a mature adult, and I call it closeness – being really close to the music – and it was so embodied. Like, ‘what is the sound?’”

“So, there’s something about that in pedagogy, in being close to what you are doing.”

The experience inspired the chapter ‘A Piano mismatch – Passion, dreams, and being a “good boy”’ published in the *Routledge Companion to Music, Autoethnography, and Reflexivity* (edited by Gouzouasis and Wiley) last year.

Inspiring a generation

David completed his music degree at Victoria University of Wellington before heading north to the University of Auckland, where he studied arts and science.

“I’d always been interested in not just one thing,” he says of his foray into subjects spanning geology, mathematics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, education and philosophy.

“I think I just love learning things ... for me the buzz is crossing the boundaries.”

It’s that same buzz that’s seen him tirelessly call everyone to action. Once he’d entered the teaching field, David saw an opportunity to produce musicals, and give young people the opportunity to co-create them. Students from

Henderson’s Bruce McLaren Intermediate (most now aged in their 30s) not only performed in David’s first school musical – Maurice Gee’s *The Halfmen of O* – but likely got their first big break composing music, collaborating with David.

“It’s hard to explain the feeling and collective experience of creative camaraderie, but it was something special.

“Later on, as a university lecturer, I had students come up to me and say ‘Are you David Lines from intermediate school? I was in your musical’ and it was just fantastic. It’s a very special moment when a teacher feels just a little bit famous,” he laughs.

A familiar path

The boy from Horowhenua who became an accomplished pianist and a ‘famous’ teacher unwittingly followed in the footsteps of his great-grandmother. A gifted musician and music teacher, Annie Pollock came to New Zealand in 1898, invited by David’s great-grandfather, David Todd; the two had grown up together in Glasgow, Scotland.

“It’s interesting because it’s like a parallel of my career, this great-grandmother I’ve been reading about. She’s got all these teaching notes and musical notes of what she was doing,” says David.

She was intent on bringing her piano, and David also came across letters containing advice to fill the instrument with blankets for the long

trip. Annie arrived and married, moved to their Gisborne farm, and had two children – only to die 18 months later.

“When my grandfather was 18 months old, Annie was found at the bottom of a cliff. We don’t really know what happened, but it wouldn’t have been easy back then.

“There’s a story in our family that Annie’s piano journey to New Zealand from Scotland and her tragic death had some connection with other musical stories.”

He says it might have been part of the genesis for Jane Campion’s award-winning film *The Piano*, despite the stark differences of how Campion devised her main character.

“Annie was very accomplished, very much her own woman and empowered,” says David. He honoured his great-grandmother at the lecture, proudly showing pictures of her music certificates and meticulous lesson plans.

