Rutherford Discovery Fellowships for New Zealand’s top young researchers have been awarded to Dr Quentin Atkinson (pictured left) and Dr Nicholas Shears from the University, and will bring alumnus Dr David Goldstone back to his alma mater from Britain.

The fellowships provide ten early-to-mid career researchers from around the country with up to $200,000 annually for the next five years.

Dr Shears is based in the Department of Statistics and undertakes marine research at the Leigh Marine Laboratory. The fellowship will support his work examining the impacts of human activity on coastal ecosystems, and predicting how these effects are likely to vary with climate change.

“It’s becoming increasingly important to predict how ecosystems will respond to climate change,” he says. “But we have to do this against the backdrop of existing stressors, which in the marine environment include things like overfishing, sedimentation and nutrient runoff from the land.

“Sedimentation is a major threat to coastal ecosystems, and is expected to worsen as climate change causes more intense storm and rain events. On coastal reefs, sediment cuts out the sunlight that marine plants like kelp need to grow, yet as the ocean warms these plants will have a physiological requirement for even more light, so climate change could have a double impact.”

Fellow recipient Dr Atkinson from the Department of Psychology will examine how languages and cooperative cultural systems evolve through time, using the same sorts of tools that biologists use to study species evolution.

“Like species, languages and cultures evolve through time. Investigating the evolution of languages is an excellent way to understand human prehistory and cultural change more generally,” he explains.

“Languages are great to study because we can break them up into small parts – words or sounds – and create family trees that describe the evolution of these features over time. And since languages are tied to people, by reconstructing the history of languages we’re also reconstructing the history of the cultures that those languages belong to.”

The two scientists are joined by Dr Goldstone, a structural biologist based at the National Institute for Medical Research in the UK. He will return to the University to continue research started there on key proteins involved in the immune response to retroviruses, a family of pathogens that includes HIV.

“The human genome harbours evidence of long-term and repeated exposure to retrovirus during our evolution,” he says. “As a result of this exposure, our cells have developed a wide array of proteins that act as part of the immune response to recognise, prevent, and contain infection by retroviruses. Learning more about this aspect of innate immunity may lead to new opportunities to block and clear retroviral infections.”
International guests

The week leading up to the launch of the Rugby World Cup proved, at an international level, as hectic for The University of Auckland as for the nation as a whole. In the space of just three days we hosted two eminent global figures: the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the European Commission. Both visits attracted large audiences and extensive media coverage.

UN Secretary-General charms full house

“Let me begin with a confession” the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Ban Ki-Moon told an audience of more than 1500 at the University on 6 September. “This may be my first time on campus, but … I often feel that I have benefited from an Auckland University education.

“It happens whenever I sit down with the leader running our United Nations’ development work around the world – the first woman ever to hold that very important position … Auckland University’s own … Helen Clark.

“It happens whenever I listen and learn from other experienced voices in diplomacy, business and civil society who graduated from this fine institution. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister of Samoa, who I met just this morning, is also an Auckland graduate.

“And it’s good to know that you not only specialise in training for policy and politics, but also peace and security. I sometimes feel we could all use a little of the spirit of Auckland alumna Lucy Lawless – Xena the Warrior Princess.”

Mr Ban, the UN’s eighth Secretary-General, was in New Zealand for two days to attend the 40th anniversary of the Pacific Islands Forum. At the University he was greeted with a Māori whakatu by Geremy Hema and then welcomed by Auckland Mayor, Len Brown, before giving an impassioned address titled “New Zealand and the world: Sustainability and security in a time of global transition” to a full house in the Owen G Glenn building’s Fisher and Paykel auditorium. This was beamed live to five other lecture theatres in the building.

Journalists from the likes of Agence France Presse and India’s Siasat Daily were in attendance as Mr Ban spoke of an “increasingly complex set of realities” that the world faced.

“Look at the geopolitical landscape: Sweeping democratic movements in North Africa and across the Middle East, global economic turmoil coupled with tectonic shifts in global power that blur old distinctions: east versus west, north versus south, rich versus poor.

“Accelerating climate change. A rising incidence of mega-disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

“Our times demand something different – a sharper focus … a more engaged and visionary global leadership,” said Mr Ban.

