



UPDATE

University of Canterbury Branch

June 2023

Welcome to our June Branch Newsletter

This newsletter is to keep you up to date with a number of things that your Branch Committee has been involved with this year.

Good news for lower paid library staff

Library management has agreed to pay the lowest paid group of library staff, casual staff (who are mostly students), the basic rate of \$28.41. This is in line with the start of the General Staff Band two rates in the Collective Employment Agreement. If you know colleagues who are “casual” employees, encourage them to join the TEU. Lower paid staff conditions and pay rates are a top priority for the Branch.

Staff development

As notified to TEU members on Thursday 18th of May Gaby sent a letter to the Vice Chancellor, as our employer, raising the issue of failure to consult with employees and their representatives in regard to the roll out of the compulsory professional development courses. Advice from HR Advisor Polly Miller of UC People and Culture was that these courses are compulsory and a “condition of employment.” That there is no reference to compulsory courses in our collective employment agreements should come as no surprise, as there is none. Use of the words “condition of employment” by HR would also suggest that if a person does not complete this course, then this would ultimately result in their dismissal. These are serious issues.

Discussions between HR and TEU subsequent to the original rollout email have confirmed that participation in the training will not be treated as “a condition of employment”. Amanda Derry, Director of People and Culture made this known to staff via the [intranet](#) with an apology: “we also apologise for any confusion or distress this may have caused. Completion of this training is strongly encouraged but not compulsory.”

While the courses are not compulsory, the Branch Committee encourages members to engage with the training. The underlying core idea that we all need to improve and learn is a good one.

From you Branch Co-Presidents

Kia ora ngā hoa

We're in the dark days of winter. Most of us are very very busy, maybe just tired, a bit over-worked, a little stressed.

While we're bums up, heads down at Canterbury, there are very dark clouds over the nation's universities. Our colleagues at Otago are facing hundreds of job cuts. At Vic, 230 jobs are proposed to go. AUT tried this last year, failed, but is bound to try again. At Massey, about 170 staff will have to compete for 130 jobs. Waikato and Lincoln both face something similar. Te Pukenga – supposedly rejuvenated – also faces 400 jobs cut, and funding shortfalls.

Record student numbers (did we say we're busy?) at Canterbury, and a decent cash reserve (much of which staff have 'paid for' with our own job reductions) mean there's no immediate prospect of cuts here. But the situation for the universities of Aotearoa looks dire.

It all comes down to funding. We can – and do – question how the university spends its money. (Not enough on staff.) But underlying any spending decisions is a long-term decline in university funding. Costs have consistently risen faster than funding, which remains stubbornly and significantly below the rate of inflation. Whatever the government, university funding needs to reflect our national aspirations. You don't get first class education from budget universities.

The funding model itself- based on 'bums on seats – is itself worth questioning. No one really thinks we should continue to run courses that no one takes. But the idea that university education should be completely 'demand driven' – supplying an 'education market' that goes up and down, and changes on a whim – is unrealistic. It takes a long time to train an academic and researcher; to propose, get approved, and build a new course or programme, and then develop and refine it. Courses and programmes that are terminated are likely to go for good. And our remit is broad: we teach doctors and engineers, artists and musicians, botanists and businesspeople, astronomers, and agronomists. Universities build and support the economic, cultural and social fabric of the nation: we can, and should, take a broad, long-term view, making sure we provide the education and research Aotearoa will rely on decades into the future.

What can we do about this funding shortfall?

TEU is still calling on Universities NZ (the 'VC's union 😊) to join us in tripartite talks with government on the state of university funding. Some of the VCs are very resistant (some seem very 'anti-union.) We can and do disagree with the VCs on many things, but we can agree that over a decade of funding slippage is causing significant damage to our universities. Tripartite talks are one way forward.

It's an election year. We all need to make sure politicians of all stripes are aware of the current crisis. With a clamour of competing needs, it's easy to disregard the university sector: most of us are not visiting food banks. But we're hurting. Great education doesn't come cheap. The cuts proposed across the sector will cut deep.

