



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

2025

TE PŪRONGO A TE KURA TANGATA

Report on Philanthropy

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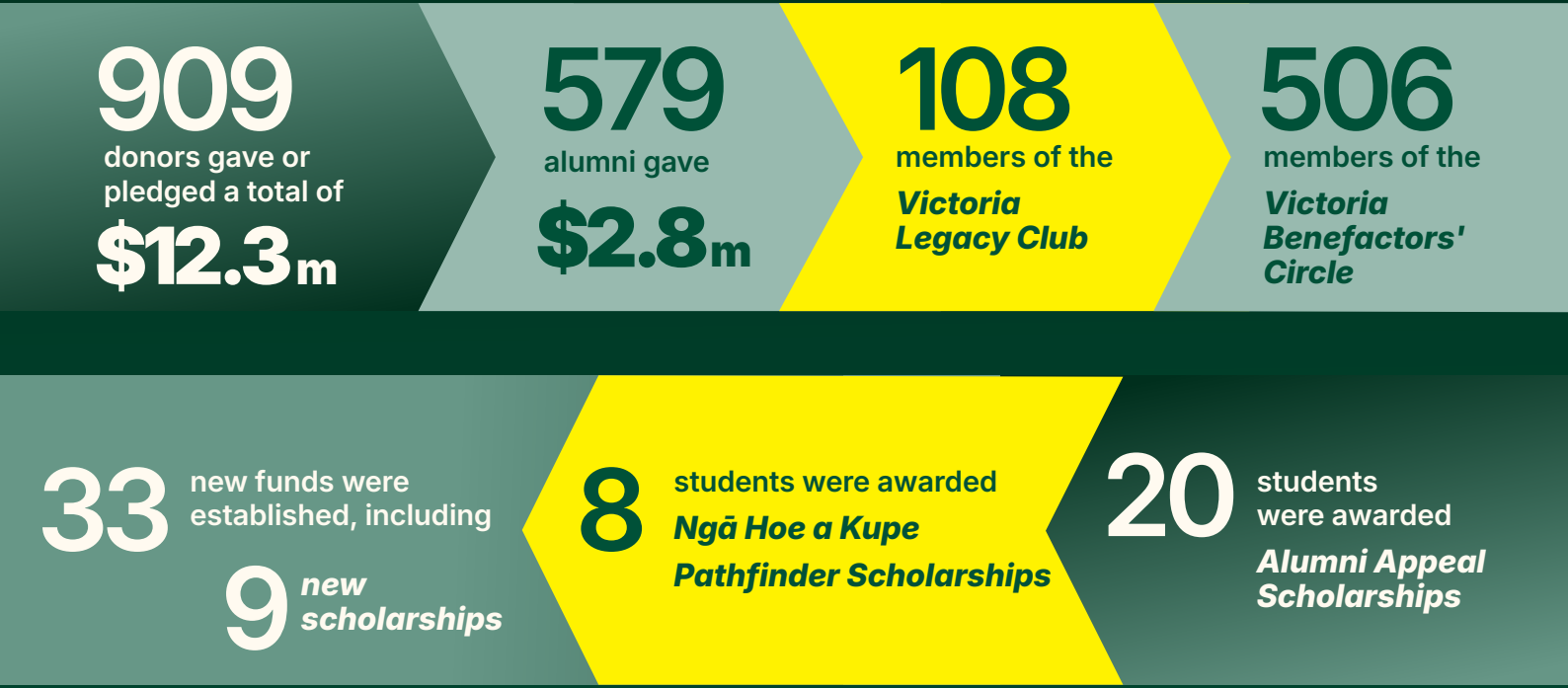
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Cover image: *Equity scholarships programme manager Gail Ah-Hi with Ngā Hoe a Kupe Pathfinder Scholarship recipients in Ngā Mokopuna.*
Below: *Alumni Appeal Scholarship recipients studying in the Kelburn Library.*



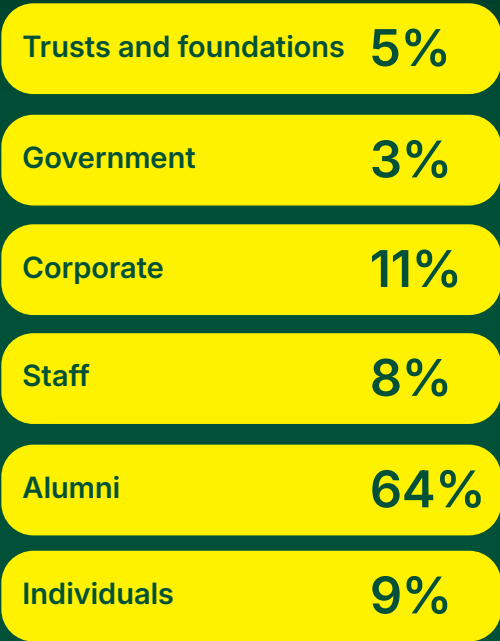
Overview

of 2025



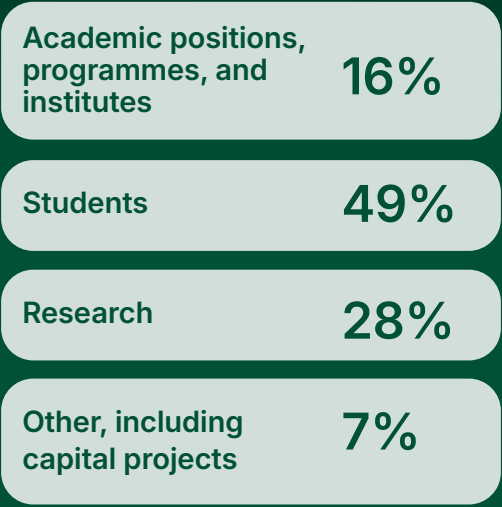
You helped 1,935 students in 2025, including 1,609 through the Winter Energy Grants

Who are our donors?



% by number of donors

What did our donors support?



\$ amount for category (%)



Reflections on the year

From the chair

I'm delighted to report that we had another exceptional year of philanthropy, thanks to the generous donors who support our researchers, students, and wider community.