“There is no opt-out clause for global problem-solving. Māori wisdom puts it best: ‘He waka eke noa – we are all in this canoe together.’

Mr Ban spoke of two of the biggest challenges the world faces: security and sustainability. In talking about security he mentioned work in the international community had done in Libya, Côte d’Ivoire in West Africa and South Sudan to foster peace. Turning to sustainability he spoke passionately about climate change.

“Climate change is not about tomorrow. It is lapping at our feet – quite literally in Kiribati and elsewhere.

“The ocean economy is a lifeline for this region. But with waves rising ever higher in this neighbourhood, the oceans are also sending a signal that something is seriously wrong with our current model of economic development.

“Today, the poorest 40 percent of the world’s population hold just 4 percent of its income. And there are no signs of improvement.

“Something has to give. Speaking to a large audience of students, Mr Ban urged young people to “transform your communities … build a better world … Get engaged. Speak out.

“The power is in our hands.”

After the address Mr Ban, his wife Madame Ban Soon-kae, and the Mayor of Auckland were hosted to lunch at the Fale Pasifika.

From the Vice-Chancellor

In eleven years as a Vice-Chancellor I have from time to time been called upon by members of the public to sack academics because of comments they have made that are deemed by some to be inflammatory, unjustified or untrue. This has applied to comments covering topics such as various elements of public policy, medical issues, genetic engineering, climate change and racism.

My response to these calls is invariably to remind my correspondents of the rights afforded academics by section 161 of the Education Act 1989 which guarantees “That academic freedom and the autonomy of institutions are to be preserved and enhanced” and includes in the definitions of academic freedom “The freedom of academic staff and students, within the law, to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and to state controversial or unpopular opinions.”

That response is often considered by the complainers to be unsatisfactory (though their descriptions are sometimes more colourful!) for several reasons. First, few members of the public are aware of the rights accorded academics by the Act, an Act that is itself quite unusual in this respect. Fewer still have actually read the Act. Second, correspondents often allege that the statements breach other legislation (a claim that can be tested only in the appropriate jurisdiction). And third, the “failure” of the University to dissociate itself from the statements is seen as making it (or the University governors and managers) somehow complicit, even though most of us could not comment sensibly because we do not have expertise in the field in question.

The net effect of this is undoubtedly that, in the eyes of some members of the public, the University’s reputation is significantly damaged by these statements. That may be a price we have to pay for academic freedom, but those who are in a position where their comments may be controversial should also ask themselves how the risks of reputational damage can be managed – for example by thinking about the ways those views are expressed and by being careful to ensure that the research which informs their views is explained carefully. After all, academic freedom, like most rights, also carries with it responsibilities.
Visit reinforces European ties

A taxing and varied programe awaited one of Europe’s most powerful and central figures on his visit to the University on the morning of 8 September.

In the space of just under three hours the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, received an honorary doctorate, delivered a public address, and responded to probing questions from students from universities around New Zealand.

President Barroso, a former academic and Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Portugal, was in Auckland to represent the EU at the Pacific Islands Forum.

The award to him of an honorary Doctor of Laws, at a ceremony in the Fale Pasifika, recognised his leadership of the Commission and his strong contribution to the field of European Studies.

The University of Auckland has the largest concentration of researchers in New Zealand working on contemporary European issues. In 2006 it established a Europe Institute to coordinate this work and collaborate with European partners.

The Institute’s mandate covers not just traditional disciplines like business, law, economics and politics but also education, history, languages, literature, engineering and most recently medical and health sciences. Its main current projects are on social welfare and education.

In her eulogy for President Barroso, the Public Orator, Professor Vivienne Gray, noted that he was serving an unprecedented second term as European Commission President.

“In conferring this degree we also celebrate the close connection between New Zealand and the European Union. His Excellency’s visit is a major affirmation of the terms of the Joint Declaration forged in 1999 between the European Union and New Zealand...” His visit “notably reinforced” the values that “tie New Zealand so closely to a united Europe”.

In response President Barroso said it was an honour to be recognised by the University. As someone who had enjoyed an academic career in Europe and the United States he said that “all universities hold a special place in my heart. The ones that truly capture my heart are those like Auckland who look outwards to the world and embrace it.”

