

Uni NEWS

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MAHURU 2021



ANGUS CAMPBELL

Designing for a more
sustainable world

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IN THE HEALTHY HOUSE

Dr Jennifer Miles-Chan and researchers at the Human Nutrition Unit measure exactly how diet impacts type 2 diabetes risk

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TIPS FOR TOUGH TIMES

Student Yvonne Ruan knows what mental health challenges are like and shares what she's learned in the past year

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PLAYING HIS PART

Dr Tim Angeli-Gordon embraces the chance to learn te reo Māori and te ao Māori every day, saying it's a privilege

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Just a few of the University of Auckland staff and student achievements in the media recently. Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz



LEARNING FROM LOCKDOWNS

Dr Annette Henderson (Psychology) told the *NZ Herald* that parents could be better equipped for the August 2021 lockdown, having been through it before. Annette is part of a research team led by Professor Nickola Overall, who looked at impacts of 2020's lockdown on couples with young children. The researchers extended an ongoing Marsden-funded study where parents with pre-schoolers had already completed assessments of family dynamics. During the Level 4 lockdown, 365 parents from 208 families completed the assessments again.

Link: tinyurl.com/NZHerald-Annette

LAZY-EYE TESTING

Dr Jason Turuwhenua, a senior research fellow with the Auckland Bioengineering Institute and School of Optometry, featured in the news for his novel eye-testing technology for amblyopia (lazy eye). He is in a group of researchers to receive Health Research Council funding to do further testing in collaboration with childcare centres, which he talked about with Kathryn Ryan on RNZ's *Nine to Noon* and Dale Husband on *Waatea News*.

Links: tinyurl.com/RNZ-Jason and tinyurl.com/Waatea-Jason



SUMMER OLYMPICS TOO HOT

Professor Alistair Woodward (School of Population Health) featured in articles by *Popular Science* and *Stuff* on the threat that climate change poses to future summer Olympics. The conversation followed on from a 2016 report in *The Lancet* that discussed which cities in the northern hemisphere will become too hot to host the Olympic games under a high-emissions scenario. The result: by 2085 only 33 cities, mostly in Western Europe, would be low-risk bets to host the games out of a total of 645 candidates. Only eight cities outside Western Europe remained viable in Alistair's modelling.

Links: tinyurl.com/stuff-Olympics and tinyurl.com/Pop-Sci-Olympics



WALK, DON'T TALK

With the Delta outbreak in NZ, Associate Professor Siouxsie Wiles is in demand again. She told RNZ's *Nine to Noon* that people need to remember it's not safe to stop and have a chat with anyone outside your bubble when out for a walk, with the new variant of the virus being easily airborne.

Link: tinyurl.com/RNZ-Siouxsie-delta



KIWISHOP OPPORTUNITY

Associate Professor Mike Lee (Marketing) talked to Jesse Mulligan on RNZ about his idea of a Kiwishop – a grocery version of Kiwibank – as a solution to fairer food prices. He says when the market is failing, that's a good time for the government step in.

Link: tinyurl.com/RNZ-Mike-Lee

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TE WIKI O TE REO MĀORI

Māori Language Week begins on 13 September. See the staff intranet for how the University is marking this week, including the staff and student pepeha project. Plus turn to page 12 for one staff member's efforts.

It's also Tonga Language Week beginning 6 September.

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Something to share?

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DOING THE UNIVERSITY AND AOTEAROA PROUD

The University had three students competing at the Tokyo Olympics, and what an Olympics it was.

The University of Auckland is basking in the golden glow of its Olympians. Two students won gold and one 2020 alumni won bronze at the Tokyo Olympics.

Our gold-medal winners were Theresa Fitzpatrick (women's Sevens) and Michael Brake (men's rowing eight). Recent alumni Dylan Schmidt won a bronze in trampolining. All three were also at Rio and say they learned a lot from that experience.

First time Olympian Kanah Andrews-Nahu (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Porou), a 20-year-old Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences (FMHS) student, says being surrounded by such high-quality athletes was inspiring. She competed in weightlifting's 87kg category.

"I didn't perform as well as I wanted to, but this made me realise how much more I want to put into my sport," she says.

Michael Brake, an Engineering honours student, says his crew showed great grit to get to the final the hard way, through the repêchage.

"It was challenging coming back from the loss in our heat. It took a lot of belief in ourselves and critical discussions to turn it around."

He says although Covid-19 made preparation tough, his crew had a good way of dealing with the fact the Olympics could be called off at any time.

"My squad's goal from the beginning of the 2021 season was to enjoy the training as a chance to work out and push ourselves among mates, and that competing would be the icing on the cake. Turned out to be some pretty sweet icing!

"I was expecting to be battling for a bronze medal. To come away with the gold has been seriously surreal."

He says so many people from the University helped him along the way and course coordinators have been accommodating.

"Balancing study with training and other commitments is a crawl, but I'm almost over the line with the honours degree. Also Toby Batchelor in the High Performance Support Programme has helped so much ... the guy is a wizard."

Theresa Fitzpatrick is also grateful to lecturers in FMHS, as well as High Performance Support.

"I had an exam at the beginning of the Olympic campaign that I sat in Townsville which was a little bit of a challenge with training and team activities. During the campaign in Tokyo, I couldn't study but used MIQ to catch up a bit."

The Sevens side also had a tough road to the final, surviving a defiant challenge from Fiji before coming out on top 22-17 in the semi-final and then beating France in the final 26-12 to take the gold medal.

Theresa says resilience stood the close-knit Sevens team well. "With uncontrollable events happening, it was very important to stay aligned, resilient and connected. Our bond with each other is something special and that really got us through the past five years."

Trampolinist Dylan Schmidt graduated with a BCom in 2020 and was involved in the High Performance Support Programme while he was studying.

"I was 19 in Rio and I'm now 24, so hard work and good preparation along with more experience was the biggest difference leading to me getting on the podium."

