

INSIGHT

AUT

THE MAGAZINE FOR AUT
ALUMNI AND FRIENDS
2021

CHELSEA WINSTANLEY

Giving voice to our
indigenous stories

SPACE FOR CREATIVITY

Gifts from lockdown

CUSTODIAN OF THE DEEP

Scientist's mission to educate and inspire

OLYMPIAN MASTERCLASS

Harnessing the mind for
limitless potential

IMMUNISING FOR MISINFORMATION

AUT alum at WHO

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Custodian of the deep

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DEREK MCCORMACK
VICE-CHANCELLOR,
AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY
OF TECHNOLOGY

Tēnā koutou katoa

Wherever in the world you are, I hope this edition of Insight finds you and your whānau safe and well.

This issue focuses on many of our alumni, staff and students who, despite dealing with the unprecedented consequences of COVID-19 lockdowns and border closures, have continued to influence change and have made a significant impact on their communities, countries and professions.

Here at AUT, I'd like to think that the University also continued to adapt to our new COVID environment.

Our staff moved swiftly and successfully, delivering an excellent online learning experience to thousands of students across 900 papers. To ensure all students were in the best position possible to continue learning remotely, we also provided 924 laptops and 966 internet connection packages to students who needed them.

We continued to produce research during this transition and secured an impressive \$33.8 million in new research contracts during the year. Our researchers found ways to continue with their existing work, which includes securing our largest ever individual research grant – an \$8 million, five-year investigation into enhancing urban regeneration – as well as contributing to the wider COVID-19 work, locally, nationally and internationally.

As you will be aware, the closure of New Zealand borders has forced many overseas-based international students to postpone or change their study plans. We miss the diversity of perspectives and experiences that our

international students bring to our classrooms. While a small number of our international students have been able to return, we look forward to all of our international students coming back to AUT.

2020 was certainly not the year we thought it would be. Indeed, we had planned to mark AUT's 20th anniversary and celebrate this significant milestone. While these celebrations didn't take place, it is important to acknowledge AUT's progress in the last two decades. Beginning as an unranked university, we are now in the top 300 in the world, and have become New Zealand's second largest and third-ranked university. Our students learn in an environment that is deeply engaged with our business, industry and community partners, where they can test and apply the knowledge they have gained. We have developed an excellent international reputation, and research that is used by organisations around the world to address important issues facing our environment and society.

While much has changed over the past year, I am proud that through it all our staff have continued to demonstrate a deep commitment to our students and their success.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Insight.

Derek McCormack
Vice-Chancellor

Unprecedented rise in global research ranking

AUT is the only New Zealand university to improve year-on-year in two world university rankings, a significant acknowledgement for a remarkable 21 year journey as a university.

During the six years that AUT has been included in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, it has leapfrogged four other New Zealand universities and settled in a solid position as one of our nation's top three.

THE annually ranks 1,500 of the world's more than 30,000 universities, focussing on those that are the most research-intensive. In its latest ranking, AUT retained its position in the top 300 universities worldwide and was ranked in the 251-300 band.

AUT performed especially well and took the number one position for New Zealand universities in its global research influence which is assessed by the number of citations per research publication, as well as in international outlook.

Luke Patterson, Chief Marketing Officer, says while university rankings don't drive AUT's behaviour as a university, "we know they are an important factor for potential students when they make decisions on their academic futures.

"AUT's rise in the world rankings over the years is both impressive and valuable to the University and is relevant now more than ever in a COVID-19 world."

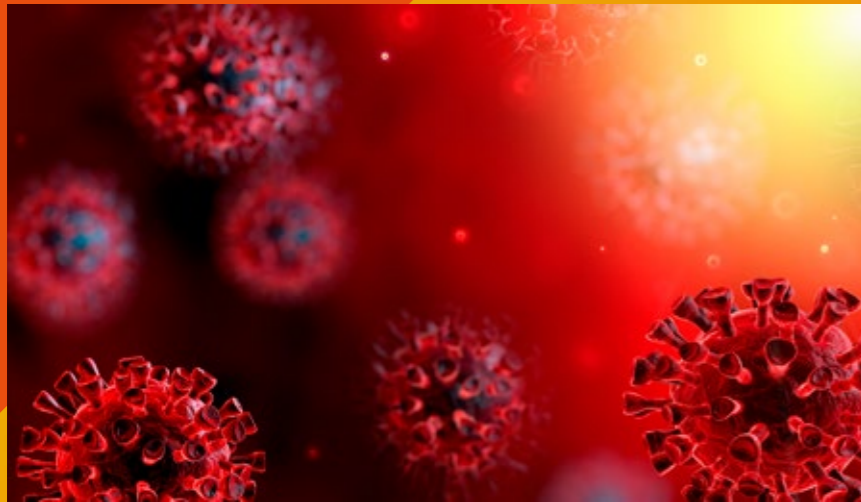
In other notable ranking results during the past year, THE ranked AUT number one in New Zealand for health subjects, the number one 'millennial university' in Australasia and fifteenth in the world, and number 23 in the world for contribution to UN Sustainable Development Goals (THE University Rankings).

AUT's impressive year-on-year rise was also reflected in the US News Global University Ranking – climbing from its rank of #724 in the world in 2016 to #389 in 2020, largely due to AUT's citation impact and international collaboration.

THE also ranked AUT #40 in the world for universities that are 50 years old or younger.



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS



Safer, more comfortable humidifier prototype

AUT researchers have secured funding to fast-track a prototype and clinical trials of a new humidifier aiming to reduce the spread of viruses like COVID-19 in hospital settings.

AUT Ventures, the commercialisation arm of the University, secured \$169,000 from MBIE's COVID-19 Innovation Fund to develop a prototype it hopes will be as effective as current hospital heated humidifier technology, while providing more comfort for the patients and better protection for health workers.

Research leader and Chief Engineer Dr Sandra Grau Bartual, who gained her PhD at AUT's Institute for Biomedical Technologies (IBTec) under the supervision of AUT Professor Ahmed Al-Jumaily, says humidifiers currently on the market are complex, bulky and expensive to purchase and run. "The use of a water tank creates a warm and aerosol environment, which unfortunately are optimum conditions for some pathogens to survive, grow and spread."

Her prototype uses 'self-humidification' technology developed by Sandra as part of her PhD research, with a special fabric membrane to trap the moisture when patients exhale, and a small electrical stimulation to release it when they inhale.

The team proposes to 'open source' the hardware design so that hospitals anywhere in the world can 3D print their own self-humidifiers for free.

International collaboration to improve mental health diagnosis

AUT researchers secured over \$2.1m to develop data science technology for prediction of mental health disorders, supported by MBIE's Catalyst New Zealand-Singapore Data Science Research Programme.

The research focuses on proposing a new computational neuro-genetic modelling based on machine-learning/AI methods for diagnosis and prognosis of mental health illnesses, led by AUT's Dr Maryam Doborjeh, a lecturer at the School of Engineering, Computer & Mathematical Sciences. Professor Nikola Kasabov is the Science Leader of the project.

Using AUT's patented NeuCube as a starting point, the project is studying six years' worth of data collected from 600 young people in Singapore, some of them manifesting mental health disorders. This study boasts an unprecedented level of data varieties, including

cutting-edge genomics, proteomics and metabonomic technologies.

This project is jointly coordinated via AUT and the Singapore partner from the School of Biological Sciences, Nanyang Technological University, which secured matched funding supported by Singapore Data Science Consortium.

"Mental illness, depression and depression-linked suicide are huge problems in both New Zealand and Singapore. Late diagnosis is the thing we can avoid with intelligent predictive computational models. The hospital and the cemetery are full of people who could have been helped earlier," says Professor Kasabov.

"It is hoped the neuro-genetic modelling research will lead to the development of new AI-based predictive analytics for early diagnosis of mental health issues in at-risk youth that can ultimately support psychological wellbeing practitioners to plan better clinical interventions," says Dr Doborjeh.

The project will also involve Professor Edmund Lai from AUT's SECMS, Dr Margaret Hinepo Williams (Public and Māori Health Research Lead at AUT) and Dr Zohreh Doborjeh, a PhD graduate from AUT, and now Postdoc at the University of Auckland.



Artists' impression of the planned greenway around Freeland Ave as part of the wider urban regeneration of Mt Roskill.

People-focused urban regeneration

A research team comprising AUT's School of Sport and Recreation and School of Business has secured \$7.95 million from the MBIE Endeavour Fund to quantify the societal impact of major urban regeneration projects currently taking place across the country.