The University’s strengths in commercialising research and fostering entrepreneurship were valuable indeed, said President Barroso. “The European Commission fully shares this approach to research and innovation. In fact getting ideas to market is a key part of our Europe 2020 strategy to boost jobs and growth.”

President Barroso’s address, to around 500 people in the Fisher & Paykel Appliances Auditorium, was on “The European Union: A committed partner for the Pacific”.

In the 30 years since a European Commission President had last visited New Zealand, he noted, global geopolitics had dramatically shifted and power had been dramatically rebalanced.

“The new geopolitical order will no longer be divided between developed and developing nations, but between multiple poles of economic and political influence. Sharing values with like-minded countries will be increasingly important. Commonality of basic principles and long-term objectives will carry far more weight in foreign policy than geographical proximity.”

On the sovereign debt problems in the EU, President Barroso said those who think the Euro will disintegrate “are not fully aware of the dynamics of our Union. Every time Europe has faced a crisis we have moved towards deeper integration.”

President Barroso concluded his hectic morning with a half-hour question and answer session with European studies students, chaired by David Mayes, BNZ Professor of Finance at Auckland and Director of the Europe Institute.

Making maths learning easier

Professor Mike Thomas (Mathematics), in his inaugural lecture, examines some of the reasons why mathematics has a reputation for being a difficult subject to learn. He considers people, brains, what the objects of mathematics are and how they are represented.

“Research tells us a lot about making mathematics easier,” he says “and in this talk I will describe how my work involving mathematical thinking, MRI brain scans, gestures, and technology contributes to our understanding of where things can go wrong in learning mathematics and what we might do to improve matters.” 28 September. Conference Centre, 22 Symonds Street, 6pm for refreshments; 6:30 pm for lecture. enquiries@math.auckland.ac.nz

NZ food innovation showcase

The University and UniServices will be joining other food innovators to showcase NZ products and know-how to the world at this free, interactive, event being run in conjunction with the Rugby World Cup. Visit our booth or come to a short talk to find out more about unique strains of yeast being developed for wine-making (and taste the results!), the hidden secrets of food microstructure that let us bend chocolate without melting it, and much more.

Viaduct Events Centre
Sunday 16 October 9am–6pm
Monday 17 October 9am–6pm
Tuesday 18 October 9am–4pm
www.nzfoodinnovationshowcase.co.nz/venue.htm

Women in leadership

Female staff are invited to apply for the Women in Leadership Programme for 2012. In particular generalist staff at Level 4-7 and academics considering applying for promotion in the next two years who are likely to be at Lecturer 6-7, Senior Lecturer 4-5 or Senior Tutor 6-7, are encouraged to apply. The programme provides opportunities for women to develop their leadership skills. It consists of an off-campus overnight introductory retreat in February, mentoring by a senior academic or general staff person and a full-day workshop in June. See the HR Career Development section of the website under Leadership and Management Development or contact Mary Ann Crick, ext 86379 or ma.crick@aucltand.ac.nz. The closing date for applications is 31 October.
Emeritus Professor of Classics and Ancient History, Walter Kirkpatrick Lacey (known as Pat), died on 24 July. He had achieved the great age of ninety. He was appointed to The University of Auckland in 1969 from St Catharine’s College, Cambridge, and he retired in 1986.

Pat was well known for his book The Family in Ancient Greece, 1968, in which he set out his ground-breaking views on the role of women. He also wrote on Roman politics, producing a sourcebook, Res Publica 1970, a book on Cicero and the End of the Roman Republic, 1978, a commentary: Cicero’s Second Philippic Oration, 1986 and, during his retirement, the collection of his revised papers: Augustus and the Principate, 1996.

His main achievement in running the Department of Classics, which he did for his whole time as professor, was to introduce and develop the subject Ancient History alongside Greek and Latin Language and Literature, and to introduce the separate subject Classical Studies as a minor. These are an enduring legacy. He gave Ancient History a special character by including the study of Mesopotamia and Egypt alongside Greece and Rome, with the intention of integrating them. He continued of course to place Greek and Latin Language and Literature at the heart of the programme overall: the degree structure he originally introduced had graduates in Ancient History going on to MA in Latin and Greek.