He says his best memory, apart from winning, involved the whole New Zealand team.

"Being welcomed back into the village by the team, and just feeling everyone's pride for me, was incredible."

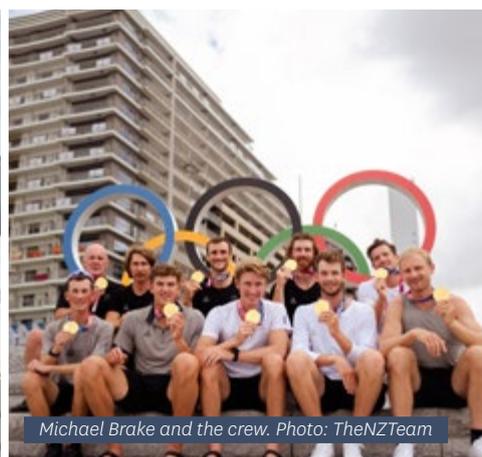
Toby, the University's High Performance Support Coordinator, says watching all athletes perform has been a joy.

"We're so proud of all of them – they have competed against the best in the world. It's been a culmination of years of incredible sacrifice and hard work. And it's just amazing for two students to come away with golds."

■ Read the full story: auckland.ac.nz/UAO-Olympians



Weightlifter Kanah Andrews-Nahu



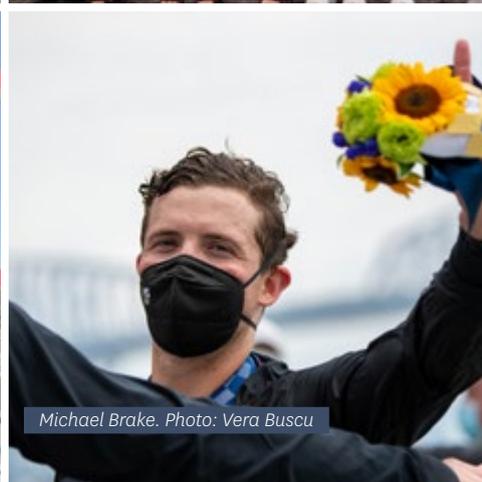
Michael Brake and the crew. Photo: TheNZTeam



Theresa Fitzpatrick



Kanah Andrews-Nahu, front right, with the weightlifting team. Photo: TheNZTeam



Michael Brake. Photo: Vera Buscu



Theresa Fitzpatrick with Stacey Fluhrer. Photo: TheNZTeam

TOP-UP AFTER TIME OUT IS IDEAL FOR PARENTS

A 'populate and publish' grant of \$10,000 for researchers returning from parental leave has been well received in the Faculty of Science.

It stemmed from faculty initiatives to improve a gender gap in senior academics. Women make up more than half of all academics, but only a third of associate professors and professors. (See story, below.)

The scheme was inspired by similar grants in several Australian universities that help academics resume their careers after maternity leave.

Researchers need to apply for the grant and criteria apply. "That includes having been away on parental leave for at least six months and returning at 0.3 or more," says Associate Professor Frédérique Vanholsbeeck, Science's Associate Dean of diversity and inclusion.

The funds can be used to pay for a research assistant, buy out teaching time, purchase equipment or otherwise catch up on research, grant applications and writing papers.

"Publishing is exponential," Frédérique says. "You have to keep generating results and building on those. If you interrupt research or slow down your career, it has a long-lasting impact. Plus, the more citations you have, the more people get to know you, so there's an additive effect."

A similar scheme runs in the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences but is broader. Academics returning from any extended caregiving leave can apply for the funding.

Frédérique would like to see similar initiatives adopted across all New Zealand universities, under a national gender-equity charter or framework.

■ Jodi Yeats

The Science grant is being reviewed after running since 2014. Email feedback to: f.vanholsbeeck@auckland.ac.nz



Associate Professor Frédérique Vanholsbeeck

WORKSHOPS EQUIP WOMEN FOR TOP ROLES

Women's tendency to take on service roles in the workplace and at home can work against them when it comes to promotion.

Across the University, 31 percent (102 full-time equivalents) of professors and 39 percent (130 FTEs) of associate professors

were women in 2020. One associate professor identified as gender-diverse.

For professional staff, women hold around 50 percent of senior roles.

Figures from the University's Equity Profile prompted workshops in the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences (FMHS), where there are also disproportionately fewer women in senior academic roles. In 2020,

women made up 59 percent of academic staff, but only 30 percent of professors and 41 percent of associate professors (all in FTEs).

FMHS Associate Dean Equity, Professor Trecia Wouldes, created gender equity workshops in the faculty to give women practical tools to get promoted to senior positions.

"Rather than complaining about inequities, we provided women with an opportunity to upskill, for example, knowing the criteria for promotion, how to write good research grants, doing all the things that can get you promoted," says Trecia.

Trecia looked at the research to see where the "hooks and barbs" were for women.

"It's mainly around managing family commitments. One thing we found was women too often put their hands up for committees that aren't meaningful for promoting their career. Women also get shoulder-tapped for those roles.

"It's work that has to be done, but it's balancing that with the time it takes to do research and publishing or writing grant applications. It's about learning how to negotiate and being able to say 'no'."

A pilot gender equity workshop in FMHS in 2019 was well received by more than 60 participants, leading to another workshop this year.

Topics tackled included:

- How to write grant applications that get funded
- How to negotiate
- How to promote research
- Should I plan my career around my baby or my baby around my career?
- Unconscious bias and how to overcome it

- A kaupapa Māori approach to career progression
- How to use policies in applying for promotion

The 2021 workshop looked at the impacts of Covid-19 on women's research publishing and included strategies for managing childcare when working from home, timely given what was to come. The workshop also covered setting goals for the faculty, which were presented to the Dean, Professor John Fraser, who agreed to action four or five of the top goals over the next six months.

The workshops complement the long-running Women in Leadership Programme, chiefly through being more faculty specific, Trecia says.