The multilayered and multi-university programme, led by Associate Professor Scott Duncan, Professor Erica Hinckson and Professor Gail Pacheco, will run for five years and aims to enhance the revitalisation of New Zealand communities to improve people's wellbeing.

Dr Duncan says outcomes will provide developers and policymakers with new and essential information on the multifaceted impact of major urban regeneration on the people of New Zealand, giving direction to future improvements.

"Our focus on wellbeing has arisen from substantial international evidence indicating that countries that enhance wellbeing not only raise the standard of living for their citizens but also create a foundation for stronger and more resilient economic growth," he says.

"Given the trend to fund major urban regeneration as a means to revitalise communities, address inequity, and improve social capital, we believe that the outcomes of this research will have a major impact on how future urban renewal projects are designed, implemented and evaluated in New Zealand and overseas."

Giving a voice to our indigenous stories

A landmark exhibition celebrating Māori artists has inspired a new film and a return Down Under for globally acclaimed indigenous storyteller and AUT alumna Chelsea Winstanley.

Toi Tū Toi Ora – an exhibition celebrating 70 years of contemporary Māori art – opened at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in December, the largest exhibition ever to be staged by the gallery, and the most comprehensive survey of contemporary Māori art ever seen in its 130-year history.

For Oscar-nominated Chelsea – widely known for producing Jojo Rabbit, What We Do In The Shadows, and Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen – the creation of this unprecedented exhibition became a story too significant to remain untold.

“I first heard about the exhibition when I was home to premier Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen at the New Zealand International Film Festival back in 2018,” says Chelsea (Ngāti Ranginui).

“I met with the Māori curator at the gallery Nigel Borell and couldn’t shake the enormity of the project. It was epic in so many ways, the largest single survey the Auckland Art Gallery

has ever shown, over 112 artists, along with several commissions and curated by a Māori. To me this was ground-breaking. I kept talking to Nigel about it and at the beginning of 2020 the gallery gave me permission to make an independent film.”

‘Toi Tū Toi Ora – Visual Sovereignty’ follows the final year of preparation of the exhibition, and sees Chelsea’s return to the role of director, after many years as a producer. Produced through her newly launched company This Too Shall Pass, and scheduled for release mid-late 2021, she hopes to eventually take the documentary to an international film festival to share the story on the global stage.

In addition to the feature film, Chelsea shot a short film to celebrate the opening of Toi Tū Toi Ora. Narrated by Taika Waititi and with music composed by Maree Sheehan, the entire video was filmed on an iPhone 12 Pro Max, prompting a tweet of support for the landmark exhibition from Apple CEO Tim Cook.

“AUT was pivotal in my decision to become a filmmaker. I was able to make a documentary in my final year on my marae, on my terms and that support gave me the inspiration I needed.”





Says Chelsea, "I've always been interested in stories that were concerned with Māori or Te Ao Māori (the Māori world view). Growing up, my Nan Kiritapu was always someone I looked to for inspiration. I'm in awe of strong women and all of my ancestors who have survived against the enormous challenges of post colonisation."

The grandmother of indigenous film Merata Mita was another guiding light, and the driving force behind one of Chelsea's most meaningful projects.

"Every project I've worked on has its own set of proud moments, but I'll always be grateful for what Merata Mita taught me so I think the documentary I made with her son Hepi has had the greatest personal impact for me."

But it hasn't only been inspirational women who have fuelled Chelsea's commitment to telling Aotearoa's indigenous stories. Her years studying a Bachelor of Communication Studies (majoring in Television Production) at AUT were also life-changing.

"AUT was pivotal in my decision to become a filmmaker. I was able to make a documentary in my final year on my marae, on my terms and that support gave me the inspiration I needed."

A guest lecture by Māori screen taonga Tainui Stephens about Māori representation in the media remains firmly etched on her memory.

"I remember clinging to every word he said. It's important to have the right representation and authority when speaking on matters that are important to Māori because it helps to reaffirm you're on the right path. He made me realise 'Nothing About Us Without Us'. He also introduced me to my future boss, I'll always be grateful to Tainui."

Although it's nearly two decades since she graduated, the University remains close to Chelsea's heart. She's an invaluable board member of Friends of AUT, a US-based not-for-profit organisation set up to foster international pathways for AUT students and graduates.

"The board's main kaupapa is to support the goals and aspirations of AUT on an international level. As an alumni, I was interested in becoming involved because I'd heard through my dear friend (New York-based AUT alum) Sarah Smith of all the wonderful placements she had secured for graduates – places like the Sundance Institute, and the Met in New York. It's extremely important to make connections in the world and this programme is incredible."

Friends of USA aut.ac.nz/givingusa

Making meaningful connections is something Chelsea excels at. Most recently, she was named a new member of the Producers Branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. She couldn't be more delighted.

"It means I can vote. It also means more inclusion and that's important. We won't be visible unless we demand to be visible and this is one way to participate and do it."

Inclusion is a word that carries great weight for Chelsea – its essence is the lifeblood of all her creative projects.

"I don't think we need to focus so much on diversity but rather inclusion. It's not as if we aren't diverse or Aotearoa New Zealand doesn't have a wealth of voices, it's a matter of giving those voices the same opportunities the mainstream have had for years. The indigenous voice is the most unique we have in this country. There are so many stories that we can tell, we just need the same access to resources and we need to build capacity."

And in order to keep growing that capacity, Chelsea says aspiring storytellers need to keep pursuing their passions, honing their craft, and finding fresh new ways to connect with their audiences.

"Find the courage to believe in yourself and just go for it. You can go about learning in many ways, either do a course or learn on the job. Find the people who make the same type of films you like and build a community of like-minded storytellers, then work won't seem like work."

"Our industry has been going through major upheavals since COVID-19 – the safety of sets, insurers who will bond your film, and now places to screen your movie. Given cinemas around the world are closing, other platforms are becoming more important. Audiences are truly global with everything being online now, so you have to think globally when making your content."

"What makes us unique is our point of view and now the rest of the world is interested in it too."

“

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”

Space for creativity

When visiting a new planet, what sort of shoes would you pack? If you were a designer for a company disrupting planet Earth's approach to footwear, they'd almost certainly be environmentally friendly.

San Francisco-based product designer April Gourdie started planning her trip through time and space at the end of 2019, unaware she was really preparing for 2020.

Reentering New Zealand's atmosphere via a managed isolation hotel a year later, the AUT alumna who has become known as the 'knit person' of Allbirds' product team explains: "San Francisco felt like being in space and coming to New Zealand feels like coming back to Earth."

April has been stamping her mark on Allbirds since she joined as an intern in 2017, when it was a growing business using merino wool to disrupt the footwear industry. Placed by AUT's global internship service AUT Internz, the Bachelor of Design graduate's first project was to create a unique tread pattern for a new shoe sole made from environmentally friendly sugarcane. It became April's first patent.

April credits the technical expertise she developed in her final year at AUT for giving her the foundations to work alongside Allbirds' departments of design, development and merchandising. "That's what I loved about AUT, it was really rooted in technical knowledge, which is a basis for all the creative stuff to sit on."



April Gourdie got her start at Allbirds as a new graduate, through AUT's global internship programme AUT Internz.

"I've had a really beautiful scope of work with Allbirds – as my first job out of uni it's been amazing to be exposed to many different projects and ways of working."

"I've always been given an awesome balance of creative and technical projects. I get to work on anything that's knit based, and many of our products are knitted."

One of her favourite 2020 projects was a collaboration with The Metropolitan Museum of Art to mark its 150th anniversary. Allbirds designed and produced a limited-edition collection inspired by famous pieces of art. In discussion with The Met team, April selected artworks then interpreted each one into a shoe, seeing it through to development. "That was a really awesome project to work on."



The Haverman Bouquet Tree Runners – a collaboration with The Met to mark its 150th anniversary – was a favourite 2020 project.

What's the difference between a bag and a pocket? If you're April Goudie, they can be one and the same thing.

April's 'Space Book' was a grounding force while working through the pandemic from her California apartment.

“I've got to be grateful that lockdown has given me the space to be creative on my own accord – not relying on uni or my profession. I don't want to lose that feeling – I know how important that is. It's a lifelong space mission.”

Fast-forward to March 2020, the company has grown from 60 to around 400, and April and her colleagues were thrust into lockdown. While missing the work culture, she was quick to find positives.

“There were times that were really not nice, but I've found that I'm far more efficient in my job and I've developed a real sense of work-life balance for the first time.”