Victoria University of Wellington raised a total of \$12.3 million in philanthropic donations in 2025 from 909 donors. In the face of an ever-changing market, the Foundation's careful stewardship enabled it to meet its objective of future-proofing the endowed fund with an inflationary increase of 2.7 percent, while also providing a return of 4 percent.

It was fantastic to see the way our community supported students throughout 2025. I'm pleased to say that support for the Winter Energy Grants has continued to increase, with 1,609 students benefiting from the grant during the year. I was also delighted to see that we awarded Alumni Appeal Scholarships to 20 hard-working students in 2025. These scholarships mean students can thrive in their second year of study without the stress of financial hardship weighing on their minds, and it's wonderful to see how your support transforms their lives.

In these pages, we find out how Dr Aola Richards's astonishing \$13.5 million bequest in 2024 to the School of Biological Sciences is supporting researchers. Dr Richards's dream was to build a thriving community of entomology researchers at Te Herenga Waka, and it's amazing that so much progress towards this goal has already been made.

We also meet Professor Pamela Bell, the inaugural Sir Mark Dunajtschik Chair in Construction, and learn what drives her commitment to empowering students in her field. Professor Bell's role was created thanks to a transformational \$10 million gift from Sir Mark and his business and life partner, Dame Dorothy Spotswood. The gift has allowed the University to establish the new Construction programme, led by the Chair in Construction, and the new Mechatronics programme, led by the Chair in Mechatronics.

You'll also learn more about what motivated Dame Kerry Prendergast, the former Foundation chair and a longstanding friend of the University, to lead the fundraising for the National Music Centre (NMC). Dame Kerry's contributions to the NMC are nothing short of remarkable, and I know many of you share in her excitement about the centre's opening in 2027.

I was honoured to serve as acting chair in 2025, and I want to extend my warmest appreciation to Dame Kerry for her years of work with the Foundation. Along with our other trustees, I was delighted to welcome John McCay as chair for 2026 onwards. John is a proud alumnus of Victoria, and we're excited that his broad range of experience is being put to good use as chair.

On behalf of the trustees, thank you for your thoughtful and generous support. The success of our community, and the Foundation, would not be possible without you.

Souella Cumming ONZM

Acting chair, Victoria University of Wellington Foundation

From the Tumu Whakarae

I have really valued the opportunity to connect with many members of our donor community throughout the year, who provide a wonderful set of examples of the way an enduring and meaningful connection to Te Herenga Waka can motivate exceptional generosity.

Just one of many remarkable examples of this generosity is the Asia Connect Scholarships, which were established by Allan Yeo and Helen Paterson. Allan first came to New Zealand on a Colombo Plan Scholarship to pursue his studies at Victoria, and this experience had a profound impact on his life. Allan has always wanted to give back to the next generation of students. This desire has inspired the creation of these scholarships, which will allow two students each year to travel to Singapore on a year-long exchange and will have a transformative impact on the students who receive them.

Closer to home, it has been fantastic to see the way our community has come together to support some of our most important and visionary projects. Like many of you, I am looking forward to the opening of the National Music Centre, a world-class centre for music education and performance anchored by Te Whare Whakarauika Wellington Town Hall, in February 2027. Our supporters have played a pivotal role in the creation of the NMC, and this is truly a project that could not have been realised without our incredible community.

As I wrap up my time as Vice-Chancellor at Te Herenga Waka, I want to take this opportunity to thank you, our generous supporters, for your dedication and foresight.

When I first arrived at this university, I found a culture of philanthropy embedded across the entire university community. Throughout my tenure, I have been inspired by the vision our supporters have for our university and the enthusiasm that drives us all forward.

In my time here, I've seen our community rally behind grassroots campaigns to enable critical research. I've seen the way our staff, alumni, and friends have come together to collectively support student success. I've seen astonishing bequests that have enabled and will enable areas of our university to thrive long into the future. This philanthropy has a profound impact on our university and society, and it is you, our champions, who make this possible.



I also want to take the opportunity to thank the members of the Victoria University of Wellington Foundation Board, past and present, who have so ably guided us through recent years. It has been an honour to work with you all, and I am grateful for your service.

Thank you once again to all our supporters for your belief in the work of this university.

Professor Nic Smith
Tumu Whakarae—Vice-Chancellor

Victoria University of Wellington Foundation

Your generous gifts to the Victoria University of Wellington Foundation are changing lives and transforming communities through scholarships, prizes, academic positions, and research programmes.

Governed by an independent board of trustees, the Foundation is responsible for managing your donations, investing gifts into the endowment portfolio, and distributing funds in accordance with donor wishes. None of this would be possible without you. Your gift—no matter the size—is making a difference.

Responsible investing

The Victoria University of Wellington Foundation has a strong commitment to responsible investment. Our current measures include regular environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and weighted-average carbon intensity reporting by our fund managers and submissions to the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPRI) to which the Foundation is a signatory. The Foundation's Statement of Investment Performance and Objectives outlines the Foundation's investment beliefs, including our commitment to integrating ESG considerations into the investment portfolio.

By investing in pooled investment funds, the Foundation recognises that there are limitations on its ability to select and influence the companies included within the funds. The board's focus is the appointment of fund managers; the extent to which the managers' ESG and climate-related policies align with the Foundation's policies; and ongoing monitoring, assessment, and engagement with managers to ensure continuing improvement and alignment over time. These measures are tracking appropriately with our expectations.

United Nations principles for responsible investment

In 2018, the Victoria University of Wellington Foundation was the first Australasian university foundation to become a signatory to UNPRI, joining more than 4,900 organisations around the world that have committed to these principles. As a signatory, the board of the Foundation pledges to integrate ESG considerations into its investment decisions.

The UNPRI provides an internationally accepted framework for investors such as the Foundation to manage ESG issues in a manner consistent with improving long-term investment returns, focusing on six principles for responsible investment. The Foundation is encouraged by the ongoing improvement in its UNPRI results showing the commitment to meeting and exceeding these principles while enhancing its stewardship of philanthropic donations.

To learn more about UNPRI, go to unpri.org

To learn about the Foundation's investment policies related to ESG and see its Statement of Investment Policy and Objectives, go to wgtn.ac.nz/foundation



Creating a legacy for the future

Leaving a gift in your will is one of the most meaningful ways to advance vital research and support hard-working students long into the future.

