New book on Pacific Mental Health launched

An exciting new book on Pacific mental health was launched in September at the Tāmaki Innovation Campus.

First released by Routledge at the end of 2012 as part of the international Monographs in Mental Health series, “Pacific Identities and Well-being: Cross-cultural Perspectives” (edited by Margaret Nelson Agee, Tracey McIntosh, Philip Culbertson and Cabrini ‘Ofa Makasiale) has also been published in soft-cover for local distribution by Otago University Press (OUP).

Rachel Scott, OUP publisher, welcomed a large gathering of contributors, their family members, colleagues and members of the wider Pacific communities to Tamaki’s Building 730 Atrium. The celebrations were led by Reverend Mua Strickson-Pua, a contributing author, who had also opened the one day Pacific Research Symposium: Pacific Identities, Mental Health and Well-being on the campus in September 2010, from which the vision for the book evolved.

The book is divided into four parts: Identity, Therapeutic Practice, Death and Dying, and Reflexive Practice. The 26 contributing authors include Māori, Pacific and pālangi practitioners and researchers from four universities including the University of Auckland.

Dr Margaret Agee, who leads the Faculty of Education’s Counsellor Education Programme at Tāmaki, says the intention was to make a significant contribution to available literature on mental health and identity-related matters specific to Pacific people, with a particular focus on culturally appropriate ways of thinking about and approaching the mental health needs of those who are often misunderstood within the dominant culture.

Introducing each section, leading poets Serie Barford, Selina Tusitala Marsh and Tracey Tawhiao give voice to the changing identities and contemporary challenges within their communities.

Reflecting the spirit of the book is a colourful cover design by Aneli Seumanutafa. Dr Agee says the cover draws people in. “We want this book to be widely read and used as a resource, a guide and a source of insight.”
Message from Head of Tāmaki Innovation Campus

Dear Colleagues

As mentioned in previous communications, I will be providing regular updates of developments and anticipated changes associated with the relocation of activities from the Tāmaki Innovation Campus. I can confirm that there have been no significant developments regarding the future of Tāmaki since the Vice-Chancellor’s presentation on 31 May this year. Remember please, that any proposed move of university groups, departments, clinics, units or other university operations from the Tāmaki Innovation Campus requires the approval of the Vice-Chancellor and Head of Campus.

It is reassuring to know that the University is committed to ensuring a vibrant active community is maintained at Tāmaki, and this is definitely evident in this issue of the Tāmaki Update. There have been a number of activities on campus in addition to and supporting the teaching and research activities, and you can read about some of these here. Of course, there have been many other activities over the year which have contributed to the vibrancy of the campus, and I thank you all for your support of Tāmaki in this regard.

I would like to acknowledge Associate Professor Jacqueline Beggs (Director, Centre for Biodiversity and Biosecurity) who has been appointed to the Ministry of Primary Industry’s Biosecurity Ministerial Advisory Committee. Associate Professor Peter Adams (Acting Head, School of Population Health) has received the University’s 2013 Sustained Excellence in Teaching award. These are impressive and well-earned achievements. I encourage you to read what motivates and inspires Jacqueline and Peter on Page Five.

It is almost a year since I started my role as Head of Tāmaki Innovation Campus and I have really enjoyed meeting and getting to know the heads of each school, department, research unit and campus partner. The diversity of activities at Tāmaki is remarkable and I appreciate the ‘heads’ role in keeping me informed of the priorities and goals of their respective groups. As heads, your leadership in maintaining business as usual at Tāmaki is significant and important.

This year I have especially enjoyed bringing to you the Head of Campus Seminar Series. There have been five speakers who have been fascinating, informative, inspirational and at times controversial. I thank you for supporting them by attending the seminars. I look forward to bringing you five interesting and hopefully thought provoking speakers next year, so look out for those announcements.

I would like to wish you and your families all the best for the festive season and encourage you take time to enjoy a relaxing, safe summer break. I look forward to working with you in 2014.