The California lockdown also presented her with the time and space to indulge in more personal creative processes.

One was to deconstruct pockets. “I had all these old clothes and all the fabric stores were closed so I cut all the pockets out. Then I started looking at the concept of what is the difference between a pocket and a bag? A bag is a container, and a pocket is effectively that but is attached. It was a weird little conceptual project. Then I started making all the pockets into bags.”

Her most useful project was a sketch book she'd started months before, which proved to be her most grounding force.

The book starts with some prompts: “If I was 'April the astronaut' going to a new planet, what would I need to design and make? What food and what vehicle would I need? What shoes would I need and how would they be weighted down?”

“I refer to it as my 'Space Book'. It's a space to research, create and explore my own creative process without expectations. I didn't need to show anyone what I was doing, there was no validation of the process, it didn't need to result in anything, and I didn't even need to finish it.

“People used to ask me about my hobbies, and I'd say – 'I'm lucky, I got to do my hobby as a degree and now I do it for a job. But that takes it to a place where the outcome depends on something like a grade or making money. Lockdown has taught me that I don't have to do that.’”

With no prospect of an end to California's lockdown by late 2020, April returned to New Zealand to continue working remotely, the only difference being a new time zone to factor in and the opportunity to see friends and family. After seeing nobody apart from her flatmate for five months she went from one extreme to another but is determined to keep hold of her newfound balance and creative process.

“I've finally found my own creative practice. I've got to be grateful that lockdown has given me the space to be creative on my own accord – not relying on uni or my profession.

“I don't want to lose that feeling – I know how important that is. It's a lifelong space mission.”

Textile + Design Lab
tdl.aut.ac.nz

Life in the fast lane for AUT start-up

Life has been full throttle for Benjamin Bray and his former classmates Tyler Hinde, James Hurlock and Levi Jacobsen since they graduated with Bachelors of Creative Technologies in 2016.

Their VR start-up Float Studios was acquired by Australian production company Finch, they moved from Auckland to Bondi Beach, and are now blazing a trail at Finch's recently rebranded technology and innovation arm, Nakatomi, with the likes of Google, Dom Perignon, ABC, Spark and Nestle among their ever-growing list of high-profile clients.

"We started Float Studios together with Charles Hlavac and Jake McPherson in our third year at AUT and joined Finch in early 2017. It's been the perfect environment for us to continue growing," says Benjamin, now Executive Producer at Nakatomi, and working alongside Tyler (Art Director), James (3D Artist) and Levi (Game Developer).

"Finch is a truly innovative business. It would have taken us years to get the exposure and experience to work with the clients that we do now. In the past three years we've worked with so many incredible companies and are adding value like we had never anticipated."

Among the many highlights is a recent collaboration with indigenous artist Christian Thompson to create Bayi Gardiya (Singing Desert) – an immersive art experience designed to preserve the lost language Bidjara. Unlike anything else the Nakatomi

team had ever worked on, the project was named VR Film of the Year at the 2020 Real World XR Awards show and has been added to the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA).

"The immersive nature of VR promotes a sense of empathy for the user that is incomparable with other media. This all-encompassing experience was the perfect medium to tell Christian's story and we were so grateful for the opportunity to bring it to life. It was massively encouraging to see this indigenous work not only recognised as Film of the Year, but also for it to be added to the National Film Archive."

Launching interactive nautical empire game Kraken to the Steam Store provided another pinch me moment, along with heading to Germany to speak about their involvement with Project Revoice – a ground-breaking digital voice clone that enables people with Motor Neurone Disease (ALS) to continue speaking in their natural voice once they've lost the ability to talk. That project won a Cannes Lion and a D&AD black pencil – the ultimate creative accolade. But even more importantly, it has the potential to rewrite the future of communication for those living with ALS.

It has been an unexpected and surprising career trajectory for Benjamin, who struggled to find his place in high school, and enjoyed so many different subjects that he was reluctant to commit to any one in particular. It wasn't until he got to AUT that all the pieces of the puzzle fell into place.

"AUT gave me an understanding of multiple fields and how to collaborate with other like-minded people. Creative Technologies was a mix of business, design, game development, physical computing and programming. It enabled me to merge all these areas which I now draw on in my career."

The Float Studios team thrived in AUT's supportive, collaborative studio environment and believe the University played a key role in helping them get where they are today.

"When we started Float Studios, we had no idea what it took to run or set up a business. AUT was incredibly helpful in those early days. Not only did they give us practical advice on business structure and incorporation, but they also arranged meetings for us with investors. Our lecturers went above and beyond to support us through our degree while also allowing us to spend university hours working on commercial projects."

Nakatomi's immersive art experience, a collaboration with Christian Thompson to preserve the lost language Bidjara, was named VR Film of the Year at the 2020 Real World XR Awards.

“

If you are self-motivated, have a hunger for creativity and like sticking your fingers in a lot of innovative pies, there is no limit to what you can do.

”

One lecturer in particular – Stefan Marks – was pivotal in their success.

"Stefan entered a piece of our work into the 2016 NZ Best Awards, which ended up winning a Gold Pin in the Experience category. This gained us international attention and landed Float Studios its first paid project Category Five, a VR training and recruitment tool for the Australian Defence Force. That was the project that really jump-started our careers."

Since then it's been a journey full of excitement and growth.

"I'm constantly learning and developing new skills, but that's the fun part! If you are self-motivated, have a hunger for creativity and like sticking your fingers in a lot of innovative pies, there is no limit to what you can do."



FROM LEFT: BENJAMIN BRAY, JAMES HURLOCK, TYLER HINDE (SITTING), LEVI JACOBSEN.

Immunising for misinformation

A meeting with Diane Abad-Vergara in her French home near the Swiss border feels like any meeting taking place anywhere, anytime during 2020: Zooming into her mezzanine office, this is what it looks like to be working at the World Health Organization's communications centre during a global pandemic.

Her desk at WHO's Geneva headquarters has been largely unoccupied since last March, as Diane balances family life with developing communication strategies and tools to translate into multiple languages and disseminate around the globe. "Most people are working from home, apart from a few occasions (when we're required in the office) like emergency responses and press conferences."

The AUT alumna and WHO Communications

Officer since 2017 says she and her colleagues have long been planning for a global pandemic. "It's not a surprise but it's really changed everyone's world. A huge amount of work goes into pandemic preparedness and WHO had been warning for years that (the world is) unprepared."

Now that COVID-19 is here, Diane presents a composed figure – she's simply getting on with the job she's been preparing for all her life.



DIANE ABAD-VERGARA

"It's vital work that we're doing from a communications perspective, and that really energises us."

Drawn to stories of international humanitarian struggles since childhood, Diane was driven to work for the United Nations. To fulfil her dream, she needed a master's degree, and was attracted to AUT's Master of Communication Studies which allowed for the production of a documentary, rather than a written thesis. "I chose that practical option, there was guidance, but I had to find my own solutions and funding, be resourceful and make it work."

Her thesis, *Living with Coffee*, was a documentary about fair trade coffee which screened throughout Colombia and in the 2009 New Zealand Human Rights Film Festival. Since then, Diane's career has seen her in journalism and communication roles in not-for-profits and the public sector across Australasia, Europe, Central Asia, the USA and Latin America.

Now part of a 70-strong communications team at the WHO, she works closely with other agencies to deliver accurate, science-based information globally. "We're fighting against the misinformation and disinformation out there – we're immunising people against misinformation."

"Our whole reputation is built on accurate scientific information, so that really comes first. We talk about science, solutions and solidarity. Having information that's timely and really understandable – especially when we're putting so much information out via social media and in partnership with digital platforms – is so important."

She has worked with social media companies – Facebook, YouTube and Instagram – to promote accurate information, and developed a partnership with New Zealand online magazine *The Spinoff* after some of their COVID-19 creative work went viral.

"It was cool to find out it was a Kiwi company – they have that Kiwi can-do attitude."

Later in 2020, Diane's focus switched to developing communication strategies around the vaccine, including "explaining what a vaccine is, what's in it, how they're developed. There's a lot of mystery around vaccines and how they work, so we're trying to break that down."

At the same time, she's been working on communication that explains why equitable access to vaccines is so important.

"Global equitable access to a vaccine, particularly protecting healthcare workers and those most at risk, is the only way to mitigate the public health and economic impact of the pandemic."

"Our mission is to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable – you don't get much better than that for a reason to get out of bed and do your best work all day."