Feedback was positive and showed participants appreciated the opportunity to network and do some personal career planning.

"As a senior lecturer, working part time while parenting two small children, finding a good balance can be a difficult," says participant Suzanne Stevens. "There were a number of great presentations that gave valuable insights into successful strategies and ways of working to support ourselves as women who value the mahi we do at Uni, our career progression and our lives outside of work."

In FMHS, the workshops are set to be a regular feature, equipping women to tackle the academic peaks. A recent meeting of the Equity Community of Interest agreed it would be good to open the workshops up more widely.

■ Jodi Yeats



Professor Trecia Wouldes.



Artist's visualisation of the Symonds

Street building. Credit: Jasmax

6 STAR BUILDING SET TO SPARKLE

The University of Auckland's Social Sciences Building has been awarded 93 points by the New Zealand Green Building Council achieving a 6 Green Star Design rating.

This is the highest score awarded since the inception of the rating, putting the building in the 'world leadership' category.

Due to open in 2024, the 50-year-old structure (B201) is an 'adaptive reuse' project that will set new benchmarks for low carbon design and sustainability. It will send less waste to landfill,

create less pollution through its construction and operation, and provide healthy, comfortable, and functional spaces for the many thousands of students and staff. The design also focuses on acoustic performance, comfortable lighting, and excellent access to public transport, bike parking, and end-of-trip facilities.

University of Auckland Director of Property Services, Simon Neale, says the University had set high standards for the project and for the design team and that achieving 6 Green Star

certification was a priority from the early stages.

"We are currently consulting on our *Estate Strategy Te Rautaki Tūāpapa* which is underpinned by our ambition to develop innovative campuses as sustainable ecosystems that are distinctive, welcoming, accessible, equitable and resilient. These will support and activate student learning and well-being.

He says the B201 redevelopment embodies sustainable design and initiatives that will reduce carbon and increase energy efficiency.

Jasmax, Beca and others involved in the design were "aligned with our priorities and truly met the brief," he says.

The design of B201 includes the refurbishment of an existing building and the addition of a spectacular new timber atrium to home the faculties of Education and Social Work, and Arts. The existing concrete cladding will be replaced with a lightweight curtain wall that will render the building earthquake-proof for another 50 years.

Other highlights include solar glazing, low-emission paints and high-quality ventilation.

The design is predicted to use 75 percent less water than a standard comparable building. Water will be collected through a rainwater harvesting system while more than a tenth of the building's renewable energy will be generated on site.

The project was supported by the government's Covid-19 'shovel-ready' response fund.

■ **Read the full story:**

auckland.ac.nz/6-green-star-building-201



Professor Nikki Turner gets her Covid-19 jab.

\$9.8M TO HELP HALT FLU AND RSV SPREAD

New Zealand's expertise tracking Covid-19 is being applied to influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) in a \$9.8 million project to learn how to stop the spread of respiratory viruses.

The Southern Hemisphere Influenza and Vaccine Effectiveness Research and Surveillance V (Shivers-V) project is led by the University in collaboration with the Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR). It features genomic testing of viruses, the detective work that has become routine with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Shivers-V will run for two years and researchers will analyse thousands of swabs from patients with respiratory illnesses to discover how respiratory viruses enter and spread in Aotearoa New Zealand. This will help scientists model outbreaks and help design strategies to prevent them.

New Zealand is uniquely suited to examine the re-introduction and transmission of respiratory viruses such as influenza and RSV. Winter's RSV epidemic has been unlike any New Zealand has seen before. Sick children filled hospital wards after Covid-19 social distancing and lockdown restrictions in 2020 blocked the development of natural immunity to the virus.

"When border restrictions are eventually eased, we will face a resurgence of respiratory viruses," says Professor Nikki Turner, medical

director of the University of Auckland's Immunisation Advisory Centre (IMAC).

"Understanding the viruses' patterns will assist us to predict and mitigate outbreaks to help protect whānau and communities in a post-Covid world."

Nikki has also received \$900,000 from the Health Research Council to develop a new tool to gauge why some New Zealanders are refusing or delaying vaccinations. She will work with Australian colleagues and the World Health Organisation on the vaccine hesitancy project.

"We estimate that between 2 and 4 percent of the New Zealand population may be highly suspicious of vaccinations, and they are unlikely to change their minds," says Nikki. "However, the group of people we call 'vaccine hesitant' can vary hugely from 5 percent to 20 percent of the population and there are a range of barriers as to why they do not get vaccinated, including their social environment and distrust of health services. It is this group of people we are targeting."

■ **Full stories:** auckland.ac.nz/ShiversV-study and auckland.ac.nz/vaccine-tool



STUDENT'S WELL-BEING TIPS

Student Yvonne Ruan tells of challenges and coping mechanisms, ahead of Mental Health Awareness Week.

The pressures of a competitive course and a pile-up of life changes proved too much for student Yvonne Ruan, who is sharing her story for this month's Mental Health Awareness Week.

Yvonne is a BSc graduate, now completing honours in Physiology at the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences. However, in her first year, the combination of being new to living in halls, meeting new people and studying Biomedical Sciences intending to enter a clinical programme, all proved too much.

"The whole environment was very foreign and competitive. Eventually, it all started piling up and became completely overwhelming."

Her usual method was to bottle it all up, but when panic attacks and depressive episodes began, Yvonne realised she needed to talk to someone. Counselling services helped, but she still had ups and downs. Looking back, Yvonne wishes she had seen her GP sooner, as cognitive behavioural therapy and antidepressants helped stabilise her mood greatly.

Second year involved new academic challenges and Yvonne found exams could trigger extreme anxiety. With the help of departmental staff, Yvonne booked an appointment with Student Disability Services (SDS). She was surprised to find out diagnosed mental health conditions are covered by the University's definition of disability. Yvonne wants to spread the word, because the support of mental health advisers has made a huge difference.