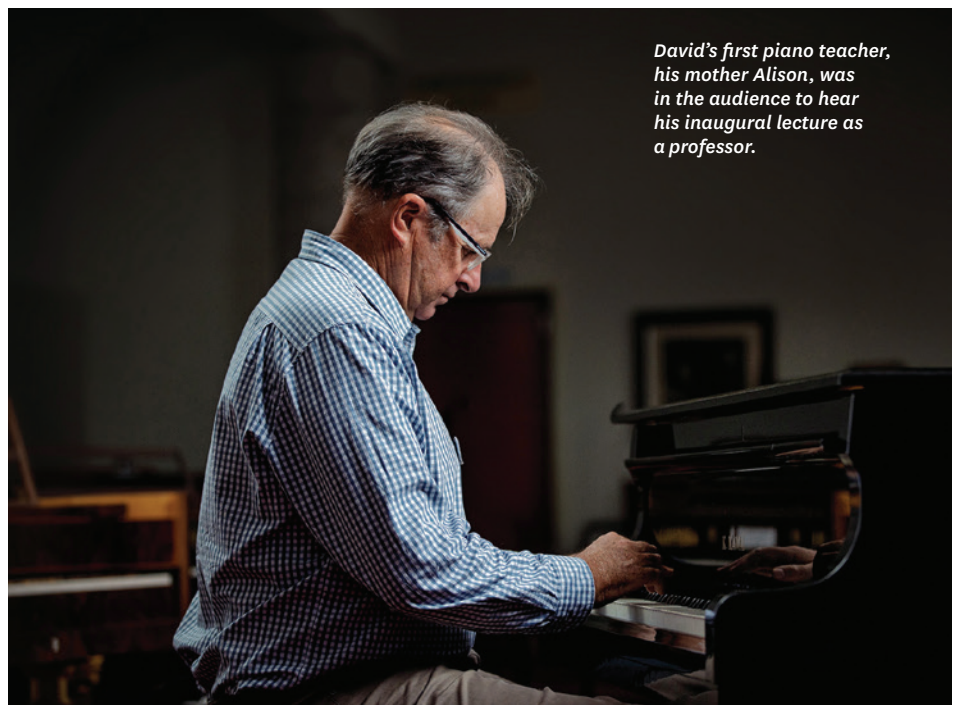
Breaking down barriers

David’s latest adventure, the Creative Pedagogies Network, seeks to connect academic staff and explore creative pedagogy. It is a collaboration with dance studies colleague Professor Alys Longley and funded by the University’s Teaching and Learning Grant.

“Sometimes the University is tribal, or hierarchical. I’m keen to break down those barriers, which is what that the creative pedagogy project is all about,” he says.

“It’s about crossing disciplines, and talking to each other and sharing. It’s asking ‘what do you actually do? What drives you? What gives you passion?’ And exploring anything that comes from that.”

■ Kim Meredith



David’s first piano teacher, his mother Alison, was in the audience to hear his inaugural lecture as a professor.



Crimson Education co-founders Fangzhou Jiang and Jamie Beaton with Business School Dean Professor Susan Watson. Photo: Jesse Marsters

UNICORN FOUNDERS ON CAMPUS

Two entrepreneurs behind a billion-dollar Kiwi-born company are teaching a new course aimed to inspire aspiring start-up founders.

LinkedIn profiles aren't usually the stuff of viral sensation, but Kiwi entrepreneur Jamie Beaton's caused a stir last year when his impressive education and career history caught the online world's attention.

Jamie, who has degrees from universities including Harvard, Stanford, Yale, Princeton and Oxford, is the youngest New Zealander to found a 'unicorn' – a company valued at more than \$1 billion. And the 30-year-old can now add another line to his career profile: teacher at the University of Auckland.

Jamie is CEO and co-founder of Crimson Education, a university admissions consultancy, and, along with his fellow co-founder Fangzhou (FZ) Jiang, he will be on campus this semester leading a project for first-year commerce students in the Business School's new Navigators programme.

Jamie, who is an honorary associate professor and on the advisory board of the Business School, says the opportunity to teach on the

programme evolved from discussions with the school's dean, Professor Susan Watson, about how to supercharge the entrepreneurial aspirations of students. When she mentioned the Navigators programme, which includes a stream focused on innovation and entrepreneurship, Jamie says it seemed natural for the co-founders to contribute.

The course content is modelled on the Harvard Business School case method, where students will learn key entrepreneurship concepts through case studies. Students will study globally successful New Zealand companies like Xero, Zuru, Halter and Pushpay, and the entrepreneurs will also share lessons from helming Crimson Education.

"To me, it's exciting and rewarding to take some of the knowledge that I've garnered on the world stage building Crimson and inject some of that ambition into young Kiwis and help them get fired up," says Jamie, "because the best way for us to solidify our economy and really get some ambition pumping, is to get many, many more Xeros and Rocket Labs emerging.

"I think our biggest constraint in New Zealand is there aren't enough aspiring founders coming out of high schools, there aren't enough of these role models, there aren't enough reference points. But if you look at Silicon Valley, and talk

"It's exciting and rewarding to take some of the knowledge that I've garnered on the world stage building Crimson and inject some of that ambition into young Kiwis."

– Jamie Beaton, Crimson Education CEO and co-founder

to 15-year-olds in California, they're aware of all these companies, they're aware of how they were built, they're aware of accelerators. It's about amplifying that culture."

Importantly, says Jamie, students will also look at how local early-stage companies are currently navigating start-up life.

"In the early days, it's always chaos. There are a million fires, and it seems impossible. It's really good for students to see that successful start-ups weren't always these smooth success stories; actually, they were gnarly and messy and required quite a lot of courage at the beginning."