Best wishes

Associate Professor Greg Anson
Head of Tāmaki Innovation Campus

New day, new challenge

A powhiri was held at the University of Auckland’s Tāmaki Innovation Campus, for Kathrine Clarke and Dr David Tipene-Leach, who have been appointed National Manager and Academic Director of Whakawhetu National SUDI Prevention for Māori respectively.

Kathrine has a broad and extensive knowledge of the health sector with specific expertise in Māori and the public health area. She has previously held senior positions in the Ministry of Health and Hutt Valley DHB and brings broad experience from a Māori public health perspective. Prior to her Ministry position she held the position of CEO for Hapai te Hauora Tapui.

Dr Tipene-Leach originally established the Māori SIDS Prevention Team in 1994. Since then he has developed and managed a number of innovative SIDS prevention projects including the ‘wahakura’ (woven baby bed) and has facilitated a randomised controlled trial of the wahakura versus the bassinet at the University of Otago, where he holds a senior research position.

“It’s been a long journey, however I am really pleased and honoured to be back here in Whakawhetu in this small role.” He says that at times it is very difficult to influence government policy but this is a ‘new day, new challenge’. Even though much has been achieved, there is still plenty to do, and he says he is really looking forward to this part of his life.
Improving aged care through acknowledging spirituality

Ageing and spirituality, and the role it plays in a medical arena, was the topic of two conferences held this year at the Tāmaki Innovation Campus.

They provided an opportunity for researchers and others with an academic interest in the area, to speak on a topic fast becoming part of mainstream care.

Described by Dr Chris Perkins of The Selwyn Centre for Ageing and Spirituality, and organisers of the first conference, as a relatively new idea, the topic is a continuation of an interest of the previous CEO of the Selwyn Foundation.

It was picked up with enthusiasm by Dr Peter Huggard, Director of the Goodfellow Unit in the Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care at the School of Population Health, who also sits on the board of the Selwyn Foundation and the advisory board for Ageing and Spirituality.

In October, the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences hosted the other conference by Dr Christina Puchalski, a palliative care specialist, author, educator and pioneer of effective educational and clinical strategies for addressing spiritual concerns common in patients facing illness.

The audience comprised aged and palliative care health professionals, pastoral care and chaplaincy providers, students of health sciences and theology, policy-makers and managers with an interest in spirituality.

Aspects of spirituality are sometimes misunderstood, and according to Chris Perkins there are myths around the topic, not the least of which is that it must be based in religion. Instead, it is, she says, about what gives people meaning in their lives, their beliefs and values and how they face the challenges of ageing.

“As we age, and especially as we become frailer and face death, spiritual issues - about the meaning and purpose of our lives - begin to loom large. Yet spirituality can be neglected in health and aged care despite its importance, perhaps because people often feel ill-equipped to discuss this sensitive topic.”

It is a process of interviewing patients and asking questions about their lives to come to a better understanding of their needs and resources. By actively listening to a patient’s story as it unfolds, a summary of needs and resources emerges and includes a spiritual care plan with expected outcomes which can be communicated to the rest of the treatment team.

Stuttering awareness given a boost

The University of Auckland has officially opened The Fluency Network, New Zealand’s newest service for people who stutter.

The event was held to celebrate International Stuttering Awareness Day, and Selena Donaldson, speech language therapist in the University of Auckland Clinics, hosted a video-conferenced question and answer session with Sam Simpson and Rachael Everard, UK-based editors of a recent publication, “Stammering Therapy from the Inside”.

“At any one time approximately 1% of New Zealanders have a stutter, and making the commitment to seek help can be an enormous obstacle,” says Selena.

The message of the morning was about ‘living well’ with a stutter, encouraging speech language therapists to work in partnership with their clients as individuals and respond to their own particular communication contexts.

“For the speech language therapy students working in the clinic, this can involve building strategies to help clients cope with difficult communication situations and empowering the client to help the people around them accept their stutter. As each person moves through their lives, different styles of therapy may be appropriate to them at different junctures.”

