Pasifika at Victoria University of Wellington

Pacific Climate Change Conference
In February, the University co-hosted the second Pacific Climate Change Conference at Te Papa, involving three days of presentations by more than 160 scientists, researchers, artists, legal minds, politicians, activists, and indigenous rights experts.

The conference was opened by Samoan Prime Minister, The Honourable Tuila’epa Dr Sa’ilele Malielegaoi, and sessions touched on diverse themes including the need for evidence-based laws incorporating traditional knowledge, the need to build capacity in the Pacific region to ensure climate change programmes are fit for purpose and managed adequately and ethically, and the importance of the arts in tackling climate change.

Representatives from 11 Pacific Island nations attended the conference and shared their on-the-ground experience of living and coping with the impacts of climate change. The conference was co-organised with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme.

Emerging Pasifika Writer’s Residency
In June, the International Institute for Modern Letters launched its new Emerging Pasifika Writer’s Residency. Supported by Creative New Zealand, the Residency runs for three months and includes a writing room and a stipend of $15,000. A member of the Pasifika arts community will also mentor the Emerging Pasifika Writer-in-Residence. Leki Jackson-Bourke, a South Auckland-based playwright of Tongan, Niuean, and Samoan descent, will take up the first Residency in 2019.

Pacific nursing outreach
A unique initiative saw Victoria University of Wellington academics delivering postgraduate courses in nursing, midwifery, and health at the National University of Samoa (NUS) to help address a chronic shortage of qualified lecturers within the NUS School of Nursing. Called Growing our Own, the initiative is a joint response to the factors contributing to the shortage, which has impacted the ability of NUS to provide research capability and postgraduate qualifications both within its School of Nursing and in Samoa’s broader nursing and midwifery sector.

The initiative began in July and involves Dr Robyn Maude and Dr Ausaga Fa’asalele Tanuvasa from the Faculty of Health, who are helping to deliver five PhDs, eight Master’s degrees, and up to 40 diploma and certificate courses in Samoa.

Public sector symposium
In August, Victoria Business School hosted a three-day symposium that explored issues affecting public sector development in Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, and Vanuatu.

Papers were presented by a cross-section of Members of Parliament, members of the diplomatic corps, public servants, development practitioners, students, and academics on themes including performance management, capacity building, and the role of regional and sub-regional intergovernmental organisations.

Prestigious prize for Samoan academic
Dr Guy Fiti Sinclair, Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, was awarded the prestigious 2018 European Society of International Law Book of the Year Prize. The jury unanimously decided to award him the prize for his book To Reform the World: International Organizations and the Making of Modern States, published by Oxford University Press. Dr Sinclair is the first author not affiliated with a European university to win this prize.

Innovative architecture
Master of Architecture student Anthony Liuvaie Freddie, who grew up in Niue, has developed sustainable, cyclone-resistant architecture for the island nation utilising its important natural features such as the native Ovava tree. He hopes this work will improve the country’s resilience and better prepare it for the impacts of climate change.