



Interview with the Vice-Chancellor

What were some of the key achievements in 2018?

The year started strongly with the opening of Te Toki a Rata and welcoming the first cohort of students into our Faculty of Health. Enrolment growth has been pleasing, particularly in international students, and we launched the Great Futures programme, which aims to more than double the University's philanthropic scholarship funds by 2020. It has been exciting to see global uptake of our MOOCs through the edX platform. We also continue to be recognised for our efforts in sustainability, winning two Australasian Green Gown Awards in 2018.

Notable research highlights?

We have had outstanding success in external research funding this year—from investment through the Government's Marsden Fund and the Health Research Council of New Zealand to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Endeavour Fund. Our staff have also received numerous accolades and awards, including five of our researchers receiving Royal Society Research Honours. We also submitted many more evidence portfolios for the 2018 Performance-Based Research Fund round than for prior rounds.

And the big challenges?

A major focus this year has been improving our international reputation in order to secure our future. The proposal to change our name to University of Wellington is one strand of that programme, which is designed to close the gap between the high quality of our institution and how we are perceived around the world. Without a strong global reputation, the University's future is at risk from constrained earnings and the emergence of global elite university 'brands' capable of disrupting local markets through online delivery.

How has the University focused on employability during the year?

We have continued to leverage the advantages delivered through our location in Wellington, which is New Zealand's strongest knowledge economy. Both employers and the wider community increasingly appreciate the importance of our students having transferable skills and opportunities for work-integrated learning during their study. One notable initiative of many this year was the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences launching an online, extracurricular course in Digital Fluency, which enables students to develop the digital skills that are so necessary in today's employment market.

What was done to boost Māori and Pasifika achievement?

A highlight was establishing two new university-wide teams to provide culturally responsive support and enhance the retention and achievement of Māori and Pasifika students. This initiative ushers in a new era which will see us providing comprehensive, customised support across all faculties and programmes. Our Taihonoa partnership programme also went from strength to strength with more than 60 agreements now signed with iwi and iwi-related organisations. We saw a boost in numbers of Māori staff, and also expanded the Tohu Māoritanga programme to allow students to enrol in a wider range of 100-level courses. The first round of recipients of our Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder Scholarships, funded by the divestment of the former Karori campus, began their studies at the University this year. The scholarships are available to students from low decile schools in the Wellington region with large numbers of Māori and Pasifika students.

What was done to further improve the student experience?

Supporting the roll out of fees-free tertiary study for first-year students was a focus, as was support for the introduction of a tertiary travel discount for our students travelling to and from the University by bus, rail, and ferry. Working alongside student representatives and advocacy groups to support student health and wellbeing has also been a high priority. This year, we joined the Berkeley-led *Student Experience in the Research University (SERU)* Consortium, which allows us to compare our students' experiences to those of students at universities across the world.

Any final words?

It has been another incredibly busy year in which our people have put an enormous amount of effort into their work and ensuring the best possible outcomes for our students. I want to thank everyone who is part of our community—staff, students, Council members, partners and collaborators, stakeholders, alumni, and donors—for everything they do for Victoria University of Wellington.

PROFESSOR GRANT GUILFORD
Vice-Chancellor