Te Toki a Rata

In February, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern officially opened the University’s new Biological Sciences building, Te Toki a Rata. Situated on Kelburn Parade, the building has been designed to reflect international best practice, including collaborative laboratory and learning and teaching environments. Serving as a gateway to our science precinct for staff, students, and the wider community, Te Toki a Rata will allow important scientific research being undertaken at the University to be more visible and accessible. In May, the building won a Local Architecture Award in the Education category from the New Zealand Institute of Architects.

Creative links with Beijing

At a special event in April, Victoria University of Wellington signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with the prestigious Beijing Film Academy that will increase collaboration and creative links between the two institutions. The first MoU is a general agreement that the two institutions will work together to explore key areas of mutual collaboration. The second MoU is focused on study abroad opportunities, and will allow Beijing Film Academy students to spend a semester studying at Victoria University of Wellington. The agreements will utilise the Miramar Creative Centre’s strengths in film, animation, and game design.

New senior appointments

In July, Dr Lucy Baragwanath joined Victoria University of Wellington as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Engagement). Dr Baragwanath brings with her a wealth of experience in strategic engagement, leadership, and influence from her previous role as Senior Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor at Auckland University of Technology, and past roles at the Committee for Auckland, the Auckland Mayor’s Office, Auckland Council, and the University of Auckland.

Professor Margaret Hyland took up the role of Vice-Provost (Research) in July. Prior to her appointment she was Professor of Chemical and Materials Engineering at the University of Auckland, and was also seconded to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment in the role of Chief Scientist. Professor Hyland was the first woman to be awarded the prestigious Pickering Medal for excellence in technology by the Royal Society Te Apārangi in 2015. She was also the inaugural Director of the Science for Technological Innovation National Science Challenge.

Professor Stephen Dobson took up the position of Dean of Education in July. Professor Dobson is a widely respected scholar whose research focuses on pedagogy, assessment, and learning. Prior to his appointment he was Dean and Head of the School of Education at the University of South Australia, and he has also held higher education roles in Scandinavia.

3D printing partnership

The University’s School of Design formally partnered with internationally renowned 3D printing company Shapeways, joining 12 other institutions, including MIT in the United States and the United Kingdom-based Royal College of Art, as a Shapeways Education Partner. Shapeways provides printing and design services to businesses and schools around the world, and the partnership is an endorsement of the high-quality design work done at Victoria University of Wellington.

Leap forward for national music centre

Plans by the University, the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, and Wellington City Council to create a national centre of musical excellence in central Wellington took another leap forward this year when the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board granted $4 million to the project. The fundraising campaign is well on its way to achieving its $30 million target. The result of many years’ planning, the national music centre is intended to be a vibrant community facility that will support civic engagement and be a magnet for musical and creative talent nationally and internationally.

University Consortium of Maritime Silk Road

In October, Victoria University of Wellington became the only New Zealand university to join the new University Consortium of Maritime Silk Road, which was launched in Xiamen, China. The Consortium comprises more than 60 universities from 17 countries and regions and was initiated by Xiamen University, one of Victoria University of Wellington’s longstanding partners, with the aim of improving collaboration between Consortium members.