Pat was one of the main drivers of the introduction into the schools of the subject Classical Studies, a multidisciplinary subject encompassing topics in art and society, history and literature in translation. In the University, he served as Dean of Arts. He was a great advocate of students, claiming to have introduced plussage, in which coursework marks are counted in the final grade only if they improve it. He was one of the instigators of New Start and was for a long time a contributor to its programmes. There is also the rumour that he tried to make a language compulsory in the BA degree – but he did not succeed.

He was a good boss, respected by administrative and academic staff as well as students. He was also a great fisher of trout, exchanging the wee ones of his homeland of Scotland for the monsters of Lake Taupo, where he had his holiday home. He was a man of great religious faith, and of moral conviction and courage, who protested against the Springbok Tour with his students in the sit-down on the Auckland motorway. His name lives on in the W.K. Lacey Prize in Ancient History set up by the Classical Association and in the departmental Lacey Library, to which he so generously donated his books. The University was lucky in his appointment and distinguished by his contribution.

Professor Vivienne Gray, Classics and Ancient History,
Caption: Drawing of Pat Lacey in A Pride of Academics
by Richard Dale

“Bless the crayfish pots,” joked Geremy Hema, as he finished a ceremonial blessing of the University’s newly refurbished Student Information Centre on 1 September.

Geremy, who is the University’s Tuakana Equity Adviser, was referring to four stunning, large woven light shades in the stylish new centre.

“They’re meant to look a bit like Māori kite,” explained Bronwyne Hawkins, Group Manager, Student Centre and Support.

It took Property Services just four weeks and $200,000 to upgrade the centre.

“We wanted to open it out and give it a modern Māori and Pacific feel,” says Bronwyne. “The difference made in this space in just four weeks is unbelievable. The whole flow of the room is now more logical. The student queues used to be at the narrowest point. Now they are at the longest.”

A new cardiovascular risk equation, to assess New Zealanders with type 2 diabetes as well as identifying a therapeutic target for Autism Spectrum Disorders, will be one step closer for clinicians after a boost from Auckland Medical Research Foundation funding.

Associate Professor Raina Elley (Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care) and the Diabetes Cohort Study team suggest people with poorly controlled diabetes or kidney impairment, especially for Māori, Pacific and Indian populations, may be undertreated when using the current US-based calculations for cardiovascular risk assessment. A recent grant of $70,000 from the AMRF will help test and validate the team’s New Zealand-based equation, which has drawn on data from 36,000 New Zealanders, before it is recommended for use by health practitioners across New Zealand.

Although Autism Spectrum Disorders are diagnosed based on behavioural symptoms the actual cause of Autism is still unsolved. A new research collaboration led by Dr Johanna Montgomery (Department of Physiology and the Centre for Brain Research) and Professor Craig Garner (Stanford University, USA) will explore the synaptic basis of Autism.

“Interestingly, many of the genes implicated in Autism encode proteins found at synapses in the brain. Our research, aided by funding from AMRF and the Neurological Foundation, aims to identify what goes wrong at the synapses in autistic brains so that we can target this therapeutically.”
When you ask new Professor Siah Hwee Ang why he doesn’t get bored doing research, expect to get a quick reply. “Do you feel bored with shopping?” is what he often asks students to illustrate his relationship with the great love of his life.

“You love shopping – I love research. And the more teaching and admin work I do, the more efficient I become with my research.”

Siah, who was promoted to full professor last month after joining the University in 2003, is now Professor of Strategy with the Department of Management and International Business, and research and teaching are his overwhelming passions.

His main research interests are in the fields of strategic management, international business strategy, competitive dynamics, reputation dynamics and some aspects of human resource management. He has published in top international journals, received five research awards and co-authored a textbook. Siah has also been appointed by TEC as a specialist adviser for the 2012 PBRF round.

Siah sits on the editorial boards of six journals, most notably the prestigious Academy of Management Journal, and teaches at the executive, postgraduate and undergraduate levels. He has supervised more than 45 postgraduate students and is actively engaged in executive education and projects. He is currently working on two major business projects, one on the competitiveness of NZ and NZ firms, the other on the strategy development of a large state-owned enterprise.