“ Having information that's timely and really understandable – especially when we're putting so much information out via social media and in partnership with digital platforms – is so important. ”



Planning for potential

Scholarships are a way to encourage and nurture talent and can also be the sustenance required to get an important research subject off the ground, one that could impact the world.

In recent years, AUT has been refining its approach to offering scholarships. What the University now offers is a streamlined set of schemes for every study level.

Trish Richardson, Head of AUT's Scholarships Office, says she and her team have been looking at how they can create a programme of support for students at every stage of the academic lifecycle.

"We've started with the school leaver and looked at what they need to support a successful transition to university."

One extraordinary school leaver attracted to AUT in 2020 was 13-year-old prodigy from Vietnam, Vicky Ngo Ngoc. After moving to New Zealand for educational opportunities in 2018, she was fast tracked through St Thomas School and Selwyn College, graduating as a top scholar for Year 12 in 2019.

She chose to study economics and finance at AUT through a special AUT Vice-Chancellor's Undergraduate Scholarship which covers full tuition fees for her undergraduate degree. She has also been provided with pastoral care.

13-year-old prodigy Vicky Ngo Ngoc is studying economics and finance at AUT through a special AUT Vice-Chancellor's Undergraduate Scholarship.

Photo credit:
NZ Herald/Dean Purcell

Trish says the University Scholarship Committee also assessed how scholarships could best support AUT's undergraduates at the various stages, then how they could be encouraged beyond their degree. "We want to work hard to attract our high-performing bachelor alumni into postgraduate and master's scholarships."

While most of the scholarship funding comes directly from AUT itself, the scholarships office makes it easy for AUT students to connect with the many important philanthropic partners and funders behind a wide range of scholarships on offer.

Thorne Snow is an example of a scholar nurtured through his journey at AUT. He began undergraduate studies with support from a Woolf Fisher First-in-Family AUT Scholarship. Working full time through his Masters in Creative Writing during 2020 with charities such as Variety – the Children's Charity, the Healing Through Arts Trust and the Neurological Foundation, Thorne also paid it forward as a mental health advocate.

At the end of 2020 Thorne was awarded a William Georgetti Scholarship, worth \$20,000. He says the scholarship will not only be a huge help financially as he completes his master's, it will also give more reach to his book, 'What It Means to Be a Cockroach', which he hopes will be used in primary schools to open the narrative about mental health.

Trish says AUT has also increased funding for doctoral-level research, "and while graduates from other universities can apply for that, our core strategy is to support our AUT alumni right through undergraduate, postgraduate, to doctoral."

AUT doctoral scholarships have recently been awarded for research into microbiology, global warming and social research.

“We want to work hard to attract our high-performing bachelor alumni into postgraduate and master's scholarships.”

AUT scholarships at a glance

Vice-Chancellor's Scholarships

The largest pool of scholarships delivered here are funded and directed by AUT.

- School Leaver – up to 140 awarded annually, delivered in four categories: academic excellence, significant student (based on academic performance coupled with community and cultural leadership), KIWA (for Māori and Pasifika) and New Horizons (for high performing students from decile 1–4 Auckland schools)
- Undergraduate – 135 awarded in 2020
- Post-graduate – 33 awarded in 2020
- Research Master's – 11 awarded in 2020
- Doctoral – focus on supporting high performing postgraduate students, or research projects of strategic importance to the University, New Zealand or the world.

Donor-funded Scholarships

Many of AUT's important scholarships are delivered by philanthropists including:

- Woolf Fisher First-in-Family, a partnership now focusing exclusively on students entering AUT South Campus – up to 15 annually
- Keir Trust Study Award – a scholarship from one of AUT's founders that supports financially disadvantaged students at all study levels – 10 Auckland awards / 4 regional awards
- Freemasons – a significant award across all New Zealand universities with AUT scholars benefiting each year
- Kate Edgar Educational Charitable Trust – a significant award for women across all New Zealand universities, with many AUT scholars benefiting.

aut.ac.nz/scholarships

Thorne Snow received a Woolf Fisher First-in-Family AUT Scholarship for his undergraduate degree and was recently awarded a William Georgetti Scholarship to complete his master's degree.

Custodian of the deep

Ticiana Fettermann is a self-confessed ocean junkie.

An avid free diver, kite surfer and boatie, she is also a niche scientist, marine biologist and fervent environmentalist. In fact, the passionate 38 year old has dedicated her entire life to the deep blue sea.

"I need to be in the ocean every day. My life is in the ocean and trying to protect it," says Ticiana, who originally hails from Porto Alegre in Brazil.

Her single-minded pursuit to preserve marine species in their natural environments has taken Ticiana all over the planet – from the spectacular beaches of Brazil to the colourful reefs of the Pacific Islands, the craggy cliffs and coastlines of Western Australia, and the Pohutukawa-fringed shores of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Currently based in Exmouth, Ticiana has devoted the past year to working in the Ningaloo Reef, a UNESCO World Heritage Area in the north west coastal region of Western Australia.

"It's my job to educate, inspire, empower and encourage people to conserve marine life and their habitats."

Working as a marine biologist guide, naturalist and deck hand on ecotourism tours, Ticiana steers snorkellers carefully through the delicate reef, and delivers daily ecology talks about whales and other local marine life. What sets her apart from other marine biologists is her very specific area of interest – using science and technology, specifically drones, to collect data and help protect the planet for the next generation.

“It's my job to educate, inspire, empower and encourage people to conserve marine life and their habitats.”



TICIANA AND A TURTLE IN CORAL BAY, WESTERN AUSTRALIA. PHOTO BY FABIO PICINATO.



“My area of interest was so specific that at first I couldn’t find anyone involved in this field, but when I came across the work of AUT’s Barbara Bollard (Associate Professor in the School of Applied Sciences), I was instantly inspired. Barbara was involved in conservation, geographic information systems and had worked with dolphins. She had started a lab with drones and I thought this was the perfect tool to use for marine conservation research.”

Ticiana immediately enrolled in a Master of Science at AUT, focusing her research on using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to study the behaviour of endangered bottlenose dolphins. Her work has made an invaluable contribution to other cetacean researchers and regulatory bodies, helping to shape guidelines and create safe protocols for marine species.

“This was the most exciting project I could ever have imagined. Drones are such great technology as they offer you a different perspective on the marine world and don’t interrupt the normal behaviour of marine life.”

After graduating from AUT in 2018, Ticiana applied her learnings in the Cook Islands as a research assistant at a whale research centre, studying the South Pacific humpback whale population and using drones to

monitor their movements and behaviour. There, she introduced other scientists to the benefits of UAVs in conservation research.

“The Cook Islands is an amazing place to live and work. While I was there, I also worked as a marine biologist, guiding reef snorkels and sea turtle interactions, and giving tourists and locals an insight into the basic ecology of the reef, marine flora and fauna.”

Ticiana uses her spare time to teach graduate students or other researchers from Brazil how drones can be used to study marine life and help conservation efforts.

“I love putting the skills from my master’s degree into practice and applying them to my research. I’ve always been close to the ocean and I thrive when I’m sharing everything I’ve learned with others.”

And in a world that’s 71 percent ocean, it’s safe to say that Ticiana will never be short of work.

“My ultimate goal is to inspire further research that can help marine conservation efforts around the world. Afterall, that is my true passion.”



TICIANA FETTERMANN’S AREA OF INTEREST WAS SO SPECIFIC THAT WHEN SHE CAME ACROSS AUT’S BARBARA BOLLARD (ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN THE SCHOOL OF APPLIED SCIENCES), SHE WAS INSTANTLY INSPIRED AND ENROLLED IN HER MASTER OF SCIENCE AT AUT.



Empowering Pasifika beyond the playing field

Pasifika's contribution to New Zealand rugby is undisputed. Samoan, Tongan and Fijian players are among our best, and the sport's most generous volunteers. But despite their strong on-field involvement, only a small number of Pasifika players move into rugby leadership and governance roles. A three-year research project conducted by AUT's Sports Performance Research Institute New Zealand (SPRINZ) set out to find out why and help instigate change.

Navigating Two Worlds, an action research study, kicked off in 2016 and saw the SPRINZ team work alongside Auckland and New Zealand Rugby, current and ex-players, their families and clubs, with the aim of cultivating leadership capability across the system.

For AUT's Sport Leadership and Management Department Head Gaye Bryham, the project highlighted a dominant, primarily Eurocentric system that operates off-field in New Zealand's national sport. It also highlighted the courage of over 70 participants who shared their stories and learned about different leadership experiences, challenges and ways.