"The nurturing environment created by SDS, combined with the fact that they never doubted my condition, really helped me be more confident in speaking out about problems I encountered academically and mentally."

Rather than asking Yvonne whether her depression was causing her symptoms, they said, "Okay, your depression is causing this. Here's what we can do." The options they presented were ones Yvonne hadn't previously realised existed.

The mental health advisers liaised with University Health and Counselling and spoke to departmental staff about special conditions,

and the possibility of compassionate considerations and aegrotats.

"It's nice to feel that there's someone on my side and know someone is advocating for me," Yvonne says.

When it comes to advice for other students, Yvonne acknowledges she still faces challenges.

"With depression comes many unexpected curveballs. One of the main symptoms I experienced was a flat mood and a loss of interest in things I liked to do," she says. "What helped me was setting achievable goals and trying to develop them to become habits.

"As an example, I used to like power-lifting, but I dropped it entirely during a depressive episode.

"So I started small and set a SMART goal to go for one hour a week. My SMART goals in a lockdown situation are to go for a walk or do at-home workouts for 30 minutes to an hour, just as a break away from the computer. The most important thing is to take things step by step, even if they are baby steps."

Another technique has been to take time out to mentally switch off. Yvonne uses self-care tools such as meditation and journaling to get in touch with her emotions and thoughts.

"I try to treat myself like I do my friends: I wouldn't tell my friends to 'get over it', so I try not to be mean to myself either.

"From there it's troubleshooting, so I can figure out what steps I need to take to solve the problem.

"Nobody knows me better than I do, so trusting in myself has been a big highlight, and a challenge, in managing down days and my mental health overall."

■ Jodi Yeats

For tips, information and activities in Mental Health Awareness Week 27 September to 1 October, visit the University's What's On page and staff intranet.

ANGUS CAMPBELL:

HARNESSING

GRASSROOTS

DESIGN

The head of the Design Programme says we need a broader understanding of what design is and to prioritise it.

"It was like arriving in a parallel universe," says Dr Angus Campbell, of reaching New Zealand with his family in May, to take up his position at the University.

"We were lucky," says the new Head of the Design Programme in the Faculty of Creative Arts and Industries.

"We flew in with the crew of the *Lion King* and it might have been coincidence, but we were put into a very nice hotel with a beautiful view of the Town Hall and the city."

Angus is from South Africa and having experienced numerous lockdowns over the past 18 months, found it both liberating and in some ways startling to meet with students and colleagues at Elam School of Fine Arts in person.

"I actually had a bit of a sensory overload, after so many months of a two-dimensional computer screen interfacing with people. To go out, and see people everywhere, even being able to go to the shops or to an exhibition, was quite strange."

Things can change quickly in the Covid-19 world and he's now back in more familiar territory. "It feels strangely 'normal' to be back to teaching and attending meetings online," he says. "All I can hope for is a swift return to being able to see students and staff face-to-face again which is so much more natural than a digital interface."

Angus has a doctorate of literature and philosophy in development studies from the University of Johannesburg and a masters of technology in industrial design. For the past 18 years he taught at the University of Johannesburg, most recently as head of the Department of Industrial Design.

His lecturing, practice-based research and freelance design experience is focused on investigating and using design in a way that brings together complex social, technological

“If we consider our ancestral history, people using sticks and stones to fashion into tools were innovations in design.”

– Dr Angus Campbell, Head of the Design Programme

Dr Angus Campbell. Photo: Elise Manahan

and ecological systems, to address contemporary needs at a local level.

Design in the 21st century demands thinking beyond traditional perceptions of what we might think of as ‘design’ he says. Design has had a bad reputation, and sometimes for good reason.

“Design has a relatively problematic history, because in the past it was used to persuade or manipulate people into wanting and buying more, particularly post World War Two.”

It was, he agrees, partly responsible for consumerism, and has been accused of commodifying our self-esteem, tying it in with what we wore, drove, put on our feet, put in our house, and products we are persuaded to constantly update.

“But that’s a distorted idea of what design is all about. If we consider our ancestral history as a species, people using sticks and stones to fashion into tools were innovations in design.”

He says we need a new and broader understanding of what design is, and to prioritise it, now more than ever.

“The world is transforming – ecologically, politically, economically, and so is the role of the designer. Design for all, universal design, inclusive design, cooperative design and participatory design are playing a major role.

“From cars to furniture, housing, clothing, equipment and technology, design from now on will need to be considered holistically.”

Aesthetics are going to play a lesser role in product development, he predicts, and sustainable materials and methods of production will be increasingly important.

“The only way to do that is to embrace the complexity of the socio-technical-ecological web. This is no easy undertaking but enterprises that try will be rewarded by customers who buy into and partner with their authentic efforts.

The opposite will be true for businesses that superficially jump on the green bandwagon.”

Angus was first alerted to the new Design Programme at the University of Auckland in November 2019, when Associate Professor Peter Shand (head of the Elam School of Arts) and Mr Jim Speers (leader of Elam Fine Arts programmes) presented at the GloWD ReDesignEd Educators Forum in Johannesburg on the Programme.

“I went up to Peter and said ‘this is what the world needs. It challenges the tradition of design as something to be taught within narrow silos, such as graphic design, industrial design, fashion or product design, as it traditionally has been.’”

The University’s Design Programme provides a bridge between disciplines. Around 60 percent of students enrolled in it study design as a co-joint degree, with health, computer science, global studies, law and other disciplines.

“It’s about using design to build bridges between disciplines, to understand and address the complex problems we’re now dealing with.”

When the head of the inaugural programme resigned in 2020 to return to Australia, Angus promptly put his hand up for the job.

“After 18 years at the same university, I was looking for a change. This programme aligned very much with my areas of expertise, and I saw a very strong parallel with New Zealand and South Africa.”

His recent research has focused on the role that design can play in learning from and supporting innovations in design developed by some farmers in South Africa.

“Small-scale or urban farmers tend to be relatively marginalised, but also innovate and use technology to overcome the issues that they face in their farming operations.”

