

Jan Thomas and Chris Whelan
Universities New Zealand

By email

12 May 2022

Dear Jan and Chris,

We write on behalf of Te Hautū Kahurangi | Tertiary Education Union having noted your media release of 10 May titled “Budget a chance to unlock universities’ full potential to enhance New Zealanders’ wellbeing and prosperity”.

We are happy to see Universities New Zealand challenging the government to recognise the true value of tertiary education and fund it accordingly.

We share your sentiments that universities “can and want to do more” to better support learners; grow our nation’s workforce; address our greatest challenges such as wellbeing, climate change, and COVID-19; grow investment; and foster a more diverse research workforce. However, we must remind you that none of this is possible without happy and well-remunerated university staff.

Just as university funding has remained static for far too long, so too have university salaries.

Recent research we have commissioned shows personnel expenditure as a share of total operating expenditure falling steadily at all but two of Aotearoa’s universities over the past 15 years. In many cases salaries and wages as a share of total expenditure have dropped even more considerably.

Our members, also your staff, must now face the highest inflation in three decades and this must be addressed by their employers and their government. To achieve both your goals and ours, kaimahi need increased staffing levels to ease workloads, an end to stressful restructuring, more professional development and decent research and study leave.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet and work with you and your constituent institutions to secure more funding for the university sector for all of the above reasons. One approach could be to jointly call for a tripartite forum between TEU, Universities New Zealand, and the government. This approach has been successful in securing funding boosts in the past.

Please don’t hesitate to contact us to discuss this further.

Kind regards,

Tina Smith, Tumu Whakarae | National President

Sandra Grey, Te Pou Ahurei | National Secretary

Barry Hughes, Branch President, University of Auckland

David Sinfield, Branch President, AUT

Annie Barker, Branch President, University of Waikato

Te Awatea Ward, Branch President, Massey University

Dougal McNeill, Branch President, Victoria University

Rob Stowell, Branch President, University of Canterbury

Cor Vink, Lincoln University

Craig Marshall, Branch President, University of Otago

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