Jamie lives in New York but is regularly in New Zealand and says he's looking forward to connecting with students while on campus.

"Hopefully we'll build a great mentoring bond between FZ and I and our students, so they can always reach out to us. And if we can connect them to seed investors or they want to talk about business ideas, we can be a resource for them well past the programme's end."

FZ came to New Zealand from China as a 16-year-old and was the first international student to be named among top high-school Scholarship exam achievers as a Premier Award winner. He's since gained degrees at universities including Stanford and Harvard (where he's a John F. Kennedy Fellow) while building Crimson Education, and Jamie says his story could inspire aspiring offshore entrepreneurs.

"We want to make sure that the University of Auckland is an exciting hub not just for Kiwis, but also if you're a student sitting in China, or in Korea and thinking about where to study."

Despite spending time in front of the class, Jamie is still a student himself and continues to grow his academic record. He recently completed a Military Studies degree at King's College London and is now studying sociology and political science at Cambridge University.

"It's opening up a new set of perspectives, which I really enjoy," he says, "but right now I'm quite stressed, because I've got to learn all this content before my next exam."

■ Caitlin Sykes



Students get together for the annual Arts and Education hide and seek event, hosted across B201.

CLUBBING TOGETHER

Ahead of the Semester Two Clubs Expo, *UniNews* checks in on what's happening with clubs on campus.

Arts and science student Amelia Orr recalls not having much to do with other students in between commuting in and out of campus during her first year at the University.

That all changed, though, once she signed up to some clubs.

"Joining a club is genuinely one of the most valuable things you can add to your university experience," says Amelia, now in the final year of her undergraduate degree.

"Through joining clubs I've made friends that I'm going to have for the rest of my life."

Getting involved in executive positions in clubs has been especially valuable, she says. As well as being co-president of the Psychology Students' Association, she's co-founder and co-president of the Arts and Education Student Association (AESA) alongside fourth-year law and arts student Jessica (Jess) Luo.

The pair co-founded AESA last year following the lapse of the former Arts Students' Association and the emergence of the combined Faculty of Arts and Education. The association has since attracted 500 members, has an executive committee of 19 and carries out a range of functions, such as advocacy and events.

The success of the new club was reflected in its dominance at last year's Clubs Awards, where it won best well-being initiative, best new club, and was the supreme award winner.

Jess leads the association's events activities, which include the annual Arts and Education Ball, bi-weekly free breakfasts (an initiative that won the club the well-being award), and



The Arts and Education Ball is one of the major events organised by the AESA.

a debate series between Auckland University Students' Association candidates.

"We also put a lot of time and effort into our Creative Arts Week," says Jess. "Given we're now representing this super faculty, which includes lots of creative practice disciplines, the week is about highlighting the amazing creations that come out of student work."

"It's a week where we define our identity as a faculty and bring together a bunch of creative, talented students."

AESA takes up a lot of time, but Jess is also a member of SpaceHub UoA and Amelia belongs to the AU Tramping Club, one of the University's largest and oldest clubs (founded in 1932).

With more than 250 active clubs at the University – spanning everything from a dessert club to a role-playing guild to a crochet corner – "there's something for everyone", says Emma Ko, the University's acting student voice team leader. All clubs are independently owned and run by their members, however the University oversees the registration of its clubs, which need a minimum of 30 members.

Some of the biggest clubs have around 1,500 members and more than half of all clubs have 100-plus members. Overall club membership is around 49,000, with some students, like Amelia

and Jess, having multiple club memberships.

"Although so many clubs can seem niche, it's really powerful when they're able to reach out to different clubs that have similar or overlapping values or interests to collaborate," says Emma. "And it's even cooler when they're reaching out to clubs that have nothing to do with them and they're still wanting to collaborate."

Clubs from across campus will gather in the first week of Semester Two for the University's Clubs Expo, which showcases their activities. It's a key time for clubs to recruit new members, network with executive teams across different clubs and showcase the variety of activities that happen on campus.

"Being a University student is a unique period in someone's life, and getting involved in clubs makes the student experience more holistic," says Emma.