National efforts to address problems, such as

food insecurity, have typically been developed by governments in a very top-down approach.

“But there’s a lot of innovation in marginalised communities, in which people aren’t considered to be experts because they haven’t necessarily had the education. They are experts at what they’re doing in very particular ways: they know their craft and the context in which they’re working, and how to use resources in a way that is sustainable.

“These sorts of innovations are also relatively easy to transfer and translate for other farmers but require modest resourcing to be able to scale up.”

In other words, we need to look to and harness the research and development done at a grassroots level, in a way that benefits communities.

Angus points to the pioneering work of Anil Gupta, former professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. He founded the Honey Bee Network to connect the innovations of ‘ordinary folk’ into the mainstream Indian innovation system in an inspiring way, representative of a new way of thinking. He cites Gupta’s book, *Grassroots Innovation: Minds on the Margin Are Not Marginalised Minds* as recommended reading.

“But there are ways of learning to look at what is technology and what is innovation and seeing and understanding grassroots innovations within this new mindset.

“Design is about thinking about how creative solutions can be embedded locally, and providing solutions for complex problems.

“We’re faced with a global sustainability crisis, which presents a huge opportunity for designers and a philosophical shift, to engage with the complexity of these problems.”

■ Margo White

‘DRUNK, MONK, HUNK OR CHUNK’ A WINNER

Business School PhD candidate Sam Mackay (pictured below) took out the grand prize in the popular Three Minute Thesis (3MT) final on 6 August.

Sam captivated the 250-strong Friday evening crowd with his research about the experiences and well-being of expats in Afghanistan who are living in compounds. It was titled: “Drunk, monk, hunk or chunk: expatriate work and well-being in Kabul, Afghanistan”. Just two years ago, Sam was caught in a bomb blast in Kabul, and his speech was somewhat prescient in predicting the fall of the Afghan government within months.

Sam was the top prize Doctoral Winner and won the chance to represent the University at the 3MT Asia-Pacific Final.

“I decided to enter 3MT as a way to help me sharpen up my elevator pitch about my research,” Sam says. “I wasn’t expecting to make it through to the finals – let alone win.”

Krish Chaudhuri, an Engineering PhD candidate, spoke on computer modelling for heart bypass surgery and won the doctoral runner-up title.

Science masters students Rachel Lawson and Sebastian Dunn also impressed the judges, Professor Jim Metson, Finlay Macdonald (New Zealand senior editor at *The Conversation*) and Morgane Merien (last year’s 3MT doctoral winner).

Rachel’s research, on changes to human mobility during the Covid-19 lockdowns, won the top masters prize, and Sebastian’s exploration of virtual reality DNA saw him grab the runner-up spot. Rachel will now represent the University at the national Inter-University Masters Final.

“I now feel much more confident explaining my research to non-specialist audiences and to future employers,” she says.

■ See videos of the speeches at auckland.ac.nz/3MT-winners

IN THE HOUSE WITH JENNIFER MILES-CHAN

The director of the University’s Human Nutrition Unit oversees important research on metabolism, obesity and markers for type 2 diabetes.

If another lockdown has seen you chowing down on chocolate, cheese and chips, Dr Jennifer Miles-Chan may have just the healthy holiday destination for you once we’re back at level one.

Jennifer is a nutritional physiologist and the director of the Human Nutrition Unit (HNU), a rather unique research facility under the School of Biological Sciences. After completing a doctorate in physiology at the University of Auckland, she worked on her postdoc at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, where she stayed for almost nine years.

“There was a big chocolate factory right next to campus ... living in the land of chocolate and cheese was great.”

Jennifer returned to New Zealand in 2017 to take up a Sir Charles Hercus Health Research Fellowship for advanced postdoctoral study, awarded by the Health Research Council (HRC).

She now oversees the HNU, succeeding founding director Professor Sally Poppitt who returned to the UK in July, undertakes research and conducts her regular teaching duties.

The HNU is a circa 1900 ex-boarding house in Mt Eden, bought to conduct in-house research. It’s an unlikely site, and the outside could do with a lick of paint, but several rooms have been refurbished to become labs and kitchens, and five nice bedrooms remain for participants to ‘live in’ for nutrition studies that require close monitoring. Those studies measure the likes of metabolic rates or how people process different foods.

“Sugar by itself isn’t the bad guy. It’s the fact that we’re more likely to over-consume energy in the sugar form,” says Jennifer.

Measuring metabolic rate involves participants being hooked up to a monitor for three hours, watching mundane movies that neither excite them nor bore them so much that they fall asleep.

“We measure how much oxygen they take in, how much carbon dioxide they expel and get an idea of how many calories they are burning and where those calories are coming from.”

The HNU is a busy place. Taimi Theresa Alipia, originally from Samoa on an HRC Pacific Health Research PhD Scholarship, measures why some people respond differently to the same ‘challenge’ as others, such as exposure to the cold.

Participants, clad in liquid conditioning suits that cool skin temperature, are exposed to different temperatures to see how it affects their metabolism.

The rise of obesity and type 2 diabetes is a global issue, and several projects, funded by HRC and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Enterprise (MBIE), investigate aspects of this health crisis.

One, recruiting now, is the Synergy Study which requires people to live-in-house for two weeks and only eat what they’re given. What’s on offer sounds appealing – a chef cooks up the likes of Omega-3 lamb and Mt Cook salmon.

The study being undertaken at the HNU is recruiting Pākehā and Chinese participants to examine why, despite a low body mass index, many people of Chinese heritage store fat more readily in unhealthy sites (like within their pancreas and liver) and therefore face a higher risk of type 2 diabetes.

“There’s a high degree of obesity and diabetes in Asia – in China alone more than 100 million





Dr Jennifer Miles-Chan oversees high-quality internationally recognised health research.
Photo: Elise Manahan

“If we’re doing really good science, and that’s translatable into clinical outcomes in New Zealand and also in key markets overseas, that’s good for everyone.”