Despite his busy schedule, students remain a major part of his life. He works hard because of his many passions and is so popular with students that many former students remain friends with him on Facebook.

Collaboration within the group and build closer links.

During this meeting, they were able to discuss different models of collaborative research at both national and local scale, while exemplifying the issues, challenges and opportunities from Māori and indigenous research.

Another highlight was meeting with Professor Ralph Cooney at the Tāmaki Innovation Campus. After a site visit, the Directors of Research discussed the materials research with a focus on the materials accelerator, a national cooperative research initiative for interfacing with industry.

Feedback on the two days was very positive and this was a great opportunity to promote Auckland and the University to this prestigious group. Says John Smart: “The University benefits from the Australian universities, experiences on how they address issues that are also relevant to us.”

New professor

Research delegation to Canada and the US

The Vice-Chancellor and a delegation of senior research leaders have recently returned from a mission to visit the universities of Alberta, British Columbia, Washington and California (Davis). The aim of the visit was to build strategic research collaborations with these universities and connect with alumni and advancement prospects in Edmonton, Vancouver, and San Francisco. Opportunities for research collaboration were explored in the areas of: Human Therapeutics; Materials Science and Technology; Food, Nutrition and Health; and Indigenous Knowledges, among others.

Murray Bain visit

Murray Bain, Chief Executive of MSI, and Max Kennedy, Manager Biological Industries MSI, visited the University in August. As well as presenting on the NZ research funding landscape as part of the Research Essentials seminar series, they visited the Institute for Innovation in Biotechnology, and met with the Vice-Chancellor. The seminar attracted approximately 150 people and was a great success.

HRC 2011/2012 round underway

The 2011/12 HRC funding round has been brought forward by HRC which means that project proposals were due at the Research Office on 12 September. Over 120 registrations have been submitted for HRC projects with greater interest shown in the targeted Health and Wellbeing Investment Stream.

FRENZ seminar

The Research Office hosted the annual FRENZ Research Managers event for Auckland universities. Carole Glynn, Director of FRENZ (the EU-funded organisation to support EU-NZ research cooperation) delivered an update on NZ participation in FP7. The process for developing “FP8” – to be called Horizon 2020 - was also to be outlined.

National mooting

The Auckland Law School has taken national mooting honours for the fifth year in a row.

In the final of the national mooting competition run by the NZ Law Students Association, the Auckland team of Benedict Tompkins and Matt Beattie defeated Macquarie University (Sydney).

Benedict, judged best speaker, is in the final year of an LLB(Hons) and a BA, majoring in English, while Matt is a fourth-year LLB student.
light in seventeenth century Baroque art is evident here: the manipulation of chiaroscuro (light and dark) borrowed from the Italians combined with an adaptation of French contre jour (against the light). The effect is as if a torch is shining on the flesh from below, or stage footlights illuminate the face of an actor making it into a mask. Light was a symbol for divine presence in those European precursors, but in Fomison it seems to symbolise life itself. Catching the upper lip, nose tip and brow of this anonymous face, the illumination seems to breathe life into a visage which could otherwise seem like a death mask. Fomison thought that to be good, painting had to be preoccupied with hovering between being and nothingness. He wrote: “You cannot separate life from death – that is what’s wrong with a lot of painting. The ecstasy of life comes from the knowledge of death…Death is going to get you. The idea is to love life and not be scared of death.”

In green paint at upper right, (not clear in this image) the artist has inscribed the title in capital letters: WAIT. Is this figure in God’s waiting room then? Other works from the same year - Waiting and Waiting for the answer – suggest that the theme is a question posed which should provoke a response. Yet in Fomison’s meticulously maintained notebooks, this work is catalogued as …wait! (#87) suggesting that the lips are parted not as a last breath is exhaled, or in the agony of attendance upon a reply, but in order to make an utterance, to call out to someone unseen, telling him or her to wait. There is a sense of climax, with the focus on the features of the face like a close-up in the cinema, but the expression remains ambiguous – perhaps anguish, maybe frustration – so that the implied narrative remains elusive. Stripped of naturalistic details like eyelashes and hair, the face is reduced to a bare structure which still manages to function expressively: the arched brow, dark eye, imperious nose and cavernous mouth all communicate a shared humanity to the viewer.