Most of all, we stand with our Te Hautū Kahurangi | TEU colleagues across the nation. In dark days, unity is more important than ever.

Ngā piki, ngā heke, Tū kotahi e

TEU National Conference

The 2023 TEU National Conference was held at the Brentwood Hotel in Wellington on Thursday 18th and Friday 19th May.



TEU 2023 Canterbury Branch Conference delegates (Left-Right) Rebecca Fisher, Rob Stowell, Kaspar Middendorf, Ngaroma Williams, Benita Rarere-Briggs, Garrick Cooper, Steven Giesege, Tim O'Sullivan. Photo taken by: Thomas Li.

A guest at the conference was Hon. Jan Tinetti who as Minister of Education took time away from the Government's budget day announcements to address the Conference about the importance of tertiary education. The main budgetary announcement relating to the tertiary sector was a 5% increase in funding. Some TEU delegates took the opportunity to make it clear to the Minister that the sector has been running on empty for a long time, with funding not keeping up with inflation. This message from TEU delegates was in contrast to the Ministers presentation of how good the government is for the increase in funding.

The main item on the conference agenda was the Rules change proposals which have been under discussion over the last twelve months in TEU, including meetings around the country and here at UC. The changes were also signalled in previous Branch newsletters. After much debate from the Conference floor the Rules as proposed have been substantially adopted and will come into effect from next year. This includes the proposal for co-governance at the National Council.

From 2024 National Council of TEU will be composed of 50% Māori and 50% Treaty partners. Our Branch is quietly confident that this will work for the ongoing betterment of our Union. The Rules are being edited to accommodate the huge number of finer detail amendments from the Conference floor and will be submitted to the Registrar of Incorporated Societies in due course.

Workload for Academic Staff

Staff workloads are an issue and source of considerable stress for staff. For academic staff there is an ongoing tension between the time allocation between teaching, service/administration, and research.

Many departments have adopted workload models/policy and some even have these models converted into easy to complete spreadsheet. It appears from anecdotal evidence, that there is a wide variation across the university on how work is assigned to staff within departments. Some appear to have no effective workload mechanism while others have a system which allows fair and equitable division of the teaching and administration load. Even in departments where there is a functioning workload model, there remains little time for staff to carry out effective research or spare teaching capacity to allow staff effective sabbaticals. Staff work is also very variable, running from months where there is no teaching, to months where there is an impossible working and marking load.

To get a better picture of this we have set up a workload committee, whose first task will be to survey academic staff on their workload allocation. We intend to extend this to look at the more complex work of general staff later in the year. The committee is under represented in Arts and Science Faculty members so if you are an academic either of these faculties and would be interested in being on this TEU subcommittee (which should go on your workload and promotion application as service) please email steven.giese@canterbury.ac.nz

2023 Whakangau Whai Taonga | Treasure Hunt

The Branch Committee asked TEU member John Silver to give his initial response to the recently released UC financial report.

In its [Te Pūrongo ā-Tau | Annual Report about 2022](#), the University of Canterbury claims to have lost 16 million dollars (or 28 million dollars or 31 million dollars) between 1st January 2022 and 31st December 2022 (see pages 12, 72, 73). This Treasure Hunt is an exercise to help it find the missing money!

There is so much more to the annual report than the above bottom line headline about surpluses and deficits [see footnote]. There is a lot of qualitative and quantitative data about education, learning, teaching, and research, and for students, academics, alumni/ae and other members of the university company of scholars in the Annual Report.

This note mostly concerns itself with finances, accounting, revenues, costs, liabilities, assets and, of course, whatever amounts to cash. And so, cutting to the chase, figures on page 75 tell that at the end of 2022, not only does the University have \$251 million dollars worth of cash and instruments which are intended to be cashed in as and when needed to sustain its activities for our second 150 years, but also the value of these is 25 million dollars more than it was at the start of 2022. Thus, some of us might be scratching our heads over the claim of a loss for the year in question. Perhaps it is only accountants who can work the sort of magic that makes things disappear but still be there and more?