The Fluency Network is committed to responding to this, and negotiates with each client how best the service can help them.
Nouran Ragaban is living the dream in researching eHealth policy for her PhD; a dream she calls invigorating and the embodiment of her early realisation that ‘research is intriguing, with so many possibilities in what you can do and learn’.

She started her academic career with a bachelor’s degree at the University of South Carolina, majoring in biology. In her final two years, she worked on research projects including Alzheimer’s disease research around the amyloid precursor protein, to using fMRI to research adolescents diagnosed with ADHD.

“A lot of that work was in a nice clean lab, but in my last year, my research shifted from the lab to public health research on obesity in the African-American community. I was brought into a multi-million dollar National Institutes of Health-funded study and given the opportunity to have a leadership role in a pilot study component of the research.”

It sparked an interest in public health, along with policy, healthcare, technology and global development but the task was to make it into a challenging, yet enjoyable life’s work. Everything clicked after coming to New Zealand and joining the Masters in Public Health (MPH) programme, when Nouran took the Health Informatics class and started talking with course lecturer Dr Karen Day, now her supervisor.

Her research topic of eHealth, sees her examining the strategies, people and structures leading to the development and implementation of the National Health IT Plan. This interest in eHealth aligned with the passing of US policy around eHealth, formed her masters and now doctoral research.

“Healthcare is complex, and therefore the rules and bodies trying to govern it are inherently complex. Sometimes they are more so than necessary but again that’s why I enjoy – and get frustrated with - my research. There aren’t always clear drawn out lines and links but the PhD has allowed me to explore the literature, to conduct interviews, analyse the data and draw out and explore some of those reasons.”

Nouran’s take on PhD studies will strike a familiar echo with many of her counterparts. “When they tell you it’s a journey, they really mean it! It’s a great opportunity to learn so much about a topic and have the freedom, for a time, to explore and see what happens. While you can’t do that forever, the PhD does give you that freedom, it really does test you, and you quickly find out, in a short three year or so period, if this is the field you want to spend the rest of your life working in.”

Nouran says she has come to the realisation that this is, in fact, a great experience. “I’ve also appreciated the many great seminars at the University from local and international professionals working in my field who have helped reinforce my interest further.”

Another highlight she cherishes is getting to know other students. “Tāmaki especially has a really great mix of people from all over the world and you get to not only hear about other peoples’ research and the process that they took to get here, but also the diverse backgrounds and cultures,” she says.

Grabbing opportunities with both hands has included a current role as PhD representative, helping students connect when wading through unexplored territory.

It is, she says, a matter of making your own luck. “I’ve been fortunate to get some real world experience as a data analyst or working on policy analysis and eventually, I plan to work in the policy development and analysis space.”
Ministerial appointment for biosecurity expert

Jacqueline Beggs has been appointed to a ministerial committee providing advice on future trends, risks and issues that may impact New Zealand’s biosecurity.

The ecology and control of invasive invertebrates and their role in ecosystem function has been the prime research interest for Associate Professor Jacqueline Beggs over the last two decades.

As Director of the Centre for Biodiversity and Biosecurity and the associated Joint Graduate School, Jacqueline is enthusiastic about combining the resources and expertise of the University and Landcare Research.

She oversees research that informs understanding of ecological communities, particularly invertebrates, and helps in the restoration and sustainable management of New Zealand’s ecosystems.

This interest has led to an appointment to the Ministry of Primary Industry’s Biosecurity Ministerial Advisory Committee.

Jacqueline says it is an excellent opportunity to advise the Minister on biosecurity issues, ensuring that ecological considerations are taken into account, alongside economic and social concerns.

“Biosecurity is of critical importance to New Zealand; it plays a pivotal role in the success of many of our productive industries, as well as in the conservation of our natural ecosystems. There have been some recent biosecurity disasters with catastrophic consequences.”

Increasingly, it is small organisms such as mites and pathogens that are beating our biosecurity systems. Detecting the incursion of such organisms before they establish and spread is not easy, and prioritising which organisms to attempt eradicating is problematic.

