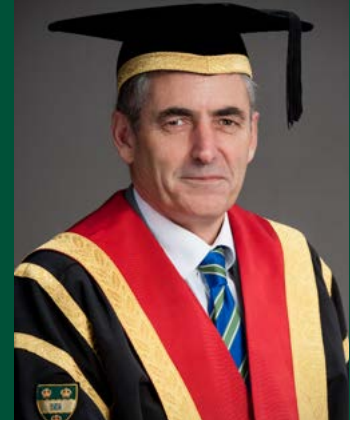


HE KUPU NĀ TE TUMU WHAKARAE INTERVIEW WITH THE VICE-CHANCELLOR



How has this year been overall for University operations?

Despite the ongoing challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, we finished 2021 in a strong position, due in no small part to the efforts of staff who have continued to go beyond the call of duty. Our financial results, our enrolment numbers, our research successes, and the ongoing accolades for our staff are extremely pleasing. A key focus has been on enhancing the University's resilience and sustainability and we have continued to improve our systems and processes to ensure they are efficient, robust, and fit for purpose.

How has the University continued to support its staff and students this year given the impact of COVID-19?

There were many learnings from 2020 that we have been able to apply successfully in 2021.

Our staff rose to a tremendous challenge, ensuring that disruptions to students' learning experience were minimal. We adopted a range of flexible teaching and working arrangements to make it easier for staff to work from home, while ensuring our HR advisors were always available to help facilitate any discussions with managers, if needed.

I appreciate the trust placed in us by students. We've continued to provide strong support for their academic success and their wellbeing, and have formalised our partnership with them with the development of the Student Engagement Framework. This articulates our processes for giving students a voice in matters that affect them. We recently undertook a self-review of our various services to identify what more we need to do to ensure compliance with the Pastoral Care Code of Practice and it was great to see that we are already in compliance with key requirements of the Code.

How far have we come along on the journey to be a world-leading capital city university and one of the great global-civic universities?

Combining the traditional Western way of being engaged with the community and respect for the Treaty, we have engaged critically with our stakeholders in an independent and non-partisan manner. We have successfully leveraged our location as Aotearoa New Zealand's political and cultural capital and our proximity to internationally respected centres of creativity. We have engaged in partnerships that help build the capability of our researchers, delivering knowledge and understanding that contributes to improved outcomes in the Asia-Pacific and other regions, and added value to research across disciplines by incorporating indigenous knowledge. Most importantly, we have a good understanding of ourselves, our responsibilities, and our commitment to civil society and global citizenship. I am proud to see our ongoing evolution into a great global-civic university.

You've described the current period as the Te Herenga Waka era—what does that mean?

The Māori name of our University reflects our place in wider society, a mooring place for canoes, and provides a strong narrative for the collective of students and staff who make up our university communities. Te Herenga Waka is a place where people from around the country and beyond can 'hitch their canoes' and find shelter. When people are ready to leave the University, they can unhitch their canoe and sail off to new horizons, while still maintaining a deep connection to the University. This emphasises how connectivity to place (tūrangawaewae) provides strong foundations for success. In addition, we have come to define our iho or essence as a global-civic university with our marae at our heart and it is inspiring to see the strong level of support throughout the University for this. It will see us embracing our Te Herenga Waka identity, increasing the number of Māori academic staff and students, supporting staff to become more comfortable with te reo, mātauranga Māori, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, embedding Māori knowledge in our curricula, and using research practices that strengthen our distinctiveness.

What are you most proud of during your time as Vice-Chancellor?

I am most proud of the University's outstanding teaching and research. I'm also very pleased with how much more engaged our university is with the wider community. We've made real progress in working in partnerships with others to use our research and expertise to address real-world problems and facilitate outcomes that lead to a more creative and equitable world. We're also playing a part in building a better world through our own sustainability initiatives at the University, including making great progress on our plan to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Any final thoughts as your term as Vice-Chancellor draws to a close?

I'm very optimistic about the future of this great university. Our sense of who we are, our identity, is stronger and clearer and we are more resilient as a community. I'm confident I leave this university in a sound financial position and with a direction of travel that will ensure a successful and sustainable future.

Professor Grant Guilford
Vice-Chancellor