"New Zealand Rugby recognises the significant contribution the Pasifika community plays in rugby, from clubs through to professional level. In Auckland particularly, this contribution is largely in playing participation and is not similarly reflected in off-field contributions involving governance, management and refereeing," says Gaye.

Researchers discovered that clubs wanted to better understand and embrace Pacific Island culture, and its collective, community approach, so a key goal of the study was to develop that awareness within current office holders, many of whom are New Zealand European.

"Pasifika participants commented that playing participation reflected an inclusive, collaborative team or village approach; however off-field leadership roles were not underpinned by that same shared approach."

College Rifles Rugby Club Manager Keith Ratcliffe believes this lack of cultural understanding could be a

"Pasifika participants commented that playing participation reflected an inclusive, collaborative team or village approach; however off-field leadership roles were not underpinned by that same shared approach."

significant barrier to Pasifika players pathway off the field.

"Nothing about our club reflected that over 50 percent of our members were Pacific or Māori. Members shouldn't feel like they have to check their culture at the door," says Keith.

Through mentoring programmes, talanoas (discussions), and the establishment of a Club Leadership Group and a Pacific Leadership Group, Navigating Two Worlds has helped merge cultures and ensure more accessible trajectories into leadership and governance for Pasifika players.

Says Navigating Two Worlds mentor, Pacific Advisory Group and Project Team member Tracy Atiga, "Through our talanoa and workshops, Navigating Two Worlds has brought about quite a bit of change specifically around people's attitudes toward understanding that there are two different perspectives. I've seen that grow quite organically."

A new Pasifika position has been created within New Zealand Rugby, clubs are placing more value on Pasifika leadership ways, and more people than ever before are connecting, networking and encouraging Pasifika players both on and off the grass.

Gaye and her fellow SPRINZ researchers couldn't be more delighted and are excited by the potential their research has to be extrapolated to other sporting codes.

She adds, "Many other sports are in a similar situation, with significant Pasifika playing contributions, but this is not always reflected in off-field leadership presence. Other sports are interested in the learnings from Navigating Two World's action research, as to how leadership ways and practices in our sport organisations and sector can be developed and strengthened with a greater appreciation of Pasifika culture."





High-performance research that's changing the playing field

AUT's Sports Performance Research Institute New Zealand (SPRINZ) is carving a global reputation, partnering with some of the world's most innovative organisations to boost health and wellbeing, sporting development and human potential.

Ranked New Zealand's top sports research institute, SPRINZ has worked with everyone from the LA Dodgers to NASA and has an unrivalled record for producing high impact research that enhances performance for the sport and recreation sector.

"We have leading-edge programmes of research that are driving change with partner organisations in, for example, strength and conditioning, sports technology, youth development, injury prevention, sport physiology and nutrition, sport leadership and governance, public health and physical activity," says SPRINZ Director, and AUT Professor of Sport Leadership & Governance Lesley Ferkins.

"Our collective thinking brings a holistic and action-orientated approach to growing capability in partnership with sector organisations for the wellbeing of New Zealanders."

Based at AUT Millennium, SPRINZ connects postgraduates with New Zealand and international sport agencies in order to work with athletes, coaches, clubs and schools to develop applied research in ground-breaking areas. Currently around 100 PhD and master's students are actively engaged in projects including development of a wearable sensor that monitors bowling intensity and workload for cricketers, and wearable resistance (WR) exoskeletons designed to enhance athletic performance.

Social change with and through sport is also on the agenda for SPRINZ researchers. Projects are currently underway with Touch NZ, NZ Rugby, and Aktive Auckland in building positive sporting experiences for youth, and diversity and inclusion in sport leadership.

sprinz.aut.ac.nz

EXOGEN™ WEARABLE RESISTANCE EXOSKELETONS
DESIGNED TO ENHANCE ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE,
ONE OF THE MANY PROJECTS SPRINZ PHD AND
MASTER'S STUDENTS ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN.



A quiet activist

Ayan Said has walked alongside migrant and refugee communities for a decade, unpacking a deeply cultural and sensitive issue, and holding space for change.

“

We had been building relationships with communities for years and wanted to protect them from further marginalisation. One negative media story could have ruined that. It always comes back to consent.

”

AYAN SAID HAS BEEN LOBBYING TO END FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION SINCE 2008.



The AUT PhD student was a driving force behind the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Crimes Amendment Bill, passed in July 2020, which ensures that all forms of female circumcision are illegal in New Zealand.

As the country's first cross-party multi-members' bill, the historic occasion was made all the more remarkable by four female members of parliament putting aside party allegiances to join forces on a global women's issue.

Ayan, a programme coordinator at the NZ FGM Education Programme, and Nikki Denholm, the programme's director, began lobbying for legislation change in 2008.

"We were all working together for positive change, and the dedication everyone had to the cause was amazing, but it didn't occur overnight," says Ayan.

International agencies have been working to eliminate FGM for 30 years, but the practice hasn't subsided. Almost 200 million women and girls living today have undergone female circumcision.

While agencies and NGOs focus on it as a rights issue, and the language of advocacy is well understood, the social repercussions for women and girls in FGM-practicing communities are slow to change. To remain uncircumcised may still render a girl unclean, unmarriageable, socially ostracised, and vulnerable to abuse.

"Any initiatives to eliminate female genital mutilation must address these powerful social factors and consider how elimination might occur without any social damage to the women and girls involved," says Ayan.

"Change cannot come from agencies, it has to come from within communities. Behavioural change is slow and until people are ready to change, the only thing you can do is hold space – walk alongside people on their journey."

The FGM Crimes Amendment Bill was a major milestone, but legislation alone is not enough, says Ayan.

Eliminating FGM requires primary prevention of the practice, with the backing of the relevant community, utilising a range of mechanisms, such as legal frameworks, education and advocacy, as well as ongoing specialised care for those women and girls already affected.

Ayan was born in Somalia, a country with the world's highest rate of FGM at around 98 percent. Her parents were extraordinary in 'having the courage to say no' and shield their daughter from the practice.

It was half a world away in New Zealand that Ayan became aware of the issue, and began training as an educator at the NZ FGM Education Programme, while working towards a double degree in Public Health and Psychology at AUT. Her master's thesis, which captures the voices of women living with FGM

in Auckland, considered culturally appropriate approaches to end female circumcision and ways the health sector could better partner with affected communities.

But Ayan points out that campaigning for change is not always about making noise. In a move that may seem counter-intuitive, she and her collaborators declined media interviews, possibly dozens over the years.

"Media headlines and picket signs wouldn't necessarily accomplish positive sustainable change. Shining a light on a community that isn't ready for that would be disrespectful. We had been building relationships with communities for years and wanted to protect them from further marginalisation. One negative media story could have ruined that. It always comes back to consent," she says.

Ayan remains committed to empowering communities. Her current research, part of a PhD in Public Health, aims to create space for young internally displaced Somali women to develop ideas for reproductive health services in Puntland. Her quiet activism will continue to create big change.

Entrepreneurial alum thriving on business success

Success tasted sweet for Denym Bird from the moment he started honing his entrepreneurial skills as a student at AUT.

"I wanted to earn income without having to work. I needed to spend my time studying," Denym says. "I ended up buying five vending machines – ice cream vending machines because other types already dominated the market." He partnered with Tip Top and strategically placed them at swimming pools around Auckland.

"That was very exciting. I learned how to make deals with companies. I realised this is what I wanted to do with my life."

Unable to maintain the machines from Hong Kong during a third year international university exchange, it also became his first experience selling a business.

Denym discovered he loved "the thrill of doing something new and bringing people together – and now I can't stop."

Since graduating with a Bachelor of Business in Business Information Systems and Marketing in 2015, he's gone on to start an additional four businesses – each very different.

There's his consulting firm Hypergiant, started in 2017 through which he acts as a virtual marketing manager for clients including Xero, A2X and Tradify.

There was Cryptosaver, also in 2017, Australia's first regulated platform for retail investors to buy Bitcoin through regular weekly payments.

And Paintvine, New Zealand's largest creative events business which hosts more than 700 events annually, proving

painting and wine to be a winning combination.

Then his latest, DeliverEat. Frustrated with long supermarket queues during New Zealand's COVID-19 lockdown and unable to find much online, Denym created a food delivery directory that connected half a million Kiwis with thousands of independent food producers delivering during lockdown.

One of these businesses was acquired (DeliverEat), another one he wound down due to not getting the right product-market-fit to make it sustainable (Cryptosaver) and the remaining two he runs are still thriving.