Our supporters are driven by a range of powerful and deeply personal motivations. Some of you are dedicated to creating equitable access to education, while others are focused on supporting research areas that matter most to yourselves and your families. Wherever your gift is directed, it helps to build a fairer, stronger society and ensures you leave the world a better place than you found it.

Our team is passionate about working with our donors to ensure your giving supports your areas of passion and creates a legacy you are proud of. Karen Whitehead, our development manager, planned giving, works closely with those considering leaving a gift in their will to ensure their vision is realised.

The Victoria University of Wellington Foundation carefully manages all gifts in accordance with donor wishes. The Foundation strives to ensure a successful and sustainable future for the University and its students through the endowment portfolio.

When a donor advises that a donation is to last in perpetuity, the Foundation invests the donation in the endowment portfolio to earn an annual income. That income is then used to provide ongoing support to the University's students and projects as per the donor's wishes. Donors often choose to create an endowed fund, and we acknowledge this commitment by naming the fund in honour of the donor or a family member.

We are immensely grateful for every gift we receive, whether it is a specific sum or a percentage of whatever is left once you have provided for those close to you. Every gift, whatever the size, will have a positive impact for generations to come. It's also the perfect way to support the causes you care about, without having an impact on your current financial needs.

By making an endowed gift, you are investing in the future of our students, teaching, and research. The Foundation's audited financial statements are available on its website at wgtn.ac.nz/foundation

If you would like to have a confidential talk about leaving a gift in your will, contact Karen Whitehead at karen.whitehead@vuw.ac.nz or 0800 VIC LEGACY (0800 842 534).



Dame Kerry Prendergast



*Artist impression of the completed Te Whare Whakarauika Wellington Town Hall, including the front-of-house annex building.
Credit: Wellington City Council*

Highlights of 2025

Love of Wellington's arts scene drives enduring support for music centre

Dame Kerry Prendergast's motivation for supporting the National Music Centre (NMC) is simple: Her belief in the power of arts, and particularly the arts in Wellington, is unwavering.

Dame Kerry has chaired the NMC fundraising campaign since its inception, which has involved years of dedicated behind-the-scenes volunteer work championing the NMC and its benefits to the city.

Her contributions to the NMC are part of her lifelong dedication to supporting the arts in Wellington. During her long and successful career in politics, which included three terms as the mayor of Wellington, she was known for helping to establish and build the city's reputation as New Zealand's arts, culture, and events capital.

"I'm a great believer that the arts help us. It's about your soul. Yes, you've got to have good infrastructure, warm places for people to live in, and jobs. But when all that's done, you've got to have things that are good for people."

The NMC is a landmark collaboration between the Wellington City Council, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra—Te Tira Pūoro o Aotearoa (NZSO), and Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington's New Zealand School of Music—Te Kōkī (NZSM). It will be anchored by the refurbished Te Whare Whakarauika Wellington Town Hall, creating a shared vision for world-class music education and performance in the heart of Wellington.

The NMC forms a key part of the revitalisation of Te Ngākau Civic Precinct. The reopening of the beloved Te Matapihi ki te Ao Nui Central Library has already revived the community spirit that previously defined the precinct, and the reopening of the City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi later in 2026 will further invigorate the area.

For Dame Kerry, the opening of the NMC in February 2027 will be the finishing touch.

"I've always said Civic Square is the city's soul. I absolutely believe that when the Town Hall reopens, and when the NZSO and NZSM are in there, we're going to see that collaboration spilling out onto Civic Square."

Dame Kerry is quick to point out that the NMC has been the result of a collaborative effort by countless people, including dedicated teams from the University, the NZSO, and the Wellington City Council.

She is also greatly appreciative of the incredible community of generous donors who have played a pivotal role in bringing this once-in-a-generation cultural home to life. She notes that the NMC simply would not exist without this community of supporters who believe deeply in the power of the arts, music, and creativity.

This is a community that is growing day by day, as more and more people become a chairholder in the NMC. This initiative gives supporters the chance to name a seat in the Town Hall's beautifully restored Adam Auditorium, either in their own honour or in tribute to someone who has inspired their life.

All gifts received through this initiative directly support the fit-out of the state-of-the-art performance and teaching spaces occupied by the NZSO and NZSM.

Dame Kerry is fronting this initiative, and she and her family have also named a series of seats that will stand as a visible tribute to their dedication to the arts.

Dame Kerry's contributions to the NMC join the long list of significant service she has given to the community, including chairing the Victoria University of Wellington Foundation. In 2011, she was honoured with a Distinguished Alumni Award, and in 2025, she was awarded a Hunter Fellowship, one of the highest honours the University can bestow.

For Dame Kerry, standing in the NMC when it opens will be a profound moment. She is particularly excited about the rehearsal and recording studios, which will help define Wellington as an international destination for recording music and scoring films.

Her drive to support the University, and Wellington as a whole, is unshakeable.

"I love this city with a passion. Through the good times and the bad, I can only see opportunities."

Find out how to become a chairholder in the National Music Centre by visiting becomeachairholder.co.nz or contacting acting associate director, fundraising Corinne Barnard on 04 463 6952 or corinne.barnard@vuw.ac.nz



In memory of distinguished art historian Gordon H. Brown

Art historian, curator, and artist Gordon H. Brown OBE died in March 2025 at the age of 93, but his legacy lives on in the lecture series that bears his name.

The Gordon H. Brown Lecture Series was established by the University's Art History programme in collaboration with Te Pātaka Toi Adam Art Gallery in 2002 when the University awarded Gordon an honorary doctorate for his contribution to art history.

Now in its twenty-fourth year, the series invites a leading scholar of Aotearoa New Zealand art history to deliver a public lecture that highlights new research and results in a published booklet. Gordon himself delivered the inaugural lecture, later published as *Elements of Modernism in Colin McCahon's Early Work*.

"Gordon H. Brown, a champion of local art history and longstanding friend of Te Pātaka Toi Adam Art Gallery, has an enduring attachment to Te Herenga Waka," says Abby Cunnane, the gallery's manutaki—director.

"For us, his legacy is significant. In 2002, he gifted a collection of books, journals, and ephemera, which now resides in the archive and library administered by the gallery, and in 2010, he presented 11 paintings and works on paper from his personal collection to Ngā Puhipuhi o Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington Art Collection.