"So, when you look back on that time, you'll remember it as a special chapter where you were able to explore new ideas and hobbies, connect with different people and communities, and tap into opportunities you may not have otherwise had."

■ Caitlin Sykes

More: auckland.ac.nz/en/on-campus/life-on-campus/clubs-societies.html



Louie Bretaña. (L-R) *Lalahon* (2023), *Habagat at Amihan* (2023) and *Kalikhasan* (2023). Acrylic, glitter and glass crystals on hessian (all). University of Auckland Art Collection. Image courtesy of Bergman Gallery.

UNRULY FORCES OF NATURE

Deities of Indigenous Filipino mythology come to life in new additions to the University's art collection by Elam alumnus Louie Bretaña.

The Science Centre on Symonds Street offers a curator a unique opportunity to bring artworks into conversation with the learning and research that happens there.

As the home to the School of Environment, for example, many of the building's artworks feature ecological subjects and natural phenomena – like Fiona Pardington's *Inseperable Huia*, which greets students in the atrium. Then there's John Reynolds' *Speaking Truth to Power* series, which playfully explores academia and intellectualism in Aotearoa, engaging visitors to the School of Psychology on the fourth floor.

Introducing a contemporary voice to this ongoing dialogue is a pair of new acquisitions to the University's art collection: *Lalahon* (2023) and *Kalikhasan* (2023), which are two of three hessian artworks (alongside *Habagat at Amihan*, 2023) by Filipino-New Zealand artist Louie Bretaña (b. 1967).

With parental roots in Manila and the Visayan province of Iloilo in the Philippines, Bretaña holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of the Philippines, and had an early career in advertising in the country.

He immigrated to Aotearoa in 2011, where he pursued his artistic practice at Elam School of Fine Arts, gaining a Bachelor of Arts (First Class Honours, 2017) and a Master of Fine Arts (2018).

In the years since, Bretaña has developed notable solo exhibitions, including *Tumingala sa tinitingala na mga tala* at Te Uru Gallery (Titirangi, 2021), which included a memorable series of suspended sculptures based on *parol* (ornamental Christmas lanterns from the Philippines).

Bretaña is known for sparking wonder and delight with his spiritually infused works, which incorporate materials and techniques bridging painting, sculpture, adornment, and performance-based practice. His works are laden with symbolism, often referencing Indigenous Filipino *diwatas* (deities) and exploring the interconnectedness of *anito* (ancestral spirits) and the natural world.

Lalahon and *Kalikhasan* are two such references, each honoring a mythological diwata from the natural environment and invoking them as guardians over the unruly forces of nature that increasingly impact our modern world.

Employing unstretched hessian as his canvas, Bretaña juxtaposes the humble textured surface

with vibrant swathes of acrylic, shimmering glass crystals and golden glitter, to create an alluring homage to the diwata depicted.

In Philippine mythology, *Lalahon* is revered as the goddess presiding over volcanoes and harvests. She commands fire, eruptions and seismic activity, with the ability to wield immense power.

Despite her potential for devastation, she equally assumes a protective role as the goddess of harvests and agriculture. She is venerated for bestowing prosperity on the farming communities of the Visayas, where she is linked to concepts of fertility and abundance.

Her neighbour, *Kalikhasan*, is more broadly understood as the diwata of nature, earth and creation itself. *Kalikhasan*'s name is derived from two words: *kalikasan* (nature) and *likha* (to create).

Bretaña has inscribed the represented diwata's name in Baybayin, an ancient Philippine script, on the edge of each work, equally enshrining and commemorating them using a centuries-old Philippine language.

In their glistening forms, Bretaña's meditative diwatas ponder the entanglements of tradition and modernity, spirituality and nature, and art and science.

The artworks are on the ground floor of the Science Centre, 23 Symonds Street.

■ Madeleine Gifford, Art Collection Adviser
More: artcollection.auckland.ac.nz



The University of Auckland mace.
Photo: Timeless Photography

KEEPING A 550-YEAR-OLD GRADUATION TRADITION ALIVE

If you've been to a University graduation ceremony you would have seen distinguished officers with an ornate mace playing an important role in proceedings. Holly Claeys recently dug into the meaning behind the mace.