– Dr Jennifer Miles-Chan,
director, Human Nutrition Unit

people have diabetes, and at least another 400 million have prediabetes,” says Jennifer. “Chinese also exhibit what’s called TOFI, thin on the outside and fat on the inside. So it’s really useful to measure that as a risk factor.”

The two-week study, which can only happen at level one, feeds the residents two different diets, either the healthy diet or the Synergy diet, both largely based on the Mediterranean diet.

“The only difference is that the Synergy diet is amped up with nutritional New Zealand food and beverage products.”

Synergy foods have been developed in partnership with High-Value Nutrition (HVN) Ko Ngā Kai Whai Painga, which is funded by MBIE and hosted by the University.



The Human Nutrition Unit operates out of an old boarding house in Mt Eden.

HVN’s goal is to develop the evidence base to support the health benefits of New Zealand foods, to boost the country’s reputation as a producer of quality, high-value foods. It supports research into novel foods such as karengo, an indigenous seaweed, being developed by Ngāi Tahu and Wakatū Incorporation. Karengo, with evidence-based health benefits, could become a viable substitute for nori seaweed, often in short supply.

Out in the community many others are doing the same on their own. For example, quinoa puffs are a healthy snack developed by a Taranaki couple. Jennifer and her team spotted them on *Country Calendar*.

“We pick our industry partners carefully and this couple stood for everything good in the world. They’re passionate about good nutrition. We got hold of them and now they’re one of the 13 companies we partner with and they sit in on the Zoom meetings alongside household names like Fonterra, Zespri and Sanitarium.”

Foods like these are included in the Synergy Study. The aim is to research the synergistic effect of a range of healthy New Zealand foods on participants who live at the unit for the fortnight of the study.

Jennifer is wary of the common practice of promoting the virtues of a single ‘wonder’ food. There are no silver bullets. The Synergy Study is based on a ‘whole diet’ approach.

A second study is a large community study on weight loss over a year. The first two months feature intensive weight loss programmes, with the remainder of the year focused on maintaining the healthier weight and improvements in blood glucose.

Jennifer says if people are in the community it’s hard to know how compliant they are with their diets. “When people are living in the house, we tightly control what they eat, so we can test cause and effect. But you can’t test cause and effect in the community. We monitor compliance by doing urine and lipid tests which give a good idea. But there is a large degree of trust.”

Jennifer is also leading a novel area of research, the effect of the contraceptive pill on weight and energy metabolism.

“I started researching it when I was in Switzerland because I was shocked to find no one else was. A 2016 study found 89 percent of New Zealand females aged 35 to 69 have used oral contraceptives at some point in their lives. But we don’t know what they do to the body. We’ve looked at the cancer and cardiovascular risks but what about everyday stuff?”

She says research from the 1970s and 80s showed the pill can influence the way women digest and absorb vitamins and minerals.

A Cochrane review, a review of studies, found no evidence of any causative link between the pill and weight gain.

“But I looked at the obesity statistics and there was this big spike in women of childbearing age. Young women were somehow more susceptible or increasing their weight at a greater rate.”

PhD student Julia Cree is looking at how women on the pill handle and respond to glucose.

“They’re given a very sweet drink, and we measure their glucose and insulin. When women are on the pill, it seems they respond like a diabetic, or a prediabetic. If you’re young and healthy, that may be no biggie in the short term. But if you’re taking the contraceptive pill for ten to 20 years, that effect might accumulate over time.”

Women’s health is a real focus. A doctoral student, still in Iran, is wrangling large data sets from Denmark to identify any relationship between females’ specific hormonal factors at various points in adult life and body composition.

No two days are the same in Jennifer’s role.

“At the HNU we do health research and aim to do really high-quality internationally recognised science. And for some of what we do, the aim is to grow export revenues through HVN.

“If we’re doing really good science and that’s translatable into clinical outcomes in New Zealand and also in key markets overseas, that’s good for everyone.”

■ Denise Montgomery

Depending on Covid levels, Jennifer Miles-Chan will speak at the Foodomics High Value Nutrition Conference on 29 September about the Synergy NZ Diet for Diabetes Prevention. See tinyurl.com/foodomics-conference

INTO THE DIGITAL GARDENS OF ARS

The world's largest media arts festival is coming to Aotearoa New Zealand, co-organised by the University of Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington.

The international Ars Electronica Festival explores the emerging digital revolution, through the interface of art, technology and society. The name Ars comes from its home and the hub of the festival, the Ars Electronica Centre (AEC) in the city of Linz, Austria.

In 2021, Ars is showcasing 'gardens' from 100 partnering institutes around the world for the theme A New Digital Deal. The two New Zealand universities are working together to present a 3D cyber exhibition, which can be accessed from anywhere in the world via computer, mobile devices and/or virtual reality headsets.

Garden Aotearoa features more than 20 installations by researchers from different disciplines at both universities, along with Massey University and other artists around New Zealand.

In the Mozilla Hubs cyber gallery, visitors will be able to interact not just with other virtual visitors but also the installations. In addition, three hours of Ars Electronica TV, streamed online worldwide, will focus on Garden Aotearoa.

"Ars Electronica Garden Aotearoa explores how the digital world connects with the physical world," says Associate Professor Uwe Rieger, director of the University of Auckland's



The XR Tumour Evolution Model created by Associate Professor Uwe Rieger and researcher Yinan Liu with Dr Ben Lawrence.

arc/sec Lab for Cyber-Physical Architecture and Interactive Systems and one of the key organisers of Garden Aotearoa.

"It is for anyone interested in digital media, whether they're ten years old or 100."

Installations include the 'XR Tumour Evolution Model' created by Uwe and Yinan Liu from the arc/sec lab at the School of Architecture and Planning, in collaboration with Dr Ben Lawrence and his team at the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences. In this installation, the data of a real cancer patient is represented in interactive extended reality (XR) – allowing visitors to observe the impact of cancer in different organs over time. They can even reach out, explore

and interact with the tumours and track their development.