It's the creative events company Paintvine that Denym is most proud of. It hosts more than 15 weekly painting and wine events in eight cities across New Zealand, has a team of 25 artists and admin staff and is close to achieving \$1 million revenue.

"I was on a business trip in the US and saw someone in a bar set up an art class. Everyone had a really great time and I thought the concept was very interesting – and no one was doing it in New Zealand."

In late 2020, Paintvine won the Westpac Business Awards People's Choice Award along with the New Zealand Events Association Best Event Marketing Award.

Denym says becoming a full-time entrepreneur just two years after leaving university has been his "biggest achievement". As an entrepreneur, he says, you can realise the value of your hard work. "You can actually see someone buy your product. I get to create things that didn't exist before and that people really enjoy."

"I was sitting in a painting and wine session and saw everyone laughing and enjoying it. Maybe it was their first date, maybe their fiftieth. And I thought 'This is an experience I helped create. I thought of it and brought it to life.'"

Denym, who features in AUT's 'Find your greatness at AUT' campaign, originally wanted to study communications and become a film director. But he realised competition would be tough, and that he had a knack for business and entrepreneurship.

"Studying business felt like the right choice. It came from the aspiration of wanting to build things. First I thought I'd build films and now I'm building businesses."

"I'm very happy that I went to university, especially AUT. AUT puts a lot more emphasis on the practical side of things. Obviously theory is important but it's not all. AUT also shows you how to do things practically."

Along with important lessons about branding and accounting, Denym draws on what he learned studying information systems. "We learned how Domino's online ordering system works from the backend. What looks so simple to the customer is actually a very complex system."

"It made me realise the value of systems and how to build them. It's something I still use now, building interfaces that are easy to use for the customer."

CO-FOUNDERS OF PAINTVINE (FROM LEFT) EVAN LOCKIE, ALEX HAMILTON AND DENYM BIRD.



SOME OF THE 15+ PAINTING AND WINE EVENTS HELD THROUGHOUT NEW ZEALAND EVERY WEEK.



“Studying business felt like the right choice. It came from the aspiration of wanting to build things. First I thought I'd build films and now I'm building businesses.”

LEX PRITCHARD WAS THE FIRST WOMAN TO WIN A BOUT AT THE OLYMPICS FOR NEW ZEALAND. PHOTO BY FINN COCHRAN.



Mind over matter

Alexis Pritchard (aka Lex) helps people build the mental skills they need to smash their goals.

She co-owns inner city boxing gym Wreck Room, and runs Rebuild with Lex, a mental skills and performance coaching business that encourages people to be more than they ever dreamed. When she's not inspiring clients at the gym or clinic, you might find her running empowerment workshops for teenage girls, inspiring school kids in her role as NZ Olympic Ambassador, or even hosting positive mindset seminars for AUT.

"Helping people is in my blood – my father is a psychiatrist and my mum is a nurse, I was always going to end up helping people," says Lex, who graduated from AUT with a Bachelor of Health Science (Physiotherapy) in 2011.

"I teach people the skills they need to get out of their own way and live courageously. For me, the really important bit is how you communicate with yourself. Our thoughts are so powerful and we have to live with ourselves 24/7. We can be our biggest critic or our strongest cheerleader and depending on what avenue we go down, we get very different results."

When it comes to results, she knows what she's talking about. Her 16 year boxing career took her to five world champs, 11 national titles, two Commonwealth Games (winning bronze in 2018) and an Olympic Games. Not

"My first contact spar reduced me to tears! I don't have tendencies to violence or aggression outside of the ring, so getting hit was quite startling."

only was Lex the first woman to win a bout at the Olympics for New Zealand, but she secured the country's first Olympic boxing win in 16 years.

"I started boxing just for fitness when I was 19 but I instantly fell in love with it. I really liked the gym environment, the friendly instructors, and feeling the power and energy of hitting the bag. I'm tall and skinny but boxing made me feel strong."

Boxing coach Cam Todd (now Lex's business partner and husband) instantly saw her potential and suggested she try boxing competitively.

"My first contact spar reduced me to tears! I don't have tendencies to violence or aggression outside of the ring, so getting hit was quite startling."

With two distinct sides to her personality Lex faced her first hurdle to athletic success.

"I had an alter ego, 'Boxer Lex'. Boxer Lex hit people really hard and was assertive, but then there was 'Physio Lex' who wanted to do nothing other than help and heal people. For a long time that held the athlete in me back because I was trying to box in a nice way. Nice boxers don't succeed!"

While simultaneously pouring all her energy into the boxing ring, Lex juggled full-time study, and later a career.

"AUT was incredibly supportive and lecturers would allow me to hand work in late when I was overseas competing. I also had a group of great classmates who I'm still friends with today. I'd go away for a three week competition and they'd get all the notes for me and help me with the tutorials when I got back. If it wasn't for them, I don't think I'd have done so well academically."

Prior to that, Lex completed a Bachelor of Science at the University of Auckland, but it wasn't until she got to AUT that she really thrived.

"The campus was so friendly and family-orientated, and the work was really enjoyable. I just loved the AUT vibe."

And with a regular line up of alumni guest speakers, inspiration was abundant.

"I always thought I was going to work as a physio in a hospital, but I ended up working in private practice instead. AUT taught me that you don't have to stick to a particular lane – you can create something that speaks to you and you can forge your own path."

It was a natural progression for Lex to combine her professional skills with her boxing prowess, bagging it up into something immensely valuable, through Rebuild with Lex.

"The skillset that has come from being a physio has made me a better mental skills coach. Physios are a bit like hairdressers – people tell you everything – so I'd already done my fair share of counselling. I'd also discovered that when I really worked on the mental skill side of my boxing, my performance changed. I saw how valuable it was."

These mental skills aren't the kind you learn via osmosis, or in school. And as Lex is quick to point out, if your parents don't have the skills to teach you, how are you ever going to learn?

She can help with that.

"When we can get our mind on our side, our potential is limitless. Everyone can learn to be so much more than they thought. You learn the skills, you practice the skills, and they change your life."

aut.ac.nz/health-sciences

“When we can get our mind on our side, our potential is limitless. Everyone can learn to be so much more than they thought. You learn the skills, you practice the skills, and they change your life.”



"NICE BOXERS DON'T SUCCEED!" LEX COMBINES HER BOXING PROWESS WITH HER DESIRE TO HELP PEOPLE BY SUPPORTING CLIENTS TO DEVELOP MENTAL STRENGTH. PHOTO BY FINN COCHRAN.

Global interns on the front line

When borders were closing, thousands of Kiwis needed help getting home from North America and New Zealand's trade relationships became more important than ever. Trade Commissioner and Consul-General Matt Ritchie was pleased to have not one, but two AUT alumni in his Vancouver team when the pandemic hit.

New Zealand Trade and Enterprise in Vancouver is a partner of the University's global internship programme, AUT Internz. Matt says the programme, which gives NZTE access to top quality graduates, has been excellent.

He has been particularly grateful to have two graduates in his small team since the pandemic arrived.

Bachelor of Communication Studies alumna Ayaka Archer joined as an intern in 2019 then was offered a permanent role, making room for the next AUT intern, Bachelor of Business graduate Alex Mackenzie, whose arrival was timed only weeks before that of COVID-19.

As part of the office's pandemic response, a new role – consular officer – was added to Ayaka's job title and she became a critical support for many stranded Kiwis in British Columbia.

"The amount we've had to deal with – flights were cancelled and there were so many issues – it was unprecedented in consular history," says Matt.

In a normal year, the Vancouver NZTE office would provide assistance to a handful of cases but by March 2020 it was supporting 60 or 70 people a day. "There were days where we fielded literally hundreds of calls."

Part of the North America research team, Alex has been providing invaluable support for Kiwi businesses trying to enter into, expand or simply

survive in the Canada and US markets. She took a role that Matt says would ordinarily be filled from Washington DC or LA, "but because we were all working from home, it didn't matter.

"She's been helping with desk research for companies that are either interested in the market or are already here but struggling because of the pandemic. We've had a large influx of work due to New Zealand businesses not being able to travel, supporting customers in how they actually transact the business, finding other marketing channels – digital commerce is the big thing at the moment."

Another issue for the office was supporting the movement of important equipment like PPE and devices when passenger flights were no longer carrying it. Fisher & Paykel, for example, needed assistance getting important medical technology to hospitals there.

Ayaka, with her communication studies background, was in the right place at the right time to help Kiwis with consular assistance. As a consular officer, she says her role is to assist New Zealanders overseas who are in a crisis, "Last March, that was pretty much everyone! I was speaking with hundreds of people per week who were upset, distressed and unsure of what the future held.