"We are proud to continue working with the Art History programme to deliver the Gordon H. Brown Lecture Series named in his honour."

Gordon was a close friend of Colin McCahon, having taken an early interest in his work since they first met in 1952. His 1984 monograph *Colin McCahon: Artist* established Gordon's reputation as a leading scholar of the artist.

Born in Wellington in 1931, Gordon attended Wellington Technical College. He received a Diploma in Fine Arts from Canterbury School of Art and trained as a librarian at the National Library School in Wellington. He continued to practise painting and photography and exhibited his art at various dealer galleries in the 1960s.

He went on to work in significant New Zealand libraries and art galleries, including the Alexander Turnbull Library. While at the Hocken Library in Dunedin, he curated three nationally touring exhibitions, *New Zealand Painting 1900–1920: Traditions and Departures* (1972), *1920–1940: Adaptation and Nationalism* (1975), and *1940–1960: Conformity and Dissension* (1981), with accompanying publications.

In 1969, he wrote the groundbreaking publication *New Zealand Painting: An Introduction 1839–1967* along with his Auckland Art Gallery colleague Hamish Keith. Known as 'Brown and Keith' to students, the book mapped a history of New Zealand painting, shaping robust discussions and stimulating research for the next five decades.

In later years, Gordon became a freelance writer on a wide variety of topics related to New Zealand art. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire for services to art history in 1989.



Professor Pamela Bell



Sir Mark Dunajtschik and
Dame Dorothy Spotswood

Sir Mark Dunajtschik Chair in Construction builds exciting new degree pathway

Professor Pamela Bell could easily be called a professional trail-blazer. While earning a Bachelor of Architecture, she became the first New Zealander to compete in a World Cup competition for snowboarding and represent her sport in the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics.

Her time as a competitive athlete opened avenues for entrepreneurship—including creating a winter sport clothing brand—which has since turned into a lifelong passion for building businesses from the ground up.

"The things that really drive me in my work are creating new pathways and spotting the gaps," says Professor Bell. "I relate it to snowboarding because when you're on a run and going between the trees, you have to keep your eyes focused on the gap, otherwise you crash. Paying attention to the gap between things, and finding the best path forward, is a connecting thread across any industry or position I have held and find exciting."

Prior to her time in academia, Professor Bell channelled her entrepreneurial spirit into founding a successful prefabricated construction industry association, PrefabNZ (now known as OffsiteNZ), and worked as an innovation consultant for businesses across the globe. Thanks to the generous funding of a gift from Sir Mark Dunajtschik and Dame Dorothy Spotswood, she recently added the role of inaugural Chair in Construction at Te Wāhanga Waihangā—Hoahoa—Faculty of Architecture and Design Innovation to her resumé as well.

This pioneering position oversees the brand-new Construction programme, which contains both Bachelor's and Master's degrees and welcomed its flagship cohort in February 2026. In addition to shaping the programme kaupapa and content delivery as Chair, Professor Bell will deliver lectures and support students with her immense insider knowledge of the industry. She believes this new degree pathway is delivering something unique to the New Zealand university landscape.

"Everything we're teaching is in partnership with industry, so students can get that hands-on connection to the built environment," says Professor Bell. "We're working with some of our largest contractors, like L.T. McGuinness,

Naylor Love, Hawkins, CMP, and Aoraki Construction, to create access to live construction sites and to bring in subject matter experts who can deliver course content in a studio setting.

"Our programme features a 50/50 split focus on construction fundamentals and future-proofing, the latter of which covers emerging fields such as digital literacy, sustainability, innovation, wellbeing, and Māori land development.

"Plus, another major benefit of this Construction programme is being embedded in an existing architecture school. This means our students will learn how to work alongside architects and design professionals to develop cross-discipline relationships so they can be an effective team player in their future roles."

Professor Bell hopes that dynamic degree pathways like this will make 'digital-first' professional construction education more visible and accessible to potential students who might only be aware of carpentry-based vocational pathways.

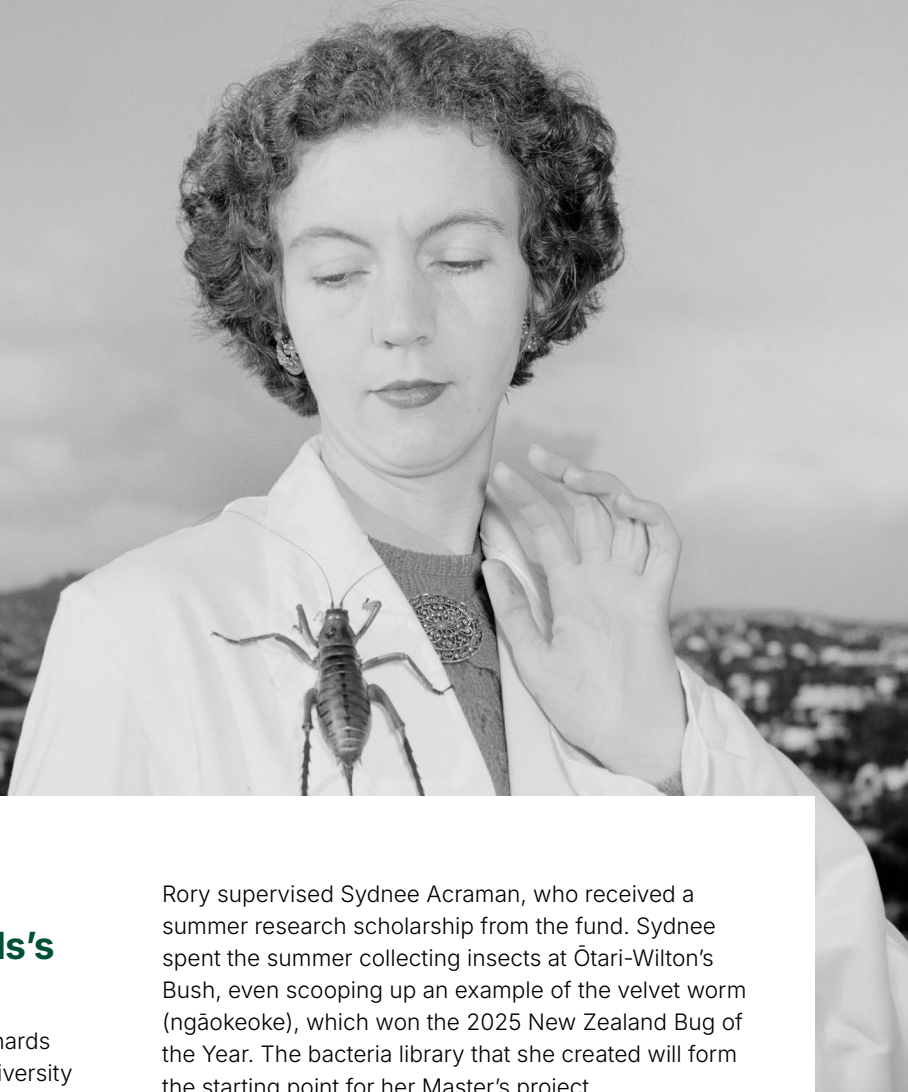
"We want to empower young people to not only be equipped with the fundamental skills of the job when they get out but also to feel confident in teaching upwards," she says. "We want them to bring their digital skills to the workplace and support the evolution of the industry in embracing digital-first methods."