Another interactive display is a kinetic installation called LightSense, also developed by arc/sec lab, with the Empathic Computing and Augmented Human labs at the Auckland Bioengineering Institute. The lightweight 12-metre structure features 3D holographic animations and an integrated AI system, trained to learn hundreds of poems. That allows it to engage, lead and sustain conversations with a virtual audience.

■ Margo White

Ars Electronica runs from 8-12 September online at www.ars.nz.

SWEETEST CLUB ON CAMPUS?

Tiramisu, brownies, banoffee pie, kumara balls, affogato, crème brûlée ... these are a few of the favourite things of the University of Auckland Dessert Society (UADS).

Students Jayna Patel and Laura Shekouh, from the Faculty of Engineering, restarted the club after a previous version folded. They say the club is all about uniting students who like sweet things, but most importantly it's about embracing diversity and culture through desserts. So far, more than 250 dessert fans have paid the annual \$8 membership fee for events every two to three weeks (depending on Covid levels).

"What better thing could there be than bringing people together over desserts," says Jayna. "We're encouraging people to push outside their comfort zones and enjoy different desserts as well as show the fun and simplicity of cooking and baking."

The group also holds workshops teaching

members how to make desserts as well as educating them on cultural desserts.

A launch event in July featured hot chocolate and thick shakes (vegan and non-vegan options) and a cultural gala next semester will showcase traditional desserts from all over the world. That includes gulab jamun and barfi (both milk-based sweets) from India and Thailand's bua loy (coconut milk dessert).

The aim is to satisfy everyone's sweet tooth regardless of dietary requirements, says Jayna.

She says the membership fee gives people access to various discounts, including world-famous Giapo.

Next year the group hopes to make that even easier through an app that gives members access to discounts at sponsored dessert hotspots.

The app will also keep people informed about upcoming events. Sounds sweet.



■ To join up, go to linktr.ee/uoadessertsociety
Like them on Instagram and Facebook
[@uoadessertsociety](https://www.instagram.com/uoadessertsociety) and you can email for more
info: uoadessertsociety@gmail.com

SOUND ARCHIVE PODCASTS CELEBRATE



Wendy Pond, photo by Garth Rogers; Dame Anne Salmond by Elise Manahan; 'Ōkusitino Māhina by Sean Atavenitia; Richard Moyle, self-portrait; Judith Huntsman by Marti Friedlander. (Anthropology Photographic Archive and Vunilagi Vou)

The Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound (AMPS) 50th Anniversary Podcast is a series of talanoa (conversations) with five significant anthropologists from the University, in celebration of AMPS' 50th anniversary in 2020.

The archive comprises recordings from 1919 to the modern day and includes vocal and instrumental music, oral histories, stories and language resources from Aotearoa New Zealand and the rest of the Pacific. If you're tired of Netflix, this is great lockdown listening.

For the series, AMPS spoke to Hūfanga-He-Ako-Moe Lotu Professor 'Ōkusitino Māhina, Drs Judith Huntsman, Richard Moyle and Wendy Pond, and Distinguished Professor Dame Anne Salmond about their work with the archive, which was established in 1970. They also shared details about their decades of field work and research.

Judith says the mastermind in establishing the AMPS was Bruce Biggs, who was professor of Linguistics and Māori Studies in the Anthropology Department.

"He was a very forward-looking person."

Dame Anne says cylinder recordings, phonographic cylinders that recorded and produced sound, held at AMPS were recorded by her great-grandfather, James McDonald, in Gisborne, Rotorua, the Whanganui River and the East Coast from 1919 to 1923.

"For people to hear the voices of their grandparents or great-great-grandparents reciting karakia and speaking across the generations is extraordinarily powerful."

The archive also contains her recordings for her thesis and book, *Hui, a Study of Māori Ceremonial Gatherings*.

'Ōkusitino describes the importance of sound artefacts for Tongan and Moana Oceania peoples.

"Without sound we don't have poetry, language, oratory, mythologies, genealogies and so on. Sound is a running thread that entwines and intertwines these art forms."

Richard says years of research in the Pacific during a period of rapid cultural change have given him insights into what people might want to listen to: "I've discovered a kind of rule operating, you might call it the three-generational rule. That is, the grandchildren of those whose voices are recorded are now keen to listen to them."

Recalling her arrival in Tonga by sailboat during a research trip in 1967, Wendy says she was embraced by a local dance community.

"That was how I became an anthropologist, making the recordings that are now in the archive."

The anniversary podcast series was delayed by Covid-19 and the 30-minute episodes will be released in stages over the remainder of the year, to coincide with various culture's language weeks.

The first two episodes, with 'Ōkusitino Māhina and Wendy Pond, have been uploaded for Tonga Language Week 5-11 September, followed by Dame Anne's for Te Wiki o te Reo Māori 13-19 September, Richard Moyle for Fiji Language Week from 3-9 October and Judith Huntsman for Tokelau Language Week from 24-30 October.

■ Huni Mancini, Cultural Collections Assistant (AMPS)

Stories and podcast links will be available on news.library.auckland.ac.nz (Te Tumu Herenga Libraries and Learning Services)

LOUNGE AROUND WITH POETRY

Each month, poets gather at Old Government House to read their published works, in the Lounge Readings.

The readings are run by the New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre (NZEPC) and organised by Associate Professor Paula Morris and Professor Michele Leggott. All welcome. The next event is on 22 September (Covid level dependent) and then on 20 October.

■ Find out who will be reading on NZEPC's Facebook page: facebook.com/nzepec

BOOKS



AUP NEW POETS 8

The three poets in this collection are associated with the University. Lily Holloway and Modi Deng are alumni and Dr Tru Paraha is in the final

year of a postdoctoral research fellowship in English and drama. Editor Anna Jackson says:

"All three poets are concerned with memory and its traces, with artistry and the forms it can take, with the natural world at its most infinitesimal and at its most vast."