"Both the volume and value of calls were quite intense, with some people asking for advice on whether to uplift and move their entire family and life back to New Zealand. Because of how rapidly

things were changing there was so much new information coming through. It was quite draining as everyone's situation was so different and there was no easy answer."

AUT's director of development, Rebecca Lowery, who oversees the global internship programme behind Alex and Ayaka, remained in touch with the 30 other 2019 graduates who departed for internships in New York, LA, Chicago, Washington DC, San Francisco, London and Singapore.

"Each graduate made their own decision about whether they would return to New Zealand when borders were closing or see out their internship. While many returned, a handful did stay, and they've been well supported.

"Whether they returned or chose to stay, the resilience and positivity we've seen in all the graduates who received 2020 scholarships to intern overseas has been incredible – everyone here is so proud of them."

internz.aut.ac.nz



BACHELOR OF BUSINESS GRADUATE ALEX MACKENZIE (LEFT) HAS BEEN SUPPORTING KIWI BUSINESSES IN THE CANADA AND US MARKETS FOR NZTE, WHILE BACHELOR OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES ALUMNA AND CONSULAR OFFICER IN VANCOUVER, AYAKA ARCHER, HAS SUPPORTED THOUSANDS OF KIWIS DURING THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC.

“Whether they returned or chose to stay, the resilience and positivity we've seen in all the graduates who received 2020 scholarships to intern overseas has been incredible – everyone here is so proud of them.”

Mapping trees: when science informs art, art communicates science

AUT Artist in Residence Joseph Michael is collaborating with scientists to bring life-sized versions of New Zealand and Amazonian forest natives, including Tāne Mahuta, to town.

Famous for projecting a 360-degree Antarctic iceberg onto New York's United Nations headquarters, Joseph's latest fascination has seen him spending quality time with New Zealand's largest living kauri tree in Northland's Waipoua Forest.

The parallel tree-mapping projects are collecting data to create an augmented reality immersive art installation for New Zealand and Brazil.

Although closed borders in 2020 put the 16,000 species in South America's forest out of Joseph's physical reach, a production team of scientists and 'fixers' on the ground there continued scanning and relaying data to him.

Like his ongoing Antarctica project (he still has plans to project it on the Arc de Triomphe and Sydney Opera House), Joseph's latest installation aims to deliver the environment in its awesome scale into an urban setting, creating an experience that will inspire small changes in attitude.

"It's about bringing the environment closer without being too pervasive, getting people to go on a journey of understanding, to look at the natural world in a different way – interacting with it and respecting it, rather than dominating it."

As well as an interactive experience, the work will become a tool for forest

management and ecology decisions, and a digital archive of these significant cultural and historical heritage sites.

Working alongside AUT Associate Professor Barbara Bollard and her team (who are studying the trees from a scientific perspective), Joseph has also been seeking advice from Te Roroa Iwi to understand the networks of the forest.

“There's a really nice relationship between art and science. When I'm looking at the tree from an artists' lens, we'll have totally different viewpoints, and when we share that, it makes us both think in different ways about what we're doing.”

"There's a difference in the way indigenous cultures view the environment – there's no objectivation of the forest, trees are connected to you, the forest is central to your health."

Joseph is interpreting and simplifying the massive amount of information collected via drone footage, game-changing technology helping him demonstrate many of the amazing processes that go on in a tree.

He's a perfect resident for AUT's Colab, with its many alliances between academic faculties and practices. All the

strands of his training and experience have led to this project – and collaboration is a driving method.

Joseph, who says he was always destined for fine arts school (which he backed up with film training, then work on *Avatar* and *The Hobbit*), enjoys working with scientists.

"I have admiration for them – they're amazing, they spend their whole lives working on specific areas and go into so much detail.

"There's a really nice relationship between art and science. When I'm looking at the tree from an artists' lens, we'll have totally different viewpoints, and when we share that, it makes us both think in different ways about what we're doing."

As part of his residency, Joseph has been teaching across the Bachelor of Creative Technologies programme, where students have the opportunity to explore concepts related to storytelling or experiences conveyed across multiple platforms and formats using contemporary and emerging digital technologies.

aut.ac.nz/creative-tech



A DIGITAL SCAN OF A SAMAUMA TREE FROM THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON



SCANNING THE CANOPY OF TĀNE MAHUTA USING LIDAR TECHNOLOGY, A PLACE VISITED LESS FREQUENTLY THAN THE SUMMIT OF EVEREST.

New trading room brings stock exchange buzz to AUT

AUT finance students can get a taste of life in the fast lane without having to set foot on Wall Street thanks to the recently established AUT Business School trading room.

Fully equipped with the latest data and portfolio simulation software, students can experience global financial markets, systems and real-time trading just as they would on the trading desks of New York, London and Hong Kong's busiest investment banks.

AUT Head of Department, Finance, Professor Aaron Gilbert says the recently-opened facility helps ensure students hit the ground running when they enter the workplace.

"Many students have limited real-life experience of what financial markets and investing are like, so the trading room gives them the opportunity to get hands-on experience that will better prepare them for a career in finance. Even better, they can get that experience without the need to invest their own money, and without the risk of real losses," he says.

Designed to simulate the environment of a trading floor (it even has a stock ticker giving the latest prices), the trading room gives students access to real time financial databases that allow them to explore news, prices and other information about financial products and markets around the world – from stocks, bonds and currencies, to futures, options, and commodities like gold and dairy.

The opening of the room has delivered a string of benefits – as well as dishing up real-world experience to students, researchers now have access to financial data that has been used to publish in high ranked journals, and trading strategies and financial risk management practices are being embedded into AUT's teaching and research.

"One innovation is that our latest intake of Master of Applied Finance students have built a simulated portfolio that they will continue to trade while they complete their degree. This portfolio will form the basis for assessments in many of their papers."

Established 17 years ago, AUT's Finance Department has carved out an enviable global reputation. In 2020 it was recognised as one of the top two finance departments in New Zealand, and among the top 200 universities worldwide according to one of the most prestigious global university ranking systems, the Academic Ranking of World Universities.

"The AUT Finance Department has risen rapidly in many international ranking systems based on its commitment to producing industry ready graduates, top quality academic research and high-quality engagement with industry. Our current rankings place us alongside many well-known universities from around the world, highlighting the success we've had in building a strong reputation."

It has been a busy 12 months for the Department, says Aaron. "We've also recently started a teaching collaboration with Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics in Hangzhou, China. This collaboration sees AUT and Zhejiang lecturers teaching Master of Applied Finance papers to students located in China. Eventually, in a post-COVID world, this will see AUT academics teaching in person to students in China."

“Many students have limited real-life experience of what financial markets and investing are like, so the trading room gives them the opportunity to get hands-on experience that will better prepare them for a career in finance. Even better, they can get that experience without the need to invest their own money, and without the risk of real losses.”

Students reflect on the Bright Side

A unique programme supporting AUT students to stay connected, develop self-knowledge, have authentic relationships and live a life of meaning proved its value during 2020, experiencing a 130 percent growth, despite students not being able to come to campus for much of the year.

Piloted in 2019, the Bright Side programme (formerly known as Wiser), has established a community that comes together for conversation, connection and reflection on the ups and downs of being human and in 2020 had its first full year of successful operation.

In response to the alert level 4 lockdown last March, the team worked with its community of guides which included AUT staff, industry and community partners to create a suite of online resources available on AUT's student website and the AUT app.

Bright Side also supported the delivery of an online seminar with renowned psychologists Nigel Latta and Natalie Flynn – helping students develop the skills they need to face challenges and setbacks.

Once back on campus, all AUT students keen to participate were welcomed to talks, workshops, rituals, and social events in Bright Side's bespoke, comfortable space on Symonds Street. Through the year they explored topics like self-compassion, finding your passion and life planning, resilience, values and strengths, sleep and exercise, mindfulness, conservation and ethical spending, healthy sex and nurturing relationships.

Bright Side welcomed guests from many walks of life to share their knowledge and life lessons with AUT students.

Ki te tō, ka tupu; ki te aroha, ka puāwai. Haumi e, hui e, tāiki e!
That which is planted, grows; that which is nurtured, blossoms.

Bright Side whakatauki

In collaboration with Wade Jackson from Inspired Learning, Bright Side also ran Future Focus, a six-month programme to help students unlock their unique creativity and personal leadership style to succeed in their studies and work. Twenty AUT students were sponsored to participate, with learning outcomes that included an understanding of strengths and drivers, self-confidence, self-efficacy, as well as communication and collaboration skills.