In the early 1970s, Fomison made two studies of Hans Holbein the Younger’s Dead Christ of 1522. He admired Holbein’s emphasis on the mortality of his subject, showing him gaunt and wounded with eyes wide open rather than transcending death in his divinity or peacefully at rest. Fomison copied Holbein’s prone figure with its head cast back, one limpid eye gazing upwards, and mouth gaping but his Christ has a brow that is still furrowed in pain. The face here is a more generic version of the Christ of his Holbein copies, made vertical as if risen from the tomb.

Criticising the paintings in the Barry Lett Galleries solo exhibition where this work was included, James Ross observed that Fomison’s strong personal imagery could be marred by large areas of dead paint in works with dark background. Study of Holbein’s Dead Christ 1970-71 was the exception, however, where the strength of the image and the delicate handling of paint imbued the image with a powerful hypnotic quality in Ross’s opinion. This was the effect that Fomison was striving for in his careful paint application, letting the support – in this case a linen tea towel – show its “tooth” or texture so that the image appears rubbed back, ancient, iconic and haunting.

Linda Tyler
Tony Fomison (1939-1990) …wait!, 1974
Oil on linen tea towel on board
510 mm x 360 mm

Experiencing Psychosis: Personal and Professional Perspectives, published by Routledge, brings together authors who have either experienced psychosis or researched the topic (or both). Chapters are presented in pairs providing personal and scientific perspectives on specific aspects of psychosis, such as hearing voices and experiencing delusions. Two of the four editors are faculty members; Debra Lampshire – an internationally renowned “experience-based expert” (School of Nursing) and Professor John Read (Psychology). The lead editor is Dr Jim Geekie, a clinical psychologist working in a psychosis team for Auckland DHB. Jim developed the idea for the book while researching his PhD on psychosis with Dr Read. The other editor is Dr Patte Randal, who also works for Auckland DHB. Dr Vanessa Beavan’s chapter on voice hearing, and Dr Melissa Taitimu’s chapter on cultural understandings of madness, also have their origins in their PhDs in the Psychology Department. Dr Paul Fink (Past President of the American Psychiatric Association) comments: “This book reminds us that we must recognise the personhood of every patient.”
Horizons of Insight seminar
Dr Hémi Whaanga: He matapihi mā mua, mā muri: The ethics, processes and procedures associated with the digitisation of the Pei Jones Collection. 2-3pm Wharenui, Waipapa Marae, 20 Wynnry St.
Queries to info@maramatanga.ac.nz

Department of Philosophy research seminar
Dr Josh Parsons, University of Otago and Oxford University: Fuzzy mereology. 3.5pm Pat Hanan RM 501, Arts 2.

The Group, John Walsh, NZIA Communications Manager, talks about approaching architecture through photography. Queries to gusfishergallery@auckland.ac.nz

SUNDAY 25 SEPTEMBER
Emerging artist concert
Jason Bae, piana. 5pm Music Theatre, School of Music, 6 Symonds St.
Cost $15/$10. Book at 0508 TICKET.

TUESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER
Bioengineering research seminar
Dr Alyx Clark, Research Fellow, Auckland Bioengineering Institute: Modelling the pulmonary circulation: Insights and the move towards clinically directed studies. 4pm venue tba. Ground Floor Seminar RM (G010), UniServices House, 70 Symonds St.

Future Proof of seminar
Min Hall: Earth, straw and more in the 21st Century. 6.7pm Design Theatre, NICAI Conference Centre, 22 Symonds St. Queries to events-archplan@auckland.ac.nz

Inaugural lecture
Prof Miriam Meyerhoff, Applied Language Studies and Linguistics: Situating variation in language. 6.30pm Lecture Theatre B10, General Library. Allfred St. By new professors at UoA.

WEDNESDAY 28 SEPTEMBER
Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics seminar
Dr Annette Henderson, Dept of Psychology, UoA: Becoming culturally attuned: Conventionality and children’s word learning. 12noon Patrick Hanan RM 207/501, Arts 2, 18 Symonds St.
Queries to jason.brown@auckland.ac.nz

Fermata: Time out to talk music seminar
5.30pm Music Theatre, School of Music, 6 Symonds St.
2) Aleasha Ward: Jazzy nerves, aching feet and foxtrots: Representations of jazz in NZ media during the 1920s.