Sir Mark and Dame Dorothy's funding for the Chair of Construction is part of a transformational \$10 million gift split between establishing the Construction programme and a new Mechatronics programme with Te Kura Mātai Pūkaha, Pūrorohiko—School of Engineering and Computer Science in Te Wāhanga a Manaia—Faculty of Science and Engineering.

Sir Mark and Dame Dorothy are visionary philanthropists who have contributed significantly to both the University and the wider community. In 2016, they donated \$2.05 million to establish the Mark Dunajtschik Chair of Sustainable Energy Systems at Victoria University. Their first gift to the University was to establish the Mark Dunajtschik Scholarship in Engineering in 2012.

"This new Construction programme is creating the next wave of learning in our field," says Professor Bell. "None of this would have been possible without the generous funding from Sir Mark and Dame Dorothy."

Dr Aola Richards with giant wētā,
New Zealand, by Steve Rumsey, gelatin
silver print. Image courtesy of the Museum of
New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (E.006714).



'Bugs and drugs' research benefits from Dr Aola Richards's bequest

Trail-blazing scientist and academic Dr Aola Richards left a transformational \$13.5 million gift to the University to advance entomology research—the field she devoted her life to.

In 2025, the Dr Aola Richards Entomology Fund supported a postdoctoral researcher, two PhD students, a Master's student, and a summer research student to investigate different aspects of our native insect populations.

Research Fellow Dr Rory Little set up the 'Bugs, Drugs, and Biosynthesis Lab' to study insect-associated bacteria. His team is interested in finding new antibiotics that could be useful to humans or other animals.

"Many insects have specialised bacteria living on or within them that make useful chemical molecules such as vitamins or antibiotics," Rory explains. "Aotearoa New Zealand is home to over 18,000 endemic species of insects, but we know almost nothing about the kinds of chemicals their associated bacteria make."

Following iwi consultation, the team has been collecting bugs around the Wellington region, then isolating bacteria from the specimens and screening them for antibiotic production. They are also sequencing the bacteria's DNA, looking for genes that might encode the enzymes that produce antibiotics.

"I have been living my dream since I was awarded the Aola Richards postdoctoral fellowship—doing the research I love, training postgraduate and undergraduate students, and getting to work at a university that is very dear to me," Rory says.

Rory supervised Sydnee Acraman, who received a summer research scholarship from the fund. Sydnee spent the summer collecting insects at Ōtari-Wilton's Bush, even scooping up an example of the velvet worm (ngāokeoke), which won the 2025 New Zealand Bug of the Year. The bacteria library that she created will form the starting point for her Master's project.

"During my summer project, I gained a diverse range of skills—from field entomology to microbiology processes—that will be useful for my future studies. I loved what I did so much that I switched my Master's research to the same topic," Sydnee says.

Sam Dilday's PhD research focuses on the major threat to honeybees in New Zealand—the Varroa mite (*Varroa destructor*). Beekeepers have noted that some pesticide treatments have become less effective over the past few years, suggesting that the mites may be developing resistance. Sam will evaluate the accuracy of a common test that beekeepers use to determine resistance and examine the mites for any genetic or physical explanations for this change.

"This scholarship has been extremely important, as it was the defining factor that led me to Victoria to pursue a PhD," says Sam. "Without it, I wouldn't be here."

PhD candidate Juanfra Guisado Chavez was studying invertebrates in his native Spain when he first learnt about wētā.

"I was impressed because invertebrates are often neglected in worldwide conservation efforts, but here the wētā was considered an iconic species with a rich history of research, much of it led by Dr Aola Richards."



Juanfra conducted fieldwork at Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne, discovering that wētā help regenerate forests by dispersing seeds after eating native fruits. This is very unusual behaviour for an insect, as birds or mammals usually disperse seeds. He even found that seeds germinate faster after being consumed by wētā and presented his research at an international conference in Hawai'i.

"I am very grateful to have received the scholarship funding. It has let me study the incredible biodiversity in Aotearoa, connect with outstanding researchers, and learn about Māori culture and knowledge, while continuing Dr Aola Richards's legacy."

It's easy to imagine Dr Richards would approve of this project—she identified most New Zealand wētā species and even had one named after her: *Miotopus richardsae*.

Jonathon Sylvester is contributing to our understanding of native insects from a different angle—his Master of Laws dissertation investigated the role of the Resource Management Act in causing New Zealand's 'insect crisis', in which many native species are at risk of extinction. Jonathon aims to work as an environmental lawyer advocating for insect conservation and biodiversity protection.

Janet Pitman, head of the School of Biological Sciences, says: "It has been so much fun allocating the Dr Aola Richards Entomology Funds to talented emerging researchers and seeing the types of research that this fund supports. It is wonderful to see the same passion for entomology that Dr Aola Richards had being passed down through future generations of scientists at Te Herenga Waka."



Above: Sydnee Acraman with bacteria samples.
Left: Juanfra Guisado Chavez looking for wētā feeding marks on konini fruits from the kōtukutuku tree at Zealandia.
Photo: Jaime Botet Rodriguez



Celebrating your contributions to architecture and design innovation

Te Wāhanga Waihanga-Hoahoa—Faculty of Architecture and Design Innovation celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in October 2025 with Paparahi, a weekend-long event that featured a gala dinner, exhibitions, and a symposium.