Looking around the taonga makutu | hocus pocus of financial statements (see pages 70-110, but see also page 69 and pages 112, 114-115), we can see that, as well as the loss of the amount stated above on page 72, there was a net increase in cash attributable operations of over \$71 million (see page 77), while cash and cash equivalents overall increased by over \$7.5 million (see page 78).

And that is without taking into account the additional cash put into short-term deposits of over \$16 million, resulting in UC having over \$228 million in such deposits on 1 January 2023 (see page 78 and pages 75, 99 and 101). Furthermore, on page 90, the value of long-term assets (e.g., land, buildings, plant, equipment, the library collection) has been reassessed upwards from \$1,595 million to \$1,653 million, for a “healthy” gain of \$58 million, of which only \$19 million is due to purchases and disposals, with the rest down to valuations and the “capital maintenance problem”.

Long term liabilities meanwhile have gone down by \$6 million and were only \$44 million on 1 January 2023. However, while we can see that “gain” features in and around the Statements of Financial Position and Cash Flows (pages 75-79), it’s not so obvious among numbers used in the Statement of Financial Performance on page 72 to calculate the deficit referred to above. Perhaps, if it were, then the \$16 million that seems to be lost might be found, and we’d all be happy again. Wouldn’t that be nice?

Or perhaps not: what would happen, for example, if Mr Robinson were to spot it and get silly ideas about relieving poverty or expanding the public transport network or reducing income taxes and forgetting all about that new tax on capital gains.

Mind you, some academics and departments might get a certain satisfaction if that was to happen, given their own positions of having to return unspent budgets at the year end to the university’s central coffers, only for them to be misplaced somewhere between the financial performance statement, the financial position statement [whatever happened to balance sheets?!] and the other 120 pages of the annual report.

So, let the whakangau begin! If we can uncover where the taonga is buried, perhaps we can rectify the prediction incorporated in the University’s Group budget for 2023 of an operating deficit of \$20 million (page 12).

Footnote: To calculate surpluses and deficits, the University applies the same rules, with options, developed for public companies (i.e., privately-owned companies whose shares and loan securities are traded on stock markets open to the public) to calculate profits and losses. These rules of calculation are predicated on profits being the amounts which said companies may distribute to their shareholders as dividends.

A key consideration in those rules is to stop the over-exuberant director-shareholders of companies paying out cash to shareholders so excessively as to prejudice the interests of holders of loan and similar company securities and other creditors.

The University, of course, is not an organisation of the type which pays out cash dividends to its members, that is the company of scholars referred to above, as listed in the University of Canterbury Act 1961 Sections 3 and 21. Its purposes are as referred to in the Education and Training Act 2020 Section 268, and these do not run to speculation in property and securities, nor to the idea of ceasing operations in the one-off financial interests of the present membership.

Positions on UC Council

Nominations are now open for two staff positions on the UC council. One permanent continuing Academic staff member and one permanent continuing General staff member.

This is a good way to try and influence university policy for the benefit of members and the good of the university. The Branch committee encourages members to accept nomination. This democratic right is important to maintaining the voice of staff at the upper echelons of management. Council needs the voice of coal-face workers in decision making otherwise decisions will be taken that do not reflect the ongoing reality of work at UC. Nominations close at 5pm on 25 June 2023. Further information and job descriptions are available on the [UC Intranet](#).

TEU websites of interest

TEU National webpage: <https://teu.ac.nz/>

TEU Canterbury Branch Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/StandUpForUC>

Academic Freedom Aotearoa: <https://www.facebook.com/academicfreedomnz/>

Our Collective Employment Agreements are available online:

<https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/about/hr/employment-agreements/>

Your 2022-2023 Branch Committee

Co-President	Garrick Cooper , Māori and Indigenous Studies garrick.cooper@canterbury.ac.nz ext. 92088 (on sabbatical)
Co-president	Rob Stowell , Future Learning and Development rob.stowell@canterbury.ac.nz ext. 94044
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