A hush falls over the graduation ceremony.

The procession begins, led by Kaiāratangi Pro Vice-Chancellor Māori Michael Steedman.

Following behind is a staff member carrying an ornate mace. When he carefully places it on a ceremonial stand and takes his seat, this moment officially marks the beginning of graduation.

These are the University's Esquires Bedell – ceremonial officers who maintain a tradition started by Cambridge University in 1473 and continued at the University of Auckland.

When placing the mace, Douglas Carrie, Associate Dean Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Business and Economics, says he's conscious of those centuries of tradition.

"There's something profound in knowing that the ceremony can't begin until the mace is properly positioned," says Douglas.

Originally, Esquires Bedell collected debts, summoned students to lectures, and served as university 'criers'. They even provided protection for university officials, a role symbolised today by the ceremonial mace they carry.

Today at the University, these ceremonial officers are distinguished staff members, nominated and appointed through the University Council to represent the institution's authority and protect academic freedom during its most significant events.

"What's significant is how we've updated these ceremonial roles," says Associate Professor Peter Shand, another of the current Esquires Bedell.

"Having the official party led by a kaiārahi reinvigorates tradition and reflects what graduation means at our University today."

Douglas and Peter's fellow Esquires Bedell include Professor Gary Barkhuizen

(applied language studies and linguistics); Margaret Crannigan Allen, scholarships and progression manager, and Professor Doug Elliffe (psychology).

"With all eyes on you during the ceremony, you're focused on getting the formal motions right," laughs Douglas. "Placing the mace correctly and doffing your cap to the Chancellor without mishaps takes concentration."

Since joining the University in 1995, he's witnessed countless emotional graduation moments. "What stands out is that palpable sense of pride and joy radiating from graduates, families and academic staff."

Peter recalls when the mace nearly fulfilled its protective function.

"Once, colleagues crossed through the official party to congratulate a graduate," he says with a smile. "[It was] a conspicuous fail on my part not to leap up and do a bit of protective wielding."

He also remembers a particularly moving address by Sir Michael Hill.

"His unscripted speech was so heartfelt that newly capped graduates approached him afterward to thank him personally – something I'd never seen before or since."

The mace itself is unique to the University. It was designed by Paul Beadle, who became a professor and Dean of the Elam School of Fine Arts in 1961 and helped develop the country's first Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.

The mace's bronze head, standing 25cm tall, features figures symbolising each branch of learning at the University at the time of its design.

Its 75cm wooden shaft is crafted from kauri, repurposed from a banister rail salvaged from a home demolished to make way for Te Herenga Mātauranga Whānui, General Library.

ARTS & BOOKS



Against the Odds: New Zealand's First Women Doctors

Postgraduate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology
Cynthia Farquhar co-authors

this book, which tells the stories of our first women doctors. Ranging from the 1890s, when Emily Siedeberg became the first woman to graduate from Otago Medical School, through to 1967, the book traverses their battles with indifference, chauvinism and other challenges.

Cynthia Farquhar and Michaela Selway,
Massey University Press, \$55

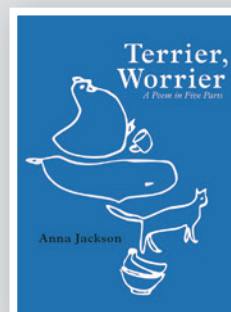


Oceans Between Us: Pacific Peoples and Racism in Aotearoa

Associate Professor in Sociology Sereana Naepi (Fijian, Pākehā) edits this collection of ten essays penned by

13 Pacific scholars. It documents and dissects Pacific peoples' experiences of racism in Aotearoa and serves as a call to action – for change and a future rooted in equity.

Sereana Naepi, Auckland University Press,
\$40, released 10 July



Terrier, Worrier: A Poem in Five Parts

Described as 'part autobiography of thought, part philosophical tract, part poetics, a book about chickens and family

and seasons', *Terrier, Worrier* is a literary sequence from alumna Anna Jackson. One of the country's most distinguished poets, she is currently an associate professor of English literature at Victoria University of Wellington.