“We lack knowledge about the likely impact of so many species, as well as the tools to control them, yet we do not usually have the time to wait for the research before having to respond.

“New Zealand has a natural biosecurity advantage because we are so isolated from other parts of the world, but it will always be a challenge to maintain this advantage as we continue to travel and trade around the globe.”

Awarded for excellence

Associate Professor Peter Adams has received the University of Auckland’s 2013 Sustained Excellence in Teaching Award, a further accolade to an earlier honour; this year’s Butland Award for Sustained Teaching Excellence from his faculty.

The award marks the culmination of more than 20 years teaching, mainly at postgraduate level across areas such as alcohol and drugs, communication skills, lifestyle change, sexuality, cross-cultural communication, family violence and gambling.

Peter is currently Director of the Bachelor of Health Sciences programme, and Acting Head of the School of Population Health. He is also a co-director of the University’s relatively new Centre for Addiction Research; an initiative bringing together researchers from across the spectrum of the University to look at the effects of addiction on individuals, their families, communities and society.

“The award is an acknowledgement of the ‘invisible art of teaching’, and reflects on the collegiality and vision of the University in attracting and retaining teaching staff,” says Peter.

“The highlights are watching people change their thinking and come alive with a passion for their subject. Although technologies have improved delivery, it’s the direct contact with students, particularly when learning about practice that remains, for me, the central way of conveying learning.”

Prior to joining the University, Peter practised as a clinical psychologist, working in a range of institutional, community and private practice. His early experience played a major role in his teaching specialties.

As he puts it, he ‘drifted into teaching’, at first mainly teaching medical students then allied professionals working in the health sector. His driving focus was the lack of mainstream knowledge about addiction, particularly related to alcohol, drugs and gambling.

In 1992, he identified a need to develop alcohol and drug teaching within the undergraduate medical curriculum. Alcohol and tobacco consumption is a major contributor to illnesses that are treated in both primary care and hospital settings.

“Teaching in this area prior to 1993 was minimal and uncoordinated. I approached the Alcohol Advisory Council (ALAC) for support to develop an integrated and co-ordinated programme, and following this initiative similar schemes were developed,” he says.
Cleantech leader first to co-locate in Product Accelerator

An innovative company named by an expert panel as one of the world’s most innovative cleantech companies has made the Tamaki Innovation Campus its home.

HydrOxSys is the first company to co-locate with the Product Accelerator and, having just completed its pre-seed capital funding round, is now heading into a seed funding round to develop the science into a marketable product.

The next phase will take the technology out of the laboratory and into the field. CEO Mark Hartstone says this will enable the company to pilot test and validate its technology to a commercial level.

HydrOxSys was established in June 2012 to commercialise a proprietary thin film composite membrane suitable for forward osmosis (FO) technologies. According to Mark Harstone, a significant advantage of the FO process over other competing technologies is that it operates at low pressure, without the need for high pressure pumps, leading to significant cost savings.

“We’re developing a robust IP portfolio that includes a platform technology to be applied across various markets. It can be adapted for use in other water based verticals and industrial processes, including mining, water/waste water treatment and water reclamation in urban and industrial settings, including desalination.”

The HydrOxSys technology focuses on the development of flat film membranes that can potentially exclude pharmaceuticals, pesticides and endocrine disrupting substances, while keeping a relatively high water flux output.

It has cost benefits, as well as operating efficiently at low temperatures, is robust, durable and has a long life span. It also has enhanced chemical resistance capabilities.

Product Accelerator Director, Professor Mark Taylor says the co-location is a prime example of the rationale behind the Product Accelerator.

“HydrOxSys is a very innovative company with great market linkages. We have a close working relationship, so close that one of our University staff has moved to the company. I count that as a success, encouraging more tech-savvy people into New Zealand industry.”

The Product Accelerator currently engages with around 120 companies on a daily basis, with more than double that number on its books.