Director of Student Communications and Engagement Rebecca Shrigley says the feedback about the 2020 programme was amazing. "The level of growth in participation shows people can see value in what Bright Side has to offer.

"Bright Side was developed in collaboration with students and the needs they expressed they were seeking – balance, connection, meaning, self-efficacy and hope."

She says the outcome is a community of students who feel like they have agency because they're part of a community committed to a journey of personal growth.

Rebecca says she's interested in hearing from any alumni who might have experiences or wisdom AUT students would benefit from. "I encourage them to reach out to us to talk through how they could contribute and give back to their AUT community."

To learn more about Bright Side, please contact Rebecca Shrigley rebecca.shrigley@aut.ac.nz 09 921 9821.

2020 guest speakers included:

- AUT Professor Grant Schofield
- AUT Adjunct Professor and entrepreneur Mike Hutcheson
- Founder of Sunday Blessings supporting Auckland's un-homed community, AUT student Danielle Le Gallais
- Director of Naked Audience, public speaking coach and AUT alum Miriam Chancellor
- Founder of Conscious Action Brian Berneman
- Sexologist and research and training lead for The Light Project, Jo Robertson
- Vice-President of Influence Ecology, Drew Knowles
- Melissa Jenner, Founder of START and certified Design Your Life coach
- Lex Pritchard, mindset and performance coach, former New Zealand boxer and AUT alumni.

“

Bright Side ... and AUT have created a programme that is investing in their students beyond the world of academia... and it's why I uprooted my safe and comfortable life in Dunedin to be at AUT – it's not a university for just academics, it values the whole student.

”

Nathaniel Peacock, AUT student

Tackling institutional racism head-on

When it comes to social justice activism there are few more steadfast than Dr Heather Came, AUT's Head of Department Public Health.

An activist since adolescence, Heather delivered an early school speech on homosexual law reform, the same year she unsuccessfully mobilised girls to run the same distance as boys in the school cross country.

In the decades since, she's been involved in queer and union activism, and more recently, te Tiriti o Waitangi and anti-racism work. Now, she and a small team of like-minded souls are leading the charge to tackle institutional racism within New Zealand's public health sector, through STIR (Stop Institutional Racism).

Since 2013, STIR has attempted to influence public health policy and contracting practices and uphold te Tiriti o Waitangi to decolonise the health system. They have utilised everything from nationwide surveys, policy critiques and scholarly publications, to presentations, submissions, organised conferences and workshops.

"We've helped win the argument that racism exists in the health sector. Through the persistence of our work and that of many Māori leaders in the space, we have helped change the operating climate."



The group's next challenge? Persuading others in the sector to embrace anti-racism practice and fulfil their te Tiriti responsibilities.

"I am steadfastly optimistic. When we first started this, we set a deadline of ending racism in the public health sector by 2017. Ok we're not there yet – we've had to cover up that date with a picture on all our promotional material! But collectively we are making some headway.

"STIR is now a boutique social movement that I believe brings hope to a lot of people. There are hundreds of people doing anti-racism mahi because they've been to one of our events or read one of our papers. Anti-racism work is very challenging and rewarding work."

STIR's "work" comes in many forms. Its members have presented evidence to the Waitangi Tribunal, developed a tool to assess whether a policy document is te Tiriti o Waitangi compliant and campaigned in support of ethnic pay parity for nurses (nurses in Māori providers often earn up to 25 percent less than their district health board colleagues).

STIR has also presented to the United Nations committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racism in Geneva, shining a spotlight on institutional racism targeting Māori in the New Zealand health system.

"Presenting to the United Nations committee was one of my proudest career moments to date. As a young person I dreamed about doing human rights work but you never really imagine you

will actually get there, to be part of that global monitoring."

Twenty-twenty proved to be a particularly big year for the organisation. In March they were part of a coalition that launched a 10-day virtual anti-racism event, Te Tiriti-based Futures + Anti-Racism, with 70 speakers (from as far afield as Rwanda and Canada), 49 partner organisations and 15,000 virtual attendees. Despite COVID-19, the event was a huge success and planning will soon commence for a 2022 version.

"We now have a Facebook page with nearly 5000 followers who are interested in racial justice – many of whom are already working on these issues. We've created a learning community that we can draw on if and when we need to take political action."

Also last year, Heather, in collaboration with Māori health equity researcher Associate Professor Jacqui Kidd (Ngāpuhi), received a prestigious \$870,000 Marsden grant to continue and extend her scholarly work.

"The new grant opens up all sorts of possibilities and will fund a research project around reimagining anti-racism practice and theory for application within the health sector."

It's no small undertaking but Heather is up for the challenge.

"Being an activist scholar is extremely rewarding work. It's grounding being accountable back to the communities you serve, back to the tangata whenua and colleagues at AUT. It's a privilege to do the work I do."

“
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stirnz.org



Ziena Jalil: Agent of change

A finalist in the 2020 New Zealand Women of Influence Awards and one of Campaign Asia Pacific's Women to Watch for 2020, Ziena Jalil was always destined to be a changemaker.

Head Girl at Fiji's Natabua High School, she became a trainer in drug and substance abuse prevention at 16, represented South Pacific youth at a UN forum at The Hague, was an award-winning orator, and scored the highest English mark in the country in her final year of school.

A trailblazer in her demographic, the Kiwi Fiji Indian went on to rack up a string of other firsts. She graduated top student in her Bachelor of Communication Studies at AUT, was recognised as the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand Young Practitioner of the Year for her work leveraging the historic NZ-China Free Trade Agreement, and at 27 was the youngest person to be appointed to the role of NZ Trade Commissioner.

Now 38, the dynamic mother of two continues to drive change in a spectacularly diverse range of sectors.

"I get bored easily so a range of different interests and roles is very natural to me."

ZIENA JALIL GRADUATED TOP STUDENT IN HER BACHELOR OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES AT AUT.

“

We need genuine respect for difference, for diversity – not just political tolerance. We need real action to become a more inclusive, equitable society, not just paying lip service to diversity.

”

Consulting Partner at PR firm SenateSHJ, Ziena serves on numerous boards, is a founding member of Gender Justice Collective, and during lockdown co-founded myyodaa, a mobile app connecting yoga and meditation students with teachers all over the world. She's also a keynote speaker and commentator on everything from economic development, international and vocational education, and Asia business, to leadership, diversity and inclusion, and politics.

While that's enough to give many of us heart palpitations, for Ziena, it's her lifeblood.

"Across all the work that I do, whether that's with my own clients, my governance roles, or advocacy work, there's a common theme around diversity and inclusion and ensuring a more equitable society, particularly better outcomes for our marginalised communities."

Gender equity is high on her list and although she acknowledges that New Zealand is making progress (half our public service chief executive roles are now held by women and we have a female prime minister and leader of the opposition), Ziena says we still have a long way to go.

"Simply having women in these roles isn't enough unless we see actions that make a tangible difference in the lives of women in our country. Only 20 percent of senior managers in New Zealand are females which places us as one of the lowest-ranked countries worldwide for women in senior leadership.

"We need genuine respect for difference, for diversity – not just political tolerance. We need real action to become a more inclusive, equitable society, not just paying lip service to diversity."

She has already dedicated a lifetime to the cause, but she's got no intention of taking her foot off the accelerator any time soon.

"Challenging the status quo is never easy, and especially so as a young, brown woman in senior roles. But I'd like to continue to use my skills, experience, networks and knowledge particularly in the areas of Asia's importance to New Zealand, economic development, education, and diversity and inclusion to contribute to a better, more inclusive Aotearoa New Zealand, and one that is engaged meaningfully in the Asia Pacific."

Ziena identifies as much with Asia as she does with the Pacific, having spent a decade there as Head of North Asia Marketing and Communications for NZ Trade and Enterprise, New Zealand Trade Commissioner to Singapore, and Regional Director South and South East Asia for Education New Zealand.

"We cannot underestimate the importance of Asia to New Zealand's future. And in doing so, especially at a time when travel is limited, we need to embrace the fullness of potential in our own country by recognising our own diversity and leveraging this as a strength as we partner and seek to grow in Asia."



AUT

JULIAN BRAATVEDT
WILDLIFE
CINEMATOGRAPHER
AUT GRADUATE

FIND YOUR GREATNESS



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to stay connected to New Zealand's
fastest growing alumni community

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