Anna Jackson, Auckland University Press,
\$25

The gallery's Art Deco glass ceiling dome references a sunburst motif.
Photo: William Chea

UNDER THE DOME

You can't miss the Gus Fisher Gallery as you walk along Shortland Street, with its solid brick frontage, devoid of windows.

The building's unique look is due to its heritage; opened in 1935 as Radio 1YA, it was the first purpose-built radio broadcasting studio in the Southern Hemisphere. Later it was used for television broadcasting, and its unbroken brick façade made it ideal for containing sound and minimising natural light.

The gallery occupies the building's fourth floor (University dance and music studios are housed on other levels) and Lisa Beauchamp has been its curator since 2018.

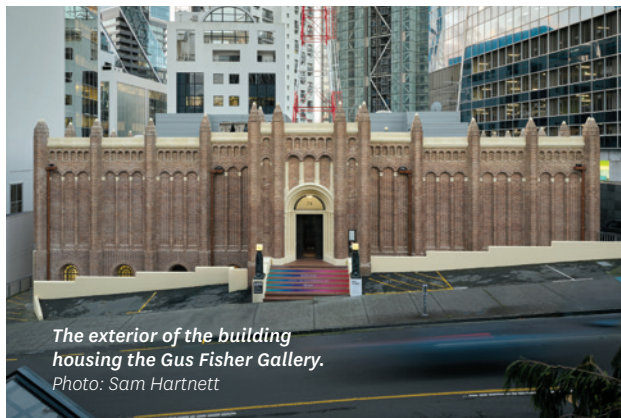
Despite the building's forbidding exterior, she says a lot of people are attracted through its doors. The gallery runs public programmes alongside its exhibitions, which typically run for three months, and provides activities for University and other students, including internships and volunteering opportunities.

Lisa gave *UniNews* a tour of the gallery before the launch of its latest shows, *Tala o le tau* and *Because of where I live*.

The building has an interesting heritage. What's the background of the spaces that the gallery occupies?

One of our gallery spaces is the room from which the first public Auckland TV broadcast was made on 1 June 1960. This room later became known as Studio 2 with smaller-scale productions filmed here, including the news and weather bulletins. A key tenet of our programme is our display of artists' film and video, which draws on the original intentions for the space.

There are all sorts of heritage details that run through the gallery spaces. We have these



The exterior of the building housing the Gus Fisher Gallery.
Photo: Sam Hartnett

native timber doors that are beautiful. They feature lines in the design that represent radio waves, which you also see represented in the glass ceiling dome in the central gallery space as you come in.

Then another of our gallery spaces was originally the women's bathroom and changing room; it's where the newsreaders would have changed before reading the evening bulletin.

What's your favourite aspect of the gallery?

It has to be the Art Deco glass dome that greets visitors on arrival at the gallery. The architecture encourages you to look up, and the dome's colours and ornate details referencing a sunburst motif dominate the room in the best possible way.

I never get tired of this space, but it's also the most challenging to show work in. Still, it's a good challenge.

What's challenging about it?

I'm mindful that the building's architecture is grand and could feel quite daunting to those new to the space or just wondering what it is.

The Dome Gallery is the first room people enter and it's important we help them to feel comfortable and welcome. I always think 'how can we make the space welcoming but also

offer that wow factor?'. It's not about competing with the inherent look of the gallery; it's about how you can direct people's attention towards the artworks and engage them in a different visual narrative.

Wall colour is a big factor. For our exhibition *Derek Jarman: Delphinium Days* last year, the spaces were painted a deep chocolatey brown, so we have the opportunity to transform our spaces through warm and vibrant colors for each exhibition that help to create an immersive atmosphere.

Through lighting and careful curation, our exhibitions all have a different feel that hopefully best expresses the content and the uniqueness of our building.

Personally, I'm not a fan of white-walled, elitist spaces – they can feel cold and unwelcoming and that's not what we are as a gallery.

■ Caitlin Sykes

***Tala o le tau*, an exhibition that brings together new and significant bodies of work by Angela Tiatia, Yuki Kihara and women from the Moata'a Aualuma Community, is on at the gallery until 30 August.**

***Because of where I live*, by Daegan Wells, is in The Changing Room.**

More: gusfishergallery.auckland.ac.nz



Lisa Beauchamp.
Photo: Jake Dennis