The success of this Faculty would not be possible without our supporters, who create positive pathways for students through scholarships, awards, and mentoring.

Master's student explores Fijian ceremonial practices

Kaline Masitabua spent his childhood in several different towns and islands in Fiji before coming to New Zealand when his father moved the family of six children to Whangārei.

When he arrived in Wellington to study at the Faculty of Architecture and Design Innovation, Kaline fell in love with architecture and enjoyed the lively tutorials in his Interior Architecture classes. "I loved the idea of creating transformation in spaces inhabited by people."

He graduated with a Bachelor of Architectural Studies in Interior Architecture in 2023, then undertook a Diploma in Designed Environments in Architecture. In 2024, Kaline began a Master of Architecture (Professional) and received the Warren and Mahoney Māori and Pasifika Scholarship for MIA and Master of Architecture (Professional).

Master's study allowed him to further explore his cultural identity as iTaukei (native Fijian). While the cultural values had stayed with him, the practices and traditions had taken a back seat to succeeding in the Western education system. Kaline spent some time in Fiji to obtain valuable knowledge and insights from iTaukei elders, chiefs, and academics.

He appreciated receiving the Warren and Mahoney scholarship, which assisted him with living costs and the many extras required for architecture, such as software licences.

"This scholarship not only validates the importance of diverse voices in architecture but also serves as a beacon of inspiration for future Pasifika university students and architects."



Scholarship recipient wants to connect Pasifika communities through architecture

Sarah McLeod-Venu was raised in a close-knit community in Wainuiomata and attended Wainuiomata High School. Receiving the Graduate Women Wellington Second Year Hutt Valley Scholarship helped to support her undergraduate Architecture studies.

Sarah was always interested in the built environment, growing up amid house renovations with a father who worked in construction and a brother who studied Building Science at the Faculty of Architecture and Design Innovation.

During the final year of her Master's degree, Sarah investigated how to translate the intangible values of Samoan culture into architecture in Aotearoa New Zealand to foster connection and belonging for Pasifika communities.

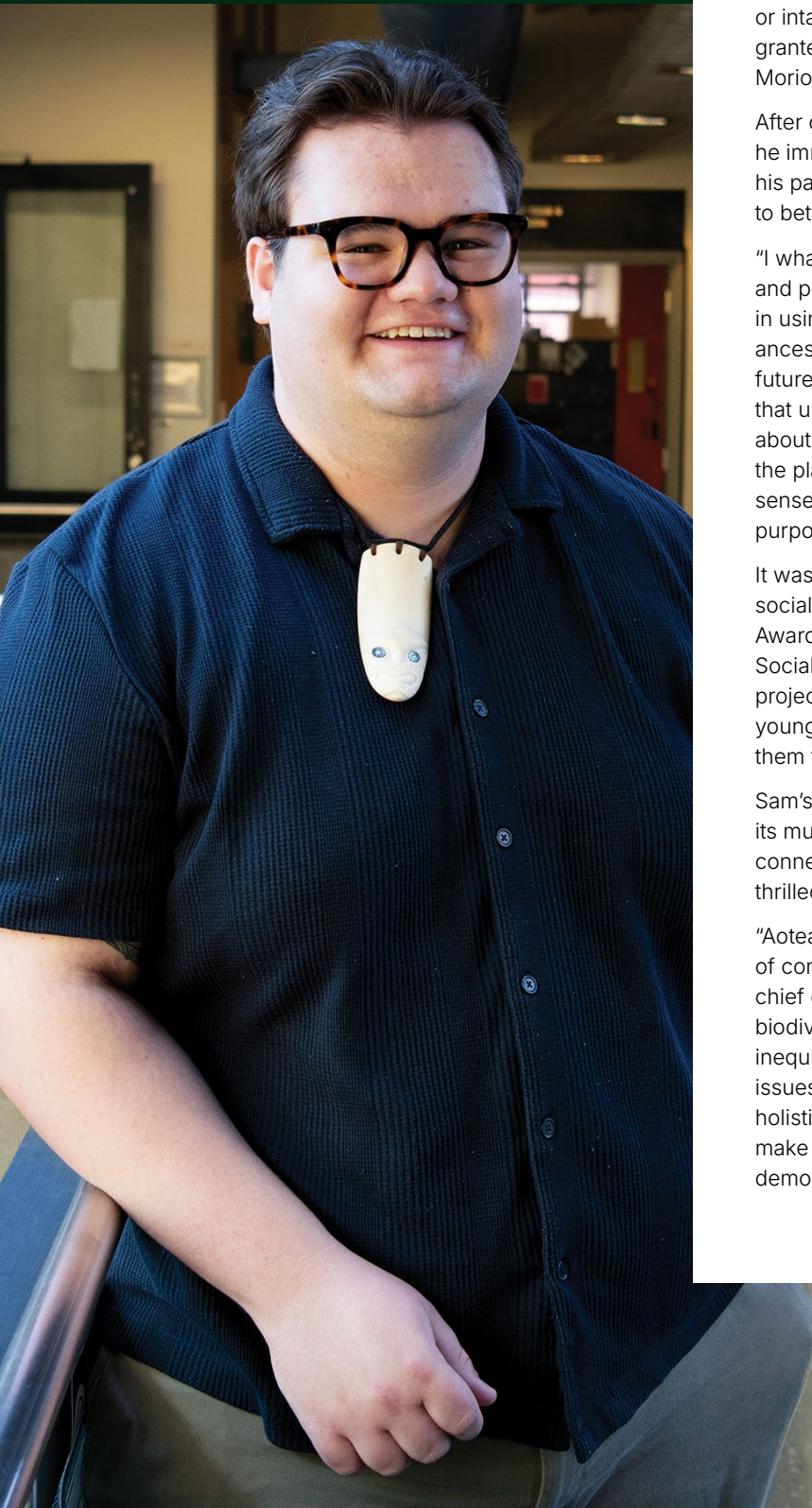
The Warren and Mahoney Māori and Pasifika Scholarship for MIA and Master of Architecture (Professional) gave Sarah the opportunity to spend three weeks in Sāmoa researching her thesis in many villages, including her family villages of Tanugamanono and Lelepa. She was privileged to speak to elders and matai (chiefs), participate in ceremonies, and learn about the traditional arts of siapo (tapa cloth) and lalaga (weaving).