Edited by Anna Jackson, Auckland University Press, \$29.99

WIN: We have one copy of AUP New Poets 8 to give away. Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz by 20 September.

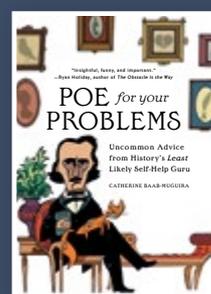


ACTIVISM, FEMINISM, POLITICS AND PARLIAMENT

Margaret Wilson has an LLB from the University of Auckland and became president of the Labour Party in the turbulent mid-1980s

before becoming a minister in the Helen Clark government. She also held roles as speaker of the house and attorney-general. This memoir provides analysis of political life in New Zealand over four decades, including the policies championed by Margaret such as pay equity, the NZ Supreme Court and paid parental leave.

Margaret Wilson, Bridget Williams Books, \$39.99



POE FOR YOUR PROBLEMS: UNCOMMON ADVICE FROM HISTORY'S LEAST LIKELY SELF-HELP GURU

Catherine Baab-Muguira is a master of creative writing (2008) and is now

living back in her US homeland working as a writer, journalist and in marketing. Her first book is a not-too-serious self-help book drawing on the works and life of Edgar Allan Poe that takes him in surprising directions. Catherine says it's a darkly humorous yet admiring look at what Poe's life can teach us today. Read more at catherinebaabmuguira.com

Catherine Baab-Muguira, Hachette, \$US18



“There is an important role for non-Māori to play as ‘Pākehā allies’ in supporting te ao Māori, te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori.”

Dr Tim Angeli-Gordon. Photo: Elise Manahan

OUR PLACE IN THE TUKUTUKU

This month’s Māori language week seems an apt time to reflect on the immense value of te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori in our society, the latter highlighted in numerous media stories about the University in recent weeks.

As a Pākehā in Aotearoa New Zealand, I constantly face the fact that I am still learning how I fit within the wider sociocultural landscape, a feeling that may ring true with others too. The concept of ‘Pākehā paralysis’ resonates deeply with me, a concept that I first heard explained by Alex Hotere-Barnes.

Pākehā paralysis manifests as an innate fear that we want to do ‘the right thing’, but at the same time, we do not want to inadvertently offend, insult or marginalise Māori. That fear of knowing that I will make mistakes, drives me into the safe space of paralysis – if I do not act, then my actions cannot be incorrect.

However, I feel strongly that there is an important role for non-Māori to play as ‘Pākehā allies’ in supporting te ao Māori, te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori. As I have navigated this path, I learned of an analogy that was attributed to the late Professor John Moorfield. Moorfield is a well-respected figure in the revitalisation of te reo Māori. He was asked about his thoughts, as a Pākehā, on the role that Pākehā should play in te ao Māori, and compared it to tukutuku panels in the whareniui (the ornate woven panels on the walls of the main meeting house on a marae).

In Moorfield’s analogy, the beautiful front of

those tukutuku panels is the rightful position of Māori, signifying that the most-important, forward-facing, leadership positions in te ao Māori must be held by Māori. Conversely, the back of the tukutuku is an intricate network of crisscrossed fibres and knots – the unglamorous side that no one in the whareniui sees, but is important for supporting the beautiful pattern on the front of the tukutuku. Moorfield suggested that the back of the tukutuku represents the place for Pākehā in te ao Māori, playing a key supporting role.

I have come to think of this position, as Moorfield described, as that of being a ‘Pākehā ally’, and in that, I can see a place where I may be able to contribute – a role where I can tautoko (support) my Māori colleagues, and provide research opportunities to Māori students.

I am a Pākehā immigrant from the United States who came to Aotearoa 12 years ago to complete my PhD in Bioengineering at the Auckland Bioengineering Institute (ABI).

I continued into an academic career at the ABI, where I am now a senior research fellow and lead the Target Lab (Translational Research in Gastroenterology and Emerging Technologies). Over my years as a scientist in Aotearoa, my concurrent personal journey led me to marrying my beautiful wife, Joni Māramatanga Angeli-Gordon (Ngāpuhi; Ngāti Whātua).

My wife is an incredible, talented, intellectual, compassionate wahine who, along with my daughter, has brought an immense amount of privilege and enrichment into my life in the area of te ao Māori.

I am privileged to be married to Joni, and to learn from her ongoing efforts to reclaim her ancestral language. This has entailed tens of

thousands of dollars in university and course fees, endless nights and weekends at various kura reo (language courses), and several years teaching at Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Hoani Waititi Marae (a Māori immersion school in Glen Eden). I am privileged to now get to watch as she finishes writing her PhD thesis in te reo Māori.

I am also privileged to have a daughter who is fluent in her native language and, through her, I get to experience first-hand the immense beauty and value of kura kaupapa Māori. I am extremely privileged to be welcomed so openly by all of the whānau in these various aspects of our life – most notably, at Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Hoani Waititi Marae, where our daughter attends.

And so this brings me back to the concept of Pākehā paralysis. What can, and should, I do with the privilege that I have been given? And more broadly, what can we Pākehā and other non-Māori do to support Māori as the back of the tukutuku in Moorfield’s analogy?

As an academic scientist, a husband to a passionate Māori wife, a father to a strong Māori daughter, and someone trying to be a Pākehā ally and honourable Treaty partner, I look forward to the opportunity to continue to learn, to step into the discomfort, to engage in mātauranga Māori, and to support my Māori colleagues in advancing Māori aspirations at the ABI and the wider University.

■ Dr Tim Angeli-Gordon is a senior research fellow in the Auckland Bioengineering Institute and a Rutherford Discovery Fellow with the Royal Society Te Apārangi.

Te Wiki o te Reo Māori: 13-19 September

The views in this article reflect personal opinion and are not necessarily those of the University of Auckland.