SATURDAY 24 SEPTEMBER
Exhibition talk
1.2pm Gus Fisher Gallery, 74 Shortland St.
In response to Frank Hofmann’s images of houses by Vernon Brown and The Group, John Walsh, NZIA Communications Manager, talks about approaching architecture through photography. Queries to gusfishergallery@auckland.ac.nz

TUESDAY 4 OCTOBER
Web 2.0 tools for teaching
1-4pm, IT Literacy Training Suite, 4th Floor, 76 Symonds St.
Designed for staff with teaching responsibilities this workshop will provide an overview of three Web 2.0 technologies (blogs, wikis and social bookmarking tools). Web 2.0 tools for teaching.

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I often get asked whether there is such a thing as a Māori business...and the answer is an emphatic yes. The easiest way of explaining it is to present it in terms of a spectrum. On one end there is a typical European paradigm of business that focuses on the creation of financial wealth, where profit is an end in itself.

The orientation of business in this view is toward the short-term and present generation, with priority placed on generating individual shareholder value. The idea underpinning this approach is infinite economic growth.

At the other end of the spectrum, typical Māori-based businesses aspire to create sustainable wellbeing and wealth across multiple dimensions including social, cultural, spiritual and ecological well-being, as well as financial wealth.

The outlook of these businesses is a long-term future generation orientation, and they adopt a stakeholder approach. That is, they factor in and involve others such as employees, suppliers and local communities. They give respect and consideration to ecologies.

Some of these organisations operate in a collective shareholder environment, with shareholders in perpetuity. In this view, profit is a means to an end, and the underpinning idea is that there are limits to growth.

In November I will travel to Harvard University and the University of Arizona on a five-month Fulbright Senior Scholar award to study the traditional wisdom approach of indigenous businesses. I will be based at Harvard University (Kennedy School, Harvard Project on American Indian Development) and the University of Arizona (Native Nations Institute, Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy).

The aim of the Fulbright project is to continue my research on the traditional wisdom approach of indigenous businesses to inform a series of case studies that advance indigenous modes of business. The research case studies are expected to demonstrate how indigenous businesses can be a catalyst and creator of multi-dimensional wellbeing and wealth through a relational wisdom approach to business.

Originally, I intended for the casebook to feature Māori and Native American case stories that were drawn from my fieldwork, but the project has grown to become an edited book that will include case studies authored by others from around the indigenous world.

Although many Māori businesses operate in a global setting and incorporate some Western business practices, they also operate modes of exchange modelled on the precepts of traditional exchange protocols that emphasise relationships and reciprocity.

Humans, in this view, are kaitiaki...stewards who are endowed and obligated to nurture the life-force in each other and all of creation. They aspire to be at the sustainable end of the spectrum, where the old English meaning of the word “wealth” is “to be well”, and has more meaning. Too often these days “wealth” is parlance for profit.

On a recent trip to the Academy of Management conference in Texas, I presented in three different forums.

The popularity of the presentations highlighted for me how there is increasing disquiet among management scholars who are concerned about the ethical failures, environmental disasters, the dissociation from society, and dispirited nature of enterprise.

Examples are the global financial crisis, oil spills, dishonest accounting practices, excessive and often unjustified executive compensation, environmental degradation, poor employment relations, imbalances in the quality of life, and the continuing intense poverty...including here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

A key feature of the indigenous response to the global crisis of sustainability is the wish to participate in ways that meet our own cultural and spiritual ideas of development.

The Fulbright casebook project will tell business stories that call for a return to the sustainable wisdom contained in values, developed over the aeons in relationship to the world around us. These stories are intended to promote indigenous management practice and pedagogy, affirm and encourage indigenous business practitioners to create relational wellbeing and wealth based on their own values, and foster change in the wider business community.

It won’t all be work – I’ll be there in mid-winter and plan to gather maple syrup in northern Minnesota and fish in Upper Washington State.

Dr Chellie Spiller (Ngāti Kahungungu, Pākehā) is a lecturer within the Business School’s Department of Management and International Business.