Sarah found that experiencing the day-to-day life in the villages allowed her to grasp in a deeper way what it means to be Samoan.

"They really value pausing and taking time to appreciate the things that you have. As long as you've got a roof over your head, that's all you need. They live off the land, and the community is everything, along with the values of respect and service."

During her studies, she completed an internship with Central Pacific Collective working on Our Whare Our Fale, an affordable housing project for the Pasifika community in Porirua's eastern suburbs.

"It was great to be part of a project like that, which is directly benefiting communities in the real world. That's the direction I'd like to go in."



The prize-winning student redesigning Aotearoa's future

When most people think of design, they don't think about the design of social systems, government workflows, or intangible cultural practices that are often taken for granted. Sam Wixon (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Waitaha, Moriori, Ngāti Toa Rangatira) is not most people.

After completing a Bachelor of Design Innovation in 2024, he immediately jumped into a Master of Design to continue his passion for (re)designing Aotearoa's social structures to better incorporate mātauranga Māori.

"I whakapapa Māori, and it's a really big part of my identity and practice as a designer," says Sam. "I'm interested in using the knowledge passed down to us from our ancestors as a toki (adze) for carving and designing Māori futures. That means looking at the values and principles that underpin the way you approach being a designer. It's about designing things in a way that supports people and the planet, which can often feel at odds with the Western sense of design where you design primarily for the purpose of profit."

It was Sam's creative approach to reimagining complex social issues that landed him the Springload Te Pipītanga Award for Innovation and Excellence within the Design for Social Innovation major for his undergraduate capstone project, which focused on increasing the participation of young people in environmental activism by connecting them to traditional food systems.

Sam's project stood out to Springload Te Pipītanga for its multi-pronged engagement strategy and accessible connection to mātauranga Māori, and the agency was thrilled to present him with its annual award.

"Aotearoa is, like a lot of the world, going through a time of contraction and hardship," says Springload founder and chief executive Bron Thomson. "Support for te ao Māori, biodiversity, te taiao (nature), and addressing societal inequities are often pushed aside for larger economic issues. But it's critical to address our challenges from a holistic perspective to ensure short-term solutions don't make things worse for future generations. Sam's work demonstrates that he deeply understands this truth."



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA



Ian Borrin at the opening of the Ian Borrin Reading Room at the Law School.

Ian Borrin's legacy advances legal research and education

Ian Borrin loved the law and devoted his life to it. His parting gifts, both individual and through the Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation, have been transformational for Te Kauhanganui Tātai Ture—Faculty of Law.

Ian died in 2016. In his will, he left a large bequest to establish the Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation, a charitable trust that supports legal scholarship, research, and education in New Zealand.

He named the foundation in honour of his parents, who came to New Zealand from Warsaw in the early 1930s and established a successful clothing manufacturing company in Wellington. Many of Michael and Suzanne's Jewish family and friends lost their lives in Poland during World War II. The Borrin family felt a deep gratitude to New Zealand for providing them with a safe refuge and an opportunity to flourish. The foundation reflects their desire to give something back to their adopted country.

The stewards of the Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation share Ian's belief that law is essential to a flourishing society—one that is just, inclusive, tolerant, and free. The foundation is guided by a vision of an Aotearoa New Zealand where everyone understands the role and value of the law and enjoys the protection and opportunity that it provides.

Ian gained his Law degree from Victoria University in 1958 and practised law until 1983, when he was appointed a district court and family court judge. He was head of the Police Complaints Authority from 2001 until he retired in 2007—it is said that during this time he never took a day's leave.

His commitment to his work stemmed from his passionate belief that the law should be a force for good in the world. His generosity towards the University began in 1995 when he funded improvements to the *Victoria University of Wellington Law Review*. In 2010, he introduced the Visiting Fellowship in Law, now known as the Ian Borrin Visiting Fellowship.

In recognition of his outstanding service, the University named the Ian Borrin Reading Room at the Law School in his honour and awarded him the Hunter Fellowship.

He became a trustee of the Victoria University of Wellington Foundation in 2013. Former executive director Tricia Walbridge says that in her view, Ian personified generosity.

"Ian brought a meticulous approach, as well as a thoughtfulness and a complete sense of modesty, to his philanthropy. Those of us who were fortunate enough to work with him felt humbled and privileged by the experience."

Professor Geoff McLay, dean of the Faculty of Law, says: "Ian's gift through the Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation has been a catalyst for the Faculty of Law to progress significant projects that improve our understanding of where transformative change is needed in our legal system. The Faculty and I enjoy a continuing relationship with Ian's partner, Jenny George, and her son Marc."

Funding from the Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation has supported the University to lead the Improving Pasifika Legal Education Project, with the participation of law schools throughout New Zealand. This project aims to increase the number of Pasifika students enrolling and graduating with Law degrees by systematically removing the barriers to success. It published research findings gained through a virtual hub and in-person fono (meetings) that connected Pasifika students, graduates, and lawyers with academics and policymakers.

Another major project being funded by the Borrin Foundation is 'Te Rauhi i te Tikanga—A Tikanga Companion'. Reader Māmari Stephens is leading a team of researchers to create a digital 'companion' to help students understand how tikanga Māori interacts with the general legal system in Aotearoa.

The Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation also supports the Centre for Justice Innovation at Te Herenga Waka. The Centre offers an independent, impartial, and trusted voice on justice issues through multidisciplinary research, evaluation, and education.

In 2025, the Centre pursued two major research projects that will have a direct impact on improving the experience of New Zealanders in the criminal justice system.

The Custodial Remand Before Trial or Sentence Project addresses the concerning statistic that Aotearoa has a higher percentage of its prison population on remand than almost all other developed nations. The project is investigating our bail laws, the decision-making processes, and the reasons for delays as it seeks to understand the impacts of bail and remand for the prison population, their families, and communities.

The second project examines how remote participation in criminal proceedings via live video technology—a growing practice since COVID-19 lockdowns—is best used in our courts.



Luke Peacocke



John-Luca Louverdis

L.G. Peacocke Scholarship aims to increase Aotearoa's influence on the global stage

Over the past several decades, alumnus Luke Peacocke has built a successful career in the international electricity sector. His experience working in Singapore, the Philippines, Australia, and the United Kingdom has provided him with invaluable insight into the expansion of the global energy market—and fueled a desire to help other New Zealanders make waves on the international stage. In 2025, the L.G. Peacocke Scholarship was created to do exactly that.

"I wanted to make an impact in my own small way," says Luke. "I also wanted to respond to a challenge that the legendary Emeritus Professor Jonathan Boston put to my 1999 Public Policy Honours class. He said that after receiving an education, students had an obligation to give back once we're able to. Luckily, I'm now in a position where I can."

The \$15,000 scholarship is offered annually to one domestic graduate student based on the recipient's academic achievement and intent to work in economics, international relations, politics, public policy, or strategic studies.

"Investment in human capital, along with infrastructure, is essential for New Zealand's long-term prosperity,"

says Luke. "I want to do my part in helping enhance New Zealand's place in the global and political economy."

The inaugural recipient, John-Luca Louverdis, embodies the scholarship's essence through his passion for global climate politics.

"My Honours degree in International Relations allowed me to write a dissertation that engaged an interdisciplinary examination of political-emotional responses to the climate crisis," says John-Luca. "I proposed a framework of 'ecological mourning' to process and confront the destruction of our planet. Writing this piece really felt like the culmination of all my studies, and I'm grateful that I was able to create something with such personal and political significance."

John-Luca is currently working as a graduate analyst at Te Tai Ōhanga—The Treasury, where he helps monitor institutions such as the Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake. He says the L.G. Peacocke Scholarship was essential in propelling him into this exciting stage of his budding career.

"Connecting with Luke has been an excellent opportunity to build a professional network," says John-Luca. "And while being a public servant aligns with my values, I could also see myself returning to academia or working in the independent policy space on socially progressive initiatives. I feel confident that there are many different ways to turn my passion into action."

Luke is acutely aware of how impactful it is to receive financial support as a student with big dreams. During his own studies, he received the Victoria University Graduate Scholarship (1999), Civil Service Institute Prize for Public Policy (1998), and Swindell Trust Scholarship for Academic and Sporting Achievement (1995 and 1996) to support his academic pursuits. Luke's experience with the life-changing impact of philanthropy is another reason he felt compelled to fund a scholarship in his name.

"Beyond the financial support, I hope the scholarship provides recognition and encouragement so that the recipients go on to achieve things beyond their current horizons," says Luke. "From my own experience, I know that scholarships build confidence by providing validation that the path you are on is worth the slog and that the destination is valued by others."

John-Luca certainly agrees. During his Honours degree, the scholarship connected him to the Environmental Defense Fund network, which gave him invaluable opportunities to connect with key leaders in the climate-action sphere.

"Aside from the financial benefit, the scholarship filled me with the confidence to really grasp my education," says John-Luca. "Last year, I often stepped out of my comfort zone to build meaningful connections and have important conversations that helped grow my understanding of the topics I was studying. I'm so grateful for the mental freedom it gave me."



Kelliher Economics Foundation scholar aims to tackle future economic challenges

Oscar Compton-Moen's first memory is of the Christchurch earthquakes he experienced at the age of four. Watching the city come back from disaster and reinvent itself, he saw first hand how investing in the city brought its heart back.

"The new stadium and facilities gave people a sense of hope and there was a palpable sense of gratitude and excitement. It helped me to understand how economic decisions make a significant difference to people's lives."

Oscar is the first recipient of the Kelliher Economics Foundation Undergraduate Scholarship at Te Herenga Waka. The scholarship aims to foster a new generation of economists equipped to address New Zealand's economic challenges.

Oscar has been interested in politics, economics, and the environment since secondary school. He participated in a community tree-planting initiative and School Strike 4 Climate, an international climate policy advocacy group.

"Since I was young, I have been fascinated by the way economics sits at the intersection of politics and business, shaping the lives of people in New Zealand. At high school, I enjoyed learning about macroeconomics and the way monetary and fiscal policy influence the lives of everyday people.

"That's why I'm so interested in economics, because it truly has the power to change the world."

Oscar spent three weeks in Colombia at the Round Square Conference, an event for students from select secondary schools from around the globe, where he saw parallels in the decision-making that influenced recovery from two different situations: the earthquakes in Christchurch and the historic drug violence in Colombia.

He also tutored some of the children of the 2019 Al Noor Mosque attack victims and is tutoring first-year Economics students in 2026.

"I've seen first hand how access to educational support can help build human capital and long-term opportunities. Working with these children exposed me to the challenges faced by communities recovering from trauma, highlighting how unequal access to educational support can have lasting economic and social consequences. This has sparked my interest in economic policies that reduce inequality and promote economic growth for all."

Now in the second year of conjoint degrees in Commerce (majoring in Economics and Finance) and Law, Oscar is enjoying approaching economic issues from a variety of different perspectives.

"I am strongly motivated by the role that economics can play in solving some of our biggest issues, be that our battle with climate change, rising inequality, or an ageing population. In fighting these issues, the way that we handle our economy will be critical."

Outside the lecture theatre, Oscar is looking forward to developing his leadership and advocacy skills as the second-year representative for the Victoria University of Wellington Law Students' Society, getting involved in the Debating Society, and running marathons.

"I am immensely grateful for receiving the Kelliher Economics Foundation Undergraduate Scholarship—the significance of this contribution to my education is not lost on me. I hope that one day I can make a positive impact on New Zealand's economy so that future generations can enjoy the promise that our great country offers."



New scholarships in 2025

- Asia Connect Scholarships
- Eastern Bay Education Scholarship (M.K. Lamont)
- Kelliher Economics Foundation Undergraduate Scholarship
- Manaia (FOSE) Postgraduate Scholarship Endowment Fund
- Marion Walton Scholarship in Psychological Sciences
- Morgan Phoa PhD Scholarships
- Narwhal Design Trust Scholarship
- SE Asia Alumni Scholarship for Undergraduate Students
- Tū Ātea Scholarship for Māori Students

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