

The Executive Committee in 2021:

Amy Malcolm (President), Richard Northey (Vice-President), Karen Thompson (Treasurer), David Abbott, Paul Gilberd, Janet Copsey, Eva Tollemache, Rachael Yang and ex-officio member Shiprah Christian as the Executive Officer until mid-year when Jody Clarke re-joined the team. Five Executive Committee meetings were held over the year.

Membership

The current membership stands at 415. Because of the concerns relating to Covid-19, the decision was made not to seek membership renewals for this financial year or to solicit donations in the same period. The pandemic meant the Society's event programme could not be delivered except for the 2020 AGM and Christmas Party although members were invited to events run by the University. All memberships were extended for a year.

Patron

Our long-standing Patron, Dame Catherine Tizard ONZ, GCMG, GCVO, DBE, QSO died on 31 October 2021. She was appointed the Society's first Patron in 1991 and made a significant contribution to the Society and the wider alumni community over her time as patron, advocate and friend. You will find a full story about her involvement and support of the Society on the Society's webpage. Condolences have been sent to Dame Catherine Tizard's family on behalf of all members.

Membership feedback

This year the Society Executive surveyed members to learn more about what they valued. Sixty-two responses were received. The most prominent reasons for joining the Society were to keep in touch with what was happening at the University and to stay connected to and support the University community. Members valued being invited to events and receiving communications (Ingenio being the most valued, followed by the @auckland and Society e-newsletters). Additional information provided by Alumni Relations and Development showed that there was an exceptionally high "opening" and "click-through" rate for the electronic communications, showing members were highly engaged. In terms of the way members support the University we learned that 69% of those surveyed said they would recommend the University, 66% said they donate and 52% said they advocate on behalf of the University. Many of the benefits available to members such as discounts were not highly valued or used.

The Executive has analysed the survey results and discussed possible future roles for the Society. These discussions within the Executive and with the University will continue in 2022, with the aim of the Executive making recommendations to our membership about the best way forward by the 2022 AGM. All members are invited to be part of these discussions and make their interest known to an Executive Committee member so they can be included.

Supporting the University Community

The Society has donated \$10k to the University's Student hardship fund managed by Student Life and an additional \$10k towards hardship experienced at the University's new South Auckland campus, Te Papa Ako o Tonga

Campus Life's Student Engagement Manager provided this feedback:

The donation from the Society made a significant impact on seven students who faced unexpected circumstances due to Covid-19, such as the loss of research subjects and disrupted family support due to lockdowns. It also supported students facing everyday challenges such as car repairs and gaps in employment. Offering financial relief for essential living costs makes a tangible difference to student wellbeing, supporting their ability to persist in their academic studies.

The Director of Te Papa Ako o Tonga Campus in South Auckland provided this feedback:

On behalf of Te Papa Ako o Tonga, South Auckland Campus, I would like to thank the University of Auckland Society for your generous support.

A fund like this hopes to provide more flexibility with where funds can be spent and support students in situations where other hardship funds are not able to.

One recent example is the purchasing of a computer screen, keyboard, mouse and USB-C connection for a Master of Arts student who was finding it difficult to write her thesis on her laptop alone. She is young mother living with her husband and his family in a limited space during lockdown. Her writing time has been limited due to the nature of lockdown but the extra items have allowed her to focus more on her studies. Having an extra screen has also increased her productivity. This is a clear example of how the fund can support students.

The Society also contributed \$500 towards the cash prize for the Doctoral winner of the 2021 Three Minute Thesis competition. This year's winner was Sam Mackay, a Business School PhD candidate, with his thesis title 'Drunk, monk, hunk or chunk: Expatriate work and wellbeing in Kabul, Afghanistan.'

Support from the University

As in previous years, the Alumni Relations team has provided considerable support to the Society through the Executive Officer, Shiprah Christian for the first half of the year and Jody Clarke for the second, and the Treasurer, Karen Thompson, who holds the position of Associate Director, Alumni Relations and Engagement.

Events

Covid-19 disrupted university events for the second year but a new version of the Distinguished Alumni Awards went ahead in May. Instead of a conversation on stage with Finlay McDonald (Bright Lights) followed by a formal dinner and awards ceremony (the DAA Dinner), both events were wrapped into one, with a new name "Taumata" and held at the ASB Waterfront Theatre. The evening started with drinks and nibbles in the foyer before people were seated in the theatre for the discussion on stage between the winners and Finlay McDonald. Refreshments and informal networking then occurred again in the foyer. The model allowed for greater numbers and a more energised event. It was also live-streamed and alumni globally were invited to watch. Videos of the event were shared on-line.

The Society AGM and Christmas Party was held on Monday 16 November and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dawn Freshwater spoke and took part in a Q&A session.

To provide certainty regardless of the restrictions we find ourselves in during December, we have decided to hold the official AGM on Zoom. We will attend to essential business at the Zoom AGM and hold the entertaining and celebratory part of the Christmas function in the new year with a provisional date of Thursday 24 March. This